

**TRANSLATING AGENCY REFORM**  
Rhetoric and culture in comparative perspective

**AGENTSCHAPPEN VERTAALD**  
Retoriek en cultuur in vergelijkend perspectief

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## Preface

The completion of this thesis has taken me to places I have never been before. In general I have enjoyed immensely the opportunities to think, debate, teach, read lots of good books and write. It would not have been as interesting or challenging without the company of a lot of stimulating and some special people. Firstly I am grateful to colleagues at the Department of Public Administration for their support and patience with the completion of this research. In particular, the company of Menno Fenger, Marine Allix and Bente Bjornholt was always a delight, and they could even offer sound advice and intelligent comments. Conversations with Albert Meijer and Mirko Noordegraaf in the early stages of my research kept me on my toes, while more recently Merlijn van Hulst has also played a role in keeping me culturally attuned. Conversations with Professor Paul Frissen provided an important source of inspiration at a time when I was feeling somewhat overwhelmed with the project at hand.

In Sweden I am indebted to my frequent email contact with Dr Goran Sundström who was always willing to answer promptly my questions and even correct my Swedish. During my research I was able to spend time at the University of Canberra, Australia and was warmly received by Professor John Halligan, who together with Professor Roger Wettenhall were very quick to subject my research ideas and arguments to healthy scrutiny. Dr David Rowlands also allowed me to delve into his collection of documents and was ever willing, even by email and in summer holidays, to give advice on the Australian scene. Outside of Public Administration Lisbeth Eelens Noordegraaf and Rachael Dunstan provided me with intellectual stimulation, friendship and support, in one way or another, throughout the period of my research. I was lucky enough to know Jovanka Gögos whose creativity and enthusiasm ensured that I could have a gorgeous book cover in lightning speed—something I had never expected given the abstract nature of the contents. The completion of the thesis and my capacity to rise above the stuff elegantly would not have been possible without the professional guidance and support of my promotors both

Professor Christopher Pollitt and Dr Sandra Van Thiel. They have continually inspired and challenged me with their own academic achievements and quality of output. They have known how to get the best out of me with rigor, good humor and kindness. I have already missed our meetings for what seems a long time.

I also have to mention my parents and family because they somehow continued to manage to find ways to support me and keep me smiling and soothed about the writing/research process from a really long distance. I am lucky with my parents. Anja Mels was frequently at hand to help with childcare and house stuff, without which there would have been even more disorganization, late nights and tardiness. Finally, I am forever grateful for the patience and love of Robbert and Anna. My desire to write this thesis has invariably meant that I was literally, and too often figuratively, elsewhere working or in my thoughts. Also Robbert did a lot of last minute lay out which was more than relief, while Anna always provided good distractions and knew how to keep me smiling. Completion was so much easier knowing you were both still waiting for me.



*For Anna*



# 1 Translating agency reform

## 1.1 Introduction

The experience of the last two decades would suggest that a new international reform category has emerged, the agency. Although not always consistent with local titles, the agency label has been associated with public sector arrangements observed in countries as diverse as England (O'Toole and Jordan, 1995), Sweden (Fortin, 1996; Gustafsson and Rhodes, 1989), Portugal, Japan (Oliver 2000), The Netherlands (Ter Bogt, 1999; Van der Knaap et al., 1997), Latvia (Pollitt et al., 2001; Pollitt, 2002), New Zealand (Boston et al., 1996), Canada (Aucoin, 1996), and Australia (Armstrong, 1998; Rowlands, 2002) - to name just a few examples. With endorsement from international organizations such as the OECD and World Bank, agencies have also been enforced upon developing countries such as Ghana and Tanzania as a condition for financial aid (Talbot and Caulfield, 2002; Minogue et al., 1999). Their spread has been the consequence of seeming universal agreement that they are a good thing. This has been reflected in OECD reports which have recognized the "greater use of agencies or their equivalents ... (for) purposes that include better service, greater efficiency, a focus on results, as well as clearer accountability relationships between the institution and government" (OECD, 1997a:19). Agencies have not only been deemed appropriate reform accessories for all kinds of political administrative contexts, but they have apparently also been able to bring about a range of benefits in these different circumstances.

More recently, there seems to have been a pendulum swing in the agency fashion whereby features, such as their autonomy, initially regarded as part of the *solution*, have come to be seen as a *problem* for accountability and for joining up government (James, 2004; Smullen, 2004). This research seeks to investigate the way that the international fashion of agency reform has attained its credibility in different national contexts and the arguments that have propelled its rise, as well as to some extent, its fall in official national talk. Its empirical focus is official accounts of agency reform at the national or federal level in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia.

## 1.2 The object of study: agency

Broadly speaking, the idea of agencies has been characterized by three features: their structural dis-aggregation from central departments, management autonomy and performance contracting (Talbot, 2004:6). A more detailed definition is provided in chapter 4. Often contrasted with the monolithic bureaucratic units of the welfare state in the post war period, agencies are at *arms length* from departments but still remain part of the central core of government (Talbot, 2004:8). Within the international community, the identification of agencies has also occurred through mutual recognition, whereby reforms introduced in one country such as The Netherlands, are presented as following from agency initiatives in other countries such as the UK (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:30-33) which in turn are said to have been inspired by Swedish agencies (Fulton Committee, 1968), and so on. These instances, which are numerous, point to the symbolic features of the agency phenomena and its fashionable status. The object of this study has therefore also been defined by national or international recognition of membership to the *agency way*.

## 1.3 A word on convergence

Agencies, as a public management fashion, have appeared during a period when there has been a wider debate about the convergence of public management reform trajectories in the western world. They can be interpreted as a corollary of the New Public Management (NPM) agenda since many of the features associated with NPM, such as management autonomy and a focus upon outputs or results, have also been ascribed to agencies (Hood, 1991, 1996; Osbourne and Gaebler, 1992; James, 2003). The spread of apparently similar kinds of reforms and ideas has raised questions as to the extent to which convergence in public management reform has taken place (Pollitt, 2001a, 2001b). While some commentators emphasize striking similarities, others stress durable differences (Pollitt, 2001b). In particular, many have noted similar kinds of public management themes and labels appearing in both the international arena, as well as in a number of political administrative contexts (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Power, 1997), while others have shown important differences in the content of reforms and the way they

have been implemented (Greves, 2000; Pollitt and Talbot, 2004; Pollitt et al., 2004; Pollitt, Van Thiel and Homburg, 2006). It has been suggested that there may have been convergence in public management reform talk, but convergence in reform practice and results is much more unlikely (Pollitt, 2001a). Such diagnoses are drawn from institutional perspectives that emphasize the durable contextual features of political administrative contexts, which have their own starting points and trajectories for reform. Talk, on the other hand, is conceived of as something more mobile that is able to travel and be translated to different contexts with fewer constraints. By analyzing agency official accounts this study seeks to investigate the extent to which management reform talk has actually converged across national and linguistic contexts. This also has implications for the kinds of meanings ascribed to agencies in different contexts, since different uses of agency terminology, as well as different actual practices would suggest that reforms such as agencies have attained entirely different meanings. In addition, this study also seeks to identify reasons for similarities and differences in talk. Against this background, the central research question is:

*How has agency reform been constructed in the official accounts presented in different cultural political administrative contexts and why have there been similarities and differences in the accounts?*

#### **1.4 Previous research on agencies and reform talk**

This research develops both a growing body of academic knowledge about agency reform, as well as studies about rhetoric and discourses in public administration. With the rise of agencies as an international fashion, and as a significant reform initiative in many national contexts, academic endeavour on this topic has also proceeded. To date, research about agencies has generally concentrated upon the results of the reform (James, 2003; Ter Bogt, 1999), the relationship between agencies and departments (Gains, 2000), and the effect of institutional arrangements upon the contents of the reform (Sundström, 2003; Rowlands, 2002; Pollitt et al., 2004). In the UK, the Next Steps program has been examined by many including James (2003) who has investigated the causes of the reform, its development and results. He has found that although agency reform was triggered by the desires of politicians to improve management, the

choice for agency reform came from high civil servants who preferred policy rather than implementation tasks (James, 2003:68). To this extent, agency reform was not necessarily about promoting efficiency or performance at all, although James found that reductions in costs could be observed (James, 2003:105-106). In The Netherlands, Ter Bogt (1999), found no evidence of efficiency improvements from agency reform and instead discovered efficiency reductions. Despite the popularity of agency reform, evidence of the effects of agency reform remain scanty and limited (Pollitt, 2001, 2003).

In her study of the nature of relationships between departments and agencies in the UK, Gains (2000) found that resource dependencies encouraged shared goals and tended to promote better working relationships within the administration. Finally, in studies of the institutional influences upon the content of reforms, Pollitt et al. (2004) have shown in their four country comparison that the performance management systems of agencies had not converged and were influenced by agency function, as well as, politico-administrative traditions and culture. Indeed, nowhere among their case studies were they able to identify agency practice that corresponded with international rhetoric (Pollitt et al., 2004:246). Similarly, in both Sweden (Sundström, 2003) and Australia (Rowlands, 2002), academic research has focused upon the unique national, historical and contextual arrangements that preceded respectively the introduction of results management to existing agencies in Sweden and the creation of Centrelink in Australia. As James (2003) also noted, they have shown how the content of agency reforms satisfied the interests of some civil servants and the information resources they had available to them. Rowlands (2002) has also shown how the rhetoric of the Australian agency Centrelink actually followed its creation and has at times been incompatible with the government decisions made about it. Unlike many of these studies, it is not the intention of this research to compare the rhetoric of agency reform with its practice but to assess convergence in national agency accounts and understand why it has appeared in the form that it has in different contexts.

This research also follows earlier studies of rhetoric and discourses in public management (Hood and Jackson, 1991; Hood, 2003; Summa, 1990, 1992, 1993; Van Twist, 1995; Clarke and Newman, 1997), as well as discourses in policy making more

generally (Fischer and Forester, 1993; Hajer, 1995). It is particularly the studies of rhetoric and their analysis of knowledge in public management that have provided the greatest buttress for this study. In 1991 Hood and Jackson published their encyclopaedia of administrative doctrines deployed throughout the history of Anglophone public management (Hood and Jackson, 1991). They demonstrated that the arguments in public management were finite and had their own counter doctrines which, despite being presented as new, tended to recur and supersede one another over time. While providing international comparative examples of administrative doctrines and rhetorical techniques, however, the primary focus upon the content and structure of arguments (*logos*) did not allow for detailed discussion of the role that context has had upon influencing which arguments appear in different contexts over time, or which kinds of speakers are allowed to speak.

Similarly, in Hood's more recent work which has sought to combine Grid Group Cultural Theory (GGCT) with rhetoric, the role of national cultural context has received only cursory attention, with much of the empirical analysis again seeking to demonstrate the way that arguments in public management comply to the GGCT's four ways of life (Hood, 2003). As will be discussed in chapter 3, Hood's categorization of public management arguments using GGCT has been integral to the present study. Summa's work has also been influential because of the focus upon housing planning documents over time and her application of the New Rhetoric. This theory is also used in the present study. Much more than Hood, Summa's work locates rhetoric in a particular institutional context and examines the role of the speaker (*ethos*), not just the *logos*, of the rhetoric. Finally, Van Twist (1995) has identified some of the metaphors that have played a central role in administrative science theories and perspectives. He has also examined the construction of administrative reform through text and has argued that the spread of such texts has the consequence of bringing about the disappearance of the author and enabling practitioners to interpret meaning in their own *con-texts*. He identifies the need for more inspiring speakers within public administration in order to aid managers in their own constructions of practice. While it is not the primary goal of this research to identify the relationship between rhetoric and practice, like the work of Van Twist, the empirical focus of this study does provide the opportunity to

reflect upon the kind of knowledge and roles that official speakers impart to practitioners, and indeed the users of public services.

## 1.5 Research question and techniques

The central research question for this study has been posed against the background of debates about convergence in public management reforms. More specifically, it is focused upon the symbolic features of agency reform and its construction in the official accounts produced in different cultural and political-administrative contexts. This allows for variety in the meanings attributed to agency reform in different countries to also be examined. The research seeks to demonstrate how agency reform has been constructed in official talk, and both identify and compare the way such constructions relate to the cultural, political and administrative contexts in which they are produced. By doing so, it can contribute to discussions of convergence in public management and demonstrate the extent to which this has occurred at the level of talk about agency reform. It can also provide insight into the culturally prescribed rules of speaking about management reforms and the audiences being spoken to in particular national contexts. This is an important contrast to the existing explanations of totalizing discourses and arguments that have been offered by proponents of NPM (see Osborne and Gaebler, 1992).

In order to answer the research question it has been necessary to identify the official documents in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia that have either described or initiated their national agency reforms. These documents have been selected on the basis of advice from experts in each of the countries under study and have included examples over an extended period of time. The technique of rhetorical analysis has been used to identify the constructions of agency reform in the different contexts and has also provided theoretical categories for comparing descriptions of agency reform. In addition, secondary literature and interview material has been used to reconstruct the *scenes of use* in which agency accounts have been produced. This material has been gathered from comparative and national academic research in political science, public administration, history and sociology. On the basis of both accounts



of agency reform and of the contexts in which they have been produced, it is possible to make conclusions about:

- The correspondence between national official accounts and the cultural political-administrative context in which it has been produced
- The similarities and differences in the official accounts produced across different cultural, political and administrative contexts
- The roles that national styles of speaking, as well as the stories about agency reform themselves, have played in the construction of agency reform across the countries.

Given that official agency accounts in both The Netherlands and Sweden have been produced in languages other than English, it has also been necessary to translate the statements in these countries about agency reform to English. I am able to read accounts of agency reform in both Dutch and Swedish and have thus conducted rhetorical analyses of documents in these countries in the original language. For the reporting of findings about this rhetoric, however, I have translated the material to English in this study. This has sometimes occurred after consultation with native speakers. It is a unique contribution of this study that it seeks to uncover and analyze the official accounts produced, not only in different countries and administrative traditions, but also in different languages.

## 1.6 Theoretical perspective

The theoretical approach adopted in this research can be classified as social constructivist. It has been inspired by philosophical figures such as Wittgenstein, Austin and Foucault, who have focused upon the way that language creates reality rather than just representing it. From this perspective the object of agency reform is not understood as a practice *out there*, but rather is conceived of as all that has been said about it in a specific context. Wittgenstein and Foucault, in particular, have argued that the construction of objects takes place in a language game, or discourse, which has its own rules about *who is qualified to speak, from which institutions they speak, and, how to speak*. From this perspective statements about agencies in different contexts will have also been governed by certain rules. The study of rhetoric provides theoretical concepts for analyzing official ac-

counts of agency reform and the rules that have governed their production. It has been defined as the art of using language persuasively and has its own toolkit for assessing the character of speakers (ethos) and their techniques for constructing objects (pathos and logos). Underlying these categories of rhetoric is the relationship of the speaker with an audience. The rules of speaking are always the outcome of a particular contextual situation. In this study, the *New Rhetoric* of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2003) has been applied to assess the construction of agency reform across the countries under study and their rules of speaking. This is a theory of rhetoric derived from Aristotle's own treatise. The theoretical categories it provides enable the researcher to compare constructions in different countries. In considering and comparing the relationships between national context and official accounts, the New Rhetoric is particularly useful because of the distinctions it makes between universal and particular audiences. This distinction makes it possible to observe convergence in appeals to a particular management audience for example, while at the same time noting differences in the way the broader argumentative appeal of accounts are obtained in a particular cultural political administrative context.

A second theoretical perspective that is adopted in this research originates from sociology and is Grid Group Cultural Theory (GGCT). This theory is also consistent with a social constructivist perspective although it proposes that regularities in the meanings attached to social phenomenon can be broadly associated with four basic ways of life or a combination of these (Thompson et al., 1997: 1-2). Derived from the dimensions of *grid* and *group* (described in chapter 3), GGC theorists identify individualism, fatalism, hierarchy, and, egalitarianism as ways of life that consist of mutually supportive values and attitudes, as well as patterns of social relations. GGCT is an appealing framework for international comparative research because it enables the analysis and comparison of objects such as agencies, even when they have been constructed from entirely different knowledge bases. It provides a means for sorting accounts of agency reforms and the argumentative themes that have characterized them. Christopher Hood (2000) has described a number of themes and arguments in public management that are consistent with the four ways of life and I have used these to categorize official accounts of agency reform. Together with the New

Rhetoric, *rules of speaking* about these different ways of life can also be compared enabling an assessment of the extent to which agency stories themselves require certain ways of speaking and thinking. In addition, GGCT is attractive to this study because it can be applied to different levels of analysis including official accounts, as well as the level of national context. This enables a diagnosis to be made of different cultural contexts and provides an alternative explanation for the official accounts that are produced in those contexts. In combination, the New Rhetoric and GGCT provide a way to assess and compare the rules of speaking in different cultural contexts, as well as the rules of speaking about culturally tinted themes and arguments. They enable conclusions to be made about the extent of convergence or divergence in agency talk, as well as competing reasons, *eg. cultural context or the story itself*, for this convergence or divergence.

## 1.7 The outline of the thesis

In the remainder of this thesis I will elaborate upon the themes briefly mentioned in this introduction, as well as present my research methods, empirical findings, comparative analysis and conclusions. In chapter 2, a more detailed account of the international fashion of agency reform is presented and some of the features of the discourse at the level of the international community will be described. In chapter 3, the philosophical origins for conceiving of language as a form of action that creates reality will be briefly reviewed, followed by a more detailed description of the theories being applied in this study. The theoretical categories from both the New Rhetoric and GGCT will be mapped out for the analysis that proceeds. In chapter 4, the design of the research is presented including the selection of documents and countries. An account is given of the way in which the rhetorical analysis has been conducted in this study, and the methods for diagnosing the cultural character of each of the countries are described.

In chapters 5 to 7, the empirical findings of this research are presented for each of the three countries under study. The cultural, political-administrative contexts or rather *scenes of use*, together with the contours of agency reform and national official accounts are described according to the theoretical framework developed in chapter 3. The rules of speaking in different con-

texts, as well as the cultural character of national official agency accounts are presented respectively for the Dutch case in chapter 5, for Sweden in chapter 6 and for Australia in chapter 7. In chapter 8, it is then possible to compare the various statements and arguments espoused about agency reform in the different countries and their *rules of speaking*. The extent to which convergence in official agency talk has occurred will be assessed and the respective roles that the cultural political-administrative context, national styles or rules of speaking, and, the rules of speaking in culturally tinted ways, have played in accounting for similarities and differences in agency accounts will be described. Finally, in chapter 9 the conclusion to this research will be presented with the findings to my research question and a reflection upon the kind of contributions this type of research can make to knowledge in public management.

## 2 The international fashion of agency reform

A number of countries have seen merit in the agency model (OECD, 1995:32).

Increasing autonomy and flexibility in resource use is fundamental to developing a performance orientated culture (OECD, 1995:8)

(M)anaging from a distance had created specific accountability and control issues (OECD, 2001:6)

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a more detailed account of the emergence of the international fashion of agency reform. While it is recognized that arrangements to put organizations at *arms length* from departments has long been a practice of governments (Greve, Flinders & Van Thiel, 1999), it is argued that the emergence of agencies in the last two decades has had an international character and following that is distinct from their use in previous periods. The kinds of benefits that agency reform is supposed to bring about will be described and a correlation will be drawn between the rise of agencies and descriptions of New Public Management (NPM) more generally. Both as practice and as a story, agencies have inspired much from NPM. Like NPM, the spread of agencies raises questions for comparative research about the convergence of national reforms, with some suggesting that convergence has occurred primarily in talk (Pollitt, 2001b). This is to be further investigated in this study, but first I will describe recent shifts in the agency story away from NPM.

This chapter will begin with an overview of various agency reform initiatives across the globe and the international character of the reform in section 2.2. In section 2.3 I will describe the practices and benefits of agencies and the similarities between agency reform and the NPM agenda more generally. In section 2.4 I will consider the matter of international convergence and the various comparative research agendas it has inspired. Then, before concluding the chapter in section 2.6, I will first describe in section 2.5 some recent changes in the international story about agencies.

## 2.2 The international rise of agencies<sup>1</sup>

The diagnosis of agencies as an international fashion can be supported by the empirical observation, over a short period of time, of a number of national initiatives to create organizations at arms length from departments, while still including them within the central core of government (Pollitt et al., 2001; Pollitt and Talbot, 2002; Pollitt et al., 2004). This has sometimes occurred in the form of a national program in which numerous departmental units have been given a separate organizational identity (UK, The Netherlands, Japan) or as single or multiple national initiatives occurring outside of an umbrella program (Australia, Italy). Related to this, though not necessarily so, is that agencies have comprised of both very significant arrangements implicating large areas of national public sectors (Sweden), to the extent that they have colonized the organizational possibilities in different national contexts, or been more marginal arrangements in the national scheme of things (Australia, The Netherlands). Furthermore, there have been countries such as Sweden where agency arrangements have long characterized the public domain although these arrangements themselves have been subject to modernization initiatives in recent years, making them also affiliates of the agency fashion. Some national examples of agency initiatives can demonstrate their global spread and significance.

Beginning with Anglo- Saxon countries, perhaps one of the most widely cited agency programs has been the UK Next Steps initiative in 1988 which led to the creation of some 136 agencies and the employment of approximately 81% of all UK civil servants in these organizations (Cabinet Office, 1999). This was closely followed by the introduction of *Crown Entities* in New Zealand in 1989, which were initially part of a very rigorous program of contracts and performance reporting (Boston et al., 1996:chapter 4). In Canada, agency creation began in 1993 with the creation of 15 'Special Operating Agencies' (SOAs) (Aucoin, 1996); which were supplemented in 1999 with the creation of a further 3 SOAs (OECD, 2000; Prince, 2000). Despite rejecting the separation of agency operations from departmental policy making in the 1980s, by 1996 Australia had

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<sup>1</sup> Ideas in parts of this section 2.2 and 2.3 have already been published in Pollitt, C., Bathgate, K., Caulfield, J., Smullen, A., & Talbot, C. (2001).

also created an enormous Service Delivery Agency, Centrelink, which was described as following arrangements in New Zealand and the UK (Newman, 1997; Rowlands, 2003). This was supplemented by the creation of *executive agencies* in the Australian Public Service Act of 1999, which enabled ministers to appoint Directors of special purpose agencies at arms length from their departments. Furthermore, there have also been some agency initiatives in Australian states (Armstrong, 1998).

In Europe, agencies have also been newly created in The Netherlands, Denmark and Italy. In 1993, the Dutch initiated their program of *agentschappen*, which has since lead to the creation of in excess of 30 agencies. These now constitute more than 30% of the Dutch civil service and are expected to increase. The Danes have established contracts for a number of their agencies in the 1990s (Greves, 2000; Beck Jorgensen, 1995) and in Italy, the Ministry of Finance has been observed to have organized the task of tax collection in separate organizational units (Cerase and De Vivo, 2000). Even the European Commission, under pressure to reform, has established a number of semi-autonomous organizations such as the Environmental Agency, and, the Food and Safety Authority to support their policy making activities (Vos, 2003). Moving to Japan, there was a program of Independent Administrative Corporations (IACs) initiated in 1998, which has since lead to 84 IACs, with more anticipated (Yamamoto, 2000; James, 1999).

Even in developing countries there is evidence to suggest that the idea of agency has become a recognizable instrument for reforming their public sectors. This has been promoted by the activities of international organizations like the World Bank and the IMF who have shown official support for decentralizing the provision of public services and have made aid, in some instances, conditional on reforms like agencification (Larbi, 1998). Countries where agencies have been created or reformed with the assistance of financial aid include Ghana (17 state owned enterprises, SOEs) (Larbi, 1998), Thailand (5 agencies created in 1999) (Bowornwathana, 2004), Tanzania (7 created by mid 2000 with more than 30 envisaged), Jamaica (11-13 agencies envisaged in 1996) and Latvia, where 138 agencies have been created (Pollitt and Talbot, 2004).

Furthermore, in countries where an agency tradition of arms length government was already an established part of national administrative arrangements, there has also been some

modernization of these agency arrangements. This has occurred with greater attention for *steering* these agencies, and, has included the introduction in 1994 of results indicators for agencies in Finland (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004), and, changes to *myndighet* reporting arrangements in Sweden (OECD, 1998; Fortin, 1996). American agencies were also given stimulus for reinvigoration with Al Gore's National Performance Review of 1998, which identified a number of performance based agencies (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). And the list could go on.

In contrast to previous periods, when agency-like arrangements undoubtedly existed in various countries, it is the organized nature of this global shift towards agencies that gives it a fashion status. Agencies have become a recognized reform category and label by international organizations such as the OECD (OECD, 2000, 1997a, 1997, 1995; Common, 1998), which have also played a role in documenting and reporting upon its presence in a number of countries. This often includes the presentation of reforms in English, which have originally been initiated in another language, and, where agency has another title. The very recognition of agencies as something good to have, and which various other countries are also doing, brings with it an impetus for reformers to include agencies within their reform package. There has also been the activity of visiting one another's countries to learn about agencies, such as the UK visit to Sweden (Fulton Committee, 1968), or of citing overseas initiatives as inspirations for one's own agency reforms (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991). All of this contributes to the view that countries are indeed busy with the same kind of activities, even though, it may be only a label that is traveling (Sahlin-Andersson, 2001). Irrespective of practice, it can be said that this symbolic recognition of one another's reforms across the globe constitutes a *discourse community* about the agency fashion.

### **2.3 Practice and benefits: agency reform and NPM**

Accompanying the spread of agency reform have been various ideas about its practice and the benefits that will ensue. In both cases, correspondence can be found between agency reform and the menu of arrangements defined as New Public Management (NPM). Hood (1991, 1996) described NPM by doctrinal components, including greater management freedoms in



exchange for their responsibility, emphasis on output control, explicit standards of measures of performance, and, a shift to dis-aggregation of units in the public sector. Pollitt (1993) has added to this list a greater orientation towards user or customer-based services. Similarly, as noted in the introduction to this study, agency reform has been broadly characterized by delegating more management decision-making autonomy to managers, by structural dis-aggregation and performance contracting. The correspondence is important because it has been noted that while NPM doctrines have been adopted in various contexts, different selections of the doctrines have been implemented and to different degrees (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). Such diversity in application can also be expected in the spread of agency reforms to different contexts and has already been observed in at least one study (Pollitt et al., 2004).

Leaving aside likely differences in NPM practice, and thereby in the practice of agencies, it is also noteworthy that these arrangements have been interpreted as emulations of business practices. This is because many of the NPM doctrines reject bureaucracy in one way or another. They are to create a culture of performance, where this has generally been defined as increasing efficiency and reducing costs, while at the same time promoting quality and responsiveness to both politicians and customers. Indeed, various academic commentators have argued that NPM practices have been inspired by somewhat contrary theories in economics and business management (Aucoin, 1990; Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; Pollitt, 2003). On the one hand, new institutional economics has been argued to inspire reform activity that concentrates upon introducing contracts, contestability and focusing upon incentives. This relies upon theories that show politicians to be captured by the bureaucracy and where arrangements such as contracts will ensure that bureaucrats comply to government intentions (Aucoin, 1990:116-117). Its goal is to centralize and control. On the other hand, managerialism has been associated with arguments about the specialization of functions (steering not rowing), and management autonomy, ensuring a more professional and creative approach to management (Aucoin, 1990:118). It has been concerned with decentralization and delegation. Contradictions in these different theories are significant because they provide further scope for contextual difference, in terms of the way contradictions are managed in practice. In addition, they raise

questions about the ability of such reforms to bring about the various benefits ascribed to them, not just because of the tensions between the different theories, but also because their applicability to government activities has been frequently questioned (Pollitt et al., 2001:278).

With regards to the benefits agencies are to bring about, there are numerous returns that have been identified. These include more efficiency, more results, flexibility, greater staff motivation, transparency and accountability, improved quality and customer service, as well as less rules and greater professionalization of the public sector (Pollitt et al., 2001). To this extent, agencies really have been considered an all purpose salve for public management woes. Once again, similarities can be drawn with NPM tracts such as Osborne and Gaebler's *Reinventing Government* which also identified these kinds of goals and values. Irrespective of the tensions in some of the benefits ascribed to agencies and NPM (Pollitt et al., 2001; Pollitt and Talbot, 2002), this has not mitigated the emergence of a common story and vocabulary about agencies within the international context. This has featured terms such as *autonomy*, *efficiency*, *results*, *contracts* and *transparency* (Smullen, 2004). It can be said that not only has there been an international discourse community wherein agencies are identified but also where their purposes and accessories have become broadly agreed upon.

## 2.4 Convergence and trajectories of reform

Associating agency reform with NPM locates it within academic debates about the extent to which convergence in management reforms have actually taken place. This idea of convergence can be found in accounts by the likes of Osborne and Gaebler which have argued that there is a global imperative for government's to introduce similar reforms, such as agencies, in order to survive within the international economy (Pollitt, 2001; Pollitt, 2006). There is an instrumental argument whereby governments have had to adopt the same kind of NPM arrangements because the benefits they bring, such as efficiency, are necessary for international competitiveness. To some extent, this thesis has already been disproved with many comparative researchers already demonstrating persistent diversity in the reforms that have been pursued in different countries (Pollitt and Summa, 1997a, 1997b; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Hood, et al.,

2004). Indeed, different administrative traditions have been shown to have their own trajectory of reforms, with different starting points and thereby different possibilities and preferences for the shape of reform (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Pollitt, Van Thiel and Homburg, 2006). In Europe, the rejection of NPM as an explanation for convergence has also been expressed with observations of a particular Anglo-American bias in accounts of the idea of convergence (Premfors, 1998; Kickert, 1997; Pollitt, Van Thiel and Homburg, 2006). More recently, some international comparative research into agencies has demonstrated important cultural political-administrative influences upon the practice of agency reform, which have preserved not reduced diversity (Pollitt et al., 2004). Evidence of the effects or benefits of these reforms, let alone the convergence in benefits, have, however, remained scanty, limited and sometimes disproved (Pollitt, 2000, 2001; Van Thiel, 2000, Ter Bogt, 1999).

Following from studies by Brunsson (1989), Pollitt (2001) has suggested an alternative conceptualization of convergence that distinguishes between convergence in NPM practice and convergence in NPM talk. This could account for the apparent verbal agreement about the benefits of reforms such as agencies within the international community, while leaving intact observations of distinct national reform trajectories. After all “talk has a life of its own” (Brunsson, 1989; Pollitt, 2001), and many of the buzzwords associated with agency reforms are of themselves ambiguous and applicable to a range of situations (Smullen, 2004). The notion of convergence in talk, but not in practice, also has special resonance for the international arena in which reforms are discussed and exchanged. This is because, as mentioned above, the language of exchange has been English, thereby exacerbating the concealment of distinct local vocabularies and enforcing compliance to an international way of speaking (Sahlin-Andersson, 2001). Convergence in talk, while practices diverge, can also be expressed with relation to meaning, since clearly the similar words being used are to describe different administrative arrangements and activities. Particularly with respect to the activity of following reform activities noted in other countries, Sahlin-Andersson has used the term *translation* to describe the way reform stories travel from country to country or from the international community to a national context (Sahlin-Andersson, 2001). The differences in the way these

terms are applied would point not only in differences in practices of apparently similar reforms but also in their meanings.

Against the background of a growing body of academic knowledge illustrating the diversity in reform trajectories and the spread of such labels as *agencies* or *autonomy*, a distinction between practice and talk is useful in understanding international management phenomena. There has, however, been little research to verify the extent to which convergence in national management reform talk has actually taken place or the significance of particular arguments for the ascendance of certain reforms in different contexts. Like the practice of many NPM reforms, it is possible that national talk has also been selective about the kinds of benefits, themes and arguments adopted to promote these reforms. Furthermore, differences in national cultures, political styles and administrative systems are likely to have implications for arguments, the kinds of meanings ascribed to different themes and arguments, the style of speaking and the actual speakers themselves. This said, some research in administrative argument also suggests that there are a limited number of major doctrines that apply to the field of public administration and that these recur over time (Hood and Jackson, 1991). This is the idea that rhetoric and arguments react against themselves and have their own rules about what can be said (Hood and Jackson, 1991; Hirschman, 1991; Foucault, 1972). The recognition of patterns and regulated structure in talk, together with the rise of an international management fashion, provide a rationale for convergence. In this research, the convergence in talk about agency reform will be analyzed in depth. But first, it is useful to briefly map out the international arguments that have been used in accounts of agency reform and NPM more generally, as well as the way they have most recently become the problems for new international solutions like joined-up government.

## 2.5 The changing international story about agencies<sup>2</sup>

A review of two OECD reports from both the 1990s and more recently in 2002 can provide an illustration of the kinds of arguments that have been integral to the rise of agency reform within the international community, as well as the reactions to

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<sup>2</sup> Ideas in this section have already been published in Smullen (2003).

these arguments that have appeared in more recent years. In 1995 the OECD published a report *Governance in Transition* in which it was recognized that “A number of countries have seen merit in the agency model” (OECD, 1995:32). Autonomy was presented as one of the central features of agency reform and other kinds of solutions, which together provided “a new paradigm for public management.....aimed at fostering a performance-orientated culture in a less centralized public sector” (OECD, 1995:7). Indeed, “(I)ncreasing autonomy and flexibility in resource use” was described as “fundamental to developing a performance-orientated culture” (OECD, 1995:8) and getting “results”. It was something that we could not get enough of in public management and acted as a node bringing about a range of benefits. Relationships between the idea of more autonomy and other desirable effects such as responsibility, responsiveness and flexibility were constructed. The arguments were that more autonomy to managers, through arrangements such as agencies, would encourage them to take more responsibility and give them the flexibility to be responsive to both citizens and politicians. Another claim was that by granting more autonomy, together with performance targets, it would also be possible to make politicians and managers more accountable. This was the idea that agency arrangements could promote transparency and clarify expectations because of the existence of a performance contract.

The report was unequivocal about these various effects of arrangements such as agencies and it was stated that:

(D)evolution... has been largely successful. It allows departments to adopt practices best suited to their individual business and needs. It has served to increase the responsibility and accountability of managers, and has contributed toward a sharper focus on results and a better use of resources” (OECD, 1995:9).

Notably, however, the solution of more autonomy was also part of a story about departing from *outdated institutions*. It was argued, that “more of the same was inappropriate” and that

(I)f the public sector is to remain responsive to the needs of those it serves, governments must foster the development of organisations that perpetually adapt and reshape themselves to meet changing client needs, and that develop new ways to cope with the changing world (OECD, 1995:6).

Given this description of the public management predicament, the idea of semi- autonomous agencies was a useful solution

that could be made to fit with the articulated need for an adaptable and responsive public sector. It was a problem that relied upon terms like “highly centralized, rule bound and inflexible organizations” and called for solutions such as agencies which were described as flexible, autonomous and responsive.

By 2002 the international story had changed significantly. Following from an international gathering of experts from OECD member countries, a preliminary report had been published describing and classifying autonomous bodies against the background of the “accelerated trend” of “giving autonomy” to public organizations in the 1980s and 90s (OECD, 2001:6). It noted that this trend had led to a “realisation within many governments that managing from a distance had created specific accountability and control issues” and that “improving the governance of these newly autonomous bodies” was a priority (OECD, 2001:6; OECD, 2002:10). In the final report of the working group entitled *Distributed Public Governance: Agencies, authorities and other government bodies* it was also stated that “priorities have moved away from the need to create new separate bodies to the challenge of finding the right balance between accountability and autonomy, openness, performance management, as well strengthening the steering capacity of central ministries...” “whole of government” issues such as how to ensure policy coherence or a coherent public service, or how to maintain the clarity of the administrative organisational system have also arisen as crucial issues” (OECD, 2002:22). Autonomy, and with it features of agency reform, was no longer a central public management solution, but now part of some of the problems to be addressed and considered.

Instead of praising the capacity to foster new types of organizations, as in the earlier OECD report, this report was of a different hue, and focused upon identifying and defining clear classifications of existing independent or autonomous organizational types. “Understanding the scope of distributed public governance” was now on the public management agenda (OECD, 2002:10). In contrast, to earlier claims that semi-autonomous agency arrangements would promote accountability, there was now concern that new roles had not been clearly defined, making accountability arrangements unclear and the capacity for control limited (OECD, 2002:25-26). There was a need for reassertion of political control from both ministers and parliament. In addition, the challenges of *governance* also re-

quired maintaining coherence and ensuring that service delivery was being performed in concert with the broader goals of government policy. Again, while less explicitly stated, the risks of creating arms length organizations for ensuring coherence of government policy and coordination throughout the administration were the new kinds of effects being associated with agency reform. There had been a shift in their status as an all purpose solution to becoming a common international problem for institutional clarity, capacity and coordination. Irrespective of what had been happening in practice, such a shift in the international story had only been made possible by earlier agreement that agencies did have autonomy and were numerous.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have documented the growth of agencies in a number of countries. I have also discussed the associations of agency reform with NPM and its menu of items which allows for much variety in reform selection and arrangement. This has provided a wealth of material for comparative research in reform initiatives which have been pursued against the background of debates about convergence. While many, though not all, comparative researchers have tended to favor accounts of NPM reforms that demonstrate their practice as dependent upon particular administrative traditions that are divergent, there is as yet little knowledge about the talk of agency reform. Indeed, it has been proposed that a common (international) vocabulary about reforms such as agencies, which itself has been changing, has concealed some of the important national differences in practice. An appearance of convergence has also possibly been exacerbated by the international character of the public management community and the tendency to exchange information about national reforms (which have been initiated in different native languages) in English. The degree of convergence in national agency talk has however, not as yet, been investigated. This has provided the impetus to conduct an in-depth analysis of national agency talk and its production in contexts where there are different native languages and cultural political-administrative arrangements. In the coming chapters I will present my analyses of national official agency accounts in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia, but first it is necessary to describe the theoretical framework that has supported this

investigation (the following chapter 3) and my research design (chapter 4).



### 3 Theoretical concepts and tools: rhetoric and culture

The limits of my language are the limits of my world (Wittgenstein in Montgometry et al., 2000:145).

The same language is often natural when used by one speaker, foolish in the mouth of another, and arrogant in that of the third (Quintillian).

Each society has its own regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish between true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth, the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault in Rabinow, 1984:73)

#### 3.1 Introduction

The spread of agencies to a range of national contexts has constituted an international public management fashion in which there would appear to be a great deal of international agreement regarding their benefits (Pollitt et al., 2001; Pollitt and Talbot, 2004; Smullen 2004). There has been convergence on the view that agencies are a good thing, and an array of terminology and arguments has featured in the international *common knowledge* about this solution. Far from some fixed entity, agencies, if we are to believe these accounts, are a solvent to a realm of woes and situations. The variety in talk, and thereby also the meanings, that agencies have been able to sustain in official national agency accounts will be researched in this study. In this chapter, the theoretical concepts and analytical tools for analyzing national agency initiatives in different contexts will be presented. Given the intention to investigate similarities and differences in agency talk, this research requires heuristic tools capable of examining the equivocal character of language. While more traditional approaches to social science assume that meaning is held constant, social constructivist approaches, and, more specifically discourse theories, prioritize the possibilities for meaning. The picture theory of meaning, where words are said to correlate with a possible state in the world, is discarded for one where words contribute to the construction of facts, or rather in this case, agencies, in the world (Wittgenstein, 1961, 1972).

In section 3.2, I will briefly describe the social constructivist perspective adopted in this research and some of the philosophical ideas that have informed it. From this perspective, the meanings of terms (such as agencies) can be derived by focusing upon their use in language. Furthermore, the philosophical contributions of Austen and Foucault will be discussed in order to identify some of the features of language that are important when analyzing the construction of meaning and language in use. In section 3.3 the field of rhetorical inquiry will be described as a discourse theory that provides clear categories and techniques for analyzing language in use and the way that ideas such as agencies are made to appear credible. More specifically, the New Rhetoric of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca will be described in section 3.4. In section 3.5, the discussion will shift from rhetoric to cultural context, or rather, the *scenes of use* in which rhetoric has been produced. Grid Group Cultural Theory (GGCT) will be identified as an appropriate theoretical framework for characterizing both context and talk. Finally, in section 3.6 Christopher Hood's application of GGCT to public management will be described as his analysis will be used in this study to evaluate the cultural character of national agency accounts.

### **3.2 Meaning, social construction and discourse**

An investigation into the way that talk varies thrusts one quickly into the realm of philosophy since meaning has generally been assumed to be irrelevant to positivistic social science research. Indeed, in order to conduct a social science that emulates the *scientific* it has been argued that meaning must be held constant (Popper, 1992). Alternatively, developments in philosophy during the last century have offered a number of perspectives that would suggest that language and meaning are important areas of research for the social scientist. They propose that meaning can be studied empirically by focusing upon the use of words and language in the contexts in which they are produced. Such figures as (the later) Wittgenstein (1972), Austen (1962) and Foucault (1972, 1977, 1994) have stimulated a research agenda that focuses upon how the representation of things in the world affect the understanding of those things (Potter, 1996). Broadly speaking this approach to research has been labeled social constructivism, though it should be noted that not all social con-

structivist research is focused upon the analysis of language (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Burr, 1995; Potter, 1996; Smith, 2001). Some characteristics of the social constructivist approach include: the insistence that we take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted ways of understanding; that the categories we use are culturally and historically specific (and not universal); that knowledge is sustained through processes and interaction; and that constructions of the world inform action (Burr, 1995). The analysis of language and the application of discourse theories are most prominent in the research activities of social constructivists. Given their influential role in informing how the use of language acts to create meaning and construct objects in the world, some of the most relevant insights of Wittgenstein, Austen and Foucault will be quickly presented in the following paragraphs.

In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein began a deconstruction of his earlier work and the picture theory of meaning more generally.<sup>3</sup> He argued that there was no subliminal relationship between a word and a thing and that uncovering the meaning of a term required no more than the analysis of its use. He writes, "Let the use of words teach you their meaning" (Wittgenstein, 1972:220). This view of language conceived of meaning occurring within particular contexts and practices or what Wittgenstein called language games. "The term language game is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or a form of life" (Wittgenstein, 1972:11). Wittgenstein noted that to play a role in a language game participants were required to follow and know certain rules, or have certain assumptions, even if they were not conscious of them. By illustrating a variety of language games and *words in use*, Wittgenstein observed that the meanings of the same terms varied but were also related. He wrote of the various uses of the term *game* or *number* and referred to their similarities as *family resemblances*. Such recognition of kinship might also be applied to the uses of the term *agency*, *results* or *autonomy* in public management (Smullen, 2004). For Wittgenstein the various uses of the same concepts were extended like "a spinning thread' where we "twist fiber on fiber". He wrote, "And

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<sup>3</sup> This was described in the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* and rests on the view that structure of reality determines the structure of language or rather that language should simply mirror reality (as opposed to constructing it).

the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fiber runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibers” (Wittgenstein, 1972:32). From this perspective there is no essence to particular words, only kinship between their various uses. Aside from his emphasis upon meaning as use, another contribution of Wittgenstein to social constructivism was his focus upon context.<sup>4</sup> It was his view that in “order to present the sense of words we must present the scenes of their use; and these scenes are themselves presented in words” (Staten, 1984:26).

In the philosophical project of John Austin we find the argument that language is used to do things and is not merely a description of reality. In a series of lectures *How to do things with words* Austin describes a range of statements that perform actions. Among these performative utterances Austin pointed to the statements “I promise” or “I name the ship Stalin” and noted that saying these things also constituted the act of doing them. He also argued that while the appropriateness of these kinds of statements may be challenged they are not true or false because they are actually deeds or practice. He writes:

None of the utterances cited is either true or false. I assert this is obvious and do not argue it. It needs argument no more than that “damn” is not true or false.....When I say, before the register or alter etc., ‘I do’, I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it (Austin, 1975:6).

For social constructivists, Austin is often credited with moving concern away from the truth value of statements and focusing instead upon the practical nature of language and its effects. He also identifies towards the end of his lectures the importance of the *total speech act* and the relation between the speech performance and the settings where they take place.

The work of Michel Foucault has also had a significant influence upon social constructivist research, and has extended the above listed characteristics of social constructivism to include an analysis of power. Foucault’s work is extensive and varied and he refused to be situated on the philosophical spectrum, so I can hardly claim to represent his work completely or

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<sup>4</sup> “Ask yourself: On what occasion, for what purpose, do we say this? What kind of action accompany these words (Think of a greeting.) In what scenes will they be used and what for? (Wittgenstein, 1972:137).

without controversy here.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it is useful to focus upon those aspects of his work concerned with the production of *objects* and the relationship between power and knowledge. Like Austin, Foucault was also interested in speech acts, although his focus was upon those serious speech acts where authorities or professionals made a claim to truth. Some examples of the serious speech acts that Foucault has analyzed include psychiatry's constitution of madness or criminality. The way that reforms are described in official accounts by politicians, civil servants or academics can be interpreted as serious speech acts. For Foucault, these speech acts, or rather in his vocabulary, *effective statements*, and the relations between them, act to constitute the objects of knowledge available for classification and limitation. They are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972:49). From this perspective:

(M)ental illness was constituted by all that was said in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its developments, indicated its various correlations, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating, in its name, discourses that were to be taken as its own (Foucault, 1972:32).

It was, in other words, to be understood by the way it had been represented in the *discursive formation*, which comprised of the range of *effective statements* that had been made about it. This is because the discursive formation comprised what had been said about madness and limited the horizon, or rather limits, of what truths could be known about it.

Like Wittgenstein, Foucault<sup>6</sup> was also interested in the way rules operated to police the uttering of statements, and thus the constitution of objects. In his *Archaeology of Knowledge* he wished to identify a method that could illustrate the conditions that made the appearance of statements possible, or more specifically, "how is it that one statement rather than another comes to be uttered" (Foucault, 1972:27). In order to do this, Foucault proposed that the *archaeologist* map the surface of what has been

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<sup>5</sup> Foucault's intention to avoid being positioned or labelled is illustrated by the following lines at the conclusion of his *Archaeology of Knowledge*: "Don't ask me who I am.....?"

<sup>6</sup> There is a difference between the conceptualization of rules in Foucault's early work eg *Archaeology* and Wittgenstein's concern with rules, since Wittgenstein did not believe that these rules could be made explicit while this is a widely criticized claim in Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*.

said, establish the correlation between statements and show how these exclude other forms of statements about certain objects (Foucault, 1972:27). In public management, it can be argued that the object *bureaucracy* has been constituted exclusively by statements of disdain in recent years (see Du Gay, 2000), making the credibility of any positive appraisals rather difficult.

Among the rules that make the constitution of certain objects possible, Foucault also pointed attention to “who is qualified to speak?” (Foucault, 1972:50-51), “from which institutions they can speak?” and “how they should speak?” (Foucault, 1972: 56-57). By describing these different aspects of discourse the archaeologist is able to show which *subjects* are privileged in generating knowledge and truths, who is excluded from naming *objects* and the limitations upon the forms that speech can take in order to be credible in certain fields or contexts. Foucault showed for example how the medical gaze was privileged in defining madness while the voice of the madman was considered “null and void, without truth or significance” (Foucault, 1965:217). By making explicit these various elements of the truths that are produced in discourse, and the regularities that characterize these truths, Foucault argued that archaeological description enables us to specify explicitly certain domains of knowledge, and thereby disturb and question these. In his later work, known as his *genealogy*, he went on to link the production of truths with power, and to understand truths as an effect of power struggles, since he argued power and knowledge are brought together in discourses.

Following from the preceding discussion, it goes almost without saying that language is one of the primary ways that we construct the world, and thereby produce knowledge about it. With respect to the various statements and uses of terminology associated with agency reform, these philosophical contributions also provide perspectives and concepts for understanding and analyzing distinctions in national agency initiatives. Statements about agencies can be observed as action creating an object and the *family resemblances* of specific agency arrangements can be categorized and distinguished according to the uses these arrangements have had in national agency talk. Furthermore, one is alerted to the kinds of *rules* that characterize different constructions of agency reform since according to both Wittgenstein and Foucault these will be reflected and reinforced in statements about agencies. More specifically, the rules about

agency construction can be derived from the kinds of limits or blind spots in what is said about agencies in different contexts, as well as with the respect to the ways of speaking, and, kinds of speakers that are privileged in the statements made about agencies. The focus upon such rules and how to make them visible has been the primary area of study and research for the field of discourse theories and analysis.

Although the term discourse has already been smuggled into this discussion in the presentation of some of Foucault's ideas above, it is fair to say that it has had a rather variable and contested existence in the social sciences (see for example MacDonnell, 1986; Van Dijk, 1985; Laclau and Mouffe, 1987; Mills, 1997; Torfing, 1999; Howarth, 2000; Faiclough, 2001). This is reflected in studies from formal linguistics which define discourses as structures above the level of the sentence that are implicitly recognized by hearers and speakers in particular contexts (Mill, 1997:134), to the view that *everything is text* or rather that discourse is everything that has meaning (Laclau and Mouffe, 1994). In this study, the application of the term discourse will be somewhat limited by the data that will be used to analyze statements about agencies, since only statements in texts will be observed as discourses (see chapter 4). In addition, discourse is used in this study to apply to a particular view of language as action and rule governed. Finally, discourse is also used in a more general way in this study to point to a particular theme or genre, so that one may point to the discourse of madness, or rather in this study, of agency reform. Consistent with these views of discourse and the constructivist view of language more generally, the tradition of rhetoric provides clearly defined concepts and techniques for applying the philosophical ideas of language in use and uncovering the *rules* being applied to make statements credible (see Summa, 1991:200). These concepts which are described below, *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*, can be considered the *rules of speaking* that have been used to make agency reform appear credible across and within different contexts. Indeed, where similar kinds of rhetorical features or rules are found to exist across countries that participate within the same discourse community, these can be considered exemplary of what has become credible to say about the object of agency as a fashion. Furthermore, given its concern for how language can be used to incite action through persuasion, rhetoric is particularly relevant to the production of statements about public

management reform, since so much of what is said in this realm is concerned to argue what should be done (See Summa, 1992: 135-136). In the following section I will describe more fully the tradition of rhetoric and its concepts which are to be used in this study to identify both *national styles of speaking* and *rules* of telling different kinds of reform stories. The theory the New Rhetoric, described further below, has been selected because, unlike many discourse theories (see Howarth, 2000), it provides a range of pre-defined categories that can be applied directly to data.

### 3.3 The study of rhetoric

Rhetoric has been defined as the art of using language effectively. In Ancient Greece it developed into an area of study concerned with identifying how one could successfully persuade. Among the most famous tracts emerging from this discipline is Aristotle's *Art of Persuasion*. This work was written as a manual for how to be persuasive and laid out a number of foundations for conceptualizing and analyzing rhetoric which continue to be relevant to rhetoric today. At the most rudimentary level the focus on rhetoric has required an assessment of the respective roles of the audience, the speaker and the argumentative message being relayed. Three interconnected Aristotelian concepts depicting this relationship between the speaker and audience - *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* - have survived, not only as important notions for the orator wishing to be effectively persuasive, but also for the rhetorician seeking to evaluate argumentation (Summa, 1990). The first two of these dimensions - *ethos* and *pathos* - have to do with the character of the relationship between the author and the audience. Although they do not refer to the basic content of the argumentation, they are "connected to the forms that arguments take as they actually occur in (particular) human contexts" (Edmondson, 1984:15). *Logos*, by contrast, refers to the "abstract intellectual structure of the argument itself" (Edmondson, 1984:15). It is useful to describe these three dimensions of rhetoric in more depth since all three aspects will be present in any form of verbal communication which aims at convincing or persuading action.



*Ethos* refers to the character of the speaker or addresser and the way that she projects herself upon the audience. Central to this dimension of persuasion is how the speaker shows herself to be trustworthy, knowledgeable and speaking for the interests of the audience. Aristotle explains the relationship between ethos and effective persuasion in the following way:

this appearance of the speaker to be of a certain kind and his making the audience suppose that he is disposed in a certain way towards them, (and thus)...the condition that they are themselves disposed in a certain way to him (Aristotle, 1991:140).

The ethos of a text will be revealed in the kinds of aims, morality and voice of authority, which the speaker will amplify in addressing the audience, and this in turn is informed by what the speaker believes to be persuasive for an audience.

*Pathos* is the dimension of persuasion concerned with the way the speaker moves the audience. Hood (2000) has referred to it as the *mood music* that is adopted to encourage a state of mind receptive to the arguments being projected and Edmondson (1984) calls it *sensitization*. Both Plato and Aristotle drew attention to *pathos* out of the recognition that anyone who wishes to communicate effectively must do more than argue logically. They must also understand the emotions (Edmondson, 1984:18; Aristotle, 1991:139). Pathos refers to the way the speaker goes about preparing or sensitizing the audience for the logical content of an argument in order to make it appear favorable.

Finally the dimension of *logos* points to a focus upon the logic of the argument and the actual subject matter that is being discussed. It is the argument itself and a focus upon the steps that have been made to demonstrate the validity of the argument. It has been suggested that “it is not enough that the audience be moved at hearing the rhetorician’s speech...their decisive judgements must be sufficiently stable to guide actions” (Oskenberg Rorty, 1996:20-21). Alternatively, even if the “argumentation is developed through reason or *logos* and appeals to the reason of the audience, in convincing the audience the other aspects of communication are also inevitable” (Summa, 1990:186). Both observations point to the importance of the interconnections between ethos, pathos, logos, when attempting to argue successfully.

Broadly speaking studies of rhetoric - given their concern with identifying the means to persuade - can and have been identified by some commentators as theories (Van Eemeren et al., 1987; Perelman, 1969). They are theories in the sense that they offer a range of concepts - such as ethos, pathos and logos - and other tools (discussed below) that maybe applied to empirical data in order to interpret that information from a rhetorical perspective. However, like constructivist theories more generally, it is not a theoretical approach that seeks to make broad generalizations, but instead can be seen as a flexible toolkit for applying to the case at hand. In Aristotle's scheme of science, rhetoric was referred to as *techne* because it was concerned to prescribe for various types of productive activities and required the skill or art of knowing which rule or technique to apply in order to be effective in satisfying a particular argument. The rhetorical tool kit has not been designed to offer universal knowledge but rather it is to be applied with reference to the particular circumstances of a case. These circumstances include, for example, the occasion, audience beliefs and values and the unique array of available facts (Jost and Hyde, 1997:11). From a rhetorical point of view the question is not "What is abstractly true or right?" but "what is true or right or good in this unique case?" (Jost and Hyde, 1997:11).

A second feature that Aristotle attributed to rhetoric was that it is not characterized by proofs of certainty like demonstrative logic but instead is applied to situations in which scientific truths are more difficult to reveal and subject to practical deliberation (Aristotle, 1991:264). Rhetoric is primarily concerned with the kinds of arguments that lead to generally accepted opinion, as opposed to arguments that are designed to achieve absolute certainty (Van Eemeren, 1987:58-59; Foss et al., 1985:2). In this respect argumentation moves in the world of probabilities where both the basis and rules of reasoning can be questioned at any time (Summa, 1993:221).

### 3.4 The New Rhetoric

Aristotle's manual of persuasion was revived by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, who have adapted it to develop a description of reasoning based upon value judgements, as opposed to formal logic (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003). In their book *The New Rhetoric*, they identify a framework for analyzing ar-

gumentation, which they claim is relevant to a range of subject matter and is applicable to both written, as well as oral forms of argumentation. Unlike a number of other theories of rhetoric, their framework is concerned with argumentation in colloquial language and does not impose norms from outside to indicate what ought to happen in argumentation (Van Eemeren et al., 1987). Instead their criterion for persuasive argumentation, is the effect upon the audience for whom it is intended, or rather, the judgement of the community of minds to which the argument is directed (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2000:14). To this extent, their framework is applicable to the empirical analysis of argumentation that has already been used in public management to introduce reforms such as agencies. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca identify three main categories for analyzing and describing argumentation, including the construction of the audience, the starting points of argumentation and the argumentative schemes or techniques. These categories can be likened to ethos, pathos and logos.

In the following sections, each of the New Rhetoric's three main categories is described with their respective concepts and argumentative types. It needs to be noted, however, that the sheer quantity of argumentative tools identified in the New Rhetoric, defies application in just one study.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, I limited my presentation to some of the more common techniques identified in rhetorical analyses, as well as those tools thought to be most useful to the analysis of agency reform.

### 3.4.1 *The construction of the audience*

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca define the audience “as the ensemble of those whom the speaker wishes to influence by his argumentation” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:19; Foss et al., 1985:124). It is a construction of the speaker's mind regarding the persons or people she wishes to persuade and the associated opinions that the speaker deems to be acceptable to this audience. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, the speaker will try to play on the opinions of the audience and give the argumentation a character that accords with these opinions. In order to be persuasive, however, Perelman and Ol-

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<sup>7</sup> Excluding the construction of the audience and premises of argumentation, there are some 45 types of associative argumentative techniques (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2000:viii-x)!

brechts-Tyteca argue that there does have to be some correlation between the speaker's construct of the audience and reality (Van Eemeren et al., 1984:216). They write:

Every social circle or milieu is distinguishable in terms of its dominant opinions and unquestioned beliefs, of the premises that it takes for granted without hesitation: these views form an integral part of its culture, and an orator wishing to persuade a particular audience must of necessity adapt himself to it (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:20-21).

It follows that by analyzing argumentation that has been used to effect change or in this case management reforms, one can identify a number of characteristics of the audience which were mobilized in the argumentation to bring about the change. Furthermore, differences in the community of minds in different contexts will be reflected in the selection of different kinds of themes or frames to construct the audience.

This is not to deny that any one audience can be quite heterogeneous and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca recognize that the construction of the audience being wooed may change throughout the speaker's argumentation. More specifically, they make an important distinction between the universal audience and the particular audience. The concept of the universal audience is used in the New Rhetoric as a guarantee of the rationality of argumentation, since the measure of rationality is the adherence of the audience. The universal audience has been defined as being "composed of all reasonable and competent people" in a particular context (Foss et al., 1984:124) and can be interpreted as the speaker's conception of what is valid and reasonable for all normal adult persons of the cultural setting to believe. It refers to argumentation that appeals to common sense or popular sentiment regarding what is generally deemed true and good. Perelman and Olbrechts –Tyteca explain:

Everyone constitutes the universal audience from what he knows of his fellow men, in such a way as to transcend the few oppositions he is aware of.... each culture, has thus its own conception of the universal audience (Perelman and Olbrechts – Tyteca, 1969:33).

The notion of the universal audience that a speaker adopts, whether conscious or unconscious, provides the basis upon which he or she makes selections about argumentation and its delivery. The construction of a universal audience by a speaker also acts to bring agreement from different particular audiences since it provides a norm of what is "good and right" that the

speaker can then use to transcend particular differences among composite audiences. It is noted:

Each speaker's universal audience can, indeed, from an external viewpoint, be regarded as a particular audience, but it none the less remains true that, for each speaker at each moment, there exists an audience transcending all others, which cannot easily be forced within the bounds of a particular audience (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:30).

By contrast, the particular audience may be any real or hypothetical audience limited by some particular feature such as a profession or taxpayers. It has been defined as "any limited group of addressees, either a concrete, temporally or spatially defined group of listeners, or an abstract target audience specified according to some principle" (Summa, 1993:225). It is not necessarily those physically present to a speech, but rather is the target audience of argumentation. For example, a politician speaking in parliament may define his target audience as the potential electorate and not the group of listeners physically present (Summa, 1993:225). In recognizing the voter mobility of some groups the politician may then focus upon the particular group of women and base the conditions for argumentation on what is appealing to this group.

The distinction that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca make regarding the universal and the particular audience is analytical and there is an important connection between the two concepts since "(T)he task is not, as often assumed, to address either a particular audience or a universal audience, but in the process of persuasion to adjust to and then to transform the particularities of an audience into universal dimensions" (See Perelman, 1984:192). A good orator will aim to illustrate how the concerns of the particular also equate with general notions of the common good. This is part of convincing one's audience that what has been stated surpasses the mere probable and persuades them to believe that it is certain. To confuse matters somewhat, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca also recognize the possibility that a speaker may construct particular elite audiences to embody the universal audience thereby neglecting other particular audiences (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:34-35). This occurs because "often the elite audience is regarded as a model to which men should conform...in other words the elite audience sets the norm for everybody.... and is regarded as the vanguard." (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:34). In chapter 4 I explain how I have identified and distinguished between

the particular and universal audiences being constructed in the official agency accounts.

### 3.4.2 *Premises of argumentation*

Aside from the construction of the audience, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca identify the premises of argumentation as fundamental. They connect the activity of identifying the starting points of arguments with establishing points of agreement with one's audience. Perelman writes: "(I)o adapt to an audience is, above all, to choose as premises of argumentation theses the audience already holds" (Perelman, 1982:23). In *The New Rhetoric* distinctions are made between different types of premises and therefore also the different types of agreements that a speaker may make with the audience. These distinctions are also to connect with the kinds of audiences that a speaker constructs in her argumentation. The two basic distinctions include premises of argumentation that begin from the real and premises of argumentation that begin from the preferable, they are meant to confer respectively to the universal and particular audiences (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:63-110). In this study, however, I have conceived of the universal audience as a rationale that tries to make particular themes or claims such as about financial management acceptable to broader audiences. This does not necessarily always concur with distinctions between the real and preferable. Premises of argumentation starting from the real, include argumentation that proceeds from agreements about facts, truths and presumptions, while argumentation starting from the preferable proceed from agreements regarding values, hierarchies and loci. Each of these concepts will be described in the following paragraphs with examples that are presented in table 3.1 at the end of this section. It needs to be noted however that the premises of argumentation are difficult to briefly exemplify because they can be implicit to an argument and its final conclusions, and are not necessarily represented in one direct statement.

Among the premises of argumentation adopted to obtain agreement about the real; facts and truths point to structures of the real that the audience is expected to accept. Indeed, when facts or truths are found to underlie an argument that has been judged sound by its audience, one can expect that there will be little "need to increase the intensity of the adherence or to generalize" since they will "require no justification" (Perelman and

Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:67). In this respect a fact is a fact, or a truth is a truth due to the agreement of the universal audience and not because of any actual correspondence to the structures of reality (Foss et al., 1985:127). For Perelman and Olbrechts – Tyteca, the term facts is used to “designate objects of precise, limited agreement whereas the term truths are preferably applied to more complex systems relating to connections between facts” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:68-69, *my emphasis*). An example of a fact in public management argumentation, can be illustrated from an OECD text stating that autonomous bodies have increased in the last twenty years (OECD, 2003). This statement rests upon the fact that some public management bodies have more autonomy than in the past. Alternatively, a truth might be associated with the claim that traditional bureaucracies are less efficient than competitive markets - since, in the process of argumentation, it may become apparent that this truth has proceeded a number of systematic statements or ideas about individual incentives. Truths are meant to reflect a theoretical structure.

The third object of agreement about the real, presumptions, refers to “statements expressing something that is supposed to be real or actual” (Van Eemeren et al., 1984; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:70). Presumptions are distinguished from facts and truths because they are said to refer to something that the audience can expect to be reinforced or proven, not something that is already agreed upon, as in the case of facts and truths. Among some common presumptions Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca point to the presumption that the quality of the act reveals the quality of the person responsible for it, or the presumption that human action will be sensible (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:71). A presumption prominent in discussions of agency reform is that central ministries (will) actively steer agencies and other organizations implementing policies. The premises of argumentation that adopt presumptions usually put forward some conception of a *normal* foundation for reasoning and even a reference group that relates to this foundation of normality (See Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:72-73). It has been noted that one of the advantages of using presumptions in argumentation is that “it imposes the burden of proof upon the person who wants to oppose” the reasonableness of “its application” (Perelman, 1982:24-25; Foss et al., 1985:128).

A second group of objects that the speaker may use to obtain agreement from the audience at the outset of argumentation relates to what is preferable. Among these objects Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca include premises of argumentation that rest upon values. Values may be used within argumentation to serve as guidelines for making choices and forming opinions about different kinds of actions or issues (Van Eemeren et al., 1987:223). They are a reference to what should be prioritized in any decision or action. By knowing and adopting the kind of values that a particular audience is likely to adhere to in the premises of an argument, the speaker is able to use these in order to obtain the agreement from the audience. In argumentation regarding the introduction of new rules or bureaucratic procedures to a public familiar with corrupt systems of government, the value of equality of treatment has been found to be an important premise (DuGay, 1994).

Along with values, hierarchies of values are also identified as establishing certain preferences within the premises of argumentation. Indeed, such hierarchies are deemed more important because of the way they distinguish audiences from each other. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca note, "(V)alues may be admitted by many different audiences, but the degree of their acceptance will vary from one audience to another" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:81). Although hierarchies of values often remain implicit within argumentation, they can be very useful for the speaker who may try to make the value most useful to the argument predominate and act as a governing principle for the conclusion of the argument. Value hierarchies in argumentation can sometimes be extremely complicated, with quite heterogeneous and interconnected values being embraced within the hierarchical order. An example may be the subordination of the means or cause value to the end value (See Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:81). In public management, where trade offs between priorities are a recurring feature (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004:155-169), one can conceive of a number of possible hierarchies of value in argumentation. For example, the subordination of cost containment to the rule of law, or of quality to the value of efficiency. In argumentation about New Public Management, it has been noted that the desirability of giving managers more freedom, has generally been subordinate to the priority of maintaining political control (Aucoin, 1990). Given the often implicit and complicated nature of these



hierarchies of values it is not always evident that the audience will be conscious of the hierarchical structure in the argument.

Finally, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca also point to the loci that may be adopted by speakers when formulating premises of argumentation that favour the preferable. Loci have been described as the *common places* that can be adopted indiscriminately in any kind of argumentation (See Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:83; Skinner, 1996:113-114). It is the broadest type of argumentation that can be adapted to many kinds of argumentative situations. There are two quite similar senses in which the term loci has been used by rhetoricians. “Sometimes they use the term to refer to general forms of reasoning that we can hope to master in the abstract and apply to individual cases” (Skinner, 1996:113). At other times, the term has been used to refer to “general maxims or stock themes which we can hope to apply in addition to the considerations specific to the case” (Skinner, 1996:113). In this latter sense one may expect loci to vary in different cultural settings and points in time. Indeed, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca note that it is possible to characterize societies “not only by the particular values they prize but by the intensity with which they adhere to one or the

**Table 3.1.** Premises of argumentation

<b>Starting from the REAL</b>	<b>Starting from the PREFERABLE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FACTS</b> <i>Autonomous bodies have increased in recent years.</i></li> <li>• <b>TRUTHS</b> <i>On the basis of (system of) theories about incentives, traditional bureaucracies are less efficient than competitive markets.</i></li> <li>• <b>PRESUMPTIONS</b> <i>Agency reform will promote a range benefits since (it is assumed) they will be steered.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>VALUES</b> <i>Justifications for new rules premised on the priority of equality of treatment.</i></li> <li>• <b>HIERARCHY</b> <i>Cost containment subordinate to rule of law.</i></li> <li>• <b>LOCI</b> <i>Quantity since more is better OR the unique since it is always special.</i></li> </ul>

other of a pair of antithetical loci” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:85). Among the loci<sup>8</sup> available to a speaker there is

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<sup>8</sup> Since Ancient Greece through to the Renaissance and until today there have been numerous loci identified and classified for different kinds of ar-

a preference for the general as opposed to the special or a preference for quantity as opposed to quality. In the New Rhetoric the loci are identified as ordering the hierarchy of values underlying an argument. A focus upon the uniqueness of a situation or emphasis upon *more (of a good thing) is better than less* are also common loci in public management argumentation.

### 3.4.3 *Techniques of argumentation in the New Rhetoric*

Besides the premises of argumentation, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca also identify a number of techniques that may be developed through the actual process of argumentation. Van Eemeren et al. (1984:227) have described these techniques as a typology of argumentation that may be chosen, given the preferences that the speaker attributes to the different kinds of audience. In the New Rhetoric a distinction is made between argumentation characterized by processes of association and those characterized by dissociation. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca define processes of association as argumentative “schemes which bring separate elements together and allow us to establish a unity among them” thereby “organizing them or evaluating them by means of one another” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:190). They identify three ways in which processes of association take place including, quasi-logic relations, relations based upon the structure of reality and relations establishing the structure of reality. Alternatively, they claim dissociation refers to techniques of “separating elements which are regarded as forming a whole or at least a unified group within some system of thought” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:190). In the New Rhetoric it is noted that logically all association implies disassociation, but that in argumentation the speaker is required to choose which elements to make present in order to be persuasive in an argument (See Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:190-191). Similarly, in the analysis of arguments, one needs to note in what way association and dissociation takes place. An overview of some of these argumentative techniques, are presented in table 3.2 at the end of this section.

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gumentation. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca focus only on the most general and widely used types of loci. See Aristotle, 1991; Cicero, 1949

Among associative argumentation, quasi-logical arguments are those arguments that follow the character of formal logic, despite not meeting the criteria for formal proofs. Indeed, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca argue that these kinds of arguments achieve their persuasive force because of their very similarity to logic and they list 15 ways in which arguments can take on a quasi-logical form (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:viii-ix). A common type of quasi-logical argument is similar in form to syllogisms that set up procedures for compatibility and incompatibility, such as the famous: *All men are mortal, Socrates is a man. Therefore Socrates is mortal.* In public management, this might take the form of; *Agencies are efficient, that is an agency. Therefore it is efficient.* Quasi-logical arguments may be distinguished in two ways. They may attempt to show that persons, objects or situations of the same sort should be treated in the same way, for example we should see men and Socrates as mortal; or they may attempt to show a mathematical relationship between different persons, objects or situations.

An example of such a mathematical relationship is, *The club is bound by certain stipulations and therefore the members are also bound by those stipulations* (Van Eemeren et al., 1987:233). Referred to in the New Rhetoric as the argument division of a whole into its parts, in these kinds of statements a relationship is established between a whole, and its parts. It can be used in different ways for example to argue that a part should be treated in the same way as the whole, such as justifying that a member should be treated in the same way as a club. Furthermore it can also be used to show the audience that only one alternative is possible. This requires demonstrating to the audience that there are limited parts to a whole and that certain choices or outcomes are unavoidable. For example that the financial autonomy granted to agency managers is a limited part of a total amount of existing financial autonomy that can be divided. The division of a whole into its parts can also be expressed by referring to a part as a whole, such as referring to a car as the wheels. Other kinds of mathematical relationships can be achieved through identity and definitions in argumentation, as well as by comparisons that enable speakers to expose contradictions. It is perhaps not surprising to note that loci of quantity such as statistics and other calculations are prevalent in the kinds of evidence adopted in the pursuit of quasi-logical argumentation.

In contrast to quasi-logical approaches to argumentation, which rely upon their rational appearance for validity, other kinds of arguments make associations between elements by relying upon accepted opinions about reality. Arguments that are based upon the structure of reality may attempt to show a sequential or co-existent relationship between different objects or actions. Such a sequential relationship is claimed when two consecutive events or facts are presented together as means and ends or as cause and effect. They are able to make verdicts about the positive or negative consequences of a thing or an action. Among these kinds of arguments Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to associations between objects by virtue of a causal link, such as increasing competition will improve efficiency. Other kinds of arguments that rely upon a sequential relationship are those that emphasize the direction one is taking, and include arguments such as unlimited development which insist upon the possibility of always going further and increasing value. Similarly, the argument of direction splits up the achievement of a desirable goal into necessary stages, since if one stage has already been taken, the next stage will appear more acceptable to the audience. Both of these arguments are useful when promoting (more) budgetary cuts for efficiency gains.

By contrast, a coexistent relationship draws a link between a person and his actions (the person and his acts), the group and its constituents or attributes of certain things (Van Eemeren et al., 1987:235). Setting up such a relationship might be useful when wishing to attribute blame or success for an outcome to a particular person or group, such as the tendency for governments to associate economic success with their own policies, and failures with their predecessors. Establishing a coexistent relationship in argumentation generally tries to illustrate some kind of essence to particular manifestations. The pragmatic argument, is one such argument that relies upon the audiences willingness to accept that certain consequences will simply arise from an event or act, without any kind of explanation. The statement, *agencies are more accountable for their performance* (note the quantitative loci) is an example. Another sub group of argumentation that tries to establish this coexistent relationship is argumentation by authority. This is where the opinions of a group or person of prestige or expertise are used as evidence of the existence of some coexistent relationship, such as reference to the opinion of economists or national heroes.

The third type of argumentation that is used to prove associations between different elements has been called argumentation that establishes the structure of reality (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:350). In contrast to relying upon the common knowledge of the audience as with arguments based upon the structure of reality (described above), this kind of argumentation resorts to a particular case to prove that a certain relations exist between elements in reality. It is often associated with showing the audience some kind of ordering that is new in the discussion of a given situation (Van Eemeren et al., 1987:240). Common argumentative techniques in this category include argumentation by a model, which is said to incite action or rather imitation (Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969:363). In this respect, it is important for the speaker to choose models carefully, since “one does not imitate just anybody; the person (*or thing*) chosen as a model must enjoy some measure of prestige” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:363). In addition, the kinds of models selected to promote argumentation, also gives an indication of the cultural preferences of different audiences. In OECD reports, it has been noted that the UK or New Zealand often tend to be featured in their accounts of public management improvements (Premfors, 1998; Sahlin-Andersson, 2001).

Another kind of argument that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca categorize as structuring reality, is argument by analogy. “An analogy is an argument that attempts to gain adherence about the relationship that exists in one pair (called the theme of the analogy) because of its similarity to the relationship that exists in another pair (called the phoros of the analogy)” (Foss et al., 1985:137). It attempts to impart a similar structure or idea known about an event, person or object to another event, person or object, where this idea has not or is not usually applied. Metaphors are condensed analogies and perhaps the most well known and theorized aspects of language and argumentation. In her account of rhetoric in sociology, Edmondson describes how the term *bridge* (a term referring to a physical structure) operates to gain the audience's adherence in discussions of occupational roles in factories. Other terms that originate from images about physical structures and that are also used in the social sciences include *flexibility* and *transparency*. Metaphors may be integrated into language in ways that conceal their origin such as when words like efficiency are no longer adopted with refer-

ence to certain inputs or outputs (Summa,1993:228). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to these kinds of metaphors as dormant.

In contrast to techniques that try to bring elements together in an argument, there are also techniques to separate elements once thought united in some way. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca call this dissociation, and it “occurs when one idea is split into two in order to avoid an incompatibility” (Foss et al., 1985:137). In the New Rhetoric, it is noted that logically all association implies dissociation, and they are therefore similar concepts, but it is still useful to consider dissociation since it encourages one to consider how exclusions operate in persuasion. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca identify the separation between appearance and reality as one of the most widely used forms of dissociation in argumentation. They also point out that such techniques promote the creation of more complicated

**Table 3.2.** Techniques of argumentation

<b>Associative Argumentation</b>	<b>Dis-sassociative argumentation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QUASI-LOGICAL (rational) <i>Agencies are efficient. That is an agency, therefore it is efficient.</i></li> <li>• THE STRUCTURE OF REALITY (accepted opinion) <i>The OECD has endorsed agency reform in their recent report on performance improvement in public management.</i></li> <li>• ESTABLISHING STRUCTURE OF REALITY (introducing the particular through examples and metaphor) <i>Agency reform bridges the gap between the citizen and government.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies are autonomous, therefore they are not bureaucratic.</li> </ul>

descriptions of reality since old concepts are refined and replaced by ones that are more consistent to new argumentative situations. In discussions about management reforms, it can be argued that referring to agencies as autonomous organizations dis-associates non-agencies within departments from having any autonomy. It also makes it difficult to conceive of autonomous agencies as bureaucratic.

The categories from the New Rhetoric presented above will be used in this study to describe how language has been used to construct agency reform. They are to be seen as techniques for interpreting the kinds of *rules* that have operated to encourage certain kinds of meanings about agency reforms (and discourage others) to different audiences. Also, they provide a way for diagnosing the kinds of speakers and audiences that are privileged in official accounts of agency reform. Although, I have presented each of the rhetorical concepts above as distinct, it has been a criticism of the New Rhetoric, that not all of their categories are mutually exclusive (Van Eemeren et al., 1987:255). In particular, the presumptions as premises of argumentation and arguments that are based upon the structure of reality are sometimes difficult to separate, as are some premises that seem to rely upon values as facts, and not as something desirable to strive for. In the following chapter on research design, I will describe how these overlaps in concepts will be dealt with in this study.

### 3.5 The cultural context of rhetoric

Rhetorical concepts and tools are useful in analyzing what has been said in texts and talk about agency reform. They also offer insight into the priorities and values predominant in different contexts since these are reflected in the kinds of ethos, pathos and logos that have been successful in obtaining audience approval. In turn, these also can also reveal patterns in the kinds of argumentative techniques adopted in official agency accounts. Explaining the appearance of official accounts also requires a depiction of the site of rhetorical performances, or rather, in the words of Wittgenstein, their *scenes of use*. Indeed, a cultural profile of the political and administrative context in which reformers undertake to argue for particular reforms can enable expectations to be made about the kinds of rhetorical packaging or meanings one might expect to appear in a particular context. The scenes of use are likely to inform the kinds of constructions that can credibly be made about agency reforms. In this study, the conceptual framework provided by Grid Group Cultural Theory (GGCT) will be used to characterize different scenes of use, and thereby identify the likely limits and variation in what has been possible to say about agency reform in different national contexts. GGCT is attractive in compara-

tive studies because it offers a simple and broad grained typology for categorizing different contexts according to four ideal types. Moreover, it is particularly attractive to the present study because it can also be applied to the level of official agency accounts. Borrowing from the recent work of Christopher Hood (2000), who has categorized public management themes according to the GGCT typology, I can make predictions about the kinds of stories that one is most likely to expect to feature in official agency accounts. These predictions, as well as the correspondence between national cultural characterizations and official accounts can be assessed in the empirical chapters of this study.

### 3.5.1 *Grid Group Cultural Theory*

The anthropologist Mary Douglas developed GGCT as a heuristic tool to deal with cultural diversity and to be able to compare it. According to this framework, culture connotes ideologies, biases and world-views as well as patterns in social relations (Grendstad and Selle, 1995: 9). The theory identifies "two basic dimensions of sociality" in different cultures that have been used to identify four ideal cultural types, or rather, *ways of life*. The two basic dimensions are *grid*, which denotes the degree to which peoples' lives are circumscribed by rules and conventions in a society, and *group*, that denotes the extent to which persons are tied to one another as part of a collective group. High grid social contexts are signified by "an explicit set of institutionalized classifications that keep individuals apart and regulates their interactions" (Douglas, 1982:203). Hood has suggested it includes societies that have fixed name sets dictated by religion or family conventions, while low grid mode can be associated with situations in which parents name their children as they wish (Hood, 2000:8). Alternatively, high group can be ascribed to communities who pool their resources, such as a monastic community, while a more atomized existence of persons would be classified as low group (Hood, 2000:8). Taken together these dimensions have been used to generate four ideal types of social environment corresponding to different degrees of group (high or low) and grid (high or low). These four ways of life have been labeled hierarchy, egalitarianism, individualism and fatalism, and they have been central to much GGCT analysis. The ways of life are presented in table 3.3.



**Table 3.3.** Four ways of life: grid group cultural theory

<i>Group</i>		
<i>Grid</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>High</i>	Fatalist way	Hierarchist way
<i>Low</i>	Individualist way	Egalitarian way

Before describing the characteristics associated with each of these ways of life, it needs to be reiterated that each way of life represents both structure and attitude. In one of the early central texts outlining GGCT, Thompson et al. (1990:1) have explained that "causal priority, in our conception of ways of life, is given neither to cultural bias nor to social relations. Rather each is essential to the other. Relations and biases are reciprocal, interacting and mutually reinforcing". Indeed, the requirement for correspondence between beliefs and social interactions in the theory makes possible the analysis of persistence and change in ways of life, since a shift in values or beliefs requires changes in social interaction, if it is to be sustained, and vice versa. Maeschaalk (1994:61) cites a criticism by Boholm (1996: 67-68) that Thompson et al. (1990:1) also identify social relations as generating and constraining beliefs and values, "thus emphasizing a uni-directional causal link". He suggests that "both propositions can however be made consistent by allowing for bi-directionality causality but emphasizing one causal direction", such as the social relationships (Maeschaalk, 1994:61-62).

It is also the rather radical claim of Douglas and many of her followers, that all cultures can be assessed and classified according to these ways of life, and that they exhaust the universe of viable cultural possibilities. Although hybrids between ways of life are possible, complete synthesis is never achievable, and each way of life remains antagonistic and in competition with one another (Mamadouh, 1999: 403). As Thompson et al. (1990:4) explain; "Each way of life needs each of its rivals, either to make up for its deficiencies, or to exploit, or to define itself against". Reactions between ways of life are continually in

play, although it is the generally the goal of GGC theorists to demonstrate the recurrent patterns between ways of life in different contexts. A further point to make about GGCT for this study, is that it embraces a social constructivist perspective in which facts in the world are not out there, but rather are the product of social interactions and the beliefs that get associated with them. Distinctive for GGCT, however, is the attempt to systemize the possibilities for social construction to the four ways of life (Douglas, 1999:412).

### 3.5.2 *Fours ways of life*

The four ways of life that are central to most GGCT analysis have been widely considered ideal types (Hendriks, 1996; Coyle, 1994; Mamadouh, 1999a). A range of earlier studies have been undertaken to identify features that can be considered characteristic of each of the ways of life. Here I will briefly describe some general features associated with each way of life.

The individualist way of life (low grid, low group) favors self-regulation, where roles are achieved and opportunities taken, as opposed to being ascribed. Interference from any authority, including the state, is continually challenged, and competition is the preferred means of regulation. The individualist views the world as an endless source of possibilities, in which growth and improvement can continue, as long as individuals are stimulated to use their creativity (Hendriks, 1996:61; Thompson et al., 1990:26). At the political level, Thompson et al. (1990:216) have associated the individualist way of life with a narrow definition of politics which "maximizes behavior that is considered private, and thus beyond the reach of government regulation".

The hierarchical way of life (high grid, high group) favors the exercise of authority on the grounds that "different roles for different people enable people to live together more harmoniously than alternative arrangements" (Douglas, 1978:206-207). "...individuals in this social context are subject to both the control of other members in the group and the demands of socially imposed roles..." (Thompson et al., 1990:6). Explicit rules and regulations, informed by tradition and experts, are desirable to ensure order and collective advancement. In this kind of culture it is legitimate that certain persons and individual interests be sacrificed for the whole of the collective good. The world is viewed as a place to be managed, and where advance is possi-

ble, as long as the correct rules and procedures are applied (Hendriks, 1990:60; Thompson et al., 1990:26). Politically, hierarchists approve of differentiating the public and private sphere and frequently harbor an expansive view of state functions (Thompson et al., 1990:217). However, politics is reserved for the qualified and privileged, and efforts will be made to ensure the boundaries of public and private are well defined.

The egalitarian way of life (high group, low grid) rejects distinctions in status and authority and prefers rules to be the continuous subject of negotiation between group members. Inclusion and participation of group members are primary concerns of egalitarians and any group decisions should apply equally to all members. Maintenance of group boundaries is supported through intensive contact between group members, as well as through emphasis upon their differentiation to those outside of the group. Egalitarians are always on alert for abuses of authority and unmasking risks. Their view of the world is one of vulnerability, where resources can be exhausted and collapse is eminent, unless radical changes are made (Hendriks, 1996:60; Thompson et al., 1990:26). In politics, "(E)galitarians desire to reduce the distinction between the political and non-political", and promote a public sphere in which all can actively participate to give their consent to collective decisions (Thompson et al., 1990:216).

Finally, the fatalist way of life (high grid, low group) is characterized by lots of rules and regulations and little collective loyalty. Distrust and alienation are reinforced in this context. It is not really disposed to one particular way of organizing since in this way of life one must be prepared for erratic events. Fatalists have a pessimistic view of the world, expecting that attempts to improve their lot will result in failure (Ellis and Thompson, 1997:53). In politics, they do not discriminate sharply between the private and public spheres, since irrespective of definitions of the political, the blows come without apparent meaning or pattern (Thompson et al., 1990:217).

As mentioned above GGC theorists embrace the notion of competition between ways of life and use the idea of hybrids or rather cultural regimes (a mix of biases) to understand swings in cultural bias within any given social unit. They claim not all ways of life will be equally represented at a given point in time, but rather some flavors will be more prominent than others (Thompson et al., 1990:4). This means that when the vulner-

abilities of a more prominent way of life become visible, it can be compensated and even surpassed in degree by a counterpart. Although this appears a fairly reasonable claim, the more extreme assumption of some GGC theorists regarding *requisite variety* is rejected in the present study. This is the claim that all of the ways of life will *always* be present (albeit in different degrees) at any point in time (Thompson et al., 1990:4; Mamadouh, 1999:397). As Hendriks (1996:79) and others (see Coyle, 1994:227-228) have pointed out, this claim is difficult (and even unnecessary) to maintain at lower levels of analysis such as official accounts where many examples of just one cultural flavor exist successfully - perhaps primarily because other biases are excluded. Although I remain open to the possibility that more than one cultural bias can be present in my object of study, it is certainly not assumed in the analysis.

### 3.5.3 *Level of analysis and scale*

So far, I have presented the four ways of life in rather general terms, without much consequent attention for the level of analysis to which the theory applies or to the associated methodological issue of scale. Culture, as defined in the theory can be reflected in social relations as well as values or biases observed in talk (Mamadouh, 1999). Indeed, Mamadouh identifies three analytical levels in which the cultural ways of life may be observed including the level of social relations, biases and behavior (Mamadouh, 1999:395). In their empirical work, GGC theorists have not always been very clear about the level of analysis to which their assessments of culture have applied and many have noted the difficulties of defining social relations and establishing cultural categories from them. Nevertheless, I have noted, among others, studies that diagnose cultural types by analyzing the social relations of individuals through their group contacts and their autonomy from rules (Engbersen, 1990); through assessing cultural values and biases as expressed in individual preferences within a political context (Grendtstad, 1999), as well as studies that focus upon cultural biases as expressed within discourses (Rayner, 1991:86; Hood, 2000).

These examples also point to the issue of scale and cultural theory's applicability to different units of scale. In early conceptualizations of GGCT Mary Douglas stated that the proper scale was "the social accounting level, the level of justification and explanation" (Douglas, 1978:15; Mamadouh, 1999:404).

This was generally assumed to be at the level of the individual and assessed according to their contacts with others and through the explicit rules present in their social environment. GGCT has also been applied at other levels such as the nation state or organization, and its proponents have boasted its applicability to a range of scales (Thompson, 1997). Thompson in particular has been somewhat unclear, however, about what the application at different levels of scales means (Thompson, 1997, 1998). Sometimes he appears to be suggesting that cultural mixes at higher levels of scale within a given social system will be replicated at lower levels. He has written:

The underlying idea in Cultural Theory is that there is no need to make the dichotomy between micro and macro, between the individual and society. To do so would be to slice right through the 'meso level' – the various viable patterns of social relationships, which is Cultural Theory's point of departure. These patterns, Cultural Theory argues, work their way down into the village, into the household and even into the individual (individuality being something that, to a considerable extent, we get from others) (Thompson, 1998:211).

In this study, GGCT will be applied to both the national political and administrative level, as well as the level of official agency accounts. As will be discussed in the following research design chapter, the cultural characterization of political-administrative contexts is difficult. While features of the political system are more amenable to characterizations of the ways of life as ideal types, there is less material to make similar characterizations to administrative features. I have been open to the extent to which characterizations of the political culture also apply to the administrative level. As others have recognized a nuanced approach is necessary at such broad levels since within any culture, there will also be sub-cultures (see Mamadouh, 1997, 1999b). My classification of national political culture will be informed by secondary sources that have based their findings primarily upon individual preferences. With regard to the analysis of the *cultural flavor* in agency talk, however, I will borrow from the application of cultural types to public management themes and arguments as developed by Christopher Hood (Hood, 2000:187). By applying cultural theory at these two different levels, political/administrative level and government official accounts, it becomes possible to assess the extent to which correspondence can be observed between higher (political culture) and lower levels (agency talk) of scale.

### 3.6 Public Management Rhetoric and GGCT

The identification and categorization of public management arguments, as well as their association with different cultural types, has featured in a number of publications by Christopher Hood and colleagues (Hood and Jackson, 1991; Hood, 2000). In his most recent analysis of culture and rhetoric, this has included an extensive overview of the kinds of public management themes that correspond with each cultural type (Hood, 2000). Drawing from a range of public management texts, experiences and examples, he identifies the favored solutions, problems and watchwords that reflect the different cultural flavors. Furthermore, he makes suggestions regarding the different kinds of speakers that are likely to be privileged in the accounts favored by each cultural type (ethos), as well as the likely cultural features of pathos and logos. Since ethos, pathos and logos are also prominent in the New Rhetoric of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, it is possible to combine both approaches to make a cultural assessment of national agency accounts. Indeed, from the findings of this research it may also be possible to identify further rhetorical features that are most likely to be consistent with each way of life. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly present Hood's characterization of each cultural type in public management, as well as his suggestions for their likely ethos, pathos and logos. Both of these aspects of Hood's analysis will provide the basis for assessing the cultural flavor of national agency accounts in this research.

Beginning with the individualist way of life, Hood associates it with themes in public management that prioritize individual self interest. He suggests it favors institutional arrangements that focus upon incentive structures and increasing competition since according to this way of life lack of price signals are central to public management problems (Hood, 2000:109-118). Some examples of the solutions Hood notes that individualist voices have promoted in public management include the introduction of performance pay, benchmarking and creating contestable markets. Transparency is also identified as an individualist (and egalitarian) theme since individualists have a general distrust of discretion in the hands of authority (Hood, 2000:114). At the same time, Hood suggests that the individualist way of life is also likely to favor individual responsibility for management decisions, as opposed to a committee or board. It

tends to start *bottom up* in its analysis of public management problems and takes particular concrete problems of collective action as its point of departure for analysis, rather than broad social values or orthodox state bureaucracies (Hood, 2000:99). Its emphasis upon individual self-interest makes the individualist flavor vulnerable to failures stemming from lack of cooperation or individual corruption (Hood, 2000:28), since these themes are overlooked when prioritizing the benefits of self-interest. In descriptions of agency reform, we would expect the individualist voice to emphasize the role of competition and market incentives to promote agency (employee) performance, innovation and customer choice.

By contrast, the hierarchical flavor in public management can be distinguished by an emphasis upon rules and impartial expertise. It favors institutional arrangements in public management that clarify and tighten up (differentiation in) roles, regulations and procedures. Public management solutions that are defined by experts and consider the collective good, as opposed to, and even at the expense of, individual interests are preferred according to a hierarchical way of life (Hood, 2000:26, 73-74). In contrast to the individualist way of life, we can expect hierarchical accounts of public management to consider public management problems in broader social terms where reference to collective groups and preferred values are more prominent. Some examples of hierarchical flavor in public management include clearly defined limits in management discretion, *cameralism* and the systematic focus upon how the state can best steer society, as well as preferences for a professional civil service (Hood, 2000:73-97). The hierarchical way of life is vulnerable to misplaced trust in expertise and the dramatic collapse of *big* visions (Hood, 2000:28). A hierarchical account of agency reform, would be expected to focus upon getting steering *from above* right. According to Hood emphasis upon expert knowledge and categories to develop a systematic approach to steering are likely to be among its favored themes, as is concern for perverse behavior and the moral character of those in authority.

Like hierarchists, an egalitarian flavor to public management is also associated with concerns for management outcomes that benefit the collective, as opposed to individuals. However, the egalitarian approach rejects privileging expert authority since it is prone to abuse. Instead it prefers institutional arrangements

that are inclusive (and empowering) of effected groups, whether that be community members or front line staff (Hood, 2000:26). Rather than favoring a rigid set of rules, egalitarians prefer these to be constantly in play and subject to informal (face to face) consultation. Some examples of egalitarian approaches to public management include arrangements to limit abuses of power through limited terms of office for chief executives, and the inclusion of citizens in the production of public management goods and services through board member representation (Hood, 2000). The egalitarian way of life in public management is vulnerable to deadlocks and weak leadership since it does not recognize any one supreme authority (Hood, 2000:28). In accounts of agency reform, egalitarians are likely to focus upon bringing the public sector closer to the customer and making it more open and accountable to communities and citizens.

Finally, Hood has also developed an account of the fatalist way of life in public management. This stresses the unpredictability and unintended effects of management approaches and favors institutional arrangements that build in an element of randomness. On the one hand, Hood identifies the skepticism of fatalism to any way of organizing since from this perspective all attempts to control one's environment are doomed. On the other hand, he also notes that there may be positive prescriptions associated with fatalism and that it is not just a passive stance, but rather one in which unintended consequences and surprises are expected. He suggests that fatalist solutions in public management include random compliance checks of clients or of employees (Hood, 2000:159). He also mentions *fire-wall* arrangements in which related elements or roles in decision making are separated in order to prevent corruption (Hood, 2000:161). According to Hood the fatalist way of life is vulnerable to inertia (Hood, 2000:28). It is difficult to imagine how a fatalist way of life might apply to *official* accounts of agency reform since reformers tend to emphasize their ability to control the effects of their initiatives, nevertheless we might find some discussion of how to control for unintended effects.

Derived from Hood's account of GGCT in public management, table 3.4 presents a summary of the kinds of themes, problems, solutions, watchwords and vulnerabilities that characterize each of the four ways of life. These features of each way of life in public management, or in the case of vulnerabili-



ties the lack of emphasis, will provide the basis for assessing the cultural flavor of the national official agency accounts in this research.

**Table. 3.4.** Four stories in public management according to a cultural theory framework

<p><b>Fatalist story</b>  <i>Stress on:</i> unpredictability and unintended effects.</p> <p><i>Blame:</i> the 'fickle finger of fate'</p> <p><i>Remedies:</i> minimal anticipation at most ad hoc response after the event</p> <p><i>Watchwords:</i> 'resilience', beyond control, luck</p> <p><i>Missing themes:</i> failures stemming from excessive inertia and passivity</p>	<p><b>Hierarchist story</b>  <i>Stress on:</i> expertise, forecasting and management</p> <p><i>Blame:</i> poor compliance with established procedures, lack of professional expertise</p> <p><i>Remedien:</i> more expertise, tighter procedures, greater managerial 'grip'</p> <p><i>Watchwords:</i> 'steering', authority, morality</p> <p><i>Missing themes:</i> dramatic collapse of think big plans or projects</p>
<p><b>Individualist story</b>  <i>Stress on:</i> individuals as self interested rational choosers</p> <p><i>Blame:</i> faulty incentive structures through over-collectivization and lack of price signals</p> <p><i>Remedies:</i> market-like mechanisms, competitions and leagues, information to support choice (eg. rating systems)</p> <p><i>Watchwords:</i> 'enlightened self interest', innovation, choice</p> <p><i>Missing themes:</i> failures stemming from lack of co-operation or individual corruption.</p>	<p><b>Egalitarian story</b>  <i>Stress on:</i> group and power structures</p> <p><i>Blame:</i> abuse of power by top-level government/corporate leaders, system corruption</p> <p><i>Remedies:</i> participation, the citizen, communitarianism, whistle blowing</p> <p><i>Watchwords:</i> 'community participation', democracy, mutuality</p> <p><i>Missing themes:</i> failures stemming from unresolved feuds or collegiality degenerating into coexistence.</p>

Furthermore, I can also adopt for my assessment of cultural flavor in agency rhetoric, some of the suggestions Hood makes regarding likely ethos, pathos and logos in public management. Not surprisingly, given distinctions in their favored themes, and solutions in public management, Hood proposes significant differences in the kinds of speakers (ethos) that will be privileged by each cultural story. He suggests "(t)he characteristic *hierarchist* ethos is that of an *authority figure*, as conveyed by marks of high scientific or official status" (Hood, 2000:180). Alternatively, an *anti-authority ethos* is proposed as being more compatible with the worldview, and thus, stories of egalitarians and individualists. According to Hood, the *egalitarian* ethos will be that of a member of a solidaristic group facing threats from the power structure (eg. upper levels business and government), while the *individualist* ethos is likely to be a lonely figure fighting a heroic battle against forces of collectivism or organizational power (Hood, 2000:180). Finally, if there is a *fatalist* ethos, Hood suggests it is likely to be that of "a radical sceptic, distrustful of anything that passes for academic orthodoxy or received doctrine" (Hood, 2000:180). With regard to the ideal pathos for each way of life, Hood proposes a speaker-audience relationship that reflects teacher and student or priest to a flock for hierarchy (Hood, 2000:180), a collective feeling of anger against abuse of power for the egalitarian way of life, a self help atmosphere for the individualist, and, a *what's the use* stance in *fatalist* rhetoric (Hood, 2000:180-181).

Finally, Hood also makes suggestions regarding possible logos in public management and identifies some examples of four master tropes (metaphor, synecdoch, metonymy, irony) that fit with each way of life. Since logos refers to specific techniques of argumentation (as opposed to the broader appeals of ethos and pathos), it is much more difficult to apply his ideal suggestions, which refer broadly to public management, in the specific analysis of agency accounts. For example, Hood proposes culturally tinged game metaphors in public management such as public management as a captained team game in hierarchy, or as a game of chance according to fatalism (for individualist and egalitarian suggestions see table 3.5). Instead, the categories of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyetca (which also embrace metaphor, synecdoch, metonymy and irony) that are observed in the cultural flavored agency accounts can be one of the findings of this study. Given the variety of techniques of argumentation that

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest, it is possible that completely different techniques will be more compatible for each cultural type. In particular, arguments from authority are likely

**Table 3.5.** Rhetoric and culture: Possible rhetorical applications of four world-views

	<b>Hierarchist</b>	<b>Individualist</b>	<b>Egalitarian</b>	<b>Fatalist</b>
<b>Possible 'ethos'</b>	Authority figure	Lonely figure battling collective pressures	Member of persecuted solidaristic group	Sceptic
<b>Possible 'pathos'</b>	Teacher and pupils or priest and flock	Self-help	Outrage against abuse of power at the top	"Whats the use?" skepticism
<b>Possible 'logos'-game metaphors</b>	Public management as a captained team game (eg.hockey)	Public management as an individual game of skill (eg.chess)	Public management as a non-captained non-competitive group sport (eg.folk dancing)	Public management as a game of chance (eg.gaming machine)

to be compatible with an hierarchical bias, while arguments that link a person with acts (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:293) or based on unlimited development (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:287) are more likely to fit with an individualist bias. The favored logos for different cultural flavors in agency talk are to remain an empirical question in this research.

### 3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the theoretical perspectives and tools for analyzing official accounts about agency reform, as well as the cultural context in which these accounts appear, have been presented. Since this study is focused upon examining possible variety in agency talk, and the way that talk can be used to construct agencies in different ways, a social constructivist perspective has been adopted for this research. More specifically, the rhetorical concepts identified by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca are to be used to examine the kinds of *rules of speaking* (ethos, pathos, logos) that are applied to construct agency reform in different national contexts. These concepts can be seen as tools for uncovering the kinds of rules that have been used by officials to make

agency reform appear good. They can also be used to diagnose the kinds of speakers and audiences that are privileged in the official accounts adopted in different contexts, and, their ways of speaking. Furthermore, GGCT is used in this study to characterize the kinds of audiences in different national contexts, and therefore the kinds of accounts we can expect to appear in these contexts. These expectations can be evaluated in my empirical chapters by assessing national accounts of agency reform with the features Hood has associated with each cultural type. In the following chapter, I will describe further my application of these theoretically concepts in this study and my selection of cases.

## 4 Research design

### 4.1 Introduction

This research is focused upon official accounts of agency reform and what it has been possible to say about agencies in different national contexts. It seeks to answer the following question:

*How has agency reform been constructed in the official accounts presented in different cultural political administrative contexts and why have there been similarities and differences in the accounts?*

This question requires a framework for describing, analyzing and comparing both official accounts of agency reform, and the contexts in which they have been produced. In the previous chapter, such concepts were identified in both the New Rhetoric of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, and from GGCT. These theories are consistent with a social constructivist research agenda that focuses upon the production of meaning and its interaction with institutional structures. They are also applicable to international comparative studies and enable national variety to be analyzed using the same conceptual framework.

In this chapter I will present the research design adopted to answer the research question, as well as give an account of the way the theories, or in the case of rhetorical analysis, the technique, have been used to inform the collection and organization of data in this research. Section 4.2 outlines the definition of agency reform that has guided the identification of official agency accounts for this research. Section 4.3 explains the selection of countries for the research and their placement within the GGCT typology. Section 4.4 provides an account of the way the documents were selected for this study and section 4.5 discusses the reconstruction of context and agency reforms in this research. In section 4.6 I outline the way the documents have been analyzed and the application of the New Rhetoric. Finally, in section 4.7 the chapter is concluded with an overview of the kinds of findings that this research design makes possible.

## 4.2 The object *agency*

In order to identify appropriate agency accounts for this comparative research, it was necessary to make some decisions regarding which accounts were discussing the agency phenomena endorsed by the international public management community (see chapter 1). This task was complicated by the generic term of agency itself, as well as by the rather broad characteristics that have been attributed to agency reform, such as structural disaggregation and performance management (Pollitt et al., 2001; Pollitt et al., 2004; Smullen, 2004). In English speaking countries, like Australia, the label agency has long been adopted to refer to a government organization or even central- department, without any necessary allusion to the fashion of agency reforms (Halligan, 1998). To this extent, selection of rhetorical data purely by reference to the term agency presents the risk of analyzing statements that refer to other phenomena. By contrast, in non-English speaking countries such as Sweden, the label *agency* is clearly distinct in the national terminology (although it may be adopted when describing national arrangements to foreign audiences), yet there exists a plethora of statements referring to reforms of arms length organizations in that country. There are in this case relevant accounts without direct application of the agency label.

A further matter of significance is the instances of agency reform recognized within the international community of public management itself. International organizations such as the OECD and the World Bank provide fora for exchanging experiences with reform initiatives, and the idea of *agency* has become an important theme of international exchange. Already in 1995 the OECD wrote, "A number of countries have seen merit in the agency model" (OECD, 1995:32; Pollitt et al., 2001:271); and since that time it has held at least one major conference where national officials could discuss their *agency* experiences. Two-way exchanges between countries have also taken place, where national reformers have visited or communicated with other countries in order to gain knowledge about public management initiatives for their own reform agenda (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). In the UK agency initiatives followed a much earlier visit by the Fulton Commission to Sweden and their examination of the separation of policy and implementation functions (Fulton, 1968:138-140). They recommended the

introduction of accountable units. In their turn Sahlin Andersson has identified New Zealand reforms as being important influences upon ideas circulating in Sweden and has noted close contacts with Anglo Saxon countries more generally (Sahlin-Andersson, 2001:49).<sup>9</sup> In addition Rowlands has noted that in preparation for the design of Centrelink - the Australian Service Delivery Agency - officials went to New Zealand to discuss another renowned agency arrangement their Crown entities and more specifically their social security agency.<sup>10</sup> Alongside these quite direct exchanges of agency knowledge are also the references within national reform documents. Here we find, among others, the Dutch officials identifying their own *agentschappen* program with arrangements elsewhere such as to the UK Next Steps agencies (Pollitt, et al., 2001; Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:30-32). These exchanges illustrate the existence of an internal system of recognition within the field of public management as to what has legitimately constituted agency reform. In addition, it suggests a desire to package national reform initiatives in agency attire. The existence of this discursive community and the role of the symbol *agency* within it, should not be ignored in any assessment of agency classification, and particularly not in the present study where symbolic activities such as talk are the central focus. Not only will content and local labels of agency reform be part of the present assessment of relevant agency accounts, but also its recognition within this international discursive community.

In light of the preceding discussion the selection of appropriate agency talk in this research has been guided by two kinds of criteria for agency status: first, the content of agency arrangements and second, their recognition in agency talk. With regards to the first of these criteria, agency content, I have followed primarily the criteria defined by Pollitt et al. (2004:10):

- Organizations that have their status defined principally or exclusively in public law (though the nature of that law may vary greatly between different national systems);
- Is functionally disaggregated from the core of its ministry or department of state;

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<sup>9</sup> Confirmed in email contact with Kerstin Sahlin-Andersson, 16/2/2004

<sup>10</sup> Discussed in person with David Rowlands, 23 July, 2003, University of Canberra, Australia.

- Enjoys some degree of autonomy which is not enjoyed by the core ministry, but is still closest to the core ministry in any given administrative framework;
- Is nevertheless linked to the ministry/department of state in ways which are close enough to permit ministers/secretaries of state to alter the budgets and main operational goals of the organization and
- Is not a commercial corporation.

With regards to the second criteria, agency talk, this includes international and/or national references to affiliation with the agency fashion, such as through the identification with agency arrangements elsewhere, by government/administrative officials, consultants or academics within the field of public administration. Such references may occur within their home country, such as in official government speeches or documents and in academic writings, or in the international community, such as in OECD documents concerned with describing national reforms. In the case of academic literature, it includes published articles describing national reform arrangements, their origins, and likenesses with other *agencies* overseas.

### **4.3 The selection of countries: the broader political culture and language**

This is an international comparative research project studying an international fashion and its national translations. Uncovering variety in the official construction of national agency reforms is one of the outcomes expected from this study. Theoretically such variety across countries is to be ascribed to the *scenes of use* in this study, or rather the cultural context, and the political and administrative structures that support that culture. Since the research also seeks to identify patterns in the way that social construction takes place in particular cultural contexts, it is necessary to be careful about case selection. According to the theories adopted in this study official accounts may, on the one hand, be ascribed to the cultural context and the political administrative structures that support that context. This would be reflected in the identification of *national styles of speaking* that correspond to the cultural context and are found to be durable over time in the various documents analyzed in each of the countries studied. It could also be concluded from the identifi-



cation of *similar* national styles of speaking across *similar* cultural and political administrative contexts. On the other hand, *similar* patterns found in official accounts *across* the *different* cultural and political administrative contexts may be ascribed to the *story* or fashion about agency reform itself. When the same kind of rhetorical features of an official account can be identified in entirely different cultural and political administrative contexts, this would suggest that it is not the specific features of the cultural and political administrative context that has influenced what has been said, but features of the story being told. As will be explained further below, I have selected two strong *egalitarian* and high group cultural political contexts (The Netherlands and Sweden) that have been rated similarly according to the categories of GGCT, and which are also both consensus democracies. I have also selected a strong *individualist* and low group cultural political context (Australia) with an adversarial system of government. The theoretical, practical and empirical motivations for my choices of case selection are explained in the following paragraphs after a brief word on the breadth of this study.

The assessment of official constructions of agency reform requires detailed document analyses therefore it is not possible to have a large number of cases. Indeed, most studies applying such laborious techniques focus only upon one case. This makes the empirical focus upon three countries in three different languages in this study particularly ambitious. It also brings with it the drawback that the discussion of the *scenes of use* or rather context has to be more broad brush than would be the case if one was focusing only upon one, or indeed even two countries. The four ways of life in GGCT are arguably suited to such a broad brush approach (see Hood, 2000:226-230). In addition, since this research is concerned to identify whether there has been convergence in public management reform talk across countries, it has been most appealing to try to extend my coverage of national cases of talk as much as possible. For an individual researcher working alone, this choice, together with the desire to assess talk in different languages, inevitably limits the time and energy available to provide detailed analysis of context. As discussed in the following paragraph and in section 4.5 below my analyses of the scenes of use has relied primarily upon the findings of others, together with some interview material that I collected myself.

The GGCT categorizations of national political culture have been primarily based upon citizens' attitudes in the World Values Study, although I have also used Hofstede's account of individualism across the countries selected (Hofstede, 2001). In addition, I have supplemented these quantitative findings with academic literature in comparative political history and political science. In the cases of The Netherlands and Sweden I have relied upon a study by Gunnar Grendstad (1999) which uses the World Value Survey in a factor analysis that derives values for grid and group in each country. It identifies the constellations of the four ways of life in these countries and their ratings. Both The Netherlands and Sweden are found to be high group political cultures ranking highest on egalitarianism followed by hierarchy (Grendstad, 1999:473). Elsewhere Mamadouh (1999) has likened this alliance of GGCT ways of life to Elazar's moralistic political culture. This is a political culture that conceives of democracy as a public service where the state is supposed to promote the good society - often through comprehensive welfare policies - and in which participation is emphasized (Mamadouh, 1997:23). It seems logical to conclude that such cultural conditions can also be expected to influence public management talk thereby reflecting and reinforcing the political way of life. Certainly if we are to accept some of the grander claims about GGCT and scale, we would expect more egalitarian themes and arguments in official accounts of agency reform in these strong egalitarian political cultures (see section 3.5.3). Such an expectation is also strengthened by the notion of the universal audience from the New Rhetoric which forces the researcher to consider the way in which the speaker seeks to obtain broader (cultural) appeal from a particular audience within a given rhetorical situation, and thus to the broader cultural political context.

For the purposes of this study both the strong egalitarian rankings of The Netherlands and Sweden, as well as the prominent alliance between egalitarianism and hierarchy constitute an important cultural similarity between the countries. At the same time, it should be noted that individualism constitutes an important cultural difference in the Dutch and Swedish political contexts. Since the rankings of individualism are stronger in The Netherlands it can be expected that public management reform talk as illustrated by official agency talk is also more likely to embrace some and more individualist stories than Sweden.

In terms of NPM and the initial international story about agency reform documented in chapter 1, a stronger individualist sub-culture in The Netherlands makes it more amenable (than Sweden) to borrowing from themes and arguments about flexibility, contracts, transparency and competition.

The selection of the Australian case provides an entirely different GGCT constellation, and more specifically a much stronger individualist political culture. It has not been possible to find studies which directly characterize Australian political culture according to the categories of GGCT nor is there sufficient data to replicate the study of Grendstad. Nevertheless the same questions in the World Values survey used by Grendstad, as well as other data, provide indications that Australia's political culture is more individualistic. Certainly there is much support for the conclusion that it rates lower on both the grid and group dimensions than either the Netherlands or Sweden. As discussed in chapter 6 this is reflected in lower citizen participation in groups and higher resistance to authority, as reflected in participation in unofficial strikes. According to his own classification of individualism, Hofstede has rated Australia as highly individualistic, ranking second only to America (Hofstede, 2001:215). He recognizes his classification as conceptually similar to individualism in GGCT (Hofstede, 2001:39). In contrast to the more egalitarian cultures of The Netherlands and Sweden, higher individualism in the Australian political culture makes it more akin to Elazar's entrepreneurial political culture. This is a political culture which conceives of the political arena as a market in which participation is instrumental (Mamadouh, 1997:23). "It implies equal opportunities for all individuals and blames the individual for failure. The state is likely to be reduced to a minimal scope to perform the necessary functions that guarantee the workings of the market" (Mamadouh, 1997:23). It can be expected that official agency accounts in such a cultural context will be more amenable to adopting primarily individualist themes and arguments. Given that Australia provides an entirely different cultural context, similarities between its official accounts with those in The Netherlands and Sweden would provide strong evidence for convergence in agency talk. It would indicate that stories themselves can and do travel independently of context. The primary GGCT characteristics of the countries selected in this study are listed below:

- Sweden (predominantly egalitarian, then hierarchical, HIGH GROUP);
- The Netherlands (predominantly egalitarian, then hierarchical but higher individualism than in Sweden HIGH GROUP);
- Australia (predominantly individualist – LOW GROUP).

Aside from the cultural variety these countries represent, another fundamental argument for their selection is the capacity to analyze rhetoric in their national languages. My mother tongue is English, however, I am also able to read Swedish and Dutch. This has been decisive for my selection of countries, since command of the vernacular is a prerequisite for conducting rhetorical analysis. It is nevertheless an attractive selection not only because of the variety in culture that it represents but also because of the variety in languages that can be studied. International exchanges regarding agency reform, and public management reforms more generally, are conducted primarily in English. The processes of construction occurring in the international arena are therefore more complicated in those cases where the reforms were originally launched in another language. It is not only a matter of satisfying a different audience than in the national context, but also a matter of finding the corresponding English terminology, which may not actually exist, for specific reform experiences. In this study I am able to analyze reform initiatives in their original Dutch and Swedish forms, and therefore consider quite literally their translations of agency reform. All reporting of these analyses will however be translated to English, which is the language of this thesis.

Finally, there are also important empirical grounds for the selection of these countries. Although agency reform has been observed in a wide range of countries, the bulk of academic publications in this area, at least in English, tend to focus upon the more well-known cases of agency reform such as the programs in the UK and New Zealand. The selection of countries in this research provides the opportunity to analyze less discussed agency arrangements such as those in The Netherlands and Australia. Similarly, while Sweden is commonly credited as representing the genesis of the agency idea, there are, with a few exceptions, limited attempts to explain the content of their agency reforms and their association with the agency initiatives occurring elsewhere. Indeed, some of the English descriptions

offered by Swedish authors tend to confuse the outsider because of the broad range of topics they are inclined to include under their agency reforms (Pierre, 2004:203-214; Larssen, 2000). The detailed account of agency initiatives presented in these national contexts, within a comparative framework, is an original empirical contribution of this research.

#### 4.4 The selection of documents

The rhetorical data for this research has been sought from official government documents, but not legislation,<sup>11</sup> initiating or describing national agency reforms. It has been the intention to compare official stories about national agency initiatives and therefore only government sources have been consulted. This has still led to a great deal of variation in the type of texts found and the government authors of these texts since reform initiatives in the selected countries may be instigated by different administrative actors. In Sweden for example most public sector reform initiatives require legislative change and are prepared in specially appointed commissions that consult with a number of actors (Premfors, 1983: 623). By contrast, in Australia such changes can and have been introduced without consultation, but rather by an executive government decision or simply the presentation of new legislation to parliament. These differences also have implications for the quantity of texts that appear to discuss agency reforms and for the difficulty of identifying which texts have been most significant in initiating or describing these reforms. Again Sweden and Australia are illustrative of the extremes, where a plethora of candidate documents describing agency reforms in Sweden were found, while there were sometimes only legislative proposals that could be identified in Australia. In the Australian case, official speeches have been used where no other policy document exists or is available to the public.

The year of publication was also another important distinction to consider in the sample of official documents available in each country. Agencies, according to the *content* definition applied in this study, have been a traditional feature of the Swedish admin-

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<sup>11</sup> Legislation has not been considered appropriate examples of official accounts in this study because it often does not provide rationales for changes introduced and is immersed in its own legal rhetoric as opposed to the public management focus in this study.

istrative system and documents discussing their reform can be found throughout the history of the Swedish State. Since my focus is upon a relatively recent period in which agency reform has not only been a Swedish administrative arrangement but also a global fashion, I have limited my search to documents published since the 1980s, when the UK Next Steps Agencies were taking shape. In the case of Sweden, this coincides with a period of political debate about the independence of their *myn-digheten*, which was to result in a range of initiatives to improve the steering of these organizations. By contrast, agency arrangements in both The Netherlands and Australia have only been put in place since the 1990s, although there is a long history of statutory independent bodies in both countries (see Van Thiel, 2000; Wettenhall, 1990), and in the case of Australia contractual arrangements within government departments. The consequence of variation in the commencement of agency reforms has inevitably been corresponding time variations (15 years) between the appropriate documents available in each country. In order to compensate for this, I have tried where relevant, to select a few documents over time in each country.

Clearly the process of document selection requires familiarity with the agency reforms that have been introduced in each country, the process leading to their creation, and the range of official descriptions in circulation. I adopted a two-pronged strategy to navigate the field of available documents and make my selection. Firstly, I consulted a range of primary and secondary sources discussing administrative arrangements and agency reforms in each country. This included consulting academic literature, as well as government sources such as policy documents, parliamentary proceedings, and agency evaluations. In this phase of the research, visits were also made to Sweden and Australia, and in all countries interviews were conducted with government officials about their agency reforms. The interviews in Sweden and The Netherlands were arranged as part of another international project about agency reform that I worked on during the period of study for my dissertation (see Pollitt et al., 2004). There is no doubt that the information I gathered during this project has contributed to my understanding of agency reforms in these countries and the circumstances surrounding these initiatives. In Australia, I was generously provided with facilities at the University of Canberra and was also able to consult with academic researchers occupied with this

area of public management reform. From the information gathered during these experiences, a preliminary selection of official documents that had announced, described or discussed agency reforms in their initial phases was made. This was relatively easy in the case of The Netherlands where agency reform had been described in a small set of clearly identifiable policy documents and sources. It was, for reasons mentioned above, more difficult in Sweden and Australia, where the candidate documents were in the first case multiple with broader terms of reference, and in the second case, not available to the public except for official speeches and legislation. The documents selected are presented in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1.** The selected documents across the countries

<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
1991, Verder bouwen aan beheer [Further building on management]	1983, Politisk styrning – administrativ självständighet [Political steering – administrative independence]	1996, The Prime Minister’s address at the official launch of Centrelink
1995, Verantwoord verzelfstandigen [Accountable autonomisation]	1985, Regeringen, myndigheterna och myndigheternas ledning [Government, agencies and agency’s management]	1998, Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop – challenges at each stage
1997, Verder met resultaat [Further with results]	1997, I medborgarnas tjänst [In the citizen’s service]	2004, Connecting Government: Whole of government responses to Australia’s priority challenges

The second stage of document selection involved consulting with experts in each country regarding their opinion on the most significant documents, and upon my own preliminary selection. A questionnaire was sent to four experts in each country, including representatives from both academic and practitioner domains. Both a list of the experts for each country and a sample of the questionnaire is presented in appendix A.

The questionnaire was not only used to make an assessment about my own selection of documents but also to check the existence of documents which I may not have considered in my preliminary field work. Consultation with these experts was also conducted by email, particularly where there were disagreements about the appropriate documents for analysis. As a result

of these interactions, a final selection of documents was made for each country.

#### 4.5 Reconstructing context: political and administrative structures

Aside from the GGCT characterizations of national political contexts provided by cultural theorists, it has also been necessary to offer specific details of national political and administrative systems and an account of the content of national agency reform initiatives. Without this kind of information it is not really possible to appreciate the rhetorical analyses, or locate them in national context, because so much of what is written in the documents refers to these *things* external to the texts. There is also no doubt that political and administrative structures are informed by cultural identities and preferences, and in turn, can reinforce these preferences. Indeed, according to GGCT such structures are central to enforcing particular cultural identities and attitudes. How political and administrative structures correspond to GGCT ways of life or even to grid and group has however been subject to only limited analysis. Nevertheless if the ways of life are taken as ideal types it hardly seems surprising that the consensus political systems of The Netherlands and Sweden rate high on egalitarianism, while the adversarial system in Australia has rated more highly on individualism. This is because consensus systems have been described as enabling wider participation and as being characterized by a more deliberative political style, while adversarial systems are considered to promote a more competitive approach where the winner then takes all. In both cases these general features of the political system correspond to descriptions of respectively egalitarian and individualist ways of life. At the level of political decision making group think as a form of control is more centralized and unified in Sweden where the principle of collective government reigns over traditions of individual ministerial accountability which exists in The Netherlands. This is argued in chapter 4 to reflect the stronger presence of the individualist way of life in Dutch political culture. The more generous and universal welfare *state* traditions of the Netherlands and Sweden *vis a vis* the selective and more limited *government* traditions of Australia would also appear to corroborate these countries placement with respectively a stronger egalitarian/ hierarchy alliance in Sweden and



The Netherlands – moralistic political cultures, and the stronger individualist – entrepreneurial political culture in Australia.

Such broad rationales are less obvious at the level of the administration, as opposed to the political sphere, since the matter of scale and how the ways of life are replicated at different levels presents confusion. It is unclear if we can expect the same mix of cultural ways of life to be observed throughout a political administrative structure, although some GGC theorists would appear to suggest that this is the case (Thompson, 1998:211). By contrast, it has also been noted that irrespective of a particular political cultural alliance or dominance all administrative systems involve greater or lesser degrees of hierarchy (Hendriks, 1996:241). Hendriks makes a distinction between the external state structure and internal state structure, wherein he also argues that features of the Westminster tradition such as majority rules, which exists in Australia, provides greater opportunities for the hierarchical way of life to characterize political relationships with the administration and its operations (Hendriks, 1996:241). At the same time, it can be expected that moralistic political cultures, irrespective of their egalitarian aims, are likely to favor hierarchical administrative doctrines that are more outspoken and committed to formal rules, responsibilities and principles than a Westminster country like Australia with a weaker state or constitutional tradition. A rhetorical commitment to formal rules can exist even when it may be supported by a practice of informal contacts and networks. It has also been noted that consensus democracies have a tendency to conduct policy making and reform debates at a distance from the political sphere as part of de-politicizing such activities (Andeweg & Irwin, 2002:105). Expert knowledge and technocratic rationales, a feature of the hierarchical way of life, are used within committees or the administration to enable egalitarian collaboration. Such approaches may also occur in adversarial systems but they are less integral to its mode of operation since without the need for multi party cooperation, de-politicization is unnecessary.

One of the important distinctions between the stronger group political cultures (The Netherlands and Sweden) in this study and the stronger individualist political culture (Australia) is the degree of inclusion of organized interest groups (corporatism) in administrative decision and policy making in the former countries. This has undoubtedly contributed to the strong

Dutch and Swedish group ratings and social redistribution commitments. It also brings other organized interests, besides the government and parliament, to which political and administrative actors are to adhere. The inclusion of organized interests in policy making is consistent with descriptions of consensus democracies (Lijphart, 1999: 37-38) and also reinforces the use of expert committees and knowledge. Australia is generally described as a more pluralist system (Marsh, 2003). The difficulty of interpreting corporatism according to GGCT is illustrated by a recent study by Hood et al. (2004:11) who refrains from categorizing it into one of their four GGCT control styles. It has not been the primary task in this study to seek to show how both political and administrative structures can be assimilated with the categories of GGCT. Rather GGCT characterizations will be presented alongside descriptions of these structures. This leaves open the possibility that characterizations of culture at the political level may not be applicable to the level of the administration or the rhetorical situations in which agency reform is discussed. This could be revealed by culturally flavors of talk that are different to characterizations of political culture. In order to construct an account of national political and administrative context, the following features of these systems have been described in each country:

- The political system and parliamentary representation;
- The core executive and role of political leaders;
- Policy making styles; and
- Central administrative structure.

The description of these features in the empirical research has borrowed primarily from academic literature in the fields of politics and public administration. In each of the chapters on national agency reforms, these descriptions provide a second account, besides culture, of the *scenes of use*.

The reconstruction of national agency reform initiatives has been prepared with reference to a range of sources including government publications, academic literature, agency evaluations and interviews with officials in each country. As mentioned in section 3.3 some of these interviews were conducted for another international comparative study into agency reform. Based upon this information a chronology of national agency initiatives has also been presented in each chapter.

#### 4.6 Applying the New Rhetoric and analyzing the documents

The process of document analysis required for this research has been a very time consuming and laborious task. Even prior to the application of the argumentative schemes of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca each document was read on numerous occasions in order to become familiar with the contents of the text, the terminology used and its structure. On these initial readings of the texts I have first reminded myself to apply the following general principles from a social constructivist perspective (see Burr, 1995:3; Wood and Kroger, 2000:91-93):

- Be conscious of the way that I am reading the text;
- Take a critical stance to the information in the text and look for taken for granted knowledge within the text;
- View the text as a cultural artefact emerging from a particular context, ask myself in what situation is it possible to say these things;
- Consider what is not in the text; and
- Be alert to what knowledge or world that is being created in the text and what action this knowledge incites.

Secondly, detailed inventories were made of each document in order to support and assist my analysis of the text. The documents were read to identify the main conclusions of the text and make a global assessment of what was being said in the text. This was to enable a reconstruction of how these conclusions had been argued throughout the document and be conscious of any presumptions in the text that made these conclusions possible. In addition, notes were made of the main themes discussed in each document, as well as their location and order in the text. Furthermore, attention was focused upon the choice of particular words throughout the text and their relationship to the main themes being discussed. I cross checked the appearance of similar kinds of terminology, themes or argumentative techniques across all the documents in the same context and also across the documents in other contexts. Certain terms, as well as any phrases that seemed exemplary of the argumentative standpoints or styles being pursued in the document were also noted for later consideration. Any terms or phrases in the document that seemed at odds with its main conclusions were also noted for consideration. To check these

inventories of the documents and their significance, I also sometimes counted the use of certain terms and made notes of the points of their appearance in the text. This information was used to support later diagnoses of the persuasive effect of the appearance of certain terms in the document. Once this process of familiarizing was complete, I then began to assess the documents again according to the conceptual framework of both Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, and Hood's classifications of public management arguments.

The conceptual framework of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca has already been described in the previous chapter. The way that I have applied these concepts is described in the following paragraphs together with a brief summary of what those concepts are. Throughout this discussion it should be kept in mind that once one begins to deconstruct a text and identify argumentative arrangements and strategies, it becomes possible to use these findings to uncover even more language games in the text. To this extent, the rhetorical approach pursued in this research can be an unending circle or rather spiral that becomes bigger, the deeper one delves into the text. The repetition of sequences in the analysis is therefore not unusual and almost impossible to avoid. As noted above I have generally proceeded from identifying the kinds of conclusions that were made in documents in order to reconstruct how such conclusions were made appealing to the audience. Beginning from the conclusions also provided me with my own starting point for considering the processes that were essential to conditioning the audience to accept certain arguments and findings.

Among the most controversial features of the New Rhetoric is the construction and distinction between the universal and the particular audience, or what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to as the framework of argumentation. This framework refers to the formation of an effective community of minds that the speaker constructs and the relationship with this audience. It has required me to assess the kind of knowledge bases that are used in official documents to obtain credibility with the audience. In general assessments of the constructions of particular and universal audiences have not been completed until the other concepts, premises of argumentation and techniques of argumentation were applied and identified. This was because these features of the argumentation provided indications of the character of the audiences being wooed. Nevertheless in my ini-

tial readings of the documents I first noted the kinds of terminology, concepts and evidence that were adopted in the documents and how these varied throughout the argumentation. Where possible I have also tried to associate such presentations with particular professions or actors within the political administrative system. This has been especially important in identifying particular audiences.

I have also been alert to the tone of the argumentation, its level of detail or simplicity, whether it is formal or informal and the kind of action that such a style is trying to incite. In this endeavor I used Hood's prescriptions for ethos in the different ways of life as a guide for my assessment e.g. did the speaker appear as an expert, a battler, skeptic or warrior for the oppressed and how? Or was there another characterization appropriate? Furthermore, the actual authors of the text were noted as well as the forums in which the document was it is to be received. This was to assist in making sense of the argumentative procedures adopted and its target audience. At this stage of the analysis the following question was posed; to whom is the text addressed and to what kind of audience?

In identifying the universal audience I sought to identify features of the argumentation that would appeal to broader audiences, not just the particular audiences I had identified as being constructed in the text. I looked for claims or principles that sought to establish acceptance across numerous professions or particular audiences in the documents and indeed that sought acceptance throughout the political administrative system. When assessing the universal audience I also consulted all of the documents that I had analyzed in each of the countries in order to identify any patterns in conceptualizations of *the good* or in the information that speakers always gave over time to obtain the adherence of national political administrative audiences. When certain styles or principles appeared repeatedly over time I interpreted this as part of the universal truth that prevailed in the political administrative context. In my analysis there was often an overlap between what the universal audience desired and the values or hierarchy of values (the value that was always superior) ascribed to the premises of argumentation.

Aside from the framework of argumentation, the premises of argumentation is used to describe the way that the speaker conditions the audience to the espoused point of view. This is not so much through the terminology and concepts used to organ-

ize the information being delivered but through the problems or situations that make certain arguments necessary and other arguments unnecessary. The premises of argumentation are the starting points of agreement with the audience from which argument unfolds and becomes possible. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca distinguish between starting points starting from the real: truth, facts and presumptions, and starting points from the desirable: values, hierarchies of values and loci. Definitions and examples of each of these categories were provided in the previous chapter (see table 3.1). The problems and solutions that were identified in the texts and the way they were used to justify the need for reform were used to identify the premises of the argumentation. In reading the text in this way consideration was given to the conclusions of the argumentation and the way that problems or claims being identified in the text prepared the audience for such conclusions.

The premises of the argumentation, particularly presumptions, were the most difficult to identify because they were sometimes implicit to the argumentation, rather than explicit. In addition, values are defined in this study as what was prioritized or preferred/desired in the text, but sometimes this was difficult to distinguish from a fact. For example the fact that business management techniques had long been adopted in government also coincided with preferences or values being expressed for business like management practices in government. Another problem was distinguishing between presumptions and the pragmatic argumentative technique. Both concepts involved making links between events without an explanation of how they were linked. One of the criticisms of the New Rhetoric has been that some of its categories, such as those mentioned above, are not mutually exclusive (Van Eemeren et al., 1987: 255). Where more than one interpretation of the data fitted the argumentative categories, I have reported both interpretations.

The argumentative techniques were easiest to apply to the information supplied in the documents. I read and re-read the texts looking for matches between the argumentative techniques defined and described by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. Again when looking for argumentative techniques I was guided by the conclusions and solutions that the speaker was describing and the kinds of techniques that aided such conclusions. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca identify numerous different types of argumentative techniques that they classify as ei-

ther associative or dissassociative, and may vary in different argumentative situations. Not all of these argumentative techniques were discovered in the documents analyzed. As with the starting points of argumentation, there were also occasions throughout the analysis where more than one of the argumentative techniques were applicable. Again on these occasions I have reported the different interpretations of the techniques being adopted. In appendixes B through to D I present a brief summary of the inventories of the documents analyzed in each of the countries.

#### *4.6.1 Document analysis and the issue of language*

The challenge of conducting rhetorical analyses in languages other than one's own mother tongue has been a constant source of concern throughout this research. After living in a number of foreign countries, including some said to speak my own mother language, and experiencing many incidents of embarrassing, funny and even tragic word bumbles, I am very conscious of the dangers of incorrectly interpreting the documents through my own language inadequacies. Dutch and Swedish remain second languages to me, no matter what my experience with them, and I cannot overcome this fact. At the same time, my knowledge of these languages has enabled me to observe some of the distortions that take place in the study of public management because of the predominance of English as the language of exchange and a reliance upon secondary sources (among English speaking scholars and practitioners) for information about non-English speaking countries. The capacity to see such incidents has encouraged me to take the risk of analyzing across languages, even if some inadequacies remain in my translations. I have also tried to reduce misinterpretations as a result of language capacity, by consulting with Dutch and Swedish colleagues and friends. This has included email discussions about the use and meaning of certain terms, as well as obtaining opinions about my reading of the documents and the plausibility of my analysis. This said, language remains a contested site, where meaning is never exhausted or pinned down. All interpretations remain therefore my own.

## 4.7 Towards the research findings

In this chapter I have identified the various decisions that have been taken in the design of this research project, regarding the selection of countries and the various sources and techniques that have been adopted when analyzing the data. These decisions have been informed by the theoretical perspective and categories identified in the New Rhetoric and Grid Group Cultural Theory. It was also explained that this is an international comparative research in which the same conceptual framework regarding national context and rhetoric will be applied to the empirical information collected. This will enable research analysis and findings to occur at two levels. In the first instance the focus will be upon comparisons and relationships within each national case. I will make conclusions regarding:

- The relationship between the national cultural and political administrative context and the arguments used including:
  - The match between the political cultural characterization and the cultural flavor of accounts.
  - The applicability of political culture to administrative culture.
  - The match between the universal audience and the cultural political context.

Secondly, the findings will include international comparisons regarding:

- The similarities and differences in national agency accounts including:
  - Who is speaking from which institution and the kind of audience to which they are speaking;
  - The cultural flavor of the argumentation;
  - The construction of the universal and particular audiences;
  - The starting points of argumentation; and
  - The argumentative techniques adopted.

Finally, the research design allows some conclusions to be drawn about the claims that have been made about GGCT. In particular, its applicability to different levels of the political and administrative context can be evaluated and the ability of the theory to assess variations in meaning and across contexts can be assessed.



## 5 The Netherlands: Agencies as a unique and accountable alternative

In de begroting en verantwoording van een agentschap zal het bedrijfsresultaat mede in de vorm van kengetallen en produktiemaatstaven opgenomen dienen te zijn. Daarnaast zullen ze ook hun kosten voor verrichte dienstverlening, bijvoorbeeld aan het moederdepartement, in rekening moeten brengen (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:76).

[In the budget and account of an agency, the business result in the form of indicators and production measurements, should be reported. In addition, the costs of the produced services, for example for the mother ministry, must be charged].

Echter anders dan bij externe verzelfstandiging kan bij interne verzelfstandigen wel worden ingegrepen in afzonderlijk gevallen (Commissie Sint, 1994:8).

[In contrast to external autonomization, with internal autonomization intervention may occur in special cases].

Agentschappen voeren een bijzondere vorm van resultaatgericht management omdat zij hierbij een afgezonderd en een afwijkend beheer hanteren (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:20).

[Agencies use a special form of results orientated management because they use a detached and deviant management system that deviates from the norm.]

### 5.1 Introduction

The creation of agencies in The Netherlands, or rather *agentschappen* in Dutch, was a novel change in the Dutch administration. While there had been a long tradition of *arms length* government in the form of extensive numbers of zelfstandige bestuursorganen (ZBOs), the formulation of agencies was to provide an alternative and less radical separation of functions within ministries. They were also a means for introducing a number of financial changes that had been under discussion since the 1970s (Smullen, 2004; Sober, 1996; Ministerie van Financiën, 1991). Dutch agency reform has been programmatic and coordinated since its inception in 1991 by the Ministry of Finance. In contrast to the *wildgrowth* of its ZBO counterpart, and by Dutch standards more generally, the conditions for acquiring agency status have been centrally defined and orchestrated (Ministry of Finance), with this becoming even more rigorous overtime. Nevertheless, the maintenance of agency arrangements, and more specifically performance contracting, has

been the prerogative of mother ministriess, who have tended to pursue this sluggishly and in their own independent and heterogeneous ways (Pollitt and Talbot, 2004; Smullen, 2004).

The Dutch political and administrative scene is a fragmented one in which almost all aspects of formal government arrangements subvert clear identification of dominant roles. Indeed, the most read scripts are those that feature consensus and compromise (for the collective) between (separate) *sovereign tribes*. It is therefore hardly surprising that many academic observers, not only from a GGCT perspective, have emphasized the egalitarian features of Dutch formal political institutions and their propensity for mutuality and inclusiveness in decision-making (Lijphart, 1999; Mamadouh, 1997, 1999b; Hendriks and Toonen, 2001). Official accounts of agency reform, by contrast, reveal a preference for individualist and hierarchical themes and remedies. This is contrary to expectations of high egalitarianism and has been aided by the preceding history of Dutch ZBOs and their function in official agency accounts. One still observes, however, some references to *gesprekspartners* [speaking partners], *overleg* [consultation] and *draagvlak* [creating support through consultation] in official constructions of agency reform. This may be interpreted as some limited appeal to an egalitarian audience. As will be argued in this chapter, however, ministerial accountability has been far more important in the construction of a hierarchical Dutch universal audience.

In this chapter I will describe the Dutch scenes of use in which official accounts of agency reform have been produced. I will also present my analysis of those official accounts and their correspondence with Hood's stories of public management. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the Dutch labels for agency reform in section 5.2. I then describe the political and administrative context in sections 5.3 and the GGCT diagnosis of this context in section 5.4. In section 5.5 I present a brief account of the content of Dutch agency reforms and provide a chronology of changes and events throughout the reform period up to the present. The analysis of Dutch official documents, according to the categories of the New Rhetoric, is then presented in section 5.6 and their classification according to GGCT stories is discussed in section 5.7. Finally, in section 5.8 I discuss both the relationship between Dutch agency accounts and the Dutch scenes of use.

## 5.2 A word (s) on agency terminology in Dutch

There are three main terms that have been used to talk about agency reform in the Dutch context. Firstly, the term *agentschap* was used in the initial presentations of the reform (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:70-86). This has a number of likenesses to the term agency in English since it is a fairly familiar term to the Dutch context, and is also used generically to describe all kinds of organizations such as franchises of a post office or a branch within a business. Historically, the term *agent* was used in The Netherlands already in the Batavian period (1795-1806), and the following French period (Boels, 1993), to refer to highest functionaries within ministries (an agent of the King). It was eventually replaced with the term minister from 1806 (Raadschelders, 1992). The term *agentschap* was also used to describe a national administrative organization called the Nationale Opvoedings Agentschap [National Upbringing/Education Agency].<sup>12</sup> It is perhaps no coincidence that the term *agentschap* was used in early descriptions of the reform, since these descriptions also referred to the UK Next Steps Agency Programme as an example of international developments influencing the reform (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:31). In the Dutch language *agentschap* is perhaps the closest term to the word agency in English, although it cannot be used in Dutch to mean freedom, as in English sociological texts.

A second way that Dutch agencies are referred to in national debate is through the words *intern verzelfstandigen*. This is usually translated in English as internal autonomization. According to the famous Van Dalen dictionary the word *zelfstandig*, (the stem of the term *ver-zelfstandig-en*) means independence while the word *verzelfstandigen* is more akin to being made independent [het zelfstandig maken]. The term *intern* is much the same as the words internal or inside. In The Netherlands there is also a category *extern verzelfstandigen* [external autonomization] that can refer to government organizations with a public or private legal identity. These organizations are also referred to as Dutch *zelfstandige bestuursorganen* -ZBOs [independent administrative organs] and have been likened to the UK Non-Departmental

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<sup>12</sup> The information and references about the use of the terms *agent* and *agentschap* in Dutch political administrative history was provided to me by email from Prof. J.C.N Raadschelders, May 19, 2006.

Public Bodies (NDPBs). In the Dutch literature the general term *verzelfstandigen* has, at least throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, been considered a type of privatization (De Ru, 1995:5; Verhaak, 1997:162). This is in contrast to the debates about privatization in English speaking countries where it is defined in a more limited way as the selling off of public property and services. An exception to the Dutch use of the term *verzelfstandigen* as privatization occurred in the document *Verantwoord verzelfstandigen* [Accountable autonomization] which described the general preference for internal as opposed to external autonomization. In this document, which is analyzed below, *privatisering* [privatization] was presented as a distinct category to *verzelfstandigen* [autonomization] (De Ru, 1995:5).

A third way in which agencies have been labelled in Dutch is with the term *baten-lasten dienst*. In accounting terminology *baten* [benefits] and *lasten* [burdens] are used together to describe an accrual accounting system [*baten lasten stelsel*], while the term *dienst* refers to a service or organizational unit. Literally *baten-lasten dienst* can be translated to English as an *accrual accounting organization*. This label was created for Dutch agencies in 2001 because, as will be described in section 4.5.2, the term *agentschap* was no longer considered desirable.

### 5.3 Scenes of use I: reconstructing the political and administrative context

It is difficult to begin an account of Dutch formal political and administrative institutions without first mentioning something of the history of *being together apart* in The Netherlands. This is a story that often begins with pointing to the Dutch Republic of the Seven United Provinces (1588-1795), a highly decentralized federation of strong independent regions, who cooperated primarily to avert foreign invasion (Daalder, 1990:23-28; Hendriks and Toonen, 2001:4). The fragmented power distribution in the Republic is argued to have encouraged a political culture where consultation and negotiation between elites were important features of collective decision-making. Similar themes can be found in Lijphart's famous theory of consociationalism that was built upon a discussion of The Netherlands prior to the 1960s (Lijphart, 1975). In this account a *politics of accommodation*, also including consensus and compromise, became the means for achieving stability between politically and socially differentiated

groups, or in what has become popular terminology *zuilen* [pillars]. Divisions between minority groups (where no single majority exists) were overcome through elite cooperation, while also maintaining a separate realm for groups to express and live their differences. Although many of the social conditions described by Lijphart are no longer relevant to Dutch society today, as will be shown below patterns of pragmatic negotiation, difference and separate realms continue to be endemic to its political and administrative institutions.

### 5.3.1 *The political system*

The Netherlands is a unitary state, with a long tradition of delegating powers of autonomy and responsibility to both the provinces and local government (Lijphart, 1999; Toonen, 1990). Indeed, both of these lower tiers of government are accorded legal recognition in the Dutch constitution. They have for example an ability to collect their own income and a responsibility for the police force.

Since 1917 the electoral system has been one of proportional representation. This was introduced at a crucial time in the history of the *politics of accommodation* when the cleavages in Dutch politics and society were most sharply drawn (Lijphart, 1975:101-115). The principle of proportionality, not only for political representation, has been instrumental to obtaining political cooperation in The Netherlands since it enabled inclusion to be fairly distributed across the pillars. In its turn, proportionality has also maintained political differentiation since, although the social circumstances supporting pillarization have changed, it has enabled the inclusion of a number of political parties to parliament. At the time of writing, for example, nine political parties are represented in the Dutch parliament. It is seldom that any one party will hold more than a third of the seats in parliament, with the consequence that government formation always requires a coalition of parties (Andeweg, 2002:101). There is also no guarantee that the largest party in the parliament will form part of the governing coalition as this depends upon the process of government formation and the negotiations that take place after elections.

### 5.3.2 *The core executive*

Given the undecisive outcome of elections, it has been observed that they "seldom have a determining impact upon the

formation of government" (Andeweg and Irwin, 1993:109). Instead, government formation depends upon a delicate process of lengthy consultation and negotiation, *behind closed doors*, between prospective coalition partners. Indeed, length of time and difference in political persuasion would appear to present few barriers to the propensity of Dutch political elites to uncover points of compromise through careful and detailed negotiations. The duration of time devoted to government formation is among the longest in the world with records being attained in 1977 when it took 208 days (the longest) and in 1948 when it was just 31 days (the shortest) (Gladdish, 1991:128). Furthermore, consensus and compromise between parties has proved to function across the political spectrum with government coalitions even being formed between the Liberals (VVD) and the Social Democrats (PvdA), although historically it is the Christian Democrats (CDA) that have been the lynchpin in this system. CDA have been members of the most governments since 1917 cooperating sometimes with the left, and, at other times to the right of the political spectrum. The necessity of cooperation between parties tends to constrain radical policy change/reform, the length of time it takes to make changes, as well as encourages a more pragmatic approach to politics rather than an ideological one.

Aside from the negotiations to identify coalition partners, there are also negotiations to establish a policy agenda for the coming period of government and this is written up in the *regeerakkoord* or coalition agreement. It has been referred to as a *codification of mistrust* because many of the discussions preceding its publication are focussed upon areas of disagreement between the coalition partners (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002:104-105). The content of the *regeerakkoord* includes bargains that have been struck between the coalition partners, sometimes favoring the policy priorities of one partner in a particular domain, in exchange for the policy priorities of other partners in other areas. Although an agreement for collective government, it need not be understated that it is a compromise attained in circumstances of division. Appeasement is achieved by distributing ministerial posts and the position of state secretaries across the parties according to the principle of proportionality and by the strategy of *de-politicization* (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002:105). De-politicization entails pursuing government in a business like manner, in order to avoid the destabilising or con-

frontational effects of ideological outbursts and offending one's coalition partners. After all, these differences have already been neutralized in the negotiations. In its most potent form depoliticization involves entrusting divisive issues to a committee or expert opinion, but it also manifests itself in the way government members present themselves and their use of technical concepts. Critics have noted that this can make for bland politics. Stimulating the dualism between government and parliament has been a recurring theme in attempts to compensate for this tendency of Dutch consensus government (Andeweg & Irwin, 2002).

Being *together apart* can also be observed in the ways that the roles of the prime minister and ministers in the cabinet are fulfilled. The Dutch cabinet has been characterized as highly collegial with the prime minister having few formal powers to influence cabinet decision-making (Lijphart, 1999:14; Andeweg and Irwin, 2002:113). Unlike the counterpart in Australia or Sweden for example, the Dutch prime minister does not select ministers and cannot remove them since these posts are negotiated upon between the coalition partners. He is also unable to give directives to ministers or intervene in disputes between ministers unless they agree to mediation. Indeed, the notion of a distinct role for the prime minister is only a recent feature of the Dutch political system; the position as *chairman* to the cabinet was subject to rotation between ministers until 1945 (Andeweg, 1988:138). Following discussions about expanding this role in the 1980s former Prime Minister Lubbers gave a rather insightful response to conceptions of the position in The Netherlands. Quoted in a current affairs magazine he stated:

Mijn stelling is, dat de minister-president geen extra zaken in zijn portefeuille moet hebben; hij moet zijn handen vrijhouden om het besluitvormingsproces van de ministerraad en de onderraden te kunnen blijven coördineren...De minister-president moet als coördinator dienstbaar zijn aan zijn collega-ministers' (From *Elsiviers* magazine 21 December, in Postma p.74).

[My position is, that the prime minister should not have any extra areas in his portfolio, he should have his hands free in order to be able to coordinate the ministerial and underministerial councils...The Prime Minister must as coordinator serve his minister colleagues.]

The Dutch prime minister also has, compared with many other countries, relatively few advisory staff (10-12) and they consist primarily of civil servants. Political appointees are only an occasional exception (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002:113). These features

aside, there has been the feeling that the position of prime minister has been strengthening in The Netherlands (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002:113). This has no doubt been promoted by the weekly meetings with the press which has consolidated the prime minister's position as the face of the government and also by the participation of The Netherlands in the EU, since this lends the Dutch PM (and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Finance) more functions.

By contrast, the position of cabinet minister has historically been characterized by much greater strength and independence, at least with respect to one's own portfolio. Individual ministerial responsibility was recognized already in the constitution of 1848, well before the notion of collective government or even the party system had established itself (Andeweg, 1988:137). Related to both circumstances of monarchy and pillarization, Dutch ministers have generally been recruited for their expertise in a particular area rather than (or not only) for their political persuasions. This has acted to promote further the concept of individual ministerial responsibility. The constitution prescribes that a minister cannot be a parliamentary member and it is not uncommon for the position to be filled by individuals without parliamentary experience or even long standing political affiliation. Even before this regulation was introduced it was customary for parliamentary members to give up their seat if they attained the position of minister (Andeweg, 2002:116). Furthermore, the minister's advisors come primarily from their ministries promoting ownership of turf and a focus upon the issues affecting one's ministry, rather than the collective government as a whole. Indeed, it is generally "frowned upon when a minister enters a debate in which their ministry has no stake" (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002:117). Consistent with maintaining consensus, this arrangement of a specialist minister has also promoted de-politicization within government and an expert approach to political problems. It has strengthened the notion of responsibility that is attributed to ministers for their ministries and particular policy areas.

### 5.3.3 *Policy making style*

As with the formation of government, the style of policy making in The Netherlands also involves extensive consultation and negotiation. This can scarcely be exaggerated with observers stating:



In the Netherlands almost every sector of government policy consists of a myriad of consultative and advisory councils, which are deeply intertwined with government and form an 'iron ring' around the ministerial departments (Kickert and In't Veld, 1995:53).

It has been rated in a number of international studies as displaying a high degree of corporatism (Katzenstein, 1985), which corresponds with the tradition established under consociationalism, of exchange and cooperation between interests, rather than competition. With the creation of the Social Economic Council (SER) and the Foundation of Labour (Star) during postwar reconstruction, *the social partners*, employee and employer organizations, obtained an institutionalized role as major players in the creation of social security and economic policy (Visser and Hemerijck, 1997). They have also been represented in advisory boards in the food, retail and agricultural sectors. Their position was, at least formally, weakened after stagnation in consensus during the period between the 1970s and 1980s, but there still remains ample evidence of a commitment to, or at least appearance of, bargaining, consultation and compromise (see Hendriks and Toonen, 2001). There is also strong interest group activity in other areas of policy making, which perhaps explains the popularity of network theory in The Netherlands, although their numbers and degree of involvement vary with policy sector (Hendriks, 2001:29; Andeweg and Irwin, 2002:145). One of the consequences of corporatism, and interest group orientation in general, has been the *verkokering*, or rather compartmentalization of policy making in government. Like the history of pillarization, this is the tendency towards strong independent policy segments within and outside ministries that operate in overlapping fields but still persist in avoiding interaction or interact ineffectively. This makes central coordination, by the cabinet for example, difficult.

#### 5.3.4 *The central administrative structure*

Related to both the specialist approach to policy (which has been encouraged by coalition government), the need for depoliticization and corporatism, the Dutch administrative structure is characterized by both heterogeneity and decentralization. There is a long tradition of heterogeneous ministries with distinct differences in recruitment, culture and structure (Van der Meer and Raadshelders, 1999). This has enabled them to respond to, and be shaped by, organized interests and the specific

attributes of their policy fields. Even the same kinds of positions in each ministry have quite different functions (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002:151). Only recently, in 1995, were the first steps taken to create a unified civil service. Previously government employees were considered employees of a particular ministry (Van der Meer and Raadschelders, 1999:205). There are presently 13 ministries.

Prior to the introduction of agency reform, functional decentralization of both policy-making responsibilities and their implementation had been widespread across the ministries. This occurred through different legal arrangements and for different purposes. For example in the immediate post war period there was a project to create a number of PBOs (publiekrechtelijk bedrijfs organen) [Public Law Business Organizations]. This was part of the corporatist attempt to include employers and employees into economic policy making, with the most famous PBO being the Social Economic Council (SER) (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002:142). A number of organizations in the social security field were also created under public law arrangements around this time enabling initiatives from voluntary groups to obtain a semi government status (Van Thiel, 2000:9). In addition, legal identities were created for a large number of organizations across the ministries during the financially tough times of the 1980s as part of an attempt to reduce their size (Van Thiel, 2000:20).

Although there are endless distinctions that can be made between the various kinds of legal identities (created through public or private law) operating at arms length from Dutch ministries, many of these initiatives have been broadly defined as ZBOs (zelfstandige bestuursorganen). In 1993, the National Court of Audit counted 545 ZBOs in The Netherlands, 40% of which were established after 1980 (Algemene Rekenkamer, 1995; Van Thiel, 2000:18). As will be shown later in this chapter ZBOs have, at least rhetorically, been somewhat out of favour in recent years, although they continue to be created (Van Thiel and Van Buuren, 2001). In terms of both numbers and degrees of formal autonomy, the arrival of agencies in this context, would actually seem a rather mild initiative.

#### 5.4 Scenes of use II: Dutch culture and GGCT

Following from comparative studies by Grendstad (1999) and Mamadouh (1999), the cultural configuration present in the Dutch political context has been found to be primarily egalitarian (47), followed respectively by hierarchy (28) and then individualism (11). This configuration has been deduced from individual responses to questions in the 1990 World Values Survey in which grid was measured using items referring to level of individual autonomy, while group was measured using responses related to membership of organizations and clubs (Grendstad, 1999:468-469). The predominance of first egalitarianism and then hierarchy has been labelled more generally by GGC theorists as social democracy (Mamadouh, 1999b) or a moralistic political culture (Mamadouh, 1997). Stability is attained between these ways of life because egalitarians can benefit from hierarchy in enforcing collective values (Lockhart, 1997:97). This characterization also corresponds to features already identified in the Dutch political administrative context such as the historical role of pillar elites in ensuring consensus, and the continued role of experts and expert knowledge in resolving political differences.

Further features of the Dutch political context that may be interpreted as illustrating a high group character include the emphasis upon consultation and consensus in decision making which, it is important to repeat, has emerged in conditions of heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. Finding consensus across groups is also related to observations that Dutch politics has had a tendency to be bland and that discussion is primarily focussed upon facts and logical reasoning rather than entertaining the public with (divisive) political ideals. The long standing Dutch adage; “Doe maar gewoon, dan doe je al gek genoeg” [just act normal/average; that is crazy enough] would seem to describe succinctly national feelings about flamboyance although this would appear to be changing as political figures such as Pim Fortuyn have attained popularity through flaunting a more outlandish and provocative style. With the exception of such characters as Fortuyn, however, there is still more often a tendency for political elites to behave in a modest way. As Hofstede has argued hierarchical features such as distinctions in status tend to be less visible in countries where egalitarian values are prominent since the powerful in such societies tend to

renounce the formal symbols that highlight their position (Hofstede, 2000:97). Television footage of ministers, and not least, former Prime Minister Wim Kok, riding to parliament on a bicycle is a vivid example that springs to mind.

Although rated as less prominent than egalitarianism and hierarchy, it is noteworthy that there are contested opinions about the degree to which individualism characterizes Dutch culture *vis a vis* Swedish culture (see Grendstad, 1999, Hofstede, 2000). The figures that I have used from GGCT indicate that individualism in The Netherlands is less than in Sweden, although other cultural studies such as those of Hofstede rate Dutch culture as more individualistic than Sweden. Certainly at the level of the cabinet the convention of individual ministerial accountability as compared to the principle of collective government in Sweden could be interpreted as indicative of a lower group rating in The Netherlands. Individual ministerial accountability has provided an important support to the functioning of coalition government in The Netherlands and recognizes that ministers should be left uninhibited to run their ministries and speak upon policy decisions in their field. In addition, the more fragmented institutional arrangements in The Netherlands, as reflected by only recent moves towards a unified civil service together with the tradition of many distinct and separate interests (albeit in groups), disperses the groups somewhat into autonomous spheres. More broadly speaking some commentators have suggested that the famous Dutch tolerance has been able to develop because citizens could get on with their own lives indifferent to what others were doing (Kickert, 2003:138). This detracts somewhat from the idea of a strong group feel. Again in more general terms individualism, at least in the form of self reliance and entrepreneurialism, has often been cited and associated with the history of Calvinism in The Netherlands, as has paradoxically, godly patriotism and commitments to charity (Weber, 1930; Huizinga, 1968; Schama, 1991). Indeed, there are quite contrasting observations made about the political system and thus culture (see Hendriks, 2006:179, 185).

## 5.5 Dutch agency reforms in brief<sup>13</sup>

The blueprint for Dutch agency reform was first described in 1991 (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991). Among a range of proposals for improving financial management, agencies were presented as an instrument for achieving greater efficiency. They have also been created for other purposes such as the separation of policy and implementation, and as an alternative to ZBOs (Smullen et al., 2001). In 1994, the first four agencies were created and since that time some 30 agencies have been created. They constitute more than 30% of Dutch public sector employees and this figure is expected to grow to above 80% (Kraak and Van Oosterom, 2002:11).

Almost all ministries now have agencies within their domain and they are used for a wide variety of tasks, from forecasting the weather to administering residence permits (Smullen and Van Thiel, 2002). An overview of some existing agencies is presented in table 5.1.

### 5.5.1 *The contours of Dutch agencies*

As reflected in their most recent title *baten-lastendienst* [accrual accounting service], Dutch agencies have had a primarily financial character (Smullen, 2001; Smullen, 2003). Indeed, the primary distinction between Dutch agencies and other organizations within the ministries is that they (must) use an accrual accounting system. In the early years of agency creation this was also recognized in the *Comptabiliteitswet* [Dutch Accounting Law], which was amended first in 1994, to include articles defining an *agentschap* (Wijziging van de *Comptabiliteitswet*, Kamerstukken II, 1994/5). Aside from requiring that ministries' budget accounting include a separate sheet for agencies in which details of their accruals and asset liabilities could be reported, initial legislation also recognized some conditions for obtaining agency status. For example, the products and services of agencies should be measurable and they should have obtained an accountant's declaration for their financial administration. Over the years, the conditions for agency status have become more numerous and precise with just 3 conditions being required in 1994 to 12 conditions being applied from 2001

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<sup>13</sup> Parts of this section have already been published in Smullen et al., (2001) and Pollitt, Talbot, Caulfield and Smullen (2004).

**Table 5.1.** Examples of agencies across Dutch ministries

Ministries	Agencies	Task	Fte
Foreign Affairs	Centre To Promote Imports From Developing Countries <i>[Centrum Bevordering van Import uit Ontwikkelingsland]</i>	Seeks to promote the competitiveness of imports from developing countries in international markets.	17
Defense	Paraseto	Provides catering to all the defense locations both nationally & internationally.	1800
Economic Affairs	Senter Novem	Prepares applications for subsidies by the private sector for technology & sustainable production.	
Justice	Dutch Prisons	Responsible for detaining offenders of crime and rehabilitating them.	16 195
Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality	Agency for rural areas <i>[Dienst Landelijke Gebied]</i>	Implements programs and projects for changing land use & management of rural areas.	
Traffic & Water	National Meteorological Institute <i>[KNMI]</i>	Responsible for the collection of meteorological data, prediction of the weather, & research into climate change.	225

(Ministerie van Financiën, 2001). Since the new conditions have focussed primarily upon financial features such as calculating cost prices and identifying financial risks, the financial character of agencies would appear to have become even more augmented. There are now also requirements mentioning quality indicators although these have been expressed in less precise ways, *eg. must have numerous quality indicators*. An overview of the conditions for agency status and their refinement since 1991 are presented in table 5.2.

The Comptabiliteitwet also requires that ministers announce their intention to create an agency to parliament and that it can only proceed if, within 30 days, there are no further requests for information within the parliament. This article of the legislation, (which was proposed by a member of parliament and was not part of the original proposal of the legislation presented by the Minister of Finance), states that if the parliament is opposed to the intention of agency creation, it cannot proceed.

**Table 5.2.** Changes in conditions of Dutch agency status 1991-2004

<b>Accounting Legislation 1991</b>	<b>Accounting legislation 1998</b>	<b>Accrual Accounting Handbook 2001</b>
<p>The products of services of the organization must be measurable.</p> <p>Organization must have received an approved declaration from an accountant.</p> <p>There must be real possibilities for efficiency improvements.</p>	<p>Business processes must be described, including 1 or more products and services and a cost price.</p> <p>Organization has to identify beforehand how the assessment of efficiency will take place through a cost price calculation, as well as at least one quality indicator.</p> <p>The internal planning and external control cycle should be connected.</p>	<p>There is an analysis of the environment.</p> <p>The products and services are identified.</p> <p>The business processes of the organization are described.</p> <p>The costs of products and services are calculated using a cost price model.</p> <p>How the organization's efficiency will be assessed is identified before agency status using a cost price and at least one quality indicator.</p> <p>There is a results-steering external planning and control cycle that is connected to internal planning and control.</p> <p>The (financial) risks of the organization are identified and agreements are made about how these will be covered.</p> <p>A trial of the results management model for the mother ministry and agency is conducted for at least a half year before agency status.</p> <p>There is a plan for setting up the opening balance, signed by the relevant actors.</p> <p>There is a financial strategy for bringing about the changes to accruals, signed by relevant actors.</p> <p>There is an approved accountant's declaration in the year before the official start.</p> <p>A trial of the accrual accounting administration is conducted for at least a half year before agency status.</p>

There has, as yet, been no incidence of parliament denying the intention of a minister although a few agency proposals have been the subject of lengthy debate, while others not at all. Together with a letter from the minister describing the attainment

of agency conditions, a concept statute [conceptstatuut] describing agency products and services, performance measures and so on, has become the conventional way to inform parliament of agency status. This statute is also a key document in describing the steering activities of mother ministries, which with the more stringent conditions for agency status, has become more detailed. Already from the early years of agency creation there was the expectation that all agencies should be subject to evaluation within 5 years of their creation, and the anticipated date of this evaluation is generally reported in the concept statute.

Aside from the unit cost price indicator, which is a condition of agency status, the other measures used to assess agency performance are the responsibility of the mother ministries. This arrangement corresponds with the ministerial responsibility for organizations within their ministries. In general the performance measures to be collected by an agency are communicated in their year plans, and later reported in their annual reports. There is no government wide approach to how agency performance is assessed or by whom in the ministries, with each ministrie tending to have their own arrangements. The involvement of mother ministries in setting the performance measures and performance targets would seem to vary from ministry to ministry and agency to agency, although some recent evidence would suggest that it is often agencies themselves that create their own performance measures (Pollitt et al., 2004: 133-135, 156-182).

The exception is financial figures, whose collection is dictated by the Ministry of Finance. Within ministries, it is the bureaux Financial and Economic Services (FEZ) and the internal Accounting Service (DAD) that are most engaged in the maintenance of agency issues. FEZ collects the monthly financial figures of agencies and is responsible for ensuring that the yearly performance information is supplied in time for the national budget. The DAD conducts the audits into agency administration, both to ensure an orderly administration prior to obtaining agency status and for the budget. Both the programme wide evaluations of Dutch agency reform have lacked detailed discussion of the performance measures collected by agencies suggesting that this aspect of the reform has been less developed (Ministerie van Financiën, 1997; Berenschot, 2002).



Furthermore, the introduction of a new budget reporting system in 1999 requiring the presentation of performance indicators for all policy sectors in the budget, has meant that the collection and reporting of performance measures is not a special feature of agencies alone (Ministerie van Financiën, 1999). Nevertheless, agencies have consistently been the subject of criticisms from the National Court of Audit, who has made an explicit commitment to scrutinizing their accounts. Managers of agencies have also noted the increased attention that has accompanied the status.

Together with changes to the conditions of agency status, there have also been some changes to the process of attaining agency status. In the *Comptabiliteitswet* it is recognized that both the Minister of Finance and the minister responsible for the agency act to advise cabinet on prospective agency candidates. This advice tended to follow findings from interdepartmental investigations or could come from expressions of interest from departmental heads, or organizations themselves wishing to become agencies. At first, it was the Ministry of Finance that assessed the agency proposal before the concept statute was presented to parliament, and assisted candidate agencies in preparing for the status. Already in 1995, when the conditions for agency status were still quite broad, a much more formalized and comprehensive approach to agency assessment and guidance was pursued with the creation of the *Begeleidingsteam Verzelfstandigen-BiFi* (Guidance Team Autonomization). This was located in the Ministry of Finance, although included provisions for consultation with Ministry of Home Affairs staff (Van Oosterom and Soons, 2002:22).

Through the BiFi team the Ministry of Finance was able to consolidate its role as agency expert to the ministries, and the outside world more generally. This has been reflected in its responsibility for the first evaluation of the agency program in 1998, the publication of a number of articles featuring agencies from its staff (Van der Knaap, Kraak and Mulder, 1997; Van der Knaap and Van Oosterom, 1999; Van Oosterom and Soons, 2002) and their organization of various agency seminars. There is little doubt that the Ministry of Finance has also been an advocate of agency reform in this role, with many of its publications emphasizing agency benefits. Following from the recommendations of an external evaluation of an individual agency in 2000, the assessment of agency proposals and their satisfac-

tion of agency conditions became the responsibility of Toetsingcommissie Verzelfstandigen [Assessment Commission Autonomization] in 2003 (Van Oosteroom and Soons, 2002:32). This is separate from the BiFi team but is still composed of ministry leaders the Director General of the Rijksbegroting [Central Government Budget] within the Ministry of Finance and the Director General of Openbaar Bestuur [Public Administration] within Home Affairs. In 2002, National Court of Audit findings have also become important in this procedure, since a regulation has been established that proposals can only be sent to parliament when there have been no irregularities found in the financial management of the candidate agency or of the other agencies from the same ministry.

### 5.5.2 *An overview of the reform period*

The initial proposal for agency reform first appeared in 1991 in an inter-departmental workgroup report *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer* [Further building on management]. It was instigated by the Ministry of Finance and followed an earlier investigation into *zelfbeheer* [self management] which, in the early 1980s, had already considered arrangements for changing the financial regulations that ministerial units and their managers were subject to. The sketch of agency reform in *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer* included the possibility of two types of agency. One type would be able to adopt an accrual accounting system while the other could maintain the cash based accounting system. In both cases there was the possibility to reserve unspent funds from the apparatus budget in a separate account at the Ministry of Finance (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:x). This formulation of agency reform provided the blueprint for the first four agencies created in 1994, two of which did not use an accrual accounting system at that time. Later that year, however, when the Parliament began to discuss the accounting legislation that would define agencies, accrual accounting would become their only option.

There was initial enthusiasm for agency reform which was expressed by the Parliamentary Commission for Government Expenditure and by the Minister of Finance (Brief van de Minister van Financiën, Kamerstukken II, 1992/93) who was able to begin creating agencies in anticipation of their seamless inclusion into the Dutch Accounting Laws. Around this same time, however, a number of concerns were beginning to emerge about the wildgrowth of ZBOs and their threat to ministerial

accountability. The National Court of Audit had been conducting an investigation during the periods 1993 and 1994 that revealed great disparities in the way ZBOs were regulated, and indeed noted in some cases very little regulation at all (Algemene Rekenkamer, 1995). This cast a shadow over autonomization more generally and encouraged a more antagonistic response to agency reform in the parliamentary debates surrounding the amendments to the Accounting Legislation. In the time-span since the initial proposal for agency reform the first purple cabinet (a coalition between Labour, the Liberals and D66) had been formed and expressed their commitment to re-establishing the *primacy of politics* (see Hoenderkamp and Schillemans, 1997). This was a commitment to obtaining a tighter grip on the administration through smaller core ministries and more accurate steering. An amendment to the accounting legislation which prescribed only the possibility of an accrual accounting system was reflective of the political spirit of the time, with a member arguing that this would make agency reform more precise and encourage a more cautious application of the reform (Behandling van de zesde wijzingen Comptabiliteitswet, 1994-95, 39:2704). The parliament was also successful in passing two further amendments to the Accounting legislation. This included prescribing the presentation of agency product information and reporting requirements to parliament, as well as notification of agency status with a provision for parliamentary disapproval.

There were also a number of initiatives in the following period that attempted to rein in autonomization and make it a much more controlled affair. In 1995 for example the report *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen* [Accountable or responsible/sensible autonomization] by the Commissie Sint set out a guideline for the choices of internal or external autonomization. In addition, it recommended a much more unified and coordinated approach to the creation of future autonomized organizations and in the guidance they received (Commissie Sint, 1994:22). This led to the creation of the BiFi team in the Ministry of Finance. A chronology of agency reform initiatives is presented in table 5.3.

**Table 5.3.** Agency reform in The Netherlands - A chronology of events

- April 1991. The *Reconsiderations* report *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer* published. Presents a proposal for agency reform.
- June 1992. Description of application of proposals in *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer* presented to Parliament.
- January 1994. First four agencies established.
- July 1994. Proposal for sixth amendment to the *Comptabiliteitswet* [Accounting Laws] (which described agencies) is presented to parliament.
- December 1994 - January 1995. Parliament amends proposal for *Comptabiliteitswet*. Amendment Liemberg requires Ministers to advise Parliament of intention to create agency, enabling Parliament to refute it. Amendment Kamp requires letter of advice to include description of agency products and the product information to be reported. Amendment De Jong requires all agencies to adopt accrual accounting.
- September 1994. *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen* published. Presents thinksteps for autonomization decisions.
- 1995. A report by the National Court of Audit about ZBOs and ministerial accountability finds that ZBO arrangements have been
- April 1995. *Begeleidingsteam Verzelfstandigen* [Guidance Team Autonomization] created within the Ministry of Finance to assess whether candidate agencies have met the criteria for agency status.
- January 1997. All agencies have adopted accrual accounting.
- April 1997. *Commissie Cohen* report published
- April 1998. *Verder met resultaat*, the first evaluation of the agency programme is published by the Ministry of Finance. Criteria for agency status revised.
- January 1999. Reserve facility of agency status replaced by loan facility through Ministry of Finance. Ministry of Finance regulation created bypassing parliament.
- January 2000. Minister of Finance presents to parliament 8 new conditions which agency candidates must comply, it becomes 12 conditions soon thereafter.
- April 2001. Seventh amendment to the *Comptabiliteitswet* [Accounting laws] changing the name of *agentschappen* [agency] to *batenlasten dienst* [accrual accounting] service.
- January 2002. Agency proposals may only be sent to Parliament when the Court of Audit has found no irregularities in the financial management of the candidate agency and of the other agencies the same ministry is responsible for.
- June 2002. Second evaluation of the agency programme is published by external consulting bureau.
- January 2003. A new testing commission created to oversee that candidate agencies satisfy conditions. The commission is composed of the Director General *Rijksbegroting* [Central Government Budgeting] from the Ministry of Finance and Director General *Openbaar Bestuur* [Public Administration] from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Further limits were placed upon the activities of agencies and ZBOs with the publication of a report from the *Commission Cohen* that expressed concerns about the effect of government commercial activities upon the health of competitive markets and the private sector more generally. A new government-wide doctrine emerged to the effect that agencies must not compete with the private sector and should sell off activities that were potentially profitable (Commissie Cohen, 1997; Pollitt et al., 2004:73). This had implications for many agencies and led for example to the privatization of the commercial activities of the Dutch meteorological agency, KNMI (Pollitt et al., 2004:164-166).

The reserve facility of agencies was also revised after 1998, when it was observed that some organizations had saved large amounts of monies, the interest of which was not being included in the calculation of cost prices. Some of the savings had to be returned and by 2000 a limit on the level of reserves agencies could save were set, with a loan facility (that charges interest) being introduced for the purpose of investments (Van Oosterroom & Soons, 2002:30-31). Though certainly not considered as problematic as ZBOs, the state of the agency image at this time is perhaps best reflected in the decision to change its name from *agentschap* to *baten-lasten dienst* via a further amendment to the Accounting Laws in 2001. This was because the term *agentschap* was considered to suggest too much autonomy, thereby reducing its appeal to parliament (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:63). It interfered with the Department of Finance's desire to expand the use of accrual accounting more generally across the whole of central government, an idea that was being touted in 1997 (Van Oosterroom and Soons, 2002:27).

Two evaluations of the program of agency reform have been conducted since its inception. The first occurred in 1998 and was performed by the Ministry of Finance itself. It was rather positive about the impact of agency reform upon the attainment of efficiency, despite the lack of unchanging indicators to assess this in the period under study (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998). Recommendations included the first, among many, of refinements to the conditions for agency status including the introduction of the condition that the performance measures for assessing efficiency be set before becoming an agency, e.g. unit

cost plus a quality measure. Praises by the Ministry of Finance for the agency initiative were somewhat remarkable at this time since irregularities in the financial accounts of some agencies were beginning to emerge. For example in the years 1997, 1998 and 1999 the National Court of Audit identified shortcomings in the financial accounts of agencies, some of which were traced to problems at the time of agency creation, such as with the opening balance (Algemene Rekenkamer, 1998, 1999, 2000). A negative financial result was also reported in a number of agencies raising questions as to their effectiveness as instruments for better financial management. These findings and the promise of devoting extra attention to agencies in future Court of Audit reports, led to the creation of further conditions for agency status (see table 5.2 above). The second evaluation was conducted in 2002 by an external consultancy firm and concluded (with limited proof) that efficiency gains had been achieved in 7 of the 22 agencies it investigated (Berenschot, 2002:22).

## 5.6 The rhetoric of agency reform

Initiatives to introduce an agency programme in The Netherlands, and also to adjust that package, have primarily been described in government documents prepared for the Ministry of Finance and by financial experts. As was noted in the previous section, the original vision for agency reform was first articulated in the 1991 *heroverwegingen* (reconsiderations) commission report *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer* [Further building on management]. It described many of the features of agency reform that would eventually be codified in the Dutch Accounting Laws such as the accrual accounting system, or the formal roles surrounding agency creation and maintenance, including ministries' responsibility for setting up agency performance requirements. Both its inception through Ministry of Finance proposals, and the related consequence of its financial character in accounting laws, ensured a central role for the Ministry of Finance in overseeing the creation of individual agencies, as well as the agency programme more generally. Indeed, as should be apparent from the chronology in the previous section, most of the adjustments to the formal policy of agency creation have been of a financial nature and initiated in the Ministry of Finance. To this extent, official accounts from central government of the Dutch agency

programme have, with a few important exceptions, also tended to have a financial character and been presented by Ministry of Finance officials.

Following from responses to the expert questionnaire for the selection of documents, the analysis of agency rhetoric will focus upon the documents; *Verder Bouwen Aan Bebeer* [Further building on management] (1991), *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen* [Accountable autonomization] (1994) and *Verder Met Resultaat* [Further with result] (1998). Both the reports *Verder Bouwen Aan Bebeer* and *Verder Met Resultaat* were published and prepared by the Ministry of Finance. Their findings were used respectively to introduce agency reform in 1994 and to make changes to the criteria for agency status that were inserted into the *Comptabiliteitswet* [Dutch Accounting Law] in 2000. By contrast, the report *Verantwoord verzelfstandigen* [Accountable autonomization] was commissioned collectively by the Secretary-Generals of the ministries, which included the head of the Ministry of Finance. It was published by the Ministry of Home Affairs and had as its task to consider the issues surrounding the appropriate choice for *autonomization*, given the different forms available to ministries. The comparison that is made between the choice for Dutch ZBOs and agencies is the primary contribution of this document to official discussions about agency reform. Furthermore, the *think steps* it identified for making a choice about autonomization were incorporated into the concept statute of agencies, thereby requiring ministers to substantiate their decision (for the agency form) to parliament according to its criteria.

#### 5.6.1 Document one - *Verder Bouwen Aan Bebeer* [Further building on management]

The report *Verder Bouwen Aan Bebeer* was published in 1991 and was commissioned to investigate how *differentiated financial rules* could be applied across central government (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:2). It was a commission report proposed by the Ministry of Finance as part of the *reconsiderations* [Heroverwegingen] with the commission members being primarily financial experts from different ministries including the Ministry of Finance. It is 94 pages long and consists of a summary and six chapters. These discuss first of all the problems of the existing financial arrangements (chapter 2) and then present a vision of financial management for the future (chapter 3). A number of

features of the existing financial system are described, such as the apparatus article of the budget and its end of year limit, as well as the macro principles underlying this system such as budgetary control, parliamentary authorization and ministerial accountability (chapter 4). The possibility of adjusting the financial system while maintaining these macro principles is discussed with special reference to changes to the apparatus budget, the annual nature of the budget, rules about borrowing and the introduction of incentives to efficiency gains. Following from this discussion proposals are then presented for changing the financial system through adjustments to budgetary rules (chapter 5) and by the introduction of internal autonomization, or rather, agencies (chapter 6).

The report identifies five features of the existing financial system that present *bottlenecks* [knelpunten] to the achievement of efficient management. These are the separation between the personnel and material articles in the apparatus budget, the time limits associated with yearly budgeting, the lack of incentives for efficient operations, the uniform cash based character of the budget system, and, the level of consultation resulting from budgetary regulations (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:5). The lack of flexibility granted to managers to make decisions about their financial management or obtain rewards for good decisions is central to the discussion about the problems of the financial system. By contrast, the management model for the future sketched in the report emphasizes a focus upon results and greater freedom for managers.

Against this background of financial problems and a results orientated vision for the future, the proposal is made to adjust budgetary regulations across central government. This includes the amalgamation of the personnel and material articles of the apparatus budget, the creation of a margin (.25%) for deviations in the end of year budget limits, and the possibility for ministries to reserve funds over the years for the purpose of investment. In addition, differentiation in financial rules is also proposed through the creation of *agentschappen* [agencies]. The report recommends two types of *agentschappen* [agencies], one in which an accrual accounting system may be used, and another in which the cash based accounting system is retained, but with a greater capacity than other central government organizations to reserve funds (over time) from the apparatus budget. In both cases, annual performance agreements are to be made with



agencies regarding desirable performance and this is to be assessed post hoc.

#### 5.6.1.1 *Ethos and the construction of the audience*

The self-presentation of the speaker throughout the text, is one of an expert in financial developments and accounting concepts. From the outset the credibility of the speaker is pursued by demonstrating knowledge of developments in financial administration through reference to a number of financial projects and committee findings. Experience with earlier projects for example *Zelfbeheer* [Self Management] or the *Operatie Comptabel Bestel* [Operation Accounting System] are described (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:1, 15) and parliamentary studies are also cited as evidence of the growing importance of good financial systems (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:14). There is also reference to the financial relevance of earlier projects such as the *Project Reorganisatie Rijksdienst* [Project Reorganization Central Administration], that itself was not primarily focussed upon financial management. Financial features are then further emphasized throughout the texts with reference to a range of technical concepts such as reserve facilities, accrual accounting systems, and lending facilities. This terminology alone achieves a measure of reliability regarding the speaker's knowledge of financial management regimes. It constructs a particular audience of financial experts, such as a financial parliamentary committee, financial units of other ministries or the Minister of Finance. The financial ethos of the speaker is also revealed in the priorities placed upon achieving efficiency, orderly accounts and budgetary savings throughout the text. The focus of the speaker remains narrowly confined to financial issues for most of the text and there is no mention of broader social goals or even the goals of particular policy sectors. Also in the presentation of agency reform, the discussion remains focussed upon features such as end of year flexibility, capital management and financial incentives for efficiency. Even the yearly agreements envisioned identify categories useful to financial calculations such as volume and cost price.

At the same time there are attempts to extend the relevance of these financial categories to a much broader universal audience. There are at least two ways in which this occurs. In the first instance, the workgroup explains that the problems they have identified with the financial system are based upon an in-

ventory gathered from existing organizations (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:4). Their observations are in this sense not presented as a theoretical view about good financial systems, but rather as based upon actual experiences in central government. In this way, the financial categories dominating the text are presented as central factual concerns for all public sector managers. The speaker states:

In de volgende paragraaf worden de bevindingen van de inventarisatie weergegeven. Daarbij worden de diensten als het ware "aan het woord" gelaten (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:5).

[In the following section the findings of the inventory will be presented. In this way the organizations will be, as it were, allowed to speak and share their experiences].

It is also noted that the findings of the workgroup are based upon a study of nine organizations across different ministries, representing different expenditure patterns such as those with small and big programme budgets, and those where price forming for products is possible (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:4-5). This gives a scientific justification to the kinds of financial problems being identified by the workgroup since it is based upon a broad and well thought out selection of cases. It is not just a financial problem as such, but one that is relevant and applicable to organizations across central government. As we shall see in later documents, it is typical for Dutch speakers of agency reform to provide accounts of the sources of findings and the choice of sources. To this extent academic rules of justification can be considered part of the Dutch universal audience. Certainly the inventory does not seem to be really about allowing managers to speak since there is never a direct citation of a representative of a central government organization, nor are particular actors in those organizations made the subject of a sentence. There are no specific examples or experiences cited and the inclusion occurs at a very abstract level maintaining technical financial terms. The references to case selection can therefore be interpreted as part of ensuring the speaker's statements can be considered credible to a broad audience.

Another way in which the particular financial preoccupations of the text are given more universal relevance is with regard to political issues and in particular the principle of ministerial accountability. The speaker makes a number of references to the capacity of agency reform to promote and protect ministerial accountability and in this respect appeals to a broader audience

by arguing the compatibility of political conventions with the financial recommendations being proposed. Indeed, it is claimed that both ministerial accountability and parliamentary oversight will be given more content through the implementation of the workgroup's recommendations. They state:

Bovendien moet meer resultaatgericht management de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid een meer betekenisvolle inhoud verschaffen. Ministers moeten aanspreekbaar zijn voor de wijze waarop verantwoordelijkheden binnen departementaal zijn toegedeeld, naast de aanspreekbaarheid op de mate waarin de beoogde resultaten als gevolg van de verantwoordelijkheidstoedeling al dan niet zijn gerealiseerd (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:30).

[Moreover, more results-orientated management must give ministerial accountability a more meaningful content. Ministers must be answerable for the way in which responsibilities are divided within ministries, next to accountability for the degree to which the intended results, as a consequence of separation of responsibilities, have or have not been realized.]

In addition the political goal of greater parliamentary insight into the activities of the administration is associated with the reforms, and thereby the minister's performance. Such statements are less prominent than more direct references to ministerial accountability itself. The document states:

Ook voor de Staten-Generaal kan meer resultaatgericht management op de departementen positieve gevolgen hebben. Meer dan tot op heden zullen de Staten-Generaal door een sterkere nadruk op de resultaten van het beleid inzicht krijgen in de produkten en diensten die met de aangewende collectieve middelen worden voortgebracht (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:v).

[More results-orientated management in ministries can also have positive consequences for the Parliament. More than in the past, the Parliament can, through greater emphasis upon the results of policy, get more insight into the products and services that have been produced with the collective means used].

The financial categories and ideas dominating the text are presented as enabling the achievement of political principles such as ministerial accountability (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:ii, x, 2-3, 9-10, 21). This extends the appeal of the argumentation beyond an audience in the financial sphere of the administration to political actors more generally and can be interpreted as an appeal to the universal audience. It enables the Ministry of Finance, particularly in the context of the fragmented Dutch administration, to demonstrate to other ministries and the parliament that they all have an interest in pursuing, or at least considering seriously, agency reform.

### 5.6.1.2 *Premises of argumentation*

The arguments in this document proceed from a number of agreements regarding what is desirable for financial management in government, and the practice of financial management more generally. Beginning from agreements about the desirable, it is evident throughout the argumentation that recommendations for the creation of agencies, and for changes to financial regulations more broadly have been made with the priority, or rather value, of efficiency in mind. Efficiency as a value, preceding the kinds of conclusions and arguments in the document, is evident from explicit statements about the goals of the workgroup and the motivations for the reforms. Already in the opening paragraphs of the document, it is stated:

Het beheer bij de rijksoverheid is volop in ontwikkeling. Op de fundamente die sinds 1985 met de operatie comptabel bestel zijn gelegd, wordt in dit rapport verder gebouwd. Het gaat daarbij om het formuleren van praktisch toepasbare oplossingen voor bestaande knelpunten ter bevordering van *doelmatig beheer*... (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:1, *my emphasis*)

[Management in central government is developing steadily. This report builds further upon the foundations that were laid with the operation accounting system. It is about the formulation of practical and applicable solutions for existing bottlenecks in order to promote *efficient management*...*my emphasis*]

Or, at different points in the document one finds opening lines such as;

Vanuit de optiek van doelmatig beheer... (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:vi).

[From the perspective of efficient management...]

Similarly, with regard to the creation of agencies the value of efficiency is identified as the primary motivation. This is illustrated in the statements below:

Het verdient aanbeveling voor dienstonderdelen waar een doelmatige bedrijfsvoering gediend is met speciale beheersregels... een apart beheersregime te ontwikkelen via de constructie van een agentschap (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:75).

[It deserves recommendation to develop a separate management regime via the construction of an agency for organizational units where efficient business operations will be served by special management rules.]

Wanneer geen besparingen mogelijk zouden zijn op het apparaatsbudget van de betrokken dienst en van het betrokken departement, moet men zich met nadruk de vraag stellen in hoeverre het zinvol is dat men zich de kosten en

moeite getroost die onvermijdelijk aan de creatie van vormen van verzelfstandigen verbonden zullen zijn (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:xiii).

[When no savings on the running costs of the concerned organization and ministry would be possible, the question must be raised strongly to what extent it is desirable, to invest the costs and efforts that are unavoidably linked to autonomization.]

Translating the term *doelmatig* from Dutch to English, and as efficiency, is somewhat problematic because it can have broader applications than the technical notion of efficiency as the ratio between inputs and outputs. Indeed, some translate the term as effectiveness. However, the financial tone of the document makes it difficult to interpret the term in a broader way especially given the emphasis upon savings. This interpretation has also taken into consideration the lack of any direct use of the term *doelmatig* or *efficient* with input or output calculations. There are instead various references throughout the document to the desire for savings from the financial reforms being introduced, such as the following:

Als gevolg van de flexibilisering van het beheersregime bij verzelfstandiging kan worden verwacht dat in de bedrijfsmatige sfeer voordelen worden gerealiseerd die ook tot budgettaire besparingen kunnen leiden (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:84).

[As a consequence of making the management regime more flexible with autonomization, it can be expected that advantages will be realized in the business sphere/operations that can lead to budgetary savings.]

With regard to any confusion that might exist about the priorities being espoused in the document, it is noted that the appearance of statements about savings in the document, were often followed by references to obtaining efficiency improvements. An example is presented below:

Vanuit deze optiek ligt het in de rede dat aan agentschappen en de moederdepartement eniglei vorm van taakstellende efficiencykorting opgelegd krijgen (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:84)

[From this perspective it seems plausible that agencies and the mother ministry are given the task to achieve efficiency savings.]

Although agreements regarding the value of efficiency underlie the recommendations for introducing changes to financial management, it is still conceived of as subordinate to political priorities such as ministerial accountability and the authorization of the parliament for budgetary decisions. Such a hierarchy of values is illustrated by repeated reassurances throughout the text

that the proposals being introduced will not interfere with these conventions. The audience is advised:

Ministers moeten aanspreekbaar zijn voor de wijze waarop verantwoordelijkheden binnende departementaal zijn toegeedeeld, naast de aanspreekbaarheid op de mate waarin de beoogde resultaten als gevolg van de verantwoordelijkheidstoedeling al dan niet zijn gerealiseerd. (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:30)

[Ministers must be answerable for the way in which responsibilities are divided within ministries, as well as for the degree to which the intended results, following from the division of responsibility are realized or not.]

Other references include,

Het is een kwestie van enerzijds administratieve doelmatigheid en anderzijds invulling van het autorisatierecht waarover duidelijk ook de opinie van de Staten-Generaal gehoord zou moeten worden (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:xii).

[It is a matter of administrative efficiency on the one hand and giving content to the authorization right on the other, where the opinion of parliament should clearly be heard as well.]

There is also some manoeuvring in the argumentation around this hierarchy of values regarding ministerial accountability as is evident in the following sentence:

Natuurlijk blijft de minister onder wie een agentschap ressorteert, ten aanzien van de Staten Generaal volledig verantwoordelijk voor het beleid en beheer van agentschappen, maar defacto zal de positie van de minister ten aanzien van het beheer wel veranderen. (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:xi)

[Naturally, the minister under which an agency resides, remains completely accountable to the parliament for the policy and management of the agency, but defacto the position of the minister towards (agency) management will change.]

The clearest evidence for the hierarchy of values between efficiency and ministerial accountability is, however, reflected in references to distinctions between external autonomization or ZBOs, and internal autonomization such as agencies. It is written:

De situatie kan zich voordoen vanuit het gezichtspunt van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid, dat de voorkeur uitgaat naar het verrichten van bepaalde taken door het rijk, maar dat bepaalde wensen vanuit de bedrijfsvoering er - ondanks de voorgestelde verandering van de comptabele en personele beheersregels- toe leiden dat toch gekozen wordt voor externe verzelfstandiging, in plaats van interne verzelfstandigen. Bestuurlijk-politieke overwegingen prevaleren dan niet. Om oneigenlijke keuzen te voorkomen wordt een differentiatie van beheersregels voorgesteld (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:x)

[From the point of view of the ministerial accountability, the situation can occur where the preference is for government to perform a particular task, but that certain wishes from the management – despite the proposed (government wide) changes to the personnel and material management rules-lead to a choice for external autonomization instead of internal autonomization. Administrative-political considerations do not prevail in such cases. In order to prevent improper choices being taken, differentiation of financial rules is proposed.]

From this statement, it can be concluded that agencies represent a way to address the hierarchy of values between ministerial accountability and efficiency, since it is proposed they can satisfy, to some extent, the requirements of both.

Agreements about loci in the argumentation are most prominently agreements emphasizing quality, or rather, the unique, although uses of quantitative loci are also made. From the perspective of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2003) the prominence of qualitative loci is surprising, since as will be shown further below, the argumentative techniques in the text are predominantly quasi-logical. Typical references that lend agencies a qualitative value include statements about their special character or special rules, their different status or their distinction from the *normal* government services. They include the following:

Gelet op het bijzondere karakter van agentschappen...(Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:85)

[Given the special character of agencies....]

*Speciale* beheersregels voor dienstonderdelen, die *afwijken* van de bovendepartementale regelgeving, kunnen worden beschouwd als een vorm van interne verzelfstandigen. De werkgroep beveelt hiertoe aan een *apart* beheersregime te ontwikkelen via de constructie van een agentschap (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:x *my emphasis*)

[*Special* management rules for organizational units that *depart* from the general ministerial regulations can be considered as a form of internal autonomization. The workgroup recommends to this end the development of a *different/separate* management regime via the construction of an agency.]

Aside from references to the specialness of agencies, it may be concluded that qualitative loci are also present in the recommendation that candidates for agencies be considered case by case and not according to some general principle or blueprint (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:82). Agencies are promoted as a good thing in the argumentation because they are unique, special and different to the normal arrangements.

Quantitative loci used in the argumentation include references to agencies having *more* authority, *more* independence and

*more* accountability. Sometimes such statements are made in isolation from any comparison, but they are also made with reference to other government services (such as the example above) or other forms of autonomization such as state companies and earlier experiments with self-management. In such cases, agencies are simply said to offer more than these arrangements. As will be discussed further below in the argumentative techniques adopted, it is significant that agencies are consistently identified as having management capacities that are analogous to ZBOs, but then with more accountability.

Although it has not been possible to identify any agreed upon truths from the document, there are a number of facts and presumptions that the argumentation is premised upon. This includes the fact that financial differentiation will make efficiency gains possible. On the one hand, efficiency has already been identified as a value or priority in the document that has motivated the proposal for reform, but the certainty that it will be achieved through financial differentiation is also put forward as a matter of fact. In the description of the task of the workgroup it becomes apparent that, given the goal of efficiency, they should identify the practical implications for introducing financial differentiation with respect to legal consequences, the budgetary process and for line managers (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:2). This would suggest that the fact that financial differentiation, or rather agencies, will bring about efficiency has already been agreed upon. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca explain that when values are not precisely defined, it is possible to also treat them as facts (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:76). Indeed, by doing so the speaker is able to promote a particular value in a factual way and thereby obtain the adherence of the universal audience, and not just a particular audience such as financial experts. As I will discuss further below, there is no attempt to define efficiency in this report except for linking it with the attainment of savings.

The argumentation also departs from presumptions regarding the ability of ministries to identify appropriate incentives for managers to achieve efficiency and to set clear indicators regarding tasks and results. In describing their vision of a management model for the future, the workgroup states that “Binnen de afgesproken randvoorwaarden mogen diensten meer zelfstandig beslissingen nemen over de inzet van de middelen en de weg bepalen waarlangs de taken het meest doelmatig ver-



vuld kunnen worden” (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:19). [Within the agreed conditions, units are able to make more independent decisions about the use of resources and the way in which tasks can be completed most efficiently.] They explain that ministries should set clearly stated expectations or results ad hoc, and that incentives should be built into the financial and personnel management regime (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:20-21). They write “Onder meer door prikkels in te bouwen in het financiële en personele beheersregime kan worden bevorderd dat verantwoordelijke managers in mindere mate zullen streven naar vergroting van het apparaat en maximale uitputting van het budget” (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:20). [Among other things building incentives into the financial and personnel management regime, the responsibility of managers can be promoted such that they will to a lesser extent seek to increase their apparatus budget and exhaust their budget maximally.] It is presumed that ministries themselves are or will be familiar with the working circumstances of managers and will know the kind of results that can be expected from them and how to motivate managers to achieve these. Agency reform and the associated changes to the financial regulations come to appear a legitimate proposal for achieving efficiency since it is presumed that ministries will know both how to inspire this and also identify the results to achieve it.

### 5.6.1.3 *Techniques of argumentation*

Quasi-logical argumentation is adopted to make the introduction of agency reform and the other financial changes being proposed in the report appear acceptable, even desirable. This occurs by using argumentative techniques that divide the whole into its parts, and through comparison and definition.

The use of a division of the whole into its parts becomes most evident in the second chapter of the report wherein the five main financial problems of managers are identified, alongside budgetary legislation and the broader macro principles of government. Any solution to the *micro* problems that managers experience is presented as requiring adherence to the principles of ministerial accountability, parliamentary authorization for budget decisions, and *macro* goals regarding budgetary control. This idea of adjusting some financial arrangements without interfering with the system as a whole is presented in the following ways:

De vraag is nu of, gelet op de naar voren gebrachte knelpunten op micro-niveau, aanpassing van de beheersregels op macro-niveau mogelijk en wenselijk is in het licht van de visie op het financiële management en afgezet tegen de overige macro-doelstellingen. Gezocht dient te worden naar oplossingen die tegemoet komen aan gerechtvaardigde verlangens van de beleidsdirecties, zonder dat de macrodoelstellingen en uitgangspunten onevenredig worden aangetast (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:34).

[The question is now whether, given the highlighted problems at micro level, adjustments of the management rules at the macro level are possible and desirable in light of the vision of financial management and in contrast to the other macro goals. Solutions need to be found that satisfy the justified desires of the policy directorates, without the macro goals and principles being unproportionally damaged.]

In this quasi-logical argumentative process, differentiation of financial regulations, such as changes to the running costs or the introduction of accruals, appear to be acceptable solutions because they do not interfere with the macro principles identified. Throughout the presentation of the workgroup's recommendations in later chapters of the report, the speaker continually points to the possibility of maintaining macro principles despite financial adjustments to the micro level. With regard to agency reform the reader is advised:

Het agentschap is bedoeld voor onderdelen van het rijk waarbij een doelmatiger bedrijfsvoering bereikt kan worden via een speciaal beheersregime, zonder dat de macro-doelstellingen van normering, allocatie en beheersing in gevaar komen (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:73).

[The agency is meant for units of central government where a more efficient business operation can be reached via a special management regime, without macro goals or standards, putting allocation and control into danger.]

The proposals of the workgroup appear reasonable because of their presentation in an argumentative style that reflects a mathematical reduction.

This use of the division of the whole into its parts to persuade the audience of the desirability of agency reform also has implications for the connotations attached to internal and external autonomization in the report. Agency reform is labelled internal autonomization and thereby is attributed membership to organizations that comply with the main principles of central government. Alternatively, the label external autonomization acts to distinguish ZBOs from this membership, and thereby lessen their desirability in this argumentation. This appeal to logic in the text is pursued even though there are some exceptions to the conformity of agencies to macro principles. In particular, the recommendation that some agencies use an accrual

accounting system is inconsistent with references in the report to the budgetary principle of uniformity in government accounts. The speaker deals with this exception by requiring adjustments to accounting legislation so agencies will still conform to the *headlines* or macro arrangements of the system.

The quasi-logical technique of definition is also used in the argumentation. This occurs prior to the discussion of possible recommendations for improved management and involves presenting a vision of public management in the future. A *new* (note the qualitative loci) management model is foreseen and five features of this model are identified. They include: more complete management (of results and resources), central steering on the headlines (not on the details), agreements about products and budget limits, systematic accountability through periodic reporting, and periodic examination of (the necessity of) public tasks (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:22-23). This definition acts, by its very presence, to strengthen the credibility of the argumentation by making it more formal. It also functions to limit the elements that need to be discussed if one is to argue for improvements in public management. This is because the vision itself has defined what needs to be done in order to satisfy results management. The definition operates to make the conclusions of the workgroup appear more logical since they correlate with many of the items that have already been defined in the document as constituting good management. In the presentation of proposals for agency reform, for example most of the features are already identified as defining a vision of management for the future are present.

Complementing the quasi-logical features of the argumentation, there is also at least one appeal to argumentation that relies upon the structure of reality. This occurs through reference to earlier *successful* financial reforms, which are presented as precursors to the workgroup's recommendations. An appeal is made to the audience's reasonable belief since the recommendations are presented as part of a sequential movement in a particular direction that is always getting better, as is reflected in the title of the document *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer* [Further building on management]. The argument of unlimited development can be illustrated by the following quotation that explicitly establishes interdependence with the workgroup's proposals and earlier operations to improve government accounting, and the idea that there is continuous improvement:

Het beheer bij de rijksoverheid is volop in ontwikkeling. Op de fundamente die sinds 1985 met de operatie comptabel bestel zijn gelegd, wordt in dit rapport verder gebouwd (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:1)

[The management of central government is steadily developing. This report builds further upon the foundations laid in 1985 with the operation accounting system.]

There are numerous references to *Operatie Comptabel Bestel* [operation accounting system] throughout the document, as well as to the project *zelfbeheer* [zelf management], which involved delegating more financial functions to line managers. By presenting these past activities as a (factual) success, and presenting initiatives (the next stage) that refine *further* the financial system, agency reform comes to appear as a reasonable, even inescapable, progression in financial management.

Finally, argumentative techniques to structure reality can also be identified in the document. This includes both argumentation by example and by metaphor. In describing their vision for desirable management, the workgroup point to initiatives taken in other countries including the UK, Sweden, Australia, Denmark, Canada and New Zealand. These examples act to demonstrate to the audience that the proposals to adjust the financial system are sensible, even modern initiatives, especially since they are all presented as good initiatives. Regarding the international examples identified, the report states:

Een algemene lijn die in verschillende landen kan worden onderkend is dat de resultaten meer centraal komen te staan in het begrotingsproces, en dat budgethouders tijdens de uitvoering een grotere vrijheid hebben in de besteding van de apparaatsbudgetten. Zo is er in het buitenland sprake van een (tussentijdse) verantwoordingsplicht, periodieke doorlichting en het behoud van (bespaarde) middelen, als ook vaak een soepeler eindejaarsregime (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:31).

[A general line that can be recognized in different countries is that results have become to be more central to the budget process, and that budget holders have a greater freedom to distribute their material budget during implementation. Internationally there is talk of accountability requirements, periodic reporting and the ability to keep saved funds, as well as a more supple end of year regime.]

This observation also communicates to the audience that the reforms being proposed by the workgroup are of a similar type to other international developments and to support the rule that as elsewhere, they will also be successful. This makes reference to an international community of agency reformers.

With regard to the metaphors adopted throughout the argumentation, one notes the use of the terms flexibility, supple

and spaciousness to describe the proposals of the workgroup. Agencies are described as organizations with a greater *eindjaar-flexibiliteit* [end of year flexibility] (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:74, 71,72) or as being able to in an “passend wijze flexibel in te spelen op de eisen die gesteld worden” [in a suitable way *play* (another metaphor) flexibly to meet the demands that are set] (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:75). Similarly, they are also described as being *soepeler* [more supple] (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:72) and as having *ruimere bevoegdheden* [more spacious authority] (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:71). The financial character of agency reform is made more tangible to the audience by giving it these physical forms. Other metaphors used throughout the text include the term freedom. While describing the proposals of the workgroup and their vision of a management model for the future, frequent reference is made to the creation of freedom for government organizations or their managers. It is stated for example that:

Doelmatig beheer bij bepaalde overheidsonderdelen kan gediend zijn met *vrijheden*... (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:14).

[Efficient management in certain government organizations can be served with freedoms]

Similarly the following citation was noted:

Bovendien de *vrijheden* die een agentschap krijgt, materieel van invloed zijn op de wijze van goedkeuring van de uitgaven en ontvangsten door de Staten-Generaal (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:74).

[Moreover all the freedom that an agency receives, will have a material influence upon the way that parliament approves expenditure and receipts.]

In such statements the audience is being brought to understand the changes to financial regulations in terms of the political or philosophical ideals of freedom. Instead of stating that new regulations have been created or old ones adjusted, it is written that freedom has been granted or created. The positive baggage associated with these ideals is being used to promote a positive impression of the proposals of the workgroup. The term *verzelfstandigen* [autonomization] itself also includes reference to autonomy but then in the passive form. It suggests a more mechanical idea of autonomy as controlled phenomenon. References to the term *verzelfstandigen* in the report occur primarily in sections of the report discussing different types of autonomization, and more specifically making the comparisons between ZBOs and agencies (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:68-70).

Finally it can also be argued that the terms *efficient* and *doelmatig* [efficient or effective] are used in metaphorical ways throughout the text. Along with the term results, references to *doelmatigheid* or efficiency are among the most cited words in the text and primary to the argumentation. They are used to either describe the reforms of the workgroup or justify the introduction of these reforms, but they are never defined. To this extent efficiency in the document can be described as a dormant metaphor, which has lost its origin in input-output calculations and become an obvious feature of agencies. Typical statements include:

Het agentschap is bedoeld voor onderdelen van het rijk waarbij een doelmatiger bedrijfsvoering bereikt kan worden.... (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:72).

[The agency is intended for sections of the government where more efficient business operations can be reached...]

Another example is as follows:

Er zijn oplossingsrichtingen voor bestaande knelpunten geformuleerd, om een doelmatiger financieel beheer tot stand te brengen...(Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:87)

[There are solutions for the existing bottlenecks identified in order that more efficient financial management can be brought about....]

### 5.6.2 Document two - *Verantwoord verzelfstandigen* [*Accountable autonomization*]

*Verantwoord verzelfstandigen* is a report by the Commission Sint that was established to investigate and clarify the principles that should guide the choices for autonomization. It was published in 1994 at the request of the secretaries general (Heads of the Ministries) who had commissioned the report as part of their focus upon improving the implementation of policy and creating core Ministries. The report is 38 pages long and defines different types of autonomization, among them agency reform, that can be used to separate policy from operations. It seeks to identify a systematic and consequent approach that can be used across ministries for deciding upon the appropriate form of autonomization. Although it briefly mentions privatization and contracting out, its focus is primarily upon internal (agencies) and external autonomization (ZBOs). It considers the consequences of internal and external autonomization for ministerial accountability and identifies the kinds of steering instruments available to ministries for controlling these organizations.

The report consists of six chapters including an introduction (chapter 1) and a list of recommendations for the future policy of autonomization (chapter 6). In the second chapter of the report the motivations for autonomization are identified and it is observed that autonomization, and particularly external autonomization (ZBOs), has been used for inappropriate or misconstrued reasons such as escaping government cutbacks. This is followed by a list of features that can promote a good separation of policy and implementation, and that is consistent with political principles. The report then describes the different forms of autonomization, their implications for ministerial accountability and the kinds of steering instruments available to ministries (chapter 3). Some of the false presumptions about autonomization are identified and systematic *think steps* for how to choose a form of autonomization are then presented (chapter 4). A list of features that are important in establishing a good steering relationship between the core department and autonomized organization is also described (chapter 5), before presenting the final recommendations of the report (chapter 6).

A central observation of the report is that the same sorts of steering instruments can be used in the cases of internal and external autonomization (ZBOs), however unlike internal autonomization (agencies) external autonomization (ZBOs) is described as requiring a transfer of ministerial authority to the autonomized organization. The report concludes with 11 recommendations, many of which are directed at perceived problems with external autonomization (ZBOs). There are also recommendations that apply to autonomization as a whole including internal autonomization (agencies). In particular, it is concluded that all proposals for autonomization should be thought out according to the think steps identified in the report. This will enable the various forms of autonomization to be pursued in a more consistent way. Another recommendation is that internal autonomization (agencies) be considered the equal of external autonomization (ZBOs) in attaining better functioning central government, but superior in ensuring accountability. It identifies only limited situations where external autonomization (ZBOs) is appropriate.

#### 5.6.2.1 *Ethos and the construction of the audience*

The self-presentation of the speaker is one of a conservator of political principles and orderliness within the organization of

government. This is reflected in a plea for the *primacy of politics*, the emphasis upon protecting the principle of ministerial accountability and the use of definitional categories to separate out different organizational types in government. From the outset of the report, the speaker pursues a sober and rational perspective on government reform by distancing herself from management fashion and hype. It is stated:

Het thema verzelfstandigen krijgt soms trekken van een modetrend. Dat wil niet zeggen dat verzelfstandigen geen goede tendens zou kunnen zijn, maar wel dat verzelfstandiging en in het bijzonder externe verzelfstandiging te vaak als panacee voor allerlei problem wordt gezien (Commissie Sint, 1994:6)

[The theme autonomization sometimes becomes like a fashion. This is not to say that autonomization could not be a good development but that it, and particularly external autonomization, is too often seen as a panacea for all kinds of problems.]

Instead, the trust of the audience is obtained by emphasizing a careful, principled approach to autonomization in which the purposes of the reform, and the formal roles and limits of possible organizational types appear to be precisely defined. This is reflected in the use of definitions throughout the report and the attempt to map out different types of autonomization, their features and the consequences for the relationship between minister and parliament (Commissie Sint, 1994: 21).

In discussing the matter of autonomization, and with it agency reform, the speaker also makes an appeal to the broader implications of such reforms for government and society more generally. The presentation of a formal scheme separating out organizational types, roles and functions follows from an expression of concern for the well being of society and democracy. It is stated:

Inhoudelijk en principele vragen over het primaat van de politiek, de positie van de overheid in (of soms tegenover) de samenleving en de democratische legitimiteit komen bij concrete verzelfstandigings discussies vaak niet of onvoldoende systematisch aan de orde (Commissie Sint, 1991:6).

[Substantive and principled questions about the primacy of politics, the position of the government in (or sometimes versus) society and the democratic legitimacy, are often not, or insufficiently systematic consideration, given attention in concrete discussions about autonomization.]

To this extent the attention for different organizational forms of autonomization is made to appear central to addressing more universal problems and issues such as the *primacy of politics*. This can be interpreted as an appeal to the universal audience



with reference to the *primacy of politics* providing a unifying label under which the commission could present its findings. It is also consistent with the views of the ruling government at the time the report was presented (see section 5.5.2). The focus that the speaker lends to ministerial accountability is also part of demonstrating the universal interest in discussing autonomization since protecting this convention is presented as part of pursuing, as the title states, *accountable autonomization*.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, given the absence of other ideas about accountability or the political sphere, ministerial accountability is presented as the ultimate means to ensuring the attainment of the primacy of politics.

Other ways in which autonomization is given broader appeal is through references to the matter of collective interests and the appropriate role of government in society. These are made together with the presence for autonomization thinksteps. References to the relationship between politics and society and the association of clear distinctions in forms of autonomization with the attainment of accountability, and particularly ministerial accountability, can be interpreted as constructing the universal audience in the argumentation. This is because the presence of these issues in the argumentation is part of giving wider appeal to the focus upon different types of autonomization. The speaker is demonstrating that autonomization is not to be simply interpreted as relating to particular organizational types or financial constructions, but it has important political consequences and even consequences for society more generally.

For the most part of the argumentation, however, the speaker adopts far narrower technocratic or legal categories to discuss issues surrounding agency reform. This is reflected, not least, in the use of the term/s (internal or external) autonomization itself, which is never once throughout the document replaced by their household names, ZBOs [quangos] or agentschappen [agencies]. There is also a wealth of references to *organisatieeenheid* or *organisatieonderdelen* [organizational units] or *taakstellingen*, [tasks], the *bestuurlijke bevoegdheden* [(type of) administrative authority], the *beleidskern* [policy core], *bestuurlijke inrichting* [administrative design]; *beheersmatig en beleidsmatig relaties* [management and policy relationships] the presence of *ondergeschik-*

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<sup>14</sup> Note the term *verantwoord* can also be translated as responsible or sensible.

*theid*, an hierarchical relationship, or not, with the minister and the *stuuringsrelaties* [steering relationships]. References in the argumentation to earlier reports and debates on government organization such as *De organisatie en werkwijze van de rijksdienst* [The organization and work practices of central administration] (Commissie Sint, 1994:5) also point the audience to the *organizational* genre of the knowledge being produced in the report. In addition, legal definitions and relationships are also prominent, particularly in the discussion of ministerial accountability, whose content, as we shall see, is measured in the report by the presence or not of administrative legal authority. These organizational and legal aspects of the argumentation construct a particular audience concerned with Home or Internal Affairs.

There are also points in the argumentation, primarily during the discussion of steering (Commissie Sint, 1994:16, 9) when special attention is being given to financial categories and ideas. As with the previous report, in these sections of the argumentation technical accounting concepts are used and there is even mention of products rather than tasks, performance rather than correct use of authority. This would suggest the speaker has also given some consideration for another particular audience, such as the Ministry/Minister of Finance, concerned with financial expertise.

Finally, there are other attempts to give the above particular concerns of the argumentation universal credibility by noting that the speaker's recommendations have been based upon examinations of four actual cases of autonomization. This is part of the scientific justification of the findings, which was consistently observed in Dutch argumentation. At the same time, however, it is also explained that "De commissie heeft er bewust van afgezien om de vier praktijksituaties in dit rapport te bespreken" (Commissie Sint, 1994:5). [The commission has consciously decided not to discuss the four actual cases in this report.] In terms of the descriptions of the Dutch administrative context, statements assuring the audience that the investigation has involved consultation with the autonomized organizations, or rather, *gesprekspartners* [speaking partners] (Commissie Sint, 1994:5) can be interpreted as a specific reference to the Dutch universal audience.

### 5.6.2.2 *Premises of argumentation*

The argumentation in the document begins with the implicit agreement that clear formal categories, in this case about autonomization, can prevent disorder in practice. This idea can be considered a truth in the argumentation, rather than a fact, because of its general nature and its possible application to many themes not just autonomization. The truth that formal order will assist in both the decision to and application of autonomization is evident from the preoccupation in the document with a systematic approach, defining the different features of types of autonomization, and recommendations for think steps to guide future decisions about autonomization. In the introduction to the document the speaker announces that clearing up the accountability issues of autonomization requires a systematic approach and that this in turn represents a well thought out approach (Commissie Sint, 1994:5, 6). Other indications of the agreement that order in principles will, of themselves, promote order in practice is evident from a table in the document defining types of autonomization and the various features associated with each type (Commissie Sint, 1994:24). All of these schemes are presented without any discussion of autonomization in practice or the possibility that such schemes are sometimes difficult to apply. The lack of attention to these kinds of application problems would suggest that there has been agreement that it is getting the principles right that will make autonomization a well thought out reform.

Among the facts that underlie the argumentation is the agreement that external autonomization, or rather ZBOs, are problematic and have been created for improper reasons. Although there is no detailed reference to the experience of ZBOs, their appearance in the report is generally accompanied by cause for concern. The fact that ZBOs have been created for invalid reasons is also reflected in the description of assumptions about autonomization in the report (Commissie Sint, 1994:10-11), which makes special reference to ZBOs, and the recommendations of the report which are primarily focussed upon either improving ZBOs or avoiding them. The facts about the poor character of ZBOs as a starting point for argumentation is conducive to demonstrating the appeal of alternatives such as internal autonomization.

There are also a number of presumptions underlying the argumentation in the document and these are most evident in the

discussions of ministerial accountability. As noted above an important conclusion of the commission is that internal and external autonomization can be distinguished by their impact upon ministerial accountability. Agencies are presented as a safer and more transparent option since ministers are unimpeded by legislation to intervene in operations and can thereby be held accountable for achieving goals and tasks (Commissie Sint, 1994:6-7). ZBOs, by contrast, are described as requiring legislation and therein the transfer of ministerial authority for administrative activities. Ministerial accountability becomes then limited since such legislation can prevent ministerial intervention in operational details. These statements about differences in ministerial accountability presume that it is not possible to make provisions for ministerial intervention within legislation for ZBOs. They also presume that their capacity to intervene in the case of agencies will be for the correct purposes of accountability and not for other political goals. The possibility that unimpeded intervention could get in the way of transparency is absent from the argumentation. The speaker leads the reader to believe that if there is complete ministerial accountability, such as in the case of agencies, then the minister will (always) be able to control for agency activities and ensure goals and tasks are met. This presumes a very direct role and influence of the minister on agency activities and there is no mention of the ability that other actors could play a role in protecting or indeed challenging the primacy of politics.

Clearly the priority of ministerial accountability is central among the values about autonomization being presented in the argumentation. The title of the document *Accountable autonomization* gives an indication of this priority. Already in the introduction of the document it is stated that autonomization can

bijdragen tot een beter functionerende overheid op voorwaarde dat de politiek-beleidsmatige controle goed vorm krijgt en de verantwoordelijkheidstoedeling goed is doordacht en geregeld (Commissie Sint, 1994:5).

[contribute to a better functioning government on the condition that the political-policy controls are given proper form and that the accountability divisions are well thought out and organized.]

Accountability, and more specifically ministerial accountability, is presented as a precondition for pursuing autonomization reforms and as an expression of the *primacy of politics* over administration more generally. Its unquestionable value in the argumentation is reflected in the absence of any detailed discussion

of its content, except for broad references to the ability of ministers to intervene. Furthermore, the supreme position that is granted to ministerial accountability throughout the argumentation is evident in its role in distinguishing, and making more attractive internal autonomization (agencies) as opposed to external autonomization (ZBOs).

The value of complete ministerial accountability, and with it internal autonomization, is also presented as if it can be achieved without any trade offs for the other values that appear in the text. Transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and the pursuit of core departments are all presented as being compatible with a situation in which the accountability relations are clearly defined. Indeed, it is suggested that to achieve one of these goals, the other values also have to be present. It is stated at the beginning of the report:

De organisatorische scheiding van beleidstaken en uitvoeringstaken en verzelfstandiging van taken kunnen bijdragen tot de doorzichtigheid en doelmatigheid van de overheidsorganisatie. Maar dan moet bij de verdeling van verantwoordelijkheden en bij de inrichting van de sturing wel op basis van een systematische benadering worden geopereerd. Zonder dat zou de doorzichtigheid en de doelmatigheid juist minder kunnen worden (Commissie Sint, 1994:6).

[The organizational division of policy tasks and implementation tasks and the autonomization of tasks can contribute to the transparency and efficiency of government organizations. But this requires that the separation of accountabilities and design of steering are based upon a systematic approach. Without this transparency and efficiency could be reduced.]

To this extent, agreement about a hierarchy of values would seem to have been avoided and instead compatibility between the different objectives is emphasized.

The loci adopted in the argumentation reflect implicit agreements with the audience regarding quantitative benefits. Internal autonomization, or agency reform, is presented as a good thing by describing it as a “meer verdergaande vorm van intern verzelfstandigen” (Commissie Sint, 1994:9), [a more further going form of internal autonomization] which offers for example 'meer beslis ruimte' [more decision space]. This is in contrast to the appearance of ZBOs which are described without adjectives and as simply external autonomization. Another example of quantitative loci throughout the argumentation occurs with regard to descriptions of ministerial accountability. Agency reform is described as embracing *complete* ministerial accountability while ZBOs are presented as having only *limited* (or

even less attractive incomplete) ministerial accountability (Commissie Sint, 1994:24). References to quantitative categories in combination with the value of ministerial accountability promote the goodness of internal autonomization in the argumentation, as well as help to raise doubt about the credibility of external autonomization. Other quantitative figures used to describe accountability include more general references to the “normale volledige systeem van ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid” [normal complete system of ministerial accountability] and to the possibility of getting the *desired measure* of accountability or of *dividing* accountability (Commissie Sint, 1994:6,12,21,29). As we shall see these descriptions correspond with the quasi-logical techniques adopted in the argumentation and with the attempt to set out a systematic approach to autonomization. Aside from the quantitative references to autonomization and accountability, quantitative loci are also used in the discussion of steering agencies. References are made to *more steering* throughout the argumentation and the *volledige* [complete] steering of agencies (Commissie Sint, 1994:8,14). Again, these references act to promote the desirability of agency reform as a better and more complete organizational type than ZBOs.

### 5.6.2.3 *Techniques of argumentation*

The techniques adopted throughout the argumentation in *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen* are primarily of a quasi-logical nature. Techniques of definition, comparison and the division of the whole into its parts can all be identified in the document.

Definition plays an important role in the process of argumentation since it enables the speaker to set out the main characteristics of objects under discussion, and in that process put forward elements that are functional to the conclusions being pursued. Three main instruments "for putting organizational units at a distance" are identified in the body of the report including privatization, external autonomization and internal autonomization (Commissie Sint, 1994:7). Privatization is defined as a situation in which the position of the organization is dependent upon its competitiveness on the market (Commissie Sint, 1994:7). External autonomization has a legally defined administrative task and obtains its authority from the law. Internal autonomization is defined as "de organisatie/instelling is ondergeschikt aan de minister, die rechtstreeks de positie van

de verzelfstandigde eenheid bepaalt' (Commissie Sint, 1994:7). [The organization is subordinate to the minister, who directly defines the position of the autonomized organization]. These definitions act to enhance the preference for internal autonomization since the criteria of ministerial accountability is such a central value promoted throughout the text. Internal autonomization is shown to be a preferable choice because, by definition, it presents no challenges to ministerial accountability. In order to verify that external autonomization (ZBOs) is not consistent with ministerial accountability it is noted that, depending upon the legal arrangements of the organization, a minister cannot interfere with the operations of a ZBO (Commissie Sint, 1994:7). This is one of the few references in the text to the content of ministerial accountability and would suggest that it is constituted in this text as the ability of political actors to interfere unimpeded into the details of management activities.

In combination with the definitions presented in the argumentation, comparison is also an important technique adopted throughout the argumentation. Comparison between external (ZBOs) and internal (agencies) autonomization constitutes a large part of the argumentation. It is used to demonstrate that internal autonomization (agencies) is equal with external autonomization (ZBOs) in terms of the capacity to steer these organizations, but surpasses external autonomization in terms of the implications for ministerial accountability. A kind of yardstick is created to give more credibility to the claim that internal autonomization is preferable to external autonomization. The definitions of each type of autonomization in the document provide important points of comparison. While internal autonomization is said to maintain a hierarchical relationship with the minister, external autonomization does not (Commissie Sint, 1994:7). While internal autonomization is described as keeping organizations within the ministerial sphere (Commissie Sint, 1994:8), external autonomization does not, and while internal autonomization is said to maintain the convention of ministerial accountability in its complete form, external autonomization does not (Commissie Sint, 1994:8). In addition, these types of autonomization are also compared on their ability to enable the creation of core ministries, separate implementation from policy making, and on their capacity to steer. In all these matters the speaker concluded that internal and external

autonomization were equal. Some examples of the way these comparisons appeared in the argumentation included:

Sturing op hoofdlijnen is ook bij interne verzelfstandiging het uitgangspunt. Echter, anders dan bij externe verzelfstandiging kan bij interne verzelfstandiging wel worden ingegrepen in afzonderlijk gevallen (Commissie Sint, 1994:8).

[Steering on head lines is, in the case of internal autonomization, the starting point as well. In contrast to external autonomization however with internal autonomization it is possible to intervene in special cases.]

Intern verzelfstandigen en extern verzelfstandigen (niet zijnde privatisering) kunnen naar het oordeel van de commissie als gelijkwaardig worden beschouwd als het gaat om hun mogelijke betekenis voor het beter functioneren van de rijksdienst (Commissie Sint, 1994:22).

[Internal autonomization and external autonomization (excluding privatization) can according to the opinion of the commission be considered equal with regard to their potential for the better functioning of central government.]

Since the commission makes a plea for the value of complete ministerial accountability more generally, internal autonomization is in principle revealed to be the preferred type of autonomization, except in certain circumstances (Commissie Sint, 1994:21).

A third quasi-logical technique that is used to promote a choice for internal autonomization is the division of the whole into its parts. This technique is implicit to the think steps identified for making decisions about autonomization. Once again, the presentation of these think steps operated to demonstrate the incompatibility of ZBOs, and compatibility of agency reform, with a accountable and responsible policy of autonomization. The think steps are presented in the document as an instrument for distinguishing between the nature of existing government tasks and the appropriate form of autonomization that they should take. The whole of the problem of autonomization is divided into three procedural questions which in the final instance lead to the question: "Indien er sprake is van een taak voor de centrale overheid, is de vraag aan de orde naar de optimale bestuurlijk-organisatorische vormgeving" [If there is a task for central government, then the question regarding the optimal administrative form should be posed] (Commissie Sint, 1994:11). In effect, the think steps result in dividing the problem of autonomization into two possibilities: the transference



or not of ministerial authority.<sup>15</sup> Where there are acute reasons for transferring ministerial authority, the choice of external autonomization with a public law character is appropriate and when such reasons do not exist the desirability of putting tasks at a distance from the policy core, such as through agencies, should be considered (Commissie Sint, 1994:11). By dividing the problem of autonomization in this way, the speaker is given the opportunity to demonstrate the weaknesses of choosing ZBOs (transferring ministerial authority) and thereby show agency reform to be, in general, the most preferable type of autonomization.

Aside from quasi-logical techniques, argumentative techniques such as metaphor acted to structure the reality being presented in the document. Most of the metaphors used in the document give viability to a systematic and principled approach to autonomization. Among the metaphors that associate physical properties with ideas about agency reform and also promote the idea of a controlled approach, are the terms *doorzichtigheid* [transparency] and transparent. The report states that:

De organisatorische scheiding van beleidstaken en uitvoeringstaken en zelfstandiging van taken kunnen bijdragen tot de *doorzichtigheid*. (Commissie Sint, 1994:6, *my emphasis*).

[The organizational separation of policy tasks and implementation tasks and autonomization of tasks can contribute to the transparency.]

Government organizations and their actions are made to appear controllable by conceiving of them as something that can be seen through like glass. This gave greater legitimacy to the various categories being espoused in the report and their applicability.

In addition, the term *greep* or in English *grip* is used throughout the argumentation to create an image about ministerial control over autonomization. This makes it possible for the audience to conceive of the implementation of policy as something that can be touched or held, as long as it is carried out in the appropriate organizational form. Ministers are said to have no direct grip on ZBOs, while they can *ingrijpen*, take a grip into,

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<sup>15</sup> The possibility of privatization (state company) is also identified as an appropriate arrangement when it is decided that there is a collective interest in the task, but that the government should not do it itself. This possibility is not discussed further in the document however since "the discussions are concentrated on the other forms of autonomization" e.g. zbos and agencies.

the activities of agencies. Examples of the use of grip in the report, in both cases of autonomization, are as follows:

De extern verzelfstandigde organisatie kan - binnen de ruimte die de instellingswet biedt - relaties aangaan met ander partijen (andere overheden, verschillende departementen en particuliere partijen) zonder dat de minister (en het departement) daar directe *greep* op heeft (Commissie Sint, 1994:8 *my emphasis*).

[The externally autonomous organizations can – within the requirements that the initiating legislation provide the opportunity to – undertake relationships with other parties (other levels of government, different departments and particular private actors) without the minister (and the department) having a direct *grip* upon this.]

Echter, anders dan bij externe verzelfstandiging kan bij interne verzelfstandigen wel worden ingegrepen in afzonderlijk gevallen....In uiterste gevallen kan de minister dus direct ingripen (Commissie Sint, 1994:8)

[In contrast to external autonomization, with internal autonomization intervention (*literally taking grip of*) can occur in special cases...in exceptional cases ministers can thus directly intervene.]

Alongside the comparisons between ZBOs and agencies, having no grip and grip, were in the case of agencies, spatial references to describe the relationship with the minister. They are *ondergeschikt* [the term *onder* is literally under, in English subordinate] to the minister or the minister is *bovengeschikt* [the term *boven* literally above, in English superior to them] (Commissie Sint, 1994:7, 8).

An image of control is also promoted throughout the report with the use of the term *steering*. Along with accountability, this is one of the most cited terms in the text and appears in three of the headings used in the document. The *sturingsrelaties* [steering relationship], *sturingsinstrumenten* [steering instruments], *een-duidige aansturing* [the ability to steer unequivocally/without ambiguity], *beheersmatige sturing* [management steering], *beleidsmatige sturing* [policy steering] are all typical terms used throughout the report to describe relationships between departments or ministers and autonomized organizations. It assumes that the implementation of policies can be controlled, separated and directed in a precise and organized way, like the steering of an automobile or ship.

The use of steering together with the term systematic in the argumentation creates a very mechanical or machine like view of the public sector in which its conclusions for clear think steps for example seem viable and possible. Finally, there is continual use of the term *verzelfstandigen* [autonomization]

throughout this report which brings together ideas of freedom, but then controlled freedom, and management reform. In contrast to the previous document there are few references to the term *freedom* itself and instead it is said that autonomization provides more space [ruimte] for management decisions.

### 5.6.3 Document three - *Verder met resultaat* [Further with result]

*Verder met resultaat* is the first government wide evaluation of the agency programme government wide. The execution of the evaluation was already announced as part of the original package to introduce agency reform in the early 1990s. It was conducted by the Ministry of Finance itself who had been responsible for both the initiation of the reform idea and for advising departments in procedures of agency creation. The report was published in April 1998 and is 70 pages long. Its central objective was to assess whether the main objects of agency reform such as increasing efficiency were achieved. The report investigated both the implementation of agency reform, and whether this corresponded to the template following from *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer*. It also evaluated the effects of agency reform. It sought to learn from the experiences of existing agencies and its findings were gathered from documents and interviews with 14 agencies created prior to January 1997.

The report consists of a summary, eight chapters and two intermezzos [interludes] between chapters 2 and 3, and, between chapters 5 and 6. At the outset of the report it is stated that the policy theory behind agency creation is to be reconstructed and tested, and the methods of research are identified (chapter 1). The motivations for agency reform are described and it is shown that agencies were not only created to overcome problems with financial regulations, but also because they could act as a catalyst for change and to separate policy from operations (chapter 2). In chapters 3 and 4 the implementation of agency reform is studied by analyzing its correspondence to the features of results-orientated management (chapter 3), and the application of the conditions for agency status in the 14 cases (chapter 4). This is followed by an analysis of the effects of agency reform and more specifically the attainment of greater efficiency (chapter 5). Chapter 6 focussed upon the possibility to refine the conditions for agency status. Chapter 7 then checks the implications that agency reform has had for the macro goals of the budget and chapter 8 presented the final

conclusions of the report. The intermezzos between the chapters are used to focus upon the experience of the investigated organizations in an informative way. Issues relating to setting up the agency status are discussed such as informing personnel, creating an opening balance (first intermezzo), and the impact of agency reform on cultural change with its positive and negative side effects (second intermezzo) also described.

It is found that agency reform has been implemented in ways consistent with results-orientation and that the conditions for agency status were also satisfied by most agencies. Agencies are found to have promoted efficiency through the creation of incentives. Nevertheless, it is recommended that the conditions for obtaining agency status be refined and that performance indicators to measure efficiency be refined to:

- The business processes of the organization should be described in one or more products and services, and with a cost price;
- The prospective agency should have identified how efficiency gains will be measured before attaining the status. The basic indicator is cost price and one or more quality indicators; and
- There should be a results orientated external steering arrangement that connects with the internal planning and control cycle.

The report also noted that the term agency has been an impediment to spreading the use of an accrual accounting system and recommends that this label not be mandatory for organizations wishing to adopt an accrual accounting system.

#### 5.6.3.1 *Ethos and the construction of the audience*

In the first instance the presentation of the speaker is one of a scientist, since *objectivity* in the evaluation is claimed to have been achieved by applying scientific principles. It is explained that the *policy theory* of agencies is to be *tested* in the evaluation by applying a question list that has been designed in accordance with the principles of “volledigheid, juistheid, actualiteit en plausibiliteit” [completeness, correctness, relevance and plausibility] (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:12). In conceding the lack of a “voor/na of met/zonder metingen” (before and after measurements) for the evaluation, the speaker also sought to strate to the audience a familiarity with the requirements of controlled scientific experiments (Ministerie van Financiën,

1998:12). Despite incomplete accordance with scientific principles, the objectivity of the evaluation is still argued to be possible since caution has been taken to use *logical reasoning*, with careful consideration for *intervening variables and factors* (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:13). Throughout the argumentation the scientific identity of the speaker is primarily maintained through the presentation of numerous tables specifying the numbers of agencies that have satisfied different features of agency reform, and the relaying of this numerical information in the text. There were, after the introduction, very few further explicit references to theory or to variables. The most important exception was in chapter five when it is explained that it is not possible to give scientific evidence of how big the efficiency gains from agency reform have been, nor to demonstrate a relationship of causality between agency reform and efficiency (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:43). These references to a scientific approach, given that the document is an evaluation, can be interpreted as an appeal to attain agreement from the universal audience. It can also be interpreted as universal since such ways of speaking to obtain the credibility of the speaker with the audience were typical in all the Dutch agency accounts examined. Furthermore since the remainder of the document has a far greater business like or consultancy tone, the scientific features of the text seek to raise the arguments about efficiency and the business like activities to obtain broader universal agreement.

For the most part of the text, however, the speaker adopted a fairly informal tone where the financial features of agencies, that once seemed so technical in *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer*, are now reported in a user-friendly way. Financial terms are still prominent such as *cash based accounting*, *end of year limit* or *loan facility* but the audience is not weighed down, as in the earlier report, with detailed technical descriptions. Instead, the financial categories are presented in short simplified ways such as in the following paragraph on the problems of the financial regulations:

De als meest knellend ervaren beheersregel betrof de eindejaarsgrens c.q. het ontbreken van de mogelijkheid gelden te reserveren. Dit wordt elf keer genoemd....Opvallend was dat ook beheersregels werden genoemd die rijksbreed reeds waren afgeschaft. Gedacht moet worden aan de sturing op personeelsaantallen of het niet mogen schuiven tussen uitgaven voor personeel en materieel (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:14).

[The management rule that was experienced as most pinching concerns the end of year limit i.e. the lack of the possibility to reserve funds. This was

mentioned 11 times...It was interesting to note that also management rules that have already been dismantled across central government were mentioned. For example the steering of personnel numbers or lack of a possibility to shift between personnel and material budgets.]

Such simplifications (of end of year limit and so on) functioned to allow the speaker to focus upon reporting the findings of the evaluation and, more specifically, the responses of informants.

Aside from relaying numbers of agencies that have satisfied different features of the agency model the speaker also offers a commentary on what individuals in agencies and ministries have said. This takes the form of both direct citation or a summary of what one or more agencies have expressed. The audience is advised that one agent stated; "Sinds we het baten-lastenstelsel voeren ..hebben we nog nooit zo goed op de kas gelet" (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:38) [Since we have the accrual accounting system...we have never been so aware of the money] or summaries of comments are made such as "Een aantal organisaties benadrukt" (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:21) [A number of organizations emphasized], and, "Sommige agentschappen merk (terecht) op dat integrale-managementverantwoordelijkheid ook grenzen kent (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:21). [Some agencies noted (correctly) that the integral management responsibility also has its limits.] Although all of these kinds of statements are presented and used to make conclusions in the evaluation, they also appear as an exchange (and even stimulus) about how other candidate agencies can pursue agency status. This is most evident in the intermezzos which offer insight into how organizations went about setting up agency status, but is also suggested in subsections entitled *learning by doing* regarding the refinements that particular agencies have made to their management systems. The audience is advised about how agency status requires constant maintenance or that organizations eventually overcame (literally in Dutch became the boss over) some of the beginner's problems they faced. There are also boxes presented throughout the report offering short informative insights into different aspects of the agency status. These kinds of references about the agency model, together with the informal tone of the report suggest that the audience being constructed is a particular one and included both managers of both existing and potential agencies. In making this evaluation interesting for existing or potential agencies, and for outsiders, however, it was also evident that the

speaker adopted the language of business-economics, a third particular audience being constructed. This was reflected in the consistent use of business like terms to describe the relationships and activities of the agencies being evaluated. Some terms such as *eigenaar* [owner] (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:5,24) were first explained to the audience and then simply inserted into later parts of the text, while other terms such as *produkten* [products], *klanten* [customers], *bedrijfsmiddelen* [business means] or *bedrijfsplannen* [business plans] were presented as normal ways to describe the activities of government organizations. There was also a tendency to make heroes of those agencies that were the most business like. For example it is footnoted, “Eén aenschap zoekt nog naar de uiterste grenzen van de over te dragen verantwoordelijkheden” (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:21). [One agency still seeks the farthest limits of handing over responsibilities.] Together with the frequent references throughout the evaluation to the possibility of the Ministry of Finance to mediate in situations where agreements for improvements need to be made, this terminology would suggest that the speaker took on the character of a business consultant for most of the report. The exceptions were, as mentioned above, in the academic ethos pursued in the beginning of the report and in chapter 7 of the report, where the macro principles of the budget are discussed. In this second last chapter, the terminology returned to the technical financial language adopted in *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer* [Further building on management].

Finally, references to improving the quality of *overleg* [consultation] through better performance information and creating *draagvlak* [support] for agency status may be attributed to constructing the Dutch universal audience in the report. These terms referred respectively to the discussions or meetings taking place between ministries and agencies, and the kind of support fostered for agency reform through information and consultation. They are both typical references to the Dutch traditions of consultation. Similarly, references to the Ministry of Finance making agreements with those ministries where agencies had not satisfied different aspects of the evaluation, rather than setting time limits for change, may be interpreted as a call to the Dutch universal audience. It was an attempt to make the reforms appear desirable to all.

### 5.6.3.2 *Premises of argumentation*

Although it was difficult to identify a truth underlying the argumentation in the document, was clear that the evaluation was premised upon agreements about the facts that agencies and accrual accounting are good things in themselves. This was evident from the lack of any detailed assessment of problems with the agency initiative. When difficulties with agency status or accrual accounting were identified in the argumentation, such as references to problems with the opening balance or even lack of evidence for efficiency gains, these were ascribed to lack of experience with the reform, and not the reform itself. Typical statements in the report that demonstrated agreement about the goodness of the reform, despite observing problems, included the following:

De invoering van het baten-lastenstelsel blijkt over het algemeen goed verlopen te zijn. Bij twee organisaties traden problemen op. De eerste organisatie was een agentschap van het eerste uur. Hier wreekte zich het feit dat er nog weinig ervaring met het baten-lastenstelsel bestond (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:17).

[The introduction of the accrual accounting system seems in general to have gone well. In two organizations there were problems. The first organization was an agency among the first to be created. The fact that there existed little experience with the accrual accounting system was an important explanation.]

That agencies are a good thing was also reflected in the very description of agency status as being *results orientated* or involving the attainment of *freedoms* under conditions that include, for example, demonstration of a real possibility to work *efficiently* (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:4). These descriptions were repeated throughout the argumentation, even though the evaluation showed that the requirements for demonstrating the possibility for efficiency gains were too limited. Finally, agreement that agencies are a good thing, was reflected in the desire to use the evaluation to *learn from* the experience so far, and thus not to reconsider the reform itself. Already at the beginning of the report it is stated:

Een van de doelstellingen van onderhavig onderzoek was te leren van door agentschappen inmiddels opgedane ervaringen (bijvoorbeeld bij de vorming van agentschappen) en inzicht te krijgen in eventuele positieve en negatieve neveneffecten (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:17).

[One of the goals for this research was to learn from the experiences that the existing agencies have gathered (for example with the creation of agencies) and to obtain insight into the eventual positive and negative side effects.]



This suggested that there had already been agreement prior to the evaluation that agency reform should continue to be pursued.

In addition, there were a number of presumptions implicit to the argumentation in the report, not least the presumption that the conditions created by agency status provide the correct incentives for promoting more efficient management. This presumption was evident from statements about the financial regime of agencies providing them with greater flexibility, which it is presumed were and will be used in an efficient way. In addition, it was also a starting point for the recommendation of performance pay in the report as an appropriate means for encouraging cost consciousness and efficiency. Other presumptions in the report included the ability of ministries to steer agencies and the capacity of the Ministry of Finance to intervene and identify ways to bring about improvements in cases where necessary. This last presumption was reflected in statements in the report regarding the Ministry of Finance's intervention in situations where improvements are necessary. Such statements indicated that there are agreements with the audience that the Ministry of Finance is able to make necessary improvements happen.

Following from the earlier report on agency reform, the argumentation in this report also began from agreements about the value of efficiency and of business economics more generally. Primary among the reasons that agencies are a good thing was the claim that they can promote more efficient management. In contrast to the earlier report from the Ministry of Finance, however, the descriptions of agency reform, particularly in the chapters discussing the actual experience of agencies, used many more terms from economic theory and business management to demonstrate the value of agencies more generally. The use of these categories indicated that the argumentation is premised upon agreements about the desirability to conduct government activities in a way that is akin to market economics. For example, as has already been mentioned, the relationship between agencies and other actors in their environment are presented as relations between owners and principles. It was written:

Het derde element van het model van resultaatgericht management behelst het vooraf (tijdens de begrotings-of beleidsvoorbereiding) maken van afspraken (tussen de 'eigenaar' en/of de opdrachtgever en het agentschap)

over de te leveren prestaties en de daarvoor te maken kosten (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:23).

[The third element of the model of results orientated management includes prior (during the budget or policy preparation) agreements (between the 'owner' and/or principal and the agency) about the performance to be delivered and the costs to be made for this.]

Indeed, a preference is expressed for situations where the owner and principal are separate actors due to the different roles they, according to policy theory, fulfil (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:26). The speaker wrote:

Ideal(ter) zouden beiden rollen gescheiden moeten worden omdat iedere rol andere belangen kan hebben (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:24).

[Ideally both roles should be separated because each of these roles can have different interests.]

Similarly, it is also reflected in expressions of desire for incentives that coincide with the individual interests of staff through performance pay. The report states:

Van groot belang voor deze omslag is dat de medewerkers van het agentschap door prikkels ook persoonlijk belang hebben bij de prestatiegerichte manier van werken en dat creativiteit en eigen initiatief worden gestimuleerd....Het verdient aanbeveling meer gebruik te maken van de huidige mogelijkheden voor een prestatiegerichte manier van belonen en sanctioneren dan thans het geval is (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:27-28)

It is most important for this change that the staff of the agency also have a personal interest in the performance orientated way of working through incentives and that creativity and individual initiative are stimulated.....it is recommended to make more use of the current possibility for a performance related way of reward and sanction than is presently the case.]

Other references to market economic categories included observations of the number of *benchmarking investigations* that have taken place or the adoption of *quasi-market* activities. Since the speaker admitted scientific evidence of efficiency gains cannot be provided, the presence of these things are presented in the evaluation as evidence that efficiency has improved (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:38-43). In both cases, as will be discussed further below, few details regarding the content of the benchmarking and quasi-market activities are provided, and in the questionnaire details at the back of the report there is simply a checklist noting presence or not of benchmarking. This can be interpreted as a factual presentation of these activities (and their relationship with efficiency gains), but it can also be interpreted as premises about values, since the use of these

categories to describe agency activities would suggest that they are a preferred way for agencies to operate.

Agreements about a hierarchy of values are almost non-existent in the report since most of the desirable things discussed in the report such as efficiency, transparency, cost consciousness and results orientation, are all presented as being consistent with agency status. There is not even reference to political priorities or ministerial accountability in the report. The exception was with regard to the macro principles of the budget, and an entire chapter was devoted to demonstrating that agency status has not interfered with these principles. The presence of this discussion in the report reflects agreements about a hierarchy between the macro principles of the budget and the introduction of agency reform.

Both quantitative and qualitative loci are adopted throughout the argumentation. The quantitative loci appeared in two main ways. Firstly, it was used to advise the audience of the evaluation's findings in terms of number of responses from agencies or the degree to which they have satisfied particular criteria such as benchmarking. Typical statements reflecting this use include:

Bij zeven van de bovengenoemde negen agentschappen worden tussen agentschap en "eigenaar" en/of afnemer ook daadwerkelijk afspraken over kwaliteit gemaakt. Bij twee van de negen nog niet (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:31).

[In seven of the above mentioned nine agencies actual agreements about quality were made between the owner/purchaser and the agency. In two out of nine not yet.]

In addition, quantitative loci were also used to amplify the positive effects of agency reform. In these kind of statements, agencies are said to bring about greater insight (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:43), greater cost consciousness (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:46), greater results orientation (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:7), they are more transparent (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:47) and lead to higher motivation (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:47); even though few of these things were measured in the report. In correspondence with the preference for market economics and business-like values, many of those things said to increase were of an economic nature. Perhaps more important, however, are the references to qualitative loci throughout the argumentation. As with the earlier Ministry of

Finance document, these included a few references to the uniqueness of agencies by virtue of them being special or new, such as the following statement:

Agentschappen voeren een bijzondere vorm van resultaatgericht management omdat zij hierbij een afgezonderd en een afwijkend beheer hanteren (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:20)

[Agencies use a special form of results orientated management because they use a special and different management system.]

Even more prevalent in this document was the emphasis on agencies as unique through presenting their existence as difficult. References to the difficulties of maintaining agency status occurred primarily during the chapters in which the speaker stated that the existing agencies are results-orientated and have conformed to the original three conditions required of agencies. The speaker advised the audience:

Uit de onderstaande toelichting zal blijken dat het werken volgens het concept van resultaatgericht management niet "automatisch" gaat, tijd nodig heeft en continu "onderhoud" vergt (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:21).

[From the report below it will become apparent that working according to the concept of results orientation management doesn't go "automatically", and requires time and maintenance.]

The use of qualitative loci in this way rested upon implicit agreements about the goodness of being special, and emphasized agency reform as an achievement. It also acted to distract the audience from the lack of detailed discussion about the contents of results-orientation, benchmarking or other features of the agencies being evaluated.

### 5.6.3.3 *Techniques of argumentation*

The argumentative techniques adopted throughout the document include all of the three types of association identified by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, however, unlike the previous documents, quasi-logical arguments were the least prominent in terms of centrality to the conclusions and quantity. They appeared primarily in the early chapters of the report, in which the speaker described the implementation of agency reform, not its effects. In these chapters, the definition of results orientated management (identified also in the previous report) was presented and compared with the attributes of existing agencies. The same procedure of definition and comparison was also applied in the analysis of compliance to the three criteria for ob-

taining agency status. In both cases, the procedure is brief, with a quick description of the criteria to be met and a short overview of whether these features were found in the evaluated agencies. Tables were used throughout the reporting to present the numbers of agencies that met each of the criteria. There are few details regarding the way the criteria have been implemented and their content, rather their existence is presented in a factual way. Typical statements in the reporting of implementation of the results-orientated management model included the following:

Bij elf van de veertien agentschappen kan gesproken worden van centrale sturing op hoofdlijnen; het moederministerie creëert randvoorwaarden waarbinnen delegatie en mandatering van verantwoordelijkheden in de uitvoeringsfase mogelijk worden gemaakt (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:21).

[In 11 of the 14 agencies central steering on the headlines could be identified; the mother department creates conditions within which delegation and mandating of responsibilities can occur during the implementation phase.]

There was little information regarding the kinds of conditions that have been set by individual mother ministries or how they constituted steering.

In the presentation of the findings about compliance to the criteria for agency status, the quasi-logical procedure of definition and comparison were accompanied by an argument based upon the structure of reality, the argument of unlimited development. This reinforced the finding that agency reform has been implemented correctly, even though, and indeed perhaps because, the quasi-logical technique was not completely convincing for all the conditions. The speaker discussed consecutively the three conditions for agency status;

- Measurable products and services;
- Accountants declaration; and
- The real possibility of demonstrating more efficiency.

But devoted most attention to the first, and gives a wealth of examples of the kinds of performance measures that were used (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:30-33). It is observed that "geen enkele organisatie hanteert momenteel nog dezelfde kengetallen als op het moment dat men als agentschap van start ging" (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:32). [Not one single organization used at this moment the same performance measures that they used at the time that agency status began.] Rather than presenting this as posing some problems (which it does for measuring

efficiency) the speaker associated this finding with development and continuous improvement. The speaker wrote:

In de eerste plaats werden de aanvankelijke indicatoren nagenoeg overall verfijnd. Een op het eerst gezicht eenvoudig begrip als "doorlooptijd" blijkt steeds beter operationaliseerbaar (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:32).

[In the first place the original indicators were refined everywhere. What originally appeared as a simple concept such as 'processing time' became increasingly more able to operationalize.]

Rather than maintaining the focus upon the objective of conditions, the audience is drawn to the notion of progress and going further in a certain direction as was reflected in the document's subtitles such as 'continu leren ook in de toekomst' [continued learning in the future]. This did not just occur in the discussion of performance measures (where it is most prominent) but also with regard to agency reform more generally. As we shall see in the discussion below, unlimited development was also reinforced by many of the traveling metaphors used throughout the document. With the idea of unlimited development implanted in the audience's mind, the speaker then provided a more convoluted definition of the third criterion about demonstrating efficiency gains. It is stated:

In de derde plaats werden de veertien agentschappen beoordeeld op de reële mogelijkheid om aantoonbaar doelmatiger te werken. De derde eis betekende niet dat de reële mogelijkheid tot doelmatiger werken op dat moment concreet onderbouwd diende te worden. Wel was de opzet om door middel van kengetallen de doelmatigheid tot uitdrukking te brengen en de mechanismen te beoordelen waardoor doelmatiger werken zou moeten kunnen ontstaan (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:29).

[Thirdly, the 14 agencies were judged according to the real possibilities to demonstrate more efficient work practices. The third demand does not mean that the real possibility to work more efficiently was at that time substantiated in a concrete way. The intention was that by using performance measures the efficiency could be expressed in numbers and the mechanisms for more efficient operations could be judged.]

Since the existing agencies are argued to have had a conception of how efficiency would be improved in their statutes (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:34), the third condition is also found (via definition and comparison) to be satisfied, despite changing performance measures.

Another argumentative technique (based upon the structure of reality) used in the document is the causal link. This technique appeared primarily in chapter 5 when the speaker evaluates the achievement of efficiency gains through agency reform.

Although the speaker advised that it is too early to draw conclusions about efficiency gains from the indicators of at least half the agencies evaluated, it is still claimed that efficiency gains have been achieved (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:36). Ignoring earlier observations in the report that performance measures were continually changing, the speaker pointed to various indicators such as decreasing cost prices or tariffs at constant or increasing levels of quality, as factual evidence of efficiency gains (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:36). The speaker then jumped to a discussion of possible explanations for the *efficiency win*. Under the heading *a continuum of prikkels* [a continuum of incentives], a range of *incentives* are identified that have (could have) caused efficiency gains. Arguments about causation relied upon relations of succession and agreements about the reasonableness of a cause. Among the causes identified in the argumentation were the following:

- The accrual accounting system, and the flexibility in financial decision making that it allows, has led to efficiency (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:38).
- The greater cost consciousness arising from the better insight into unit costs, as calculated by an accrual accounting system, has led to more efficiency (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:38).
- Visibility of costs has given agencies an incentive to improve efficiency since this can form part of the internal and external steering (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:38-39).
- The use of benchmark examinations by a number of agencies stimulates (has stimulated) more efficiency (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:39-40).
- The use of quasi-market arrangements stimulates (has stimulated) efficiency gains (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:40-41).

All of these causal statements about the arrangements that have led to efficiency gains are accompanied by references to statements from informants and illustrations of particular cases. To this extent achieving agreement about the outcome of efficiency gains, relied not only on arguments based on the structure of reality, but also arguments that acted to structure reality.

In order to establish that efficiency gains were achieved (by the causes mentioned above) the speaker presented a number of particular examples to make the generalization of efficiency

gains from agency reform possible. This included the presentation of tables of cost prices from the Dutch Prison Agency between 1994-1997, together with number of complaints during the same period. Since both tables showed a decline over the period, it is concluded "(D)e combinatie van de kostprij- en kwaliteitsontwikkeling duiden op doelmatiger werken" (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:37). [The combination of the cost-price and quality development indicated more efficient working]. Another example was a table indicating decreasing tariffs in the agency Senter. Since this agency also uses quasi-market arrangements this example gave more legitimacy to the argumentation about causes of efficiency gains. Furthermore, reference is made to a particular example of benchmarking in the agency Duyverman Computer Centrum (DCC) that lends greater credibility to the findings about efficiency gains from agency reforms.

The metaphors used throughout the document include, as in the earlier reports, references that associate agency reform with physical structures such as flexibility and transparency. More particular to this report, however, were the uses of metaphors relating to both travel and learning. Setting up an agency in this report is frequently referred to as the *optuigen* [rigging up] of an agency (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:17, 19, 50). This is a term generally associated with shipping and putting up one's sails. In this report it associated agency reform with the idea of adventure and travel. Together with references that agency improvements occurred *stapsgewijs* [step by step] or that agencies were *nog in de kinderschoenen* [still in children's shoes], the audience is brought to view agency reform as a journey. This makes them receptive to overlooking weaknesses of agency reform since they are to be seen as only initial problems. As I have already argued above, the idea of continuous improvement is also quite explicitly expressed in the argumentation, not only as metaphor. Finally, there were attempts to present agency reform as a business reform by referring to it as *business redressing*.

Other metaphors in the document included examples of existing agencies as offering *handvatten* [handles] for other and prospective agencies, and use of expressions about learning. Agencies were said to have overcome (literally become the boss of) their problems; *Deze zijn uiteindelijk allemaal de baas geworden*, they are in charge (Ministerie van Financiën, 1997:19, 32). An overview of Dutch argumentation about agency reform and the



rules of speaking across all of the Dutch documents are presented in table 5.4.

## 5.7 GGCT and the rhetoric of Dutch agency reform

It is now possible to consider the resemblances between the argumentation about agencies in official Dutch accounts and the four public management stories Hood has derived from GGCT. Surprisingly, given the strong egalitarian character associated with the Dutch political and administrative system, these resemblances are primarily with the individualist and hierarchical stories. The exceptions occurred with the discussion about which organizations should become agencies, and in the more token references to the universal audience. In these instances the rhetoric was more akin to features ascribed to an egalitarian account.

### 5.7.1 GGCT and *Verder Bouwen Aan Bebeer*

The first observation to make about the account of agency reform presented in *Verder Bouwen Aan Bebeer* is that the discussion was narrowly focussed upon issues of financial management. There were few references to collective problems and where these did appear they were primarily references to macro principles of the budget and how to accommodate these, through and while operating like a business. For example performance measures were never presented as a means for promoting democracy - democracy or other broad values never appeared-, but instead as a means to making better business decisions. Instead, it was the role of parliament to oversee production that was emphasized rather than other political concerns of constituents or matters of redistribution. There was mention of ministerial accountability and the ability to intervene in agency decision making, but no further justification of why. As has already been mentioned in the rhetorical analysis there was also a preference for business accounting concepts, and references to *optimal business operations* [bedrijfsvoering] (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:ix, 76), *business result* [bedrijfsresultaat] (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:xi,xii,76, 77) and *being business like* [bedrijfsmatig] (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:xiii, 84).

**Table 5.4** Overview of Dutch argumentation (continues on next page)

	<b>Verder bouwen aan beheer</b>	<b>Verantwoord verzelfstandigen</b>	<b>Verder met resultaat</b>
<b>Ethos</b>			
<b>Particular audience</b>	Financial expert, some attention for managers and political conventions	Internal government expert, attention for politics and society. Some attention for finance	Business-economics consultant, attention for existing and prospective agencies. Some attention finance and science
<b>Ethos Universal audience</b>	Ministerial accountability  Scientific justification Consultation	Ministerial accountability  Scientific justification Speaking partners	Scientific justification Consultation, creating support [draagvlak
<b>Premises</b>			
<b>Truth</b>			
<b>Facts</b>	Financial differentiation leads to efficiency	Clear formal categories in principle ensure order in practice Zbos are problematic	Agencies and accrual accounting are good things
<b>Presumptions</b>	Ministries know (incentives) how to motivate managers for efficiency	Ministers can't intervene by law and won't intervene improperly	Agencies provide conditions for incentives to efficiency
<b>Values</b>	Efficiency	Ministerial accountability	Efficiency - being a business
<b>Hierarchy values</b>	Ministerial accountability above efficiency		

**Table 5.4** Overview of Dutch argumentation (continues on next page)

	<b>Verder bouwen aan beheer</b>	<b>Verantwoord verzelfstandigen</b>	<b>Verder met resultaat</b>
<b>Techniques of argumentation</b>			
<b>Quasi logical</b>	<i>Division of the whole into its parts</i> (macro and micro) <i>Definition and comparison</i> (Results management)	<i>Division of the whole into its parts</i> (Think steps) <i>Definition and comparison</i> (types of autonomization, internal versus external autonomization)	<i>Definition and comparison</i> (Results management, conditions agency reform)
<b>Structure of reality</b>	<i>Unlimited development</i> (building on past financial reforms)		<i>Unlimited development</i> (refining performance measures, agency model) <i>Causal link</i> (efficiency gains)
<b>Creating structure of reality - metaphors</b>	Flexibility, spacious, steering, freedom, efficiency, Autonomization Example: International experiences UK, Sweden, New Zealand	Transparency, grip, steering, command, autonomization, vertical, horizontal	Rigging up, children's shoes, giving agencies handles, business <i>redressing</i>  Example: Proof of efficiency gains, particular agencies

These aspects of the argumentation were most consistent with Hood's individualist story line and its preference for market solutions.

A second feature of the account that indicated an individualist flavor was the emphasis upon incentives and price forming throughout. This occurred when making explicit the problems with the existing financial system and also in promoting the advantages of new financial regulations, and more specifically, agency reform. The lack of incentives in the existing financial regulations, was one of the reasons identified for making new proposals in the report (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991: ii,7). In particular, the report noted the lack of monetary rewards for good performance in the financial regime and recommended organizations be allowed to keep efficiency wins (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:7). A results management model for the future is presented as resolving this lack in the following way:

Onder meer door prikkels in te bouwen in het financiële en personele beheersregime kan worden bevorderd dat verantwoordelijke managers in mindere mate zullen streven naar vergroting van het apparaat en maximale uitputting van het budget. Managers moet meer worden beoordeeld, en zo mogelijk beloond, op de doelmatige uitvoering van de taken. Daartoe zou beter gebruik gemaakt moeten worden van het beschikbare instrumentarium op het vlak van de individuele bezoldigen (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:21).

[Among others, through building incentives into the financial and personnel management regime, the accountable managers will be encouraged less to strive for an increase in the apparatus budget and the maximal expenditure of this. Managers should be judged more, and as much as possible rewarded for, the efficient implementation of their tasks to that end. Use should better be made of the available instruments for individual payment.]

Aside from the reference to performance pay, the proposals for agency reform included the possibility for organizations to keep the reserves they have built up from efficiency wins on a separate account (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:79). Although an *efficiency win* was never explicitly explained, it can be interpreted as unspent funds, after delivering agreed upon volume for agreed cost price to the mother ministry/other parties. The presumption in the document that individuals/organizations are motivated by monetary incentives and ministries would know how to get these incentives, operated as an important premise throughout the argumentation. According to Hood this is a remedy typical of the individualist way of life in public administration (Hood, 2000:26, 105).

The references to price forming in the argumentation included arguments about how cost calculation as a basis for transactions

within and outside of government can promote efficiency. It is stated:

Een belangrijk instrument bij het verwerven van middelen en het genereren van efficiënywinsten, kan zijn dat de kosten die overheidsdiensten maken, worden doorberekend aan de (eventuele) afnemers van de goederen/diensten. Het verdient aanbeveling meer bewust om te gaan met de mogelijkheid van toepassing van kostendoorberekening (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:vii)

[An important instrument in the bringing about of more means and the generation of efficiency gains can be that the costs of government services produced, be passed onto the (eventual) purchasers of the goods/services. It is recommended that more conscious use is made of the possibilities to pass on costs.]

More specific to the proposals for agency reform were the discussions about performance measures which are primarily discussions about cost and volume. The argument was that agencies will promote efficiency by using production indicators. This was stated as follows:

Het gaat er in essentie om dat in kwantitatieve termen wordt vastgelegd welke produkten en diensten worden voortgebracht danwel welke activiteiten worden verricht respectievelijk welke middelen worden ingezet (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:75).

[In essence it is about defining the products and services produced in quantitative terms, which activities are produced and respectively the means that are used.]

Price forming is a further indication of the vision of the public sector as a business operation in the argumentation. "Dit kan gelden bijvoorbeeld voor onderdelen die goederen en diensten voortbrengen waarvoor prijsvorming mogelijk is" (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:68). [This can apply for example to units that produce goods and services where a price calculation is possible.]

There are also some elements in the argumentation that are more akin to the themes and concerns of the hierarchical way of life. Agency reform is not only to ensure the achievement of efficiency because of market incentives, but also because there will be central steering at the headlines (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:iv, 22). Authority and rules remained important in setting the limits to activities that could be driven by market incentives, and, importantly for the Dutch case, made it possible to argue that ministerial accountability would be unaffected by agency reform. The hierarchical flavor in the argumentation was expressed in the definition of the results management model

which defined central steering as setting the conditions for delegating authority, and thereby making limited discretion/autonomy possible (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991: iv). These ideas of steering and limited discretion were also expressed in terms of macro and micro goals throughout the argumentation, where it was the macro principles that set the limits for financial discretions. It was stated:

Bij het vinden van oplossingen gaat het om de verwezenlijking van de gerechtvaardigde verlangens uit "micro"-oogpunt, zonder dat er een onevenredige aantasting plaats mag vinden van de "macro"-doelen. Dat betekent dat de speelruimte veelal klein zal zijn (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:ii).

[In searching for a solution, the realization of the justified desires from the 'micro' perspective is at stake, without allowing for unproportional damage to the macro goals. This means that the leeway shall remain small most of the time.]

The term autonomization, which was described in the rhetorical analysis as a metaphor, can be interpreted as part of presenting the hierarchical story throughout the document. This is because it showed that autonomy could be granted in a controlled way; and was about giving autonomy but in the passive form.

Finally, although it was already noted that there was no detailed discussion of collective goals or the social good in this document, it was not completely ignored. When it appeared it was to justify intervention from above. An example was:

Bijsturing door centrale organen zal binnen organisaties met gemeenschappelijk doelstellingen echter onvermijdelijk blijven. Wanneer daartoe aanleiding bestaat, blijven ingrepen in de beleidsuitvoering daarom mogelijk (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:iii).

[Interventions by central organs in the organizations with a social goal remain however unavoidable. When necessary, the ability to intervene in the implementation of policy therefore remains possible.]

The hierarchical flavor in the account of agency reform enabled it to be presented as a market like initiative that could also be controlled and directed by authorities.

Although the conceptualization of agency reform in the argumentation was primarily a coalition between individualist and hierarchical hues, references to the implementation of agency reform suggested an element of informality and mutuality that could be interpreted as the egalitarian way of life. This was expressed in a number of references to considering the possibility of introducing agency reform case by case. Typical statements about the selection of candidates for agency status included:

Niet elk agentschap hoeft hetzelfde regime te hebben. Het gaat om maatwerk, uiteraard binnen algemene kaders die voorvloeiën uit het feit dat het gaat om aanwending van overheidsgeld. Van geval tot geval zal moeten worden bezien welke bevoegdheden en verantwoordelijkheden een agentschap krijgt. Wellicht zal dan ook blijken of zich voor een bepaald type dienst een bepaalde set beheersregels uitkristalliseert (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991: x, 73).

[Not every agency need have the same regime. It is about tailoring, of course within the general conditions that are associated with the fact that it is about the use of government funds. It must be considered from case to case which authority and responsibilities an agency receives. Perhaps it shall then become clear which type of services fit with which set of management rules.]

In terms of ethos, pathos and logos, the speaker in this document adopted the character of a financial expert with mainly quasi-logical preferences. Other types of argumentation were used. The metaphors adopted made references to physical attributes such as flexibility, as well as to results, efficiency and steering, and there was a preference for the unique.

### 5.7.2 GGCT and *Verantwoord verzelfstandigen*

The account of agency reform produced in *Verantwoord verzelfstandigen* was most reflective of Hood's hierarchical way of life, with little reference to the themes and problems associated with the other cultural flavors. Indeed, the argumentation complied to all of the features Hood associates with the hierarchical way of life including (Hood, 2000:73-96):

- Considering public management issues (agency reform) within a broader perspective about society *e.g. principle questions about the primacy of politics and the relationship between government and society;*
- A preference for clarifying/separating roles and defining categories systematically *e.g. types of autonomization, focus on separation policy and operations, the division of accountability, the thinksteps;* and
- A focus upon steering relations and steering instruments *eg. consequences of autonomization for ministerial accountability.*

The argumentation revolved around the authority figure of the minister and the desirability to maintain vertical relationships with the administration for the sake of ministerial accountability. This was apparent in references to internally autonomized organizations being subordinate to the minister and externally autonomized organizations as not being subordinate. It was the legal status of an organization that was the criterion for assess-

ing compliance with the most desirable authority structure, namely internal autonomization. In this account legal status itself was not conceived of as providing means to steer but more as the mandating of authority.

Complementing the hierarchical concern for steering throughout the argumentation, was also some reference to individualist themes in the discussion of steering instruments (Commissie Sint, 1994:16-20). Oversight of business operations and clarifying financial relations through contracts, cost price, performance criteria, as well as customer charters were presented as means to steer autonomized organizations.

The ethos in the document revealed a conservative and organizational expert wishing to preserve orderliness within the public sector. There was a preference for quantitative loci or pathos, quasi-logical argumentation, and machine-military metaphors such as steering, command and grip.

### 5.7.3 *GGCT and Verder met resultaat*

As with the first report *Verder met resultaat* considered the issue of agency reform in a very narrow financial way, without reference to broader consequences for society or even politics - the issue of ministerial accountability for example was also absent. The only issue outside the immediate concern for the workings of agency reform was a discussion of its consequences for the macro financial principles of the budget. This narrow focus is consistent with an individualist account of public management reform.

There were also other features of the argumentation that reveal an individualist cultural flavor, not least the preference for business economic terminology and the focus upon the market-like activities of agencies to justify their goodness in the evaluation. References to price forming activities through the calculation of cost prices, the use of quasi-market operations and benchmarking are all presented as evidence that agency reform has led to efficiency gains. In addition, the stress upon incentives throughout the argumentation, both through references to performance pay and market like activities, was most reminiscent of Hood's individualist way of life. There were also repeated incidences of presenting those agencies that have delegated the most responsibility or adopted benchmark arrangements to be the most heroic of agencies.



Besides the explicit reference to the market like features of agency reform, the emphasis upon *learning by doing* throughout the document may also be interpreted as individualist in flavor. This aspect of the argumentation was concerned with disseminating agency experiences (there is mention of including them in a handbook (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:17, 18) for the purpose of giving *traveling tips* to managers embarking upon the agency *adventure*. It also presented management as a creative exercise in self development and skill.

A hierarchical hue was identified in the argumentation as reflected in references to steering. This occurred as part of the discussion of results orientated management and the condition of setting measurable objectives for agencies to pursue (see Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:20-35; 49-53). Given that performance measures were continually changing since the creation of agency status, the report recommended more precise conditions for agency status including the use of cost price measurements, quality indicators, and an established external steering plan that connects with the internal steering arrangements (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:51). Indeed, it is one of the observations of the report that there was not enough attention for the external steering of the departments (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:19, 21-233). The enthusiasm for continuous learning expressed in the report, for example in developing performance measures, is to be tempered by better arrangements for control (this term hardly appears at all) and setting the conditions for agency freedoms. More so than in the earlier reports, there is an explicit discussion about shifting from steering according to the means used and steering on outputs (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:25). This aside, the cost price (a figure calculated from inputs) was identified as the most important indicator for overseeing performance. While recognizing that the matter of steering is present within the argumentation, it appeared primarily in the chapters focusing upon the implementation of agency reform, and not in the chapters discussing the effects of agency reform and the attainment of efficiency. In these latter chapters, it is the discussion of market incentives that predominate.

Finally, there is an element of mutuality being expressed throughout the report that gave an egalitarian flavor. This occurred throughout the evaluation with the observations that some agencies and ministries have not satisfied the conditions

of agency reform (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:5, 8,31). Rather than adopt financial sanctions or introduce some kind of formal process or law for tackling this problem, the response to be taken is mediation from the Ministry of Finance. It is stated:

Daar waar - op onderdelen- nog niet volgens het concept van resultaatgericht management wordt gewerkt, zal het ministerie van Financiën met het betrokken ministerie afspraken maken voor het treffen van verbetermaatregelen (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:5)

[In cases when, units have not yet worked with the concept of results orientated management entirely, the Ministry of Finance shall make agreements with the concerned ministry to implement arrangements for improvement.]

This indicates a preference for informal consultation in order to agree upon a solution.

The ethos in the argumentation can be described as a consultant wishing to stimulate the enthusiasm of one's audience. There was an element of disseminating experiences so managers can do it themselves and an emphasis upon qualitative pathos such as the difficult or new, and, metaphors likening agency reform to traveling and adventure.

## 5.8 Conclusion: The translation of agency reform in Dutch official accounts

Official accounts of agency reform in The Netherlands brought together three main themes: the financial management system of agencies and its distinction from other departmental organizations, the greater desirability of internal autonomization as opposed to external autonomization, and related to this second theme agencies and (ministerial) accountability. In statements regarding financial management systems, Dutch agencies were constructed as embracing a results orientated model that enabled them to overcome the problems of previous financial arrangements and to operate efficiently, flexibly and in a business like way. The calculation of cost prices for agency products and financial incentives, such as possibilities to keep efficiency wins or introduce performance pay, were ascribed to this model. It is presented as a financial arrangement *differentiated* from other departmental organizations, though subject to the same macro principles, and of itself capable of adjusting to different cases. The main arguments espoused for agency reform in these accounts included:

- More freedom to make financial decisions will (unlike the existing cash based accounting system) enable managers to make more efficient decisions;
- New more flexible financial arrangements will (unlike the existing cash based accounting system) enable (financial) incentives to be introduced to encourage more efficient decisions; and
- Accrual accounting enables the calculation of cost prices and thereby promotes cost consciousness and provides the means for identifying financial incentives.

In statements regarding agencies as a preferred alternative to ZBOs, or in the language of much of the argumentation, a preference for internal autonomization as opposed to external autonomization, agencies were constructed as preserving the convention of ministerial accountability. This is because agencies are said to have many of the business management attributes of ZBOs, but remain within the departmental sphere and, unlike ZBOs, have no legal authority that can prevent ministerial intervention in operational decisions. The construction of agencies as a preferred alternative to ZBOs relied upon statements regarding the poor credibility of ZBOs. The main arguments presented in these statements include:

- Agencies are more accountable than ZBOs because they remain within the departmental sphere and there are no barriers to minister intervention;
- ZBOs have been created for improper reasons, lead a life of their own and are seen as a panacea for all kinds of problems.

Finally, Dutch agencies were also constructed in statements describing their accountability. This included statements that Dutch agencies were more accountable than ZBOs, but also in *Verder Bouwen Aan Beheer*, statements about agencies giving greater content to ministerial accountability and greater oversight to parliament. Oversight and accountability were described as the consequences of more reporting of agency results. Another kind of statement that expressed the accountability, as well as transparency of agencies in The Netherlands, was again their location within the departmental sphere. Agencies were said to be more accountable because their departmental status was a guarantee that ministers can be responsible to par-

liament for their activities. The arguments expressed in these kinds of statements included:

- The reporting of agency results gives the parliament greater insight into agency products and requires ministers to be answerable for these results; and
- The lines of accountability between agencies and ministers are clear and transparent because they are within the department.

Together the use of these statements to describe agency reform in Dutch official accounts can be interpreted as giving them the meaning of a unique and *accountable* alternative. They are unique because their identity was expressed by distinguishing them from *normal* departmental organizations and ZBOs. The features of their accounting system were prominent in the descriptions distinguishing Dutch agencies from *normal* departmental organizations. They were also presented as an *accountable* alternative to ZBOs because they required no formal changes to the content of ministerial accountability.

### 5.8.1 *The rules of speaking*

The kinds of speakers and audiences privileged in Dutch official accounts (*ethos*), together with the pathos and logos that they used to persuade the audience can be interpreted as the *rules of speaking* governing Dutch official agency accounts. It was observed that Dutch official speakers of agency reform consistently included some appeal to scientific rationales in their self-presentation. This was reflected in account giving about the design of commission investigations, such as the kinds of organizations their findings drew upon, or the theoretical basis for interview schedules. All these features of Dutch accounts sought to demonstrate an objective basis for findings and thereby make them appear credible. In addition, and perhaps contrarily, the ethos of Dutch speakers always included some reference to their findings being based upon consultation, or providing the possibility for the content of agency reform to be based upon consultation and/or negotiation. This was reflected in the presence of terms like financial differentiation, *gesprekspartners* [speaking partners] and creating *draagvlak* [support] in the documents. Together with ministerial accountability, which was continually cited to achieve the assent of the audience to the goodness of agency reform, I associated these features of

Dutch official talk as appeals to the universal audience and the construction of this audience.

In addition, a prominent position for financial knowledge and concepts was consistently observed in all the documents analyzed in this study, although it was less prominent in *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen*. This ensured the credibility of the speaker to a particular financial/accounting audience. The way in which financial knowledge was central to the ethos of the speaker was reflected in the priorities of efficiency in Dutch accounts as well as technical jargon and categories adopted to describe agency reform such as the apparatus budget, cost price calculations, the *rekening courant* [current account] or *normkostensystematiek* [cost norm system]. It can be concluded that in order to speak credibly about agency reform in The Netherlands, it was necessary to demonstrate knowledge of accounting concepts and attend to a particular audience of financial experts. This is not to say that Dutch speakers have not also sometimes attended to other particular audiences such as organizational experts or (prospective) agency managers themselves, indeed in *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen* the voice of a government organizational expert was far more prominent than finance. Rather it is to note that the particular financial audience and character of the documents had a dominant presence over time. As noted above Dutch speakers have *universalized* the goodness of these financial attributes of agency reform by associating it with the maintenance of ministerial accountability, objective scientific findings and references to consultation.

The conditioning of the audience to accept the arguments of the speaker, or rather, *pathos* of Dutch official accounts of agency reform relied upon agreements about the values of efficiency and ministerial accountability. The audience was sensitized to accept that agencies are a good thing because they promote efficiency and not reduce, indeed even give content to, the convention of ministerial accountability. Describing agencies' financial management regimes in terms of categories such as their cost prices, their flexibility and as results orientated management all conditioned the emotions for accepting that agencies are efficient. In addition, references to the *inappropriate choice* [oneigenlijke keuze] of ZBOs, their selection as panacea or the risk that *they will lead a life of their own*, contributed to presenting agencies as a more credible way to give *freedom* to managers. It should be noted that such statements appeared in texts to

promote agency reform, at a time when Dutch politicians and administrators were already well aware of negative findings about ZBOs from the National Court of Audit. Finally, positive dispositions towards agencies were sought in the argumentation by focusing primarily upon their creation as unique and an adventurous challenge (locus of the difficult) for Dutch managers. Good feelings about agencies were played up by presenting them as daring and slightly free but not outrageously so.

Much of the *logos* of Dutch accounts were based upon quasi-logical argumentation, although metaphors were also always present. The main quasi-logical arguments used were the division of whole into its parts, definition and comparison. These kinds of argumentative techniques were used to show that agencies would not disturb macro principles in the Dutch financial system, that they are a results orientated way to conduct management and that they are preferable to ZBOs. There were also some arguments based upon the structure of reality in Dutch official accounts, in particular the argument of continuous development and the causal link. These appeared primarily in the third document *Verder met resultaat*. Arguments of continuous development were used to show that agencies provided a better way to conduct financial management than in the past and that they would promote performance, while the causal link was used to demonstrate the attainment of efficiency gains. The metaphors used in the documents were subject to some variation and included *flexibility*, *spacious* (decision making authority), *freedom*, *autonomization*, *efficiency* and *steering* in the Ministry of Finance documents, and *grip* and *command* in the Home Affairs documents.

### 5.8.2 *The cultural flavor of official accounts*

Agency reform in The Netherlands has been consistently constructed using arguments that are compatible with the individualist way of life on the one hand, and the hierarchical way of life on the other. Some egalitarian catch phrases were noted in all the documents and particularly, *Verder bouwen aan beheer* and *Verder met resultaat*, but their role appeared as a minor afterthought, rather than being central to the Dutch agency story. The central figure of the ZBO in Dutch accounts of agency reform can be interpreted as acting as a node bringing together individualist and hierarchical ways of life since Dutch agencies were presented as having the same kind of (individualist) finan-

cial conditions as ZBOs but, in contrast to ZBOs, without threatening vertical (hierarchical) relationships with the minister and his or her capacity to intervene in operational decisions.

The individualist flavor of Dutch agency accounts appeared in arguments that emphasized the business like features of agency reform such as the attainment of efficiency and results, the calculation of cost prices and the introduction of financial incentives. Although there were some references to benchmarking and quasi-market arrangements in *Verder met resultaat*, individualist preferences for competition were not prominent in constructing the goodness of Dutch agency reforms. Quasi-logical arguments were used to show that Dutch agencies are a results-orientated model and comply to macro principles, while arguments based upon the structure of reality such as unlimited development were used to demonstrate that the financial system and performance arrangements of agencies have been and will continue to be refined in ways that promote flexibility, results and efficiency. The *metaphors* supporting individualist arguments included autonomy, freedom, efficiency and results. In *Verder met resultaat* there were also some traveling metaphors such as *rigging up* (ones sails) that accompanied the argument of unlimited development. It was significant that in the documents with individualist argumentation, the qualitative locus of the unique was repeatedly identified. In addition there were some differences in the ethos of the speaker. In the first document *Verder bouwen aan beheer* for example, the speaker adopted the tone of a serious financial expert while in the evaluation document, *Verder met resultaat*, there was a much lighter, more motivational business-consultant approach. This was reflected in the presentation of information boxes for agency managers and the identification of agency *heroes* who had done their utmost to be business like. The individualist way of life was always strongest when actual financial speakers dominated the commissions responsible for the reports.

Hierarchical descriptions and arguments appeared in the discussions of ministerial accountability and the primacy of politics, in the preference for internal as opposed to external autonomization, in concern about clear divisions of accountability and categories of autonomization, as well as in references to steering through more precise conditions and performance measures. Significantly, Dutch accounts of steering included little reference to compliance which is considered one of the fea-

tures of the hierarchical way of life in public management. It was primarily quasi-logical argumentative techniques that were used to present hierarchical themes in Dutch accounts, while the metaphors supporting these were *steering*, *transparency*, *grip*, *command* and *autonomization*. In *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen* the most hierarchical of the Dutch accounts, there was sole preference for quantitative loci. The particular audience constructed was primarily an organizational expert rather than financial expert, and the speaker adopted a principled sober approach to the problem of autonomization.

Egalitarian themes and arguments played a more cursory role in official Dutch accounts of agency reform. Their appearance was only associated with watchwords in the documents such as consulting *speaking partners* or creating *support* [draagvlak] through consultation. There was also the recommendation that agency initiatives be considered case by case which could be interpreted as low grip since it requires agency initiatives to be the outcome of some kind of consultation, rather than a principled approach. Aside from these instances, it has not been possible to identify more specific kinds of egalitarian solutions or arguments in the accounts of agency reform. This is not to say that these watchwords have not been important in appealing to the Dutch universal audience, but rather that they have not been central to Dutch logos.

### 5.8.3 *The relationship between official accounts and the scenes of use*

In contrast to the strong egalitarian character that GGC theorists, and others, have ascribed to Dutch political culture, the official accounts of agency reform consistently comprised of a mix in prominence of individualist and hierarchical arguments. Moreover it exhibited stark contrasts between strongly individualist themes and arguments in *Verder met resultaat*, as well as strongly hierarchical themes and arguments in *Verantwoord Verzelfstandingen*. Egalitarian themes presented themselves primarily in the form of watchwords about the importance of consultation or creating *draagvlak* [support], in both the collection of evidence about agencies and in their implementation. While these watchwords were interpreted as appealing to the Dutch universal audience, the finding that they were cursory would indicate that there has been limited correspondence between the cultural character of official agency accounts and the GGCT diagnosis of Dutch culture as highly egalitarian. Furthermore, the



universal audience was also characterized by other contrasting features, far removed from the egalitarian way of life, such as favouring the convention of Dutch ministerial accountability, and accepting evidence based upon a scientific rationale. These features are still akin to high group, but then more to the hierarchical way of life. They would suggest that GGCT descriptions of the Dutch context as highly egalitarian cannot account for the production of individualist-hierarchical official accounts. They have either been wrong in their diagnosis of Dutch culture or their characterizations are not relevant to the policy community in which Dutch agency reform has been discussed.

It was described in this chapter that both Dutch culture generally, as well as the political administrative system, exhibited a number of paradoxes that are difficult to reconcile and interpret neatly. This was articulated in references to both the figures of the *merchant* and *priest* providing a rather unusual partnership in stereotypes of Dutch culture (Weber, 1930; Hendriks and Toonen, 2001:4). The history of *being together apart*, whether we are talking about the Republic of Seven Provinces, pillarization or consensus politics, is also exemplary of the strong oppositions that can be observed in the Dutch culture. This is arguably also consistent with the stark contrasts that were revealed in the analysis of Dutch official accounts, such as the metaphor of *freedom* and the business consultant speaker in *Verder met resultaat*, and the metaphors of *command* and *grip* as described by the conservative in *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen*. Such contrasting cultural mixes could also be reconciled with the higher individualist ratings in The Netherlands (compared to Sweden). It is plausible that individualist themes in Dutch accounts are a consequence of individualist elements in its cultural configuration. An associated but alternative explanation for the individualist themes and arguments in Dutch accounts is the prominence of financial speakers delivering official stories.

Leaving aside exclusively cultural explanations for official agency talk, there were a number of other features of the Dutch scenes of use that could explain both the shifts in prominence in the cultural tone of the stories and the themes and arguments identified. Not least among these were the actual speakers and audiences being addressed in the Dutch accounts of agency reform. It is hardly surprising given their financial preoccupations that individualist themes and arguments were strongest in the documents prepared by the Ministry of Finance, while they

were more subdued and even subordinate to the hierarchical themes and arguments produced in *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen*, a commission report published by the Ministry of Home Affairs. In addition, all of these reports and particularly *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen* were prepared at a time when there was already great parliamentary unrest about the accountability of ZBOs. This was further exacerbated by the 1995 Court of Audit report citing irregularities in the wild growth of ZBOs. To this extent, there was little opportunity for egalitarian themes and arguments. Nor was there the need since these documents were all produced for audiences internal to the political administrative system, such as departmental officials or parliamentary committees, who given the circumstances were most interested in hierarchical solutions. Egalitarian elements, if you like, did not constitute extensive cultural features of the universal audience in this context. Instead the other features of the universal audience ministerial accountability and a scientific ethos would suggest the Dutch agency policy community was more hierarchical.

Furthermore, the very predominance of Dutch ZBOs in the administration can also account for their strong presence in Dutch agency talk and as already mentioned in the previous paragraph, its hierarchical tone. Agency reform has, in the broader administrative system, been a rather marginal arrangement in The Netherlands that has occurred in the shadow of the formally far more autonomous and numerous category of ZBOs. This organizational type has long characterized the Dutch administration, with their growth accelerating in the 1980s as part of the Dutch style of *privatization* or rather *autonomization* (Van Thiel, 2000). As problems with this arms length solution began to emerge, at least in terms of the political stories being told about ZBOs, it was necessary to find a *more accountable alternative*. To this extent, internal autonomization or rather agencies were a reaction to the previous solution of external autonomization or rather ZBOs. The pendulum swing noted in the international story about agencies, had already begun in The Netherlands in the period I have analyzed, where the starting point for agency reform was on a trajectory following a much longer and established history of arms length government in the form of ZBOs.

Finally, both the function of ministerial accountability to universalize agency reform in Dutch official accounts as well as

the prominence of quasi-logical argumentation in most of the documents can be associated with the tradition of consensus democracy. With regards to ministerial accountability, it was shown in this chapter that this has had a particularly important place within Dutch politics because of the lack of a strong cabinet and the emphasis upon the professional rather than political role for ministers. Together with the fragmentation of the Dutch administration which has given minister's strong feelings/duties of ownership, these conditions arguably promoted a greater commitment to the convention of ministerial accountability than in adversarial systems. It provided a watchword that would promote the Ministry of Finance's creation of agencies to other departments. Its appeal as a universal good is therefore not surprising especially when there are few other lynchpins, such as the cabinet or prime minister, providing a strong impetus to unity. Similarly, the prominence of quasi-logical argumentation in Dutch official talk corresponded with the need for depoliticized, expert information in order to promote and enable consensus and compromise between the various speaking partners in Dutch politics and policy making. All of these contextual factors, however, do not account for the use of other argumentative techniques, and particularly the prominence of arguments based upon the structure of reality in *Verder met resultaat*. This matter will be returned to in chapter 8 when the official agency accounts across the countries are compared.



## 6 Sweden: Steering agencies for democracy and as constitutionally prescribed

De missförstånd om regeringens befogenheter och ansvar som vunnit viss spridning synes i första hand bero på att den faktiska självständighet som många förvaltningsmyndigheter åtnjuter har uppfattats som konstitutionellt sanktionerade....har inget stöd i regeringsformen eller dess förarbeten (SOU, 1983:99).

[The misunderstanding about the government's authority and responsibility, which has gained certain ground, seems to depend on the factual independence that many agencies enjoy and has been considered constitutionally sanctioned...(this) has no support in the constitution or its preparation].

Blir den offentliga sektorn alltför svårstyrd hotas inte bara effektiviteten utan även legitimiteten i det demokratiska systemet (SOU, 1985:33).

[If the public sector becomes too difficult to steer, it is not only a threat to effectiveness, but also to the legitimacy of the democratic system].

Det är viktigt att det inom myndigheterna finns en levande insikt om att medborgarna är deras uppdragsgivare (SOU, 1997:147).

[It is important that there is a living view within agencies that the citizen is their principal].

### 6.1 Introduction<sup>16</sup>

The idea of and reference to independent government units operating at a distance from ministries has long been present in descriptions and debates about the Swedish administration. This is because the administrative structure in Sweden has historically been characterized by central government *myndigheter* [agencies] separate from Swedish *departementen* [ministries]. Indeed, the Swedish constitution has recognized the independence of central government administrative units since 1809 (Andrén, 1968:14). Within this context, the agency reform initiatives in Sweden have tended to focus upon instruments for formalizing the relationship between agencies and ministries, and to this extent curbing the independence of agencies. This has occurred primarily through setting directives about agency performance in the budgetary process. In addition, the authority of the Swedish government to influence agencies through

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<sup>16</sup> Parts of this section, section 6.3 and 6.5 have already been published in Pollitt, Talbot, Caulfield and Smullen (2004).

appointments of their director generals and boards has been an important feature in the pursuit of reform.

As in The Netherlands, the Swedish political and administrative context has a strong tradition of consensus politics but this has developed in a society that has been more homogenous in terms of religious and social cleavages (Davidson, 1989)<sup>17</sup>. This is not to ignore the existence of important divisions within Swedish society, both based upon religion<sup>18</sup> and class, but it is to distinguish it from the institutionalized differences of the Dutch (Therborn, 1989:197-206). In Sweden unity and centralization have been more characteristic of political groupings, as reflected in the strength of the the Social Democratic party, its intimate ties with the labor movement and capacity to be the party of the nation (see Castles, 1978:93-99; Heclø and Madsen, 1987:27). Collective decision making and the group has had a strong tradition in Sweden, which was the most agrarian of the Scandinavian countries and the last to industrialize (Kuhnle, 1982:134, Huntford, 1971). GGC theorists, and others, have typified it as rating highly on egalitarianism, followed by hierarchical ways of life (Grendstad, 1999). Official accounts of agency reform also reveal a strong group flavor, but this has shifted over time from more hierarchical accounts in the 1980s to more egalitarian accounts in the 1990s. Individualist elements can be identified but in a more limited way. It is significant to note that irrespective of which cultural flavors feature in Swedish official agency accounts, they always make reference to democracy and the Swedish constitution. This can be interpreted as an appeal to the universal audience in Sweden.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the Swedish terminology for agency reform (5.2) and is then followed by a presentation of the Swedish scenes of use (5.3 and 5.4). In section 5.5 I offer a brief account of Swedish agency reforms, followed

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that both smallness and cultural homogeneity have frequently been cited as explanations for social harmony and welfare expansion in Scandinavia and particularly Sweden. The cultural homogeneity explanation has been rejected by Castles (1978), Jenkins (1968) and Therborn (1989), among others, because it is an invariant cause.

<sup>18</sup> Religious difference was concealed early in Sweden with King Gustav Vasa's adoption of a Lutheran state church in the middle ages. This became associated with Swedish national identity to the extent that even catholic immigrants were expected to comply, even after the 1950s (Huntford, 1971:21-24).

by an analysis of Swedish agency rhetoric. The analysis and conclusions of my findings are presented in section 5.6.

## 6.2 A word (s) on agency terminology in Swedish

In Swedish accounts of their agency reforms, the terminology adopted is clearly not the English word agency. Rather they refer to their independent administrative units as *myndigheten* and/or *styrelsen*. These terms do not indicate a new kind of organizational form, nor a particularly modern type of organization since Swedish agencies have long existed without any new name change. Indeed, many Swedish commentators translate the term *myndigheten* as authority, reflecting the administrative powers of these organizations, and the public nature of that power. Unlike the terms adopted for agency in The Netherlands and Australia, it is not possible to refer to private companies or organizations in Sweden as myndigheten. In international exchanges in English about Swedish agency reform, however, it has been the practice to translate the term *myndighet* as agency.

## 6.3 Scenes of use I: reconstructing the political and administrative context

It is no exaggeration to say that the political administrative scene in Sweden is big. The Swedish public sector as calculated from GDP is the largest in the western world and, in the 1980s at least, was roughly equivalent to the entire manufacturing sector of the Swedish economy (Heclø and Madsen, 1987:4). This structural feature, as well as the universal generosity of the welfare system, has been attributed to the hegemony of the Social Democratic party in Sweden and their capacity to use the state apparatus to implement their vision of the good society (Tilton, 1990: chapter 1). The initiatives of the Social Democrats have always been pursued in close cooperation with the union movement, who has been the source and organizational capacity of many ideas and their implementation (Castles, 1978). As Heclø and Madsen (1987:9) have noted, “(I)n no other nation has a reforming party of the political left held such a grip on the state apparatus and on the public perception of policy choices”. Even now when their grip on government seems to be loosening, the Social Democratic image of society lives on through commitments of parties on the right, and not to mention the

general public, to a strong and active welfare state tradition (Castels, 1978; Heclø and Madsen, 1987; Roper, 2006). After all there are a number of vested interests in the existing policy making system not only from organized employee groups, but also from agricultural interests and the authority of the political and administrative elite generally. Indeed it has been described as a very cosy policy making environment in which actors can expect to be in frequent contact with one another (Heclø and Madsen, 1987:21).

Historically, the kinds of policies that Sweden has become famous for, such as their active labour market policies, has relied upon a highly centralized system (Heclø and Madsen, 1987:9; Huntford, 1971: chapter 2). While it is a corporate system the state has had a strong voice in policy making (Therborn, 1989:226). This is distinct from the Dutch case where the state has played a more facilitative role allowing civil society to provide solutions. The Swedish approach has required an enormous planning capacity and a commitment to the rationale that the good society can be planned by a *strong* state (Tilton, 1990; Rothstein, 1996; Andersson, 2006). An early citation from one of the intellectual engineers of Social Democratic ideology, Gunnar Myrdal is illustrative of the political mood; “foresight, and planning action to improve the outcome of the development we foresee, particularly action to avert dangers ahead, is the essence of whatever rationality there is in human life” (cited in Tilton, 1990:163). The extent of social planning, commitment to rationality, clear role definitions, detailed technicalities and the sheer reach of the state into private lives provides, compared to The Netherlands, a much more assertive and unified image of the Swedish *people’s home*.

### 6.3.1 *The political system*

In the terminology of political scientists, Sweden is a unitary decentralized state (Lijphart, 1999). There is a strong local government tradition, and the local level has been permitted to pursue its own political and policy agendas. It is also responsible for the delivery of public services in a wide range of areas (Pierre, 1995:141), although in this chapter I have only focused upon public agencies at the national level. Since many parliamentarians at the national level are active at the local level of politics there is also strong motivation within the political sys-



tem to maintain attention for local government issues at the national level.

The electoral system has been based upon proportional representation since 1909 ensuring representation of a number of parties within parliament. It has also meant that minority government has been the most common type of government formation since the early 1900s. From the early 1930s the Social Democratic party became the key actor on the political scene forming governments almost consecutively until 1976 (with the exception of a few months in 1936) (Larsson, 1995: 41). It remains the largest political party in Sweden, although as demonstrated in the 2006 election it is no longer assured a position in government, as it was in earlier periods.

Aside from the Social Democrats there are also four other parties that have consistently been represented in Parliament since the beginning of the 1900s. These include the Conservatives (Moderata Samlingspartiet, M), the Liberals (Folkpartiet liberalerna, FP), the Centre Party (Centern) and the Left Wing party (Vänsterpartiet, VP). The Green party has also become a consistent presence in parliament since the late 1980s, together with the Christian Democrats (Kristdemokraterna). Although the number of parties in the Swedish parliament would indicate a multi-party system as in The Netherlands, it is still often characterized as a modified two party system because the parties tend to practice their politics in two blocs, which are of similar size. There is the Socialist bloc composed of the Social Democrats and the Left Party, and the Liberal/Conservative bloc composed of the Conservatives, Liberals and Centre Party. The Liberal/Conservative bloc has generally been more divided than the left bloc, which has been considered one of the reasons for its weakness in the past (Castles, 1978:131-142). This does seem to be changing however as the right have become more consolidated in their attempt to become a real opposition to the Social Democrats. The left bloc has also become more divided, particularly with the preparedness of the Greens to criticize the Social Democrats. Nevertheless government is usually, but not always, formed from one of the left right blocs.

### 6.3.2 *The core executive*

Following elections the formation of government begins through the appointment of the prime minister. The speaker of the parliament is required to select a candidate for prime minis-

ter (after consultation with all parties) and this candidate is then appointed (or not) by the members of parliament through a vote (Larsson, 1995:37). It is then the task of the prime minister to form the government. Although there are few rules and practices governing how the prime minister is to select his or her team, given the tendency towards coalition governments, there is usually some kind of negotiation between the partners regarding the allocation of ministerial posts. This negotiation is, however, not on the same kind of scale or pursued with the same kind of rigour as in The Netherlands, since the formation of the cabinet has long been considered the privilege of the Swedish head of state, which in practice is the prime minister<sup>19</sup>. According to King's categorization of prime ministers influence in cabinet, the Swedish prime minister has an intermediary position secondary to the influence of the German chancellor or UK prime minister, but still above the kind of influence attributed to the Dutch prime minister (Lijphart, 1999:114). It is the Swedish prime minister for example that summons the cabinet for their informal sessions and oversees the cabinet debate from which he or she establishes government policy. In recent years, changes to the recruitment of agency director generals, as well as other changes have been argued to strengthen the prime minister's office in Sweden. The style of recent prime minister Goran Persson in particular has been described as more presidential, and even as a dictator of conditions (Öberg cited in Mongalvy, 2006). This has to some extent been fostered by institutional arrangements which grant the prime minister the task of appointing and dismissing ministers.

Aside from some special authority granted to the prime minister, cabinet decision making is highly collective with almost total absence of individual ministerial rule. Larsson has written; "At the most, a Swedish minister may perhaps make a couple of hundred decisions on his own, decisions which usually concern the internal organization and the administration of his own ministry, while his colleagues in other countries make thousands of decisions in their own name" (Larsson, 1995:50). The Swedish constitution prescribes collective decision making in government meetings and this is taken quite seriously in Sweden with various conventions existing to ensure that inter-

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<sup>19</sup> The King is the formal head of state, but unlike in The Netherlands, plays no role whatsoever in the appointment of ministers.

ministerial contact takes place regarding government decisions. For example all government bills and important statements by ministers (such as replies to questions in the Riksdag) are circulated in advance to the other members of the cabinet so that they may express their views (Larsson, 1995). Cabinet members also usually lunch together daily providing yet another avenue for questions of common interest to be discussed. These conventions for collective government have the effect of diluting ministerial ownership for a particular administrative turf. It is nevertheless been observed that the Minister of Finance, together with his ministry, have traditionally held a very powerful position and influence within Social Democratic governments (Ruin, 1991:66; Rothstein, 1996:61). While formally there is the principle of collective government, there are more possibilities for the prime minister and minister of finance to influence policy direction within the cabinet.

### *6.3.3 Policy making style*

As in The Netherlands, the policy making style in Sweden is generally characterized as open, at least to elite insiders, and consensus orientated (Lijphart, 1999). Policy-making occurs primarily through the commission system, which conducts much of the preparation for policy change, which in other countries would be carried out by ministries (Larsson, 1995:81). The government appoints a commission with a directive to investigate a particular area of policy change and this will usually result in a very extensive report, which in the past could take years to complete. It is typical that the inquiry of the commission will be modelled on the ideals of scientific inquiry, with existing conditions, practices, and, historical roots, first being analyzed before attending to the question of reform or change (Premfors, 1983:629). Indeed Premfors (1989) has noted that this aspect of the Swedish model attaches disproportionate weight to the preparation of decisions and their formal procedure at the expense of execution, evaluation and feedback (See also Rothstein, 1996:70). Since the early 1980s reforms to the commission system have included setting a time limit of two years at the most for their completion. Although the appointment of a commission requires a decision of the cabinet, the initiative and most of the details relating to the commission (such as the appointment of its members) typically rests with the individual minister and his or her staff (Premfors,

1983:627). Larsson has noted that in almost two thirds of the commissions there is a civil servant appointed who acts as the eyes and ears of the ministry (Larsson, 1995:82). Whether an administrator, politician or academic, appointment to a commission is prestigious and exemplary of a certain type of expert knowledge. Hecló and Madsen have described it, somewhat controversially, as follows:

The commissions of inquiry form an extension of the small permanent ministerial staffs through which individuals with specialized, political, administrative, interest group and professional roles can together work out approaches to whatever reform problem lies at hand. And because the cabinet rather than commission members bears official legal responsibility for presenting any commission proposals to parliament, most deliberations can be carried on in semiprivate conditions – outside the glare of public sunshine laws but in full view of other insiders participating in the group life of government (Hecló and Madsen, 1987:12-13).

Irrespective of whether they are allowed to comment upon findings, the length of commission reports and their expert style give them a character that is inaccessible to the general public.

There is considerable leeway for organizational interests and political opposition to effect the outcome of an investigation since those "responsible for the inquiry are required to go to great lengths to invite the opinion of all parties who might be concerned in one way or another" (Larsson, 1995:81). Indeed, together with membership on agency boards, commission appointments have been one of the ways in which organized interests have been integrated into the state apparatus. Their inclusion may also take the form of called upon outside expertise, as part of the inquiry itself, or, of commenting upon the findings of the inquiry at its conclusion. There is a remiss or referral system that follows from the submission of a commission which enables any actor to submit a reference voicing their opinion of the report's findings. These reactions are then also to be taken under consideration by the government before making its decision on the report. It is typical that effected agencies will comment upon the commission's findings. The inclusion of a number of opinions within the investigation and reporting process makes the commissions an important arena for elite deliberation, political negotiation and compromise.

A consensus approach to policy making is also reflected in the corporatist character of the Swedish state. Organized interests have long been included in the decision-making procedures

of the public sector and they have been strongly represented on committees within ministries and within the boards of agencies (Gustafsson and Richardson, 1980:28). The growth of the Swedish welfare state for example under Social Democratic governments is often associated with the inclusion of union influence within the field of social security, upon policies to protect employees and reduce unemployment more generally. According to international studies Sweden with the other Scandinavian countries is among one of the most highly corporatized countries in the world (Rothstein, 1996; Sundström, 2003:74). In order to promote a solidaristic wage policy, its main interest group organizations have also been extremely centralized (Tilton, 1990:206, Johansson, 2003:308). In recent years there has been much debate about the continuing corporatist character of the Swedish state (see Thelen, 1993; Svensson and PerOla Öberg, 2002; Blom Hansen, 2000, Micheletti, 1991). The breakdown of centralized wage bargaining between peak organizations and the rejection of agency board membership by the leading employer organization SAF in 1991 dealt a serious blow to Sweden's corporatist image. Nevertheless the links between organized actors and the political administrative apparatus have still been found to be intimate, albeit different from in the past (Svensson and Öberg, 2002; Michelletti, 1991). The threats to corporatism in Sweden have frequently been fueled by criticisms that the influence of organized interest groups is undemocratic and has alienated individual citizens and grassroots union members.

Informal contacts between ministries and agencies have been a widely cited feature of the Swedish policy making style (Pierre, 2004:209). This has been necessary because while it is small ministries and commissions that are constitutionally prescribed the role of policy making, it is the administrative agencies that implement and thereby have extensive knowledge about policy. The lack of ministerial rule, the creation of policy in the separate realm of the commission system and constitutional regulations that recognize administrative independence in applying the law has created a very strict formal delineation between policy and administrative roles. This presents agencies with great scope to influence policy since in practice they are responsible for policy implementation at a distance from government and have some legal authority for this. Indeed, there is a real aura around the autonomy of Swedish agencies and some

evidence that it is they, through their own lobbying, authority and knowledge, that initiate the policies that are formally proposed and introduced in the policy making sphere (Pierre, 2003:210-212). It should be noted that the role of Swedish agencies in policy making is also entangled within the corporatist system itself since organized interests also have close contacts with agencies and have traditionally been represented on their boards. Concurrence between government policy and administrative decision-making is sought through informal channels and contacts between both ministerial and agency employees. This occurs however against the background of detailed legislation and administrative procedures to guide decision making within agencies. There has been a strong legalistic tradition within the history of Swedish administration and in the past many administrators had a legal education (Anton, 1980). This meant that rather than relying on interventions from the legislature or politicians in the cabinet, accountability in the administration could be “sought through a legalistic conception by which the individual administrator is fully liable for failure to keep within the collectively sanctioned rules” (Heclø and Madsen, 1987:11; Anton, 1980). To this extent the more deliberative aspects of Swedish policy making have been accompanied by a wealth of regulations.

A final observation to note about policy making in Sweden is the official commitment to openness in public decision making generally. The Swedish *offentlighetsprincipen* [publicity principle] is a widely cited feature of the Swedish Constitution that requires that most official documents be accessible to the public. It was actually a convention promoted by a Finnish clergyman in Sweden, Anders Chydenius, and followed already existing practices in Finland, which was part of the Swedish realm at the time (Lamble, 2002:3). The *offentlighetsprincipen* requires that most official documents be available to the public including the documents agencies have used to come to an administrative decision or the material foundations from which commission inquiries have been based. Civil servants also have the right to inform the media of agency activities and this is meant to occur without reprieve or attempts by the agency to uncover who has spoken with the media (Larsson, 1995: 110). There is no requirement however for civil servants to speak out about agency activities and in general they are loyal to the organization for which they work.

### 6.3.4 *The central administrative structure*

The Chancellory is composed of 10 government *departementen*, the Prime Minister's office, the Office of Administrative Affairs and the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the European Union. There are approximately 450 state agencies responsible for the administration of government policy (Premfors et al., 2003:164). Some of these agencies have branches at the regional level, and there is also an administrative apparatus at the municipal level. The central level has a dual administrative structure that can hardly be exaggerated - in 2002 there were a total of 220,000 employees working in central agencies in Sweden and just 5000 employees working in the Ministries<sup>20</sup>. The personnel ratio between ministries and agencies has actually declined substantially over the last ten years with just 3500 employees working in the *departementen* and 361,000 employees working in agencies in 1992. While the focus in this research is upon central government agencies, it should also be noted that the municipal level plays a significant role in the delivery of government services and there are approximately 734,000 municipal employees (OECD, 1997).

In stark contrast to Australia and The Netherlands, agencies dominate the administrative scene at the national level in Sweden. There are at least two other types of organizational categories distinguished in Sweden at the national level, public enterprises and state companies. A distinction is made in Sweden between civil service work (*myndigheten*) and public service enterprises (*centrala affärsverk*), where civil service work is primarily occupied with public tasks and goals while enterprises combine public goals with commercial activities<sup>21</sup>. Civil service work has generally come to be understood as the realm of *myndigheten* or rather agencies.

Public enterprises or *Affärsverk* are a dying breed in Sweden with most of them, including Swedish Post having been reorganized into state companies during the 1990s. The reorganization of affärsverk into state companies has been cited as the main type of organizational change in the first half of the 1990s (Premfors, 1999:157), and has sometimes been cited as privati-

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<sup>20</sup> These figures were provided by Åke Fagrell in the Employers Agency (Arbetsgivarverket). 13 February, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> My thanks go to Petter Peterson, Advisor in the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development, for his assistance in this section.

zation in Sweden and elsewhere. Today, only 3 *Affärsverk* organizations continue to exist, including the Civil Aviation Service and the Electricity Grid.

The demise of this organizational type would seem to be part of an attempt by Swedish government to cultivate [renodel] the public sector through applying a rationale that distinguishes between organizations with commercial goals, *affärsverk*, and those without, *myndighetsutövning* (Premfors, 1999:161). The implication for the Swedish public sector has been that commercial activities by the state should be pursued in the form of state companies and not within organizational forms closer to core government such as state enterprises or agencies (Premfors, 1999:162). This has meant that the commercial activities that have remained the responsibility of agencies have been the subject of much controversy since the early 1990s. They have also had to apply strict accounting rules which distinguish between the commercial and non-commercial activities of their organization in order to demonstrate that their commercial activities comply to free market principles and not government subsidization (see Pollitt et al., 2004:161-162).

**Table 6.1 Organizational types in the Swedish administration**

Agencies	State Enterprises	State Companies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (<i>SMHI</i>)</li> <li>• Swedish Employment Agency <i>Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Service Aviation (<i>Lufthälsverket</i>)</li> <li>• National Maritime Administration (<i>Sjöfartsverket</i>)</li> <li>• National Electricity Grid (<i>Svenska kraftnät</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swedish Post (<i>Posten AB</i>)</li> <li>• Sveaskog AB</li> <li>• Royal Opera AB (<i>Operan</i>)</li> </ul>

Alongside the some 450 agencies and 3 state enterprises, there are also 59 state companies or *statliga bolag*. These state companies are mandated under the Swedish Limited Liability Incorporation Act. The majority of state companies are entirely state owned, although there are some exceptions where state shares are as small as 9.5%. Some examples of these different types of organizations are presented in table 6.1.



#### 6.4 Scenes of use II: Swedish culture and GGCT

GGC theorists have recognized a high degree of egalitarianism within the Swedish political culture (Grendstad, 1999:473, Mamadouh, 1999:479), followed by hierarchy. This is not a surprising alliance since both ways of life exhibit concern for the health of the social collectivity (Lockhart, 1997:97). Like the Netherlands, it is a moralistic political culture and hierarchy is used to promote the achievement and maintenance of equality (Mamadouh, 1997:23). Sweden provides many examples of the state playing an active role in the promotion of the *good society*, whether through the creation of legislation to promote greater equality in the home (father's maternity leave) or to limit wage disparities. Indeed achieving the good society has been an explicit objective of the Social Democratic party and has been pronounced by many of its visionaries throughout its history (Tilton, 1990). Heclø and Madsen have put it as follows:

In the Social Democratic vision, politics is a kind of therapeutic exercise. Its mission is the slow, careful eradication of disease and the establishment of a regiment of good health in society. It is always to be done with the patient's consent, but also with the recognition that some unpleasant medicine and restrictions may need to be accepted because they are good for the people (Heclø and Madsen, 1987:27).

By comparison with the other countries in this study, Sweden represents the most high group country, with some observers even arguing that individualism and concern for the individual, outside of the group, has been very limited (Heclø and Madsen, 1987; Huntford, 1971). Among its political and administrative institutions, there are also limited examples of the individualistic features of competition or individual responsibility. Perhaps an exception is the strong legal conception for individual administrators to abide by the law and apply it in a neutral way (all are equal before the law). This kind of tradition has however been described by GGC theorists as also typical of the hierarchical way of life (Hood, 2004:11; Schwarz and Thompson, 1990:66).

The egalitarian flavor of the Swedish political culture can be ascribed to the many rituals devoted to participation and deliberation. For example, there are the lengthy consultation procedures of the commission system or the various formal and informal arrangements to encourage deliberation among the cabinet members themselves. The principle of collective government also formalizes a commitment to shared group responsi-

bility, it emphasizes equality among government members, as opposed to distinctions in status or roles. This is not to say that such distinctions do not exist, and in the case of the prime minister or minister of finance there are some real opportunities to act as team captains. Other political and administrative features that may be interpreted as egalitarian include the emphasis that some scholars have placed upon the consolidative role of informal contacts between administrators and politicians. Politics and policy making is a cozy realm in Sweden and these contacts act to promote mutuality among the political and administrative elite.

There are also a number of features of Swedish political institutions that can be associated with the hierarchical way of life. As in The Netherlands, the hierarchical feature of expert knowledge and expert participation within the policy process is typical of the Swedish policy making style. It has become renowned for its painstaking attention to technical details, as numerous examples of refinements to regulations in various policy areas have testified (Hecló and Madsen, 1987). This is particularly significant given the wealth of areas in which the state is active. Even though these may be compensated by informal interaction, the formal emphasis upon the distinctions between policy and administrative roles can also be interpreted as typical of the hierarchical concern for clearly defined areas of responsibilities. Finally the structured way in which consultation takes place in Sweden and the historical commitment to social planning can be interpreted as typically hierarchical. In few other western countries has there been such detailed and extensive implementation of policies and regulations to achieve optimal social conditions.

From these descriptions and GGCT ratings, it can be said that the group dimension is particularly strong in Sweden, and stronger than the other countries examined in this study. Certainly, compared to The Netherlands there has been historically a more unified and uniform group tradition within the political system. In contrast to The Netherlands, it has also been the state rather than civil society that has been the primary facilitator of solidarity. This has been fostered by the dominance of the Social Democrats within politics and their close ties with a centralized labour movement. As Francis Castles has argued the success of this partnership brought about a Social Democratic image of society, undisturbed in its hegemony until at least the

early 1980s, and this became the status quo or establishment opinion within Swedish politics, its administration and indeed Swedish society (Castles, 1978, Heclø & Madsen, 1987). To quote Heclø and Madsen yet again, the plight of the individual within this group tradition has been described as follows:

The Swedish system arranges things in such a manner that results can be achieved only if participants play their clearly distinguished role in group settings requiring the assent of other designated group representatives. Any individual not playing by the rules of the group interaction is potentially alone and vulnerable, with no place to go. There is simply no alternative mechanism to commission work, no alternative structures of corporate representation, no alternative processes for getting heard and getting along in public life (Heclø and Madsen, 21-22).

In light of this interpretation, it seems no surprise that the Swedish political culture has, among countries examined in this study, rated lowest on individualism.

## 6.5 Swedish agency reforms in brief

There are two features of agency reform in Sweden that distinguish it quite fundamentally from the trajectory in many other countries. Firstly, the long tradition of organizational separation between policy making and implementation has the consequence that the starting point for agency reform has actually been making these agencies more within *arms reach*, rather than putting them at *arms length*. Swedish agency reform initiatives have not included new arrangements to make some kind of separation between departments and agencies possible, but instead been concerned to formalize existing arrangements. This has occurred primarily through the introduction of management by results within the budgetary process, through the use of government ordinances to define more specifically agency tasks, and through more active government policies regarding the appointment of agency director generals and the structure of their management boards. A second distinction to note in the Swedish case is that agencies are numerous in Sweden and the primary way of implementing policy at the national level. This has the consequence that any change across the central administration affects agencies, thereby leaving a very broad pool of activities that can be described as Swedish agency reform. As explained in chapter three, my focus has been primarily upon initiatives to create more *contract like* relations between national administrative agencies and the government.

### 6.5.1 *The contours of Swedish agencies*

It is the Swedish Constitution that provides a legal basis for the separation of agencies from the government offices. This occurs through the recognition of a dualistic system in Sweden and with a particular passage regarding the legal role of agencies. Known as the *independence principle* [självständighetsprincipen], this constitutional article prescribes that agencies should make their legal decisions, in particular cases (eg. about individuals), independent of other or higher authorities. Together with the extensive legal authority that some agencies have acquired over time, it has been said that many of the tasks of Swedish agencies can be characterized as being similar to that of a court (Premfors et al., 2003:67-69). Agency independence from departments has also been promoted by the requirement of collective government decisions, and not ministerial directives. Ministerial steering [ministerstyre] is generally understood to be forbidden by the Swedish Constitution and can result in a minister being reprimanded by the parliament for abusing his/her position (Pierre, 2003:206). While, as we shall see, the degree of independence that the Constitution prescribes to agencies is contested amongst Swedish commentators, it is dealt with very cautiously by departments and ministers and with a regard that is often difficult for foreigners to fathom. By contrast, in interviews it was noted that agency independence is a feature that many agency directors and employees will boast about with much confidence.

The tasks of agencies and the framework within which they should be conducted are defined in government ordinances. There are two types of ordinances affecting agencies, a more general ordinance which outlines the criteria that all agencies should seek to satisfy in the operations (eg. avoiding unnecessary costs, cooperating with other agencies) and a more specific ordinance describing agency tasks and management structure (Molander et al., 2002:73-74). The government will prescribe one of three different kinds of management structures that can apply to agencies in Sweden. They may be prescribed a *one man rule model* [enrådighetmodell], which confers full responsibility for decision making to the agency director, a *limited responsibility board* or an *extended responsibility board* (Larsson, 1995:60). With extended responsibility boards, the director general of an agency is not the chairperson, although he or she is usually a member of the board. Limited responsibility boards are still

quite common among agencies in Sweden today and entail strategic decisions being made by a board wherein the director general is chairperson. Boards have been a recurring theme in agency reform debates because of criticisms that they confuse lines of responsibility and represent interests other than those of the general good (SOU, 1983; SOU, 1985). Although initially one of the primary corporatist features of the Swedish administration, board membership includes not only organized interest groups, but also parliamentarians, citizens and experts in the field. Among a range of proposals to shift towards management by results in the Swedish budget, it was argued that the *one man model*, with its clearer lines of command, should become the main management structure (SOU, 1985). The parliament rejected this proposal, however, because parliamentarians are often represented on boards and use this as a check on agencies<sup>22</sup>. This has also meant that links with organized interests can be maintained. Nevertheless, with the refusal of the employer organization to participate in these arrangements union board membership was also reduced in some fields during the reign of the right bloc government in the early 1990s (Johansson, 2003:308).

It is the government that is responsible for the appointment of both agency directors and board members. In practice, however, the selection is often based upon recommendations from responsible departments (in consultation with the agency) and, depending upon the nature of the agency's task, through negotiations within the policy sector. Against the background of a strong tradition of agency independence, the appointment powers of the government have been touted as an important means for ensuring agency conformance to government policy and intentions. Explicit party political appointments are condemned although next to merit, an appointee that understands the government's policy objectives, are legitimate criteria for the selection. With the long reign of the Social Democrats up until the late 1970s, it has been suggested that the administration had also obtained a party political flavor, although this was more the consequence of a politicized society rather than an agenda from the government (Pierre, 1995:148). The discontent of the incoming Conservative government with the administration (after

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<sup>22</sup> This information was pointed to me by Goran Sundström in email on 26/2/2003.

the Social Democrats long reign) set the ball rolling for a more active recruitment policy. In the period between 1987-1994 three changes to the recruitment of agency directors have been introduced. It is now possible that they serve a shorter second term, that they be transferred to another agency (with same employment conditions) where deemed suitable, and that they be transferred to newly created units in the departments in order to facilitate a quick transfer. Although clearly these arrangements are very convenient to the government, it should be repeated that explicit political party appointments are condemned and ministers may be reported in this matter to the parliamentary committee on the constitution. Nevertheless some observers seem to be suggesting that political appointments are on the increase (Pierre, 2004) and certainly appointments have been more centralized to the prime minister's office. Lindvall and Rothstein (2006:52) also speak of the creation of more *ideological state apparatuses* engaged in the production of ideological positions, rather than the implementation of laws. Since the heads of these organizations are often former politicians, they have labeled them policrats.

The government has also used the budget process to set performance objectives for agencies (Sundström, 2003). The appropriation document [regleringsbrevet] in which financial resources are allocated to agencies, has since the late 1980s become the means for communicating broader performance requirements. This includes the general political goals the agency is to achieve, as well as some more detailed performance measures that should be reported back to the government in an agency annual report. It is not always the case that precise targets are set, however, and the agency may be required to develop measures that demonstrate their achievement of the set political goals (Pollitt et al., 2004:92). Furthermore, the government also uses the appropriation document to request various kinds of reporting about agency activities. Although formally it is the department that prepares the information presented in the appropriation document, in general its contents are already known to the agency and have been negotiated with them. Some agencies write most of the document themselves because the departments have lacked the knowledge to develop (specific) performance goals and measures for agencies (Sundström, 2003:265; RRV, 1994:32, 23).

Following a commission report in 1985 agencies have also been required to report back their accomplishments to the government (Sundström, 2003:264 Brunsson, 1995:111), the first of these annual reports occurred in 1992. The National Audit Office (RRV) became responsible for creating an ordinance to define the general kinds of information that must be included in the annual report, besides the specific requests of the government. This has been refined on at least two occasions requiring firstly detailed information per agency activity, to a focus upon the relationship between the agency's activity results and its contribution and subsequently their set goals (ESV 1999:19, 14). The National Audit Office investigations have found that the information supplied by agencies has been too detailed to be useful or accessible to government and that they were often manicured for the requirements of auditors rather than politicians (Brunsson, 2002:197). The quality of information supplied in the reports has also been criticized at different times (OECD, 2001:54). Again refinements have been made to try to simplify the annual reporting of agencies, for example by requiring only a limited number of key indicators.

To complement the performance information in the annual report, there is also regular financial reporting between agencies and the Swedish Financial Management Authority (ESV). Every month a list of standard financial information such as the use of appropriations, the collection of income and types of expenditures are sent electronically to ESV (ESV, 2001:8). They compile and analyze this information and then transfer it to the ministries and other agencies such as the National Institute for Economic Research. Quarterly and half yearly financial reports are also submitted to ESV covering respectively the articles in the National Accounts and the same financial figures required for the annual report (ESV, 2001:8).

Accompanying the introduction of performance reporting in the budget, has also been the delegation of more financial and personnel decisions to agencies. This was firstly in the form of setting financial frames for agencies, wherein managers were required to decide how set resources would be distributed in their organization. They were also delegated some decisions regarding wages and the design of their organization. In 1993 accrual accounting was introduced and this also enabled agencies to save funds over time with interest (up to 3-5% of the total

appropriation) and to make investment decisions (Pollitt et al., 2004:94).

### *6.5.2 Overview of the reform period*

At the beginning of the 1980s Sweden was still being governed by the first non-Social Democratic government in 40 years, and it was suffering a large budget deficit. Concern over the size of its public sector had become paramount (Wilks, 1995:33). This had placed budgetary reform on the agenda, and, more specifically the possibility for reviewing expenditure. Indeed, the budget would become a forum for a number of reforms, and these would also provide an important means for steering agencies. Although the circumstances were favourable, it was no coincidence that the budget would become the source of much fine-tuning from the late 1980s since experience and expertise into budgetary reform had been built up in Sweden's central coordinating agencies (Sundström, 2003:143). In particular, the Agency for Administrative Development (Statskontoret) and the National Audit Agency (RRV) both had experience with Programme Budgeting in the 1960s and conducted their own investigations into new budgetary techniques. I have focused my analysis upon budgetary changes in this section although clearly there have been a range of different kinds of reforms effecting agencies since the early 1980s. This includes the Renewal programme with a large decentralization of agency activities to the local level (Gustafsson, 1987), a focus upon service and training (Gustafsson, 1987), reducing agency regulations (Premfors, 2003:281), as well as later aims to cultivate clearer distinctions in agencies' commercial, legal and government activities (Premfors, 2003:293-302).

Preceding the first budgetary reform in 1988, were also two important commission reports opening up discussion about the steering of agencies. In 1983 *Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet* [Political steering - administrative independence] problematized the matter of agency independence and argued that it was quite legitimate for the government to steer agencies (SOU, 1983). The budget, in particular was an attractive means because it was recognized as a financial power of the government (SOU, 1985). The second commission report was published in 1985 and provided the first proposals for new budgetary arrangements. It also presented initiatives to change the length of tenure of agency director generals and promote their



mobility. By this time the Social Democrats had returned to government and were keen to demonstrate their ability to reform the public sector. They unleashed a Renewal programme that besides creating a new *Civil Departement* responsible for administrative reform, and training agencies to develop service initiatives, also embraced initiatives to enhance political control over the budget (Premfors, 1991:88). The budget plans were ambitious and entailed a three-year budget that was to promote long-term perspectives upon financial management. Beginning in 1988 after a trial period, it required agencies to supply in depth analyses of their activities once in a three-year cycle, with more simplified reporting in the other years. The government was to set long-term goals for agencies over the three-year period, to be achieved within a frame budget. Agencies were then to report back at the end of the three-year period, which was in turn to provide material for further directives. Incorporated in the budget goals were 2% saving standards for all agencies to satisfy in their existing budgets. They were required to identify how they would achieve this themselves (Brunsson, 1995:114). It was this budget arrangement that initiated the use of the appropriation document [regleringsbrevet] for steering agencies and provided the foundations for the reporting system within the budget. By 1993, however, the three-year system had been dismantled as financial crisis took over. Three year expenditure limits were still being set but reporting was once again annual without an in depth report in the third year. The budget unit in the Ministry of Finance had now taken over the responsibility for public sector reform and accrual accounting was introduced across the administration (ESV, 2001). References to some of these reforms are included in the chronology in table 6.2.

In 1996 the budgetary decision-making process was refined even further. The beginning of the fiscal year was changed and even more precise stages were identified for exchanging various documents to support the process (OECD, 1998). Twenty seven expenditure areas were defined in the budget and two decision making phases were introduced for setting firstly the limits of an expenditure area, and secondly the specific allocation within that area. Agency managers have argued that these arrangements have limited the opportunity to negotiate their appropriation (Pollitt et al., 2004). Each expenditure area was divided into sectors that corresponded to an overarching goal that agencies should aim to achieve, as well as a broken down

goal specific to each agency. This has since been criticized for the detail in reporting it has required (SOU, 1997:57, 81) and depending on the agencies' task such broken down goals may not be requested. In a study of four Swedish agencies in 2004, it was evident that the government directives were fairly broad with the exception of the large Employment Agency (Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen) (Pollitt et al., 2004: 91-92). Some observers suggest the reporting requirements have become pathologically precise (SOU, 1997), while others have stated that government directives are vague, unsuitable for measurement, or general goals without any indication of how they should be reported (Molander et al., 2001: 79).

More recently, the budget unit of the Ministry of Finance has made further proposals for a more integrated performance budgeting system in Sweden. Their proposals included identifying a number of objectives in the political arena for policy areas, programme areas and then sub-programmes which concerns those activities conducted within separate agencies. The budget unit envisions goal setting that will tie the activity goals of particular agencies with wider objectives at the programme and policy levels (Ministry of Finance, 2001; DS, 2000). According to the findings of the VESTA project these linkages will promote more explicit connections between the principles of the budget and the structure of management and control tools.

Their ambition is to put the national budgetary accounts on the same footing as those of the accounts of organizations in the public sector, including agencies, by moving the budget to full accruals (Ministry of Finance, 2001). Some movement towards introducing the recommendations of VESTA was seen in the budget bill of 2001 when 47 policy areas were distinguished. The impetus for these new budgetary changes is, according to VESTA, the continued input orientation of the budget and the limited role that agency reporting has continued to have in affecting budgetary decisions (Ministry of Finance, 2001).

**Table 6.2. A chronology of Swedish reform events  
(continues on next page)**

- Budget year 1979/1980 2% cuts in running costs were demanded across the board from all Government agencies.
- 1982. New Social Democratic government created *Civildepartementet* (Ministry of Public Administration) responsible for improvement of public service production and efficiency, and the relations between administrative bodies and citizens. It was to coordinate the forthcoming renewal activities of the Government.
- June 1983. Publication of *Politisk styrning – administrativ självständighet*. Finds that there is constitutional legitimacy, and indeed a democratic requirement, for the government to actively steer agencies.
- April, 1985. Renewal program and action plan introduced including seminars and training sessions for civil servants, more scope for decision making at local level and less regulations.
- August, 1985 publication of *Regering myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning*. Recommends shift to three year budget with more precise and detailed steering from the government, that the general arrangement for boards should be a one man rule system and that the government more actively recruit and transfer director generals of agencies.
- May, 1986. New Administrative Procedure Act passed regulating the way that civil servants make their decisions. It stressed openness, service and simplified contacts with citizens.
- March – May, 1987. The second contract term of directors of agencies was shortened to three years and new general director's office created within the chancellery in order to enable quick transfers.
- 1988. Many central reform activities taken over by the budget unit of the Ministry of Finance.
- 1988. Three year budget cycle introduced for first group of agencies, it included using the appropriation letter to set agency goals.
- Budget years 1989/90 and 1990/1991 both included propositions to make distinctions (cultivation/[renodling]) between agency work (myndighetsutövning) and commercial work (affärsverk). 1990/1991 proposition included preference for state company (statlig bolag) rather than enterprise (affärsverk) where commercial work was prominent.
- 1993. The three year budget reporting system dismantled with only three year budgetary goals being set and no longer indepth reporting. Accrual accounting introduced across central agencies.
- 1994. Change to law regulating civil servants employment thereby enabling the government to transfer directors of agencies to another office.
- 1994. New 'coordination' minister position created within the government to coordinate administrative reform activities across the

**Table 6.2. A chronology of Swedish reform events**

<p>administration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1994. New legislation passed devolving collective bargaining to agencies and making it the responsibility of agency directors.</li> <li>• 1996. Further changes to budget process introduced. Appropriation levels set for different policy sectors and the budget year made to correspond with the calendar year.</li> <li>• 1996. New ordinance setting out the categories to be reported upon within annual reports.</li> <li>• March 1997. Publication of <i>I medborgarnas tjänst</i>. It criticizes the <i>renodling</i> of agencies and detailed results steering for increasing fragmentation within the administration, as well as the closed circle of experts responsible for results steering. Recommends fundamental changes to results steering and greater focus upon civil service ethics and training within administration.</li> <li>• 1997. New minister post for questions of democracy and administration created together with three units for administration matters within the Justice Ministry including: unit for administrative development [enheten för förvaltningsutveckling], personnel politics unit [personalpolitiska enheten] and the democracy unit [demokratienheten].</li> <li>• 1998. The E government unit of the National Audit Agency (RRV) is separated and placed within a new organization (ESV) the Swedish National Financial Management Authority. It becomes responsible for developing steering of state more generally.</li> <li>• 2000. The Vesta group coordinated by the Ministry of Finance publish their ambitious report for accruals reporting in the budget.</li> <li>• 2002. The Ministry of Finance obtains full responsibility for public management issues</li> </ul>
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Although this final development would suggest that the budgetary unit in the Ministry of Finance has maintained a strong hold over reform initiatives in Sweden, from 1997 the Justice Ministry did become responsible for a large part of the administrative reform activities for a short period. A separate minister post was also created for questions of democracy and administration. Following from a commission report in 1997 (SOU, 1997), new units were created in the Justice Ministry for employment and recruitment matters, for steering and management and for matters of democracy (Premfors et al., 2003:307-308). In more recent times, however, the Ministry of Finance has once again become solely responsible for public management issues. A chronology of the reform period is presented in table 6.2.

## 6.6 The rhetoric of agency reform

Any proposals to reform the state administration, and thereby agencies, in Sweden are usually prepared and discussed within the commission system. The government appoints a commission with the task of investigating specific kinds of changes or problem areas. It is typical that the commission will also assign different specialists and authorities to report on different aspects of their task, as part of gathering evidence for their investigation and eventual recommendations. Sometimes these smaller assignments, and who is to perform them, are also defined within the government directives for the commission investigation. This presents the possibility for other speakers, besides the commission members, to have an influence upon the contents of their report. Sundström, for example, has argued that some commission reports discussing results steering in Sweden were limited by their dependence upon findings from Statskontoret (National Agency for Public Management) and RRV (the National Audit Office) (Sundström, 2003:176). This was because these agencies were the state experts on these matters, since they had already been developing ideas in this area. At the same time they had thereby an (uncritical) interest in promoting them. The commission document is a negotiation of all of the different perspectives gathered, often from different actors, during the investigation.

It is important to note that although the final report of the commission system can be seen as providing the initial argumentation for a change in policy or the introduction of management reforms, its proposals may only provide the basis for further discussion. Indeed, if the proposals are implemented, it is not unusual that they will also occur in an adjusted form. As was noted earlier in this chapter the commission system includes an open process of debate whereby any actor is able, in writing, to reject the findings or recommendation of a commission and explain their own standpoint in a given matter. In presenting their response to the commission's findings and eventual actions, the government is expected to show consideration of the commission's standpoint, as well as for the remiss statements. This is not to say that the government will not take a position of its own (which must then be approved by parliament), which may only conform in a limited way to the commission findings and/or remiss statements. Nevertheless, there

is generally some uniformity in the kinds of terminology adopted by the government and an emphasis upon they way agreement has been found with both the commission and remiss findings. This uniformity is in part fostered by the terms of reference for the commission report that have been set by the government, itself. Perhaps exemplary of the egalitarian character of Swedish political and administrative culture, emphasis upon agreement tends to occur even when the government decisions proposed would suggest the commission findings have been overlooked or rejected (see for example Regerings Proposition 1997/98:136, 34-49).

The first commission document analyzed for this chapter is *Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet* [Political Steering - administrative independence] published in 1983. This commission report was one of two reports prepared for the Förvaltningsutredning [Public Administration investigation] that was first given a government directive in 1976 to consider methods for steering the state administration. *Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet* was later added to the commission's task because of constitutional questions raised around that time about the legality of government steering of administrative activities and decision making (Sundström, 2003:176). The government directives for this investigation were quite general and did not request recommendations for change, but rather an analysis of the constitutional prescriptions for steering and its factual application (SOU, 1983). Consequently the argumentation in this report did not directly lead to legislative change or bring about any direct reforms to Swedish agencies. Instead it set out a number of principles and constitutional possibilities for political steering, as well as to describe the actual independence of Swedish agencies. The findings have since been used (selectively) to provide legitimacy for reformers introducing steering initiatives such as management by results and a more active recruitment policy for appointing and relocating agency director generals. This use continues to be made even though the commission findings were and still are contested in legal circles (Sundström, 2003:182).

The second commission document analyzed is *Regeringen, myndigheterna och myndigheternas ledning* [Government, agencies and agencies' management]. Published in 1985, it was also given broad directions to investigate methods for government to improve the steering of agencies. The directive focused primarily

on the need to investigate the different ways management (including director generals and boards) were organized across different types of agencies, their management functions and responsibilities, since these features were seen to have implications for effectively satisfying the parliament's and government's intentions. In addition, brief mention was also made of investigating the introduction of frames for agency goals within the budget and other areas of economic steering (SOU, 1985:40, 235-247). Although the bulk of the report focused upon the management level of agencies including their boards (composition), director generals and management teams, the most important decision following from this report were changes to the budget and the introduction of management by results. It was the grounds for adopting a three-year budget, a more formalized system of result reporting and for delegating more financial and personnel decisions to agency management. Other consequences from the report's findings were adjustments to the appointment conditions of agency director generals. Their tenure was shortened, legislation was created to enable the government to transfer them to other state offices, and units were created in the Regeringskansliet to facilitate quick transfers. Finally, the report also made a number of proposals regarding the boards of agencies. It expressed the need for clearer division of responsibilities for boards, the removal of interest group representation on boards, and, a preference for boards in which the director general maintained responsibility for agency decisions. Although no direct changes occurred from these recommendations, clarifying the lines of responsibilities of boards and their role in the Swedish democracy has remained an ongoing theme of discussion about Swedish agencies throughout the 1980s and 90s.

The third commission document analyzed in this chapter is *I medborgarnas tjänst* [In the citizen's service]. Its instructions were to analyze the current forms of steering and the structural organization of the state administration (above the level of a sector analysis), as well as to provide guiding recommendations for the administration in the coming years (SOU, 1997:57, 171-177). Although the directive was once again broad and even requested an account of how the administration had developed since the Second World War (!), it also gave an explicit commitment to the continued use of management by results (SOU, 1997:57,173). Furthermore, it defined demands for democratic

steering, oversight and control, legality, effectiveness and accessibility as basic principles that should underlie the commissions' work (SOU, 1997:57:175). As we shall see, the commission was highly critical of management by results and raised some reservations about the *renodling* [literally cultivation] or rather focus upon core activities which has occurred over the last decade because they contributed to the fragmentation of the administration. Many of its recommendations concerned promoting unity and cooperation across the whole of state activities. Although the government (in accordance with many remiss statements) did not accept the commission's proposals to completely overhaul management by results activities, it did agree to make a number of refinements to the program. Not least among these, were changes to the double role of the National Audit Office in the evaluation and development of management by results activities. Instead a new organization, the Agency for Economic Management (EVS), was created to develop management by results.

The government also accepted that steering needed to adjust more to the different kinds of activities performed by different agencies and in future government letters would prescribe separate result goals for each agency that corresponded to a sector goal. In order to promote cooperation within sectors, they would only prescribe an overarching goal for a sector instead of an overarching goal for each agency. Other refinements made to management by results included a more structured approach to the exchange of result information (to strengthen political engagement) and more dialogue between departments and agency director generals. Other initiatives following from the commission's report included the creation of a new agency to promote the quality and competence of the administration. This organization was to support other kinds of steering activities such as the promotion of a public sector culture, maintain the program for agency director generals (their selection and training), and encourage the simplification of agency regulations.

#### 6.6.1 *Document one - Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet* [Political steering - administrative independence]

Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet was the second of two reports prepared for the Förvaltningutredning [administration examination] and first appointed in 1976. The original directive to the commission requested an overview of steering



and organizational questions within the state, with special attention for budget processes (Sundström, 2003:176). Later, following from a parliamentary motion reviving constitutional considerations of the democratic steering principles for the administration, a second directive was made to examine the constitutional conditions for steering the administration, as well as the actual relationships between administration, government and parliament. One of the main motives for this examination was to consider constitutional prescriptions for steering, given the widespread belief that the government is unable to steer directly by virtue of the Swedish tradition of agency independence. The terms of reference for the report were expressed as follows:

(A)tt kartlägga de förändringar som skett i den statliga förvaltningsorganisationen och mot bakgrund härav beskriva och analysera nu rådande förhållanden och problem i relationerna mellan regering, riksdag och förvaltningsmyndigheten (SOU, 1983:9).

[To map out the changes that have occurred in the state administration's organization and against this background describe and analyze the existing relationships and problems in the relations between government, parliament and agencies.]

This task was assigned against the background of perceived problems with government steering of agencies and their strong independence. It is observed:

Den demokratiska styrningen av den statliga verksamheten uppfattas som otillräcklig. Härav följer, menar man, å ena sidan att politiska intentionerna inte får ett tillfredsställande genomslag i myndigheternas arbete. Å andra sidan har förvaltningen givits befogenheter att fatta beslut för vilka ansvar i politisk ordning inte kan utkrävas (SOU 1983:18).

The democratic steering of the state activities is considered insufficient. This means, it is argued, on the one hand that political intentions do not have a satisfactory impact on the work of agencies. On the other hand, the administration has been given the authority to take decisions on things for which responsibility within the political order cannot be demanded.]

The commission's objective was therefore to clarify the means available for government to steer agencies (SOU, 1983:18).

Commission members were primarily active politicians but also included a political scientist, Daniel Tarschys as chairperson. The final report is just over 100 pages long and consists of five chapters examining respectively the constitutional foundations for steering (chapter 2), the government's steering function (chapter 3), the administration's increasing independence (chapter 4) and steering and responsibility (chapter 5). There is also an introductory chapter that provides an overview of par-

liamentary debate about the steering of the administration and an account of previous reports examining this issue (chapter 1).

The final chapter of the report (chapter 5) brings together the main findings and identifies three courses of action that may be taken to improve the democratic steering of the administration. A central conclusion is that there is no constitutional barrier to political steering of the administration by parliament and government. Indeed, the commission finds that the notion that there is such a barrier has been the result of widespread misunderstanding about the constitution and dualism in Sweden. At the same time, it is argued that it may be desirable to limit detailed political steering of the administration in order to protect other values such as legality, pluralism, local and regional identity, and, the business activities of the state (SOU, 1983:96-97).

Three main problems in the existing relationship between government and the administration were drawn from the analysis in the report. This included the problem that agency independence has grown in a way that has limited government's possibility to be responsible for its activities to parliament. It was argued that government needs to have better insight into the activities of agencies. The second problem identified relates to the lack of clarity in the relationship between the political sphere and the administration, which is exacerbated by the unclear role of boards in agencies. These boards are found to have been subject to very little government regulation and great uncertainty is said to exist about the kinds of roles they play and their composition. The third problem identified relates to the creation of regulations by agencies and the lack of knowledge in the political sphere about the kinds regulations being made and how they are used.

Finally, the report closed with three possible roads the government can take to promote stronger *democratic steering* of the independent authorities (SOU, 1983:105-106). These roads included increasing the influence of the political sphere or increasing social influences through, on the one hand, shifting more responsibilities to the municipalities or, on the other hand, by using market steering. The report suggested that increases in political influence could be pursued by returning some decision-making competencies to the political sphere and/or by increasing the political influence upon the management of agencies. Some suggestions were made about cultivat-

ing the authorities through the selection of management, board types and board members. Alternatively, the routes to increase social influences are argued to offer a means by which local political opinion or the consumer can influence the direction of authority work. No examples are offered regarding the kind of activities that would be most appropriate for more democratic steering through decentralization to the municipalities or through market steering.

#### 6.6.1.1 *Ethos and the construction of the audience*

In the self-presentation the speaker, devoted much effort to demonstrate very broad knowledge about the administration and its place within society. This occurred through an account of the complexity of industrial countries (SOU, 1983:17) and its implications for the state, and through presentation of the democratic chain within which the administration operates (SOU, 1983:16-17). There was also an overview of the themes discussed in previous commission reports (SOU, 1983:14). Furthermore, accounts of the history of the administration through an inventory of commission reports that have been conducted since the 1800s, and a discussion of dualism also from around this time, are brought together to demonstrate the credibility of the speaker. All of these elements corresponded with the more general concern in the argumentation for Swedish democracy, and act to appraise it in many ways. To this extent, they can be interpreted as appeals to the universal audience in the Swedish political and administrative system. After all, the idea of democracy is appealing to most audiences, and particularly those that have been imbued with a social democratic image of society. As Premfors has noted, it is also typical for Swedish commission reports to attend to some rewriting of history (Premfors, 1991).

At the same time, the kinds of detail and technical terms adopted also indicated that the speaker constructed particular audiences throughout the text. The various definitions from political science, as well as the devotion to constitutional law discussion indicated an appeal being made to an expert audience of political scientists. Definitions included the representative democracy principles of the Swedish state (SOU, 1983:16), the kinds of authority the constitution prescribes to public power (SOU, 1983:19-29), and dualism (SOU, 1983:37). The vocabulary included various references to other political science terms such as the parliamentary democracy, sovereignty of the people,

the separation of powers and systems of government such as those based upon a system of ministerial accountability (SOU, 1983:41-42). With regards to constitutional terminology the audience is exposed to a range of citations from the Swedish Constitution, as well as statements from various legal commentators about the implications of constitutional articles for more active steering of the administration (SOU, 1983:43-49). Indeed, these provided much of the evidence for the legitimacy of more active government steering of the administration. In addition, although references to the complexity of society are rather cursory, they still provided a signal to an academic audience with the capacity to connect these to their knowledge about theories of the state in (post industrial) society. Finally, the speaker also paid reference to scientific evidence through the provision of a number of statistics describing the growth of agency tasks and their regulation. These features of the text all require the audience to have rather extensive knowledge of political science ideas in order to process the evidence presented.

Associated with the academic political science elements of the argumentation was the attention for political-administrative history in Sweden. In some cases this occurred in a rather cursory way, as if to attend to some important dates in Swedish political history (eg. SOU, 1983:35, 39), but on other occasions this occurred in such a detailed way that a particular expert audience is being constructed. For example there was extensive analysis of the relationship between the administration and government in Sweden, and, the history of dualism (SOU, 1983:37-43). This examination included descriptions of earlier commission proposals to change the relationship between the government and the administration, and references to the circumstances that reigned during these periods. It also identified origins of the tradition of agency independence in Sweden and the relatively weak position of departments with reference to the absolute monarchy in Sweden. A number of the problems that can be attached to dualism in the Swedish state are given an historical perspective such as double work, weak harmony and unclear accountability relationships. This constructed an expert audience interested in political-administrative history.

Finally, an audience of politicians is another particular audience being constructed throughout the argumentation. This was reflected in the devotion of the speaker to a range of citations from parliamentarians and their concerns about the Swedish

administration (SOU, 1983:9-12). These included citations about the lack of oversight of agencies' regulations and activities, oversight of their board composition and corporate character, and the weak position of the citizen against such monolithic bureaucracy. More generally, there was some element of sympathy being expressed for the politician given the growth of the state, which would appeal to politicians. By contrast, there is no reference to the perspectives of civil servants or agency director generals.

#### 6.6.1.2 *Premises of argumentation*

Premises of argumentation based upon the structure of reality included the truth that complexity in the world, and with it the expansion of the state more generally, has brought with it the problem of *unsteerability*. The commission pointed to debates in the international community about the industrial worlds' growth and its consequences for simultaneously reducing the ability of governments to steer, as well as strengthening bureaucracy's position as an independent power (SOU, 1983:17). Although there was no detailed analysis of this debate, it acted as a truth in the argumentation because it depends upon a system of thought relating a range of facts about society, government and the administration. It provided the backdrop throughout the argumentation for the focus upon steering and thereby acted to give urgency to the themes being discussed by the commission. Fleeting reference to *komplexitet* [complexity] and the expansion of the state occurred throughout the argumentation (SOU, 1983:17,63, 95, 96) and acted to reinforce to the audience that the matter of steering should be addressed. It also promoted the credibility of the speaker as familiar with international and academic accounts of the state of play.

Related to this truth was the fact of the independence of Swedish agencies, as a premise of the argumentation. This was a starting point of the argumentation that the commission then sought to explain in its analysis. Together with the observation of complexity and its consequences for the bureaucracy as an independent power, it was also noted that "Våra statliga myndigheter karaktäriseras sedan länge av en betydande självständighet" (SOU, 1983:17) [Our state agencies have for long time been characterized by significant independence]. The assessment of the relationship between government and agencies therefore required an analysis of its independence, which is

all the more important given the complexity of the state and problems regarding its *ostyrbarhet* [unsteerability]. Together with the fact of agency independence, and the truth of complexity, was another fact that *democratic steering* has been insufficient. These starting points in the argumentation all made it possible to then reconsider the arrangements in Sweden that limit political control, and focus upon the administration as a problem for democracy.

Presumptions that provided the starting points of argumentation included the presumption that there is a motivation within the political system for government members to steer and be accountable for agencies. This presumption was reflected in the various references to complexity and state expansion as the primary reasons for the delegation of tasks and responsibilities to agencies. Perceptions of the constitution were also identified as a cause of the lack of steering, while political motivations remained undiscussed or were only given very cursory attention. Indeed, in many parts of the text the politician was presented as a victim of the growth of the state with little *handlingsfrihet* (room for negotiation). A second presumption was that the system of representative democracy in its most traditional form is capable of providing a means for achieving meaningful government accountability. The commission made a plea for more meaningful accountability relationships within the *accountability chain*. This is a chain with links from the people to parliament to government and to the administration. More active government steering was justified because then it can satisfy demands of accountability to parliament. This supposed large information processing capacities on behalf of the government, as well as an interest in the management activities of agencies within parliament. Only cursory mention was made of other forms of steering and accountability eg. through decentralization to local communities, at the end of the document.

The starting points regarding the desirable in the argumentation included the primacy of the values of political accountability and legality. Indeed, it was for the value of *democracy* more generally that the analysis of steerability was being conducted in the report. This was reflected in the focus upon the Constitution as the only criterion for assessing the capacity of the government to steer the administration and in various other democracy artefacts presented in the document, such as statements from politicians and public law experts or descriptions of

the Swedish democratic system. The focus upon steering in the argumentation was primarily pursued because of the consequences for democracy from a lack of steering. The report stated:

Frågor som tidigare avgjordes av de politiska organen hanteras nu av myndigheterna själva....Dessa tendenser har aktualiserat en rad spörsmål kring de förtroendevaldas reella kompetens att styra den offentliga sektorn och kring förvaltningens demokratiska legitimitet (SOU, 1983:95).

[Questions that were earlier decided upon by political organs are now managed by agencies themselves....these developments have raised a range of questions about the real competence of democratically elected representatives to steer the public sector, and about the democratic legitimacy of the administration].

Or, with regards to accountability in democracy:

För att regeringens ansvar inför riksdagen och riksdagens ansvar inför folket skall ha en reell innebörd måste de båda statsmakterna också ha förutsättningar att bestämma inriktningen av det arbete som bedrivs i förvaltningen (SOU, 1983:18).

[In order to give real content to the government's accountability to the parliament, and parliament's accountability to the people, both state powers must also have the necessary conditions to decide the direction of the work that is conducted in the administration.]

In these statements the democratic system was presented as requiring a hierarchical relationship between the government and the administration, where agencies are to be the *tool* [redskap] for actualizing the government's intentions (SOU, 1983:58). The article of the Constitution "förvaltningsmyndigheten lyder under regering" [agencies are subordinate to the government] was cited to achieve this view of democracy. Furthermore, it was against this vision of the democratic system that the independence of the administration was presented as a problem in the argumentation. This problem was expressed as follows:

Klart är emellertid att betydande uppgifter successivt har överförts från de politiska till de administrativa organen utan att de samlade effekterna på det demokratiska systemets funktionsduglighet har prövats (SOU, 1983:98).

[It is clear, however, that significant tasks have successively been handed over from political to the administrative organs without examining the accumulated effects on the democratic system's functional competencies].

Indeed, agency independence was presented in general as being inconsistent with the democratic system, and with it the sovereignty of the people.

With regards to a hierarchy of values, it was also observed that although the commission expressed a preference for the subordination of the administration to government as central to

the good functioning of democracy, in particular kinds of legal cases, agency independence was considered a higher value. This was discussed with reference to the article RF 11:7 of the Swedish Constitution which rejects the right of an external power to direct the application of law by an agency towards a private individual or other actor in a particular case (SOU, 1983:44). It was explained:

Förvaltningsmyndigheternas grundlagsskyddade frihet att bestämma efter eget omdöme syftar primärt till att garantera rättssäkerhet vid förvaltningsmyndighets myndighetsutövning eller tillämpning av lag... (SOU, 1983:39).

[Agencies constitutionally protected freedom to decide according to their own judgement aims primarily to guarantee the rule of law in the administration's exercise of authority or application of law...]

Regeringsformens bestämmelser om förvaltningsmyndigheternas ställning avser som nämnts att ge garantier för myndigheternas oberoende vid handläggningen av vissa ärenden och uttrycker rättssäkerhetskrav (SOU, 1983:46).

[The constitutions prescription's about agencies' position exists, as mentioned, to give a guarantee for agencies' independence of certain assignments and expresses the demand for the rule of law.]

Although much of the argumentation around this article of the Constitution was concerned to demonstrate that it is only applicable in a limited area of agency activities (regarding the exercise of their legal authority towards individuals), it remained exonerated from government steering.

The preference for quantitative loci was prominent in the argumentation, particularly in its discussion of the causes of the growth in agency independence. For example this was demonstrated with reference to the increase in the number of tasks the authorities have become responsible for or the number of regulations that they create. Tables and graphs with statistical information are used to illustrate this growth (SOU, 1983:66-69). Even when the commission claimed to be presenting qualitative evidence of the growth in agency independence, this information was presented by emphasizing the quantitative aspect of this evidence. For example, the report claimed that the kinds of laws and budgets which agencies have been subject to have changed in a way that gives them greater influence upon the content of their activities, this was argued to be a qualitative change. There was, however, no indication about the way such influence has been used in practice, rather there was only a focus upon the *increase* in the use of these kinds of laws or budget



frames. In addition, quantitative argumentation was used in the prescriptions of the report. For example it stated that one desirable way to make the relations between the administration and the political sphere *more* democratic was to have *more* political steering. There was also reference to *increasing* steerability (SOU, 1983:105).

Besides the strong quantitative locus, the qualitative locus of the precarious was used in two important ways to sensitize the audience to greater concern for the desirability of stronger political steering. First, there was an emphasis upon historical explanations with attention for the history of the relationship between ministries and agencies. The origins of dualism was explained by describing agencies acquisition of an independent position from ministries, as a consequence of the king disallowing ministers strong powers of authority over the administration (SOU, 1983:38). This encouraged the audience to reconsider the tradition of agency independence in Sweden. It occurred together with an account of the various proposals to change the weak position of departments and ministers throughout the 1800s and in the early 1900s (SOU, 1983: 37-42). It was noted for example that past commissions have even favored a tradition of ministerial accountability by virtue of the dissatisfaction with Swedish arrangements, although it is stated “tiden var inte mogen härför” (SOU, 1983:41). [The time was not right for this]. Together with the observations of the speaker that the recent focus upon the administration in Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s made the space for serious discussion about agency independence (SOU, 1983:16), an appeal was made to the argumentative power of timeliness. Timeliness is described as being based upon the qualitative value of precariousness (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:91). The transitory state of affairs, in this case constitutional debate and reconsideration of agency independence, were presented as an opportunity for making change, which was also being shown through the account of history to be overdue. Given that one of the main arguments of the commission was that widespread perceptions about the (constitutional) correctness of agency independence are wrong, the use of qualitative loci was not surprising.

A second way the precarious locus was used is in descriptions of the need for more democratic steering. This need was described against the background of growing bureaucratic power. The position of the political sphere was argued to have

weakened because of the increasing strength of organized interests and the expertise of the administration, which has also taken over many political responsibilities (SOU 1983:17). More democratic steering was presented as necessary because otherwise democracy, where the political sphere determines the intentions of, and steers the activities of the state, is under threat. This urged the audience to see that agency independence is indeed a problem.

### 6.6.1.3 *The techniques of argumentation*

It was primarily quasi-logical techniques that were used to establish that the steering of agencies is a legitimate activity of the government and that agency independence has only limited constitutional recognition. In addition, techniques based upon the structure of reality, such as the causal link, were used to explain the growth in agency independence. In addition, metaphors and arguments of dis-sociation were identified.

The division of the whole into its parts, definition and comparison were all used to demonstrate government steering of the administration is legitimate. The Constitution played a central role in this argumentation because it is the source of many of the definitions identified and compared. Division of the whole and its parts was achieved together with the definition of the central principle in the Swedish state being described as an "ansvarskedja i fyra länkar" [responsibility chain in four links] (SOU, 1983:16). This chain includes the members of parliament elected by the people (1), the prime minister (2) elected by the parliament, who then selects government ministers (3), and, the administration (4) who is linked to government. This definition included a system of relationships between the different parts of the Swedish state, in which the administration was presented as subordinate to government in order that the people be served. The relationship between these parts were presented as follows:

Det demokratiska statskicket innebär samtidigt att det måste råda en stark samstämmighet mellan förvaltningen och de politiska organen. All offentlig makt utgår enligt regeringsformen från folket. Riksdagen är folkets främsta företrädare. Regering styr riket och är ansvarig inför riksdagen. För att regeringens ansvar inför riksdag och riksdagens ansvar inför folket skall ha en reell innebörd måste de både statsmakterna också ha förutsättningar att bestämma inriktningen av det arbete som bedrivs i förvaltningen (SOU 1983:17-18).

[The democratic state structure entails at the same time that there must be a strong concordance between the administration and the political organs. All

public power emanates, according to the constitution, from the people. The parliament is the people's primary representative. Government steers the country and is responsible to the parliament. In order that there be real content to the government's responsibility to the parliament, and to the parliament's responsibility to the people, both state powers also require the conditions to decide the direction and the work conducted in the administration.]

Government steering is necessary in this system for it to be accountable to parliament, while conversely too much administrative independence was argued to disrupt this accountability to parliament, and it in turn to the people. A mathematical relationship was assigned to the parts of the Swedish state in which increased responsibility in one part, such as the administration, results in a reduction of the capacity of other parts to be responsible eg. the government to the parliament. With the exception of certain legal decisions that are discussed later in the argumentation, this responsibility chain enabled the speaker to identify administrative independence as incompatible with the Swedish state tradition.

Definition was also used to amplify the mathematical relationships between the parts, wherein four types of public power are defined. These included regulative powers, financial powers, the appointment powers and the control power (SOU, 1983:19-29). All of these types of powers were defined quite precisely with some references to the Constitution. It was noted that some of these kinds of powers such as the regulative and prescriptive powers were delegated to the administration. Together with the chain of responsibility that is to accumulate into accountability to the people, the description of delegations in the use of public power aided in demonstrating that the acquired independence of the administration from these shifts was inappropriate.

A second way in which definition was used, together with comparison, was in the presentation of the articles of the Constitution which recognize agencies subordination to government and the independence of agencies in questions of law. The article referring to agency independence was cited as follows:

Ingen myndighet, ej heller riksdagen eller kommuns beslutande organ, får bestämma, hur förvaltningsmyndighet skall i särskilt fall besluta i ärende som rör myndighetsutövning mot enskild eller mot kommun eller som rör tillämpning av lag (SOU, 1983:44).

[No authority/agency, nor parliament or municipal decision making organ, can decide, how an agency shall, in the individual case, decide in assignments

concerning exercise of agencies' public authority towards individuals or communes or that concern the application of law.]

It was then compared to the activities that agencies undertake in order to identify how extensive this immunity from government subordination is. Another definition was introduced, the definition of *factual activities* of agencies, as opposed to the areas of work requiring the application of law. Factual activities were argued to constitute a large area of agency work including health care and education. A comparison with what the Constitution states and this large area of factual activities enabled the speaker to demonstrate that the constitutional sanctioning of agency independence was *snäv* [narrow] and applies only to limited areas of agency work. The commission writes:

Regeringsformen (RF 11:7) reglerar endast förvaltningsmyndigheternas handläggning av ärenden och behandlar inte deras s.k faktiska handlande. Vad avses då med begreppet faktiskt handlande? Hit hänförs uppgifter som har karaktär av service eller prestationer till den enskilde, t.ex. undervisning sjukvård, kommunikationer, men även informerande, rådgivande eller opinionsbildande uppgifter (SOU, 1983:46)

[The constitution (RF 11:7) regulates only agencies management of assignments and not their factual actions. What is then meant with the concept factual activities? This includes tasks that have the character of service or performance to the individual, eg. education, healthcare, communication, but also informational, advisory or opinion setting tasks.]

By comparing simplified definitions regarding what the Constitution says and what agencies do, in order to demonstrate that the legal basis for agency independence is limited, the commission sought to show their audience that limited independence is self evident and rational. They relied, it should be noted, on the audiences' acceptance that these definitions are clear and unequivocal. In terms of arguing that existing agency independence is a problem for democracy, the demonstration of limited reference to agency independence in the Constitution also invited the reader to compare it with their discussion of growing agency independence. Since this was then presented in the following chapter of the report. The comparison with formal constitutional rule provided the basis for the proposition that agency independence as a legal category has been misunderstood in Sweden. Although clearly a quasi-logical operation was taking place in the discussion of the Constitution and its application in practice, its use in the argumentation may also be interpreted as argument by authority. This is because of the status

of the Constitution itself as the authority on what is right to do within the political administrative system.

Before proceeding to the arguments based upon the structure of reality, techniques using dissociation were also be identified as contributing to the argument that strong agency independence has been misunderstood in Sweden. These are arguments that break connecting links in a concept in order to show an incompatibility. In this report a distinction was made between formal or rather legally prescribed independence and the customary or factual independence that agencies have. By constructing these two ways of considering independence, it became possible for the commission to express to the audience that although the independence of agencies has been extensive in Sweden, this is not consistent with the independence prescribed them in the Constitution. References to this distinction between customary and factual independence included the following:

En orsak är att de rådande föreställningarna om statsskicket ännu är färgade av 1809 års regeringform; en annan att de också har influerats av en *sedvanerättslig doktrin* som vuxit fram vid sidan om och delvis i strid med den *skrivna grundlagen* (SOU, 1983:106).

[One reason is that the prevailing ideas about the state system today are still colored by the 1809 Constitution; another (reason) is that it has also been influenced by *customary doctrine* that has grown along side and partly in stride with, the *written constitution*.]

More active steering from the political sphere was thereby identified as essential, not only because it is legally sanctioned and essential to democracy, but also in order to change a misinformed custom (SOU, 1983:106).

Arguments based upon the structure of reality included the causal link to establish that agency independence has grown. As noted above, a starting point in the argumentation was that agencies have strong independence in Sweden. By demonstrating how this independence had grown (and become a problem for democracy) therefore became a central occupation of the commission. Indeed, the entire fourth chapter was devoted to identifying causes of increasing agency independence. They identified four clusters of change that have increased agency independence and thereby reduced government steering. The clusters included (1) development of many big agencies, decentralization of authority to agencies in form of frame laws and frame budgeting (2) increasing competence and security of em-

ployment of public servants (3) increasing influence of board members, and, (4) steering from outside of government (SOU, 1983:63). All of these factors were associated with the expansion and complexity of the state more generally. Their impact upon agency independence relied upon the audience's willingness to accept such a causal relationship as reasonable. In this particular case, they also acted to divert attention somewhat from other possible causes such as the responsibility of the political sphere itself for the growth of agency independence.

Among the metaphors used to obtain the audience's agreement that government steering of the administration is necessary and legitimate, was the term *steering* itself. This is used frequently throughout the document and in combination with a number of other terms such as *democratic steering* or *political steering*. The metaphor of steering gave the impression that the administration can be controlled to go in a particular direction, it sounded, particularly in combination with the word democratic, less confronting than control. An example of how democratic steering is used in the argumentation included the following:

Ett genomgående tema...av tilläggsuppdraget kan sägas vara att den demokratiska styrningen av den statliga verksamheten idag är otillräcklig (SOU, 1983:12, 16).

[A pervading theme...of the additional directive can be said to be that the democratic steering of the state activities today is insufficient].

Other metaphors that give a physical dimension to the argumentation included the descriptions of relationships between the administration and the political sphere as requiring more *balance* or being *imbalanced* (SOU, 1983:96). Similarly, references to the lack of *space* for political steering provided the audience with an image of the problem of the political sphere. Another association between physical attributes and the ideas being promoted in the argumentation was government steering being described as *strengthening* democracy and the state.

With regard to the use of the term democracy throughout the argumentation, it was noted that it also relied upon metaphorical characterizations. Not least among these, the notion of a *responsibility chain*, linking the different parts of the state system. This acted to promote acceptance of the idea that responsibility can be achieved because the parts of the system are linked. It may also be argued that democracy itself is a dormant metaphor throughout the argumentation. This is because it was

used metaphorically when in combination with such terms as steering or system, but also because it appeared without explaining exactly what it is or how government steering can ensure more democracy. Democracy itself was also provided as a reason for more steering within the administration, without any further meaning being offered about what more democracy will entail.

#### 6.6.2 *Document two - Regeringen myndigheterna och myndigheternas ledning*

The second report analyzed is *Regeringen, myndigheterna och myndigheternas ledning* [Government, agencies and agencies' management]. This report was first commissioned in July 1983 by the newly elected Social Democratic government to follow up upon the recommendations of the earlier report *Politisk styrning-administrativ självständighet* [Political steering-administrative independence]. More specifically, *Regeringen, myndigheterna och myndigheternas ledning* [Government, agencies and agencies' management] focused upon the two paths for improving political steering that were identified at the end of *Politisk styrning-administrativ självständighet* [Political steering-administrative självständighet]. These included bringing back decision making competence to the political sphere and increasing the political influence upon management organs of agencies (SOU, 1985:33). Commission members appointed were a former Director of Statskontoret [Agency for Public Management] as Chairman, five members of parliament, two Professors of Political Science, Prof. Daniel Tarchys and Olof Ruin, and civil servants, including one from RRV [National Audit Agency] (Sundström, 2003:212-214). Sundström has described it as a somewhat multicoloured [brokig] commission because of the different expertise and interests the various members brought with them from different financial agencies e.g. Statskontoret and RRV, and their involvement in earlier commissions e.g. Daniel Tarchys who contributed to the previous report (Sundström, 2003:213). Nevertheless, the financial expertise represented among their members and their historical interests in management by results was significantly greater among these members than those represented on the other reports analyzed in this study. The report is some 292 pages long with four chapters focusing upon strengthening government's decision-making competence over the administration (chapters

2-5) and six chapters devoted to analyzing the political influence upon management organs in agencies (chapters 6 -11).

Among the topics dealt with to promote government's decision-making competence were legislative guidelines (chapter 2), budgetary steering (chapter 3) and informal contacts (chapter 5), while promoting political influence on management included chapters on the history of boards and advice counsels (chapter 6), analysis of existing board arrangements (chapter 7), principles regarding the appointment of board members (chapter 8), and the appointment of agency directors (chapter 9). Besides the chapters that examined the two paths to improved political steering, there was also a chapter at the beginning of the report describing the points of departure [utgångspunkter] (chapter 1) and four chapters at the end of the report describing its application, consequences and costs (chapters 12 - 16).

In its presentation of the questions the commission was to assess, explicit connection was made with the findings of the previous report. These connections included not only the focus upon strengthening political steering in the two earlier identified ways, but also accepting the previous reports interpretation of the constitution. Indeed, the commission expressed constitutional prescriptions regarding the steering of agencies in far less uncertain terms than the previous document such as the following:

Utredningens (Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet) bestämda slutsats var den att bestämmelserna i regeringsformen inte reser några besvärande hinder för regeringen att styra de statliga myndigheterna på det sätt och i den omfattning som i varje situation befinnes önskvärd (SOU, 1985:14).

[The commission's (Political steering-administrative independence) final conclusion was that the prescriptions in the constitution do not raise any troublesome hinderance for the government to steer state agencies in the way, and to the extent that is considered desirable in every situation.]

There are important distinctions to note in the role that is attributed to the administration for requiring more and better political steering. In the previous report the desire for better political steering was expressed against the background of increasing political authority being handed over to the administration, which in its turn enhanced the independence of the administration. In this report, however, the desire for political steering was expressed against the background of an increasing technocratic state that is insensitive and closed to the political intentions of government and parliament (SOU 1985:13). It referred



to "oro över att den statliga byråkratin blivit för okänslig för riksdagens och regeringens styr signaler" [concern regarding the state bureaucracy becoming insensitive to parliament's and government's steering signals]. This departed somewhat from the characterization of the problem in *Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet* which emphasized the undemocratic nature of the bureaucracy and lack of political freedom (for politicians) to negotiate because political decisions had been handed over to independent agencies. Although there were different reasons identified for the sources of the need for improved political steering in both reports, this remained unrecognized in the presentation of the background to the problems in *Regering, myndigheternas och myndigheternas ledning*. Instead, the focus upon the connections between both reports in its introduction gave the impression that it was merely adding to the findings of the previous report.

In order to improve and make more effective the political steering of the administration, the commission identified in excess of 70 recommendations (SOU, 1985:24-29). These range from observations that the Constitution gives the government satisfactory authority to steer agencies (SOU, 1985:40, 24), or that informal contacts between agencies and departments be developed (SOU, 1985:40, 26), to quite detailed adjustments to the budget such as its timing and the documents delivered (SOU, 1985:24-25). The chapters analyzed in this section include those on the budget (chapter 3) and on the appointment of director generals and their employment conditions (chapter 10). I have also noted some of the findings in chapter 5 on informal contacts. In the case of the budget these recommendations included a shift to a three-year budget wherein the government sets agency specific directives for agencies, on the basis of in depth reporting from agencies every three years.

With regards to the appointment of director generals, the recommendations included a review of the appointment after the first six years, with reappointment possible for a shorter period of time than six years. A limit of 18 years in the position was also recommended. Furthermore they recommended that recruitment for director generals be actively sought outside of the activity area and that units be established for director generals in the departments which enabled the government to transfer director generals of agencies.

### 6.6.2.1 *Ethos and the construction of the audience*

As in the previous document, the speaker attended to a broad concern for democracy in the presentation of its problem analysis. This occurred through various references to the democratic system, as well as the threat that it was under given the growth of the bureaucracy as an independent power (SOU, 1985:40). Credibility was established through cursory reference to political theories about the growth of the state, although there was no reference to accountability as there was in the previous document. The political sphere (parliament and government) was identified as the only power that could keep the threat to the weakening of democracy at bay (SOU 1985:13). Furthermore, references to Swedish democratic traditions such as the constitution and the history of the board system, constructed a universal audience that is proud of its democracy and wants to preserve it. Another universal good thing that was presented concerned effectiveness, which is equated by the speaker with promoting democracy.

Against the background of these broader concerns and themes (which are most prominent in the introduction of the text), the speaker's self-presentation also included a concern for very practical solutions to the problem of steering. A particular management ethos was pursued wherein budgetary concepts and employment conditions were central. Once democratic legitimacy for steering was established, the focus shifted very quickly and narrowly to techniques to improve the management and steering of agencies. The analysis being presented relied primarily upon budgetary and accounting concepts (eg. statens ekonomiadministrativ system (SEA) [the states economic administrative system], anslagframställningarna [appropriation proposals], ränteinkomsterna [interest income]), as well as an overview of the employment conditions of agency director generals. In both cases statistical information was used to support the management analysis. In the case of employment conditions of agency director generals, the focus was upon creating the incentives for greater mobility and effectiveness. In addition, the central goals of promoting values of effectiveness and flexibility, as well as some reference to ways of working in the private sector, all contributed to the construction of a particular audience primarily concerned with the financial management of the administration. The appeal to such a particular audience was also evident in the call for the role of director generals to be-

come a profession in itself with its own (financial) management values (SOU, 1985:166), rather than other kinds of expertise.

The speaker also paid consideration to the plight of agency director generals that can be interpreted as a construction of them as a particular audience. This occurred through the presentation of interview statements from director generals and demonstrated that they too will benefit from the proposals of the commission. For example, references were made to director generals that showed their dissatisfaction with existing budgetary arrangements and the interplay with departments throughout the budgetary process (SOU, 1985:68). In the presentation of proposals for initiatives to promote the mobility of agency director generals such as the possibility for shorter second terms, it was noted that the current length of time is experienced as *oppressive* (SOU 1985:170). Finally, much of the analysis was concerned to make the introduction of greater mobility, a possibility within financial sanctions for director generals. All these features of the text acted to construct a concern for the particular audience of agency director generals.

#### 6.6.2.2 *Premises of argumentation*

The argumentation rested upon a number of agreements regarding the structure of reality. Among these are the truth that the complexity of the industrialized world, and with it the growth of the state, had created a situation in which the need for specialists within the bureaucracy have also made it insensitive to government steering (SOU, 1985:13). I have interpreted this as a truth because it borrows from political theories criticizing the corporatist state. It posed that the growth of special interests outside of the state and their influence within the state, together with a growing technocracy, led to decisions being made outside of the political arena. Against the background of this view of reality, it became more reasonable to make the arguments in the document for more extensive and precise government steering. This was a slightly different premise to that found in the previous report which attributed political decisions being made in the bureaucracy as a consequence of the complexity of problems and government handing them over to the administration. The truth regarding the insensitivity of the bureaucracy was revealed in the following citations:

Under årtionden pekat på tendenser i samhällsutveckling som alla haft det gemensamt att de försvarar för de politiska makthavarna i industrivärldens demokratier att hålla den växande byråkratin stängden (SOU, 1985:13).

[Throughout decades, tendencies in societies development have been noted, which have in common that they make it more difficult for the political powers in the democracies of the industrial world, to hold the growing bureaucracy at bay.]

Or

Den statliga verksamhetens allt större komplexitet har lett till en ökad specialisering hos myndigheter och tjänstemän (SOU, 1985:41).

[The extensive complexity of the state's activities has lead to increasing specialization among agencies and their civil servants].

And

...Politikerna blir därmed i allt högre grad beroende av experter, som gör sina bedömningar ur en vetenskaplig eller teknisk synvinkel, utan att väga in politiska krav och utan att ta hänsyn till helheten (SOU, 1985:42)

[...Politicians thereby become, in a higher degree dependent on experts, who make their judgements from a scientific or technical perspective, without considering political demands and without consideration for the whole].

It was because of the truth of the *closed* bureaucracy and its undemocratic nature that it was argued that the government must steer through more precise demands upon the bureaucracy and through influencing the kinds of management that are appointed within the administration.

In addition, there were agreements about a number of facts that are also relied upon to make the argumentation in the text. This included the fact that the Swedish state is struggling financially and has only limited resources to conduct its activities. The fact of limited finances provided a basis for focusing upon techniques of financial steering. Both in the opening chapters to the report and in the chapter on budget steering it was noted for example:

Att budgetstyrningen måste fungera väl har i takt med de ökade kraven på statsförvaltningens effektivitet blivit allt viktigare, inte minst som en följd av de minskade budgetramarna (SOU, 1985:61).

[That the budget steering must function well has, together with the increasing demands on the public administration's effectiveness, become all the more important, not least as a consequence of the reduced budget frames.]

Or

För regeringens del kan det betyda att fatta mycket mer precisa beslut, ofta av föga populär natur, om den fortsatta färdriktningen för enskilda myndigheter inom ramen för krympande resurser (SOU, 1985:14).

[For the government's part, it can mean that they have to make more precise decisions, often of an unpopular nature, about the future directions for individual agencies within the frames of shrinking resources.]

The urgency which is associated with the crimping resources of the Swedish state also legitimized the focus upon the government being very precise about the activities it requires of the administration.

Another agreed upon fact from which the argumentation departed was the fact that the Constitution, and it would seem nothing else, defined what kind of steering the government is able to pursue legitimately. This fact was illustrated by the various references to the Constitution and its role as a source of authority for the focus upon government steering throughout the argumentation.

Among the agreed upon presumptions implicit to the argumentation, was the presumption that the government has the resources and knowledge to steer the administration precisely. This presumption was reflected in the view that more precise steering is a realistic solution to reduce the insensitivity of the administration. The reliance upon the view that the government was able to be precise in its steering was reflected in the various references to the capacity of government to set precise goals for the administration in the budget (See SOU, 1985:4, 15, 64). It was also reflected in a number of statements emphasizing the need of government to clarify their role and also that of managers within the administration, and of government to be able to identify suitable managers (SOU, 1985:165). At no point in this discussion was mention made of the possibility that it may be difficult to be precise and clear in steering arrangements. In the arguments about changing the budgetary process, the presumption of precise government steering was presented with the presumption that agencies are able and will provide the necessary information for government to steer (SOU, 1985:69). This was evident from the recommendation that agencies themselves present the government with advice regarding how their activities can be developed (SOU, 1985:71).

Furthermore there was a presumption that politicians are willing to steer the administration through clearer directions. This presumption was on the one hand evident in the recom-

mentation that they should be able to steer more precisely but also on the other hand from the various aspects of reality that acted to blame their apparent lack of steering in the past on other factors. For example, the document identified the insensitivity of the bureaucracy, the perceptions of the Constitution and shortage of time (another presumption) in the budget, as reasons as to why the government had not steered in the past. Except for one phrase identifying that the political sphere had avoided clarifying where cuts in agency budgets should be made (SOU 1985:66), there was little attention given to the possibility that the government and politicians more generally may not always be interested in steering the administration precisely. Instead it was simply observed that important decisions had been left over to agencies (SOU 1985: 43)

Finally another presumption was that only the government and parliament were able to steer the administration in a democratic way. Indeed, it was stated at the outset of the report that "Det är den (the political powers) ensam som ser till helheten och som kan hålla de andra krafterna stången" (SOU, 1985:13). [It is it (the political powers) alone that considers the whole and can keep the other powers at bay]. Other indications that there was a presumption that the government is the most appropriate actor to steer, could be found in the exclusive focus upon the steering techniques available to government and the responsibility of parliament to stimulate government steering.

Among the premises regarding the desirable it was clear that the values of effectiveness and democracy were central agreements from which the argumentation departed. Frequent reference was made to the desire to attain greater effectiveness especially given the fact of limited resources. Such references included the following:

I direktiven .... statsmakternas krav på rationaliseringsinsatser och önskad effektivitetsutveckling och en begäran att myndigheten i sitt underlag redogör för alternativa vägar att nå dess mål (SOU, 1985: 71).

[In the directives...(there is) the state powers demand for rationalization, and desired improvements of effectiveness, as well as a demand upon agencies to give alternative routes to meet their goals]

In general the desire for increased effectiveness was associated with greater flexibility and sensitivity to the requirements of the government and parliament. The recommendations for changes to the management arrangements in agency boards and to director appointments were based upon the view that these func-

tions should be filled in ways that were instrumental to the decisions of government. In addition, the proposals for budgetary changes had a similar goal to ensure that government directs more clearly the way that effectiveness goals and other priorities should be achieved. This view of agencies as tools of government was expressed as follows:

Direktiven till kommittén betonar att ett grundläggande krav på den offentliga förvaltningen är att den fungerar som ett effektivt redskap för att förverkliga riksdagens och regeringens intentioner. Att de krympande ekonomiska ramarna för den offentliga verksamheten ökar detta effektivitetskrav framhålls också (SOU, 1985:31).

[The directives to the committee emphasize the fundamental demand upon the public sector is that it functions as an effective tool for realizing) the parliament's and government's intentions. The shrinking economic frames for public activities also increases the stress placed upon this effectiveness demand.]

It was also expressed in various statements about obedience [lyhörd] to the directives of government and having a *sensitive ear* for their intentions. Democracy becomes an important value for the administrative reforms being proposed since, as is reflected in the above statements, it was interpreted as being obedient to the demands of the political sphere. It should be noted that there were a couple of references to the desire for agencies to respond to those that they serve (SOU, 1985:31), aside from government, but these statements were never explained further. Since the attainment of effectiveness, as a central goal of the government, was presented as consistent with democracy, the argumentation did not base itself upon an existing hierarchy of values. The view of democracy being presented was a hierarchical one wherein the administration should be obedient to the desires of government, which in the case of this document was, the achievement of effectiveness.

Therefore these values came to appear compatible with one another especially since there was never recognition that they may sometimes be incompatible with one another or with other goals in the administration. The premise that effectiveness and democracy are compatible were reflected in the speaker's attention to demonstrating that the Constitution recognizes that agencies are subordinate to the government (SOU, 1985:34-38) and therefore should be obedient to its desires for effectiveness. The compatibility of effectiveness and democracy was also brought together in another way, against the background of existing difficulties with steering:

Blir den offentliga sektorn alltför svårstyrd hotas inte bara effektiviteten utan även legitimiteten i det demokratiska systemet (SOU, 1985:33).

[If the public sector becomes too difficult to steer, it is not only a threat to effectiveness but also to the legitimacy of the democratic system.]

It was being proposed that in order to maintain the democratic system it was necessary that effectiveness be achieved.

There was clearly a preference for a quantitative locus throughout the document. This was reflected in statements describing the changes to the budget requiring *more precision* (SOU, 1985:16, 64), increased cost consciousness (SOU, 1985:64), increased responsibility for agencies (SOU, 1985:43, 62, 63), *increased freedom* (SOU, 1985:71, 75), and an *increased long sightedness* (SOU, 1985:65). Quantitative loci were also used in statements about increasing the mobility of agency director generals. Other ways in which quantitative loci was used was in the presentation of quantitative information about budget reporting (SOU, 1985:65) and past experience with director appointments, such as figures on who had made their appointments or average length of tenure (SOU, 1985:166-169). There were nevertheless some qualitative loci including in particular the locus of the precarious. This was used in two ways. In the first instance it was used in the claims that strengthened political steering was necessary to keep the threat to democracy at bay. This was the threat presented by undemocratic powers such as organized interests and expert bureaucrats with specialist but undemocratic interests. It was also reflected in statements about the time being right for budgetary changes.

### 6.6.2.3 *Techniques of argumentation*

The quasi-logical techniques adopted throughout the argumentation included comparison. Early on in the document the speaker sought to establish agreement with the audience that it was possible and legitimate for the Swedish government to actively steer agencies. The Swedish Constitution played a prominent role in this argumentation. Certain parts of the Constitution were presented and their application to the activities of agencies are compared and given different values. This discussion took place under the sub-title *Myndigheternas lydnessplikt och självständighet* [Agencies requirement of obedience and their independence]. It began by citing the paragraph in the Constitution that recognizes agencies to be subordinate to the govern-



ment (SOU, 1985:34), and then went on to define the obedience requirement of agencies to the government's intentions as follows:

Lydnadsplikten innebär att myndigheterna är skyldiga att följa de direktiv som regeringen meddelar. Och detta gäller både generalla föreskrifter och direktiv som meddelas för särskilda fall (SOU 1985: 35).

[The obedience requirement means that agencies have an obligation to follow those directives that the government communicates. And this includes both general prescriptions and directives that are communciated for individual cases.]

The commission also explained that the government in its law-making capacities was able to ensure that agencies satisfied its intentions, even in individual cases, by taking new decisions in a matter that could be *actual* or by dispensing with its previous regulations (SOU, 1985:35). Possible application of the obedience requirement of agencies and their subordination to government was presented as being extensive. By contrast, the parts of the Constitution recognizing agency independence were presented as having limited application. This was reflected in the following statement that began the discussion on the constitutional recognition of agency independence:

De statliga förvaltningsmyndigheterna har sedan länge en betydande självständighet. I RF finns emellertid endast ett fåtal bestämmelser som kan sägas gälla detta (SOU, 1985:35).

[The state agencies have, for a long time, had significant independence. In the constitution, however, there are only a few statements that refer to this.]

Four paragraphs of the Constitution, all relating to the application of law, were then identified as having some reference to agency independence, with the most important of these being RF 11:7. The commission noted that in areas of law, particularly with regard to its application in individual cases (effecting citizens for example), agencies in Sweden were required to take an objective position similar to the courts (SOU, 1985:36). It then went on to identify the areas that fell outside of agencies legal authority such as their *factual activities* [faktiskt handlande] (giving advice, security and care, education, building and transport), and areas of civil law (SOU, 1985:36-37). There was only one sentence devoted to identifying broadly the kinds of areas in which agencies' legal authority and independence applied. It stated:

Vid myndighetsutövning är det fråga om en myndighets ensidiga avgörande i kraft av en maktbefogenhet i förhållande till medborgarna. Med myndighetsutövning mot enskild avses sålunda "utövning mot enskild bestämma om förmån, rättighet, skyldighet, disciplinär bestraffning eller annat jämförbart förhållande" (SOU, 1985:36).

[The exercise of agency authority concerns an agency's one-sided decision to use authority in relation to citizens. With agencies exercise of authority towards an individual is meant the "exercise towards an individual decision about benefits, rights, obligations, disciplinary sanction or another comparable relationship.]

This was then followed by statements regarding the kinds of actions the government could take, such as writing general guidelines, to steer agencies even in these areas and reference was made to the findings of the previous commission report (SOU, 1985: 36-37). The conclusions were:

RF slår klart och entydigt fast regeringens beslutanderätt över myndigheterna. Myndigheterna har att verkställa de beslut som regeringen fattar. Det förhållandet att myndigheterna har att på egen hand utan inblandning av regeringen eller någon annan besluta i vissa typer av ärende ändra inte på detta förhållande. Anser regeringen att de beslut som myndigheterna fattar i sådan ärende strider mot sådan intentioner regeringen finner väsentliga, har regeringen möjlighet och anledning att själv eller via förslag till riksdagen ändra på de regler som gäller för berörda myndighetsbeslut (SOU, 1985:38).

[The constitution makes clear the government's decision right over agencies. Agencies must actualize the decision that the government makes. The proposition that agencies may take decisions in their own hands, without interference from the government or someone else, in certain types of assignments, does not change this relation. If the government thinks that the decision that an authority makes in such assignments is in opposition to the intentions of the government, the government has the possibility and reason to change the rule concerning the agency's decision itself or via the parliament.]

Or to put it more bluntly:

RFs regler, främst i 11:6-7, utgör därför enligt kommittén en fullt tillräcklig grund för regeringen att styra sina myndigheter precis så bestämt och i den omfattning som regeringen själv finner önskvärt och lämpligt i varje särskild situation (SOU, 1985:38).

[The constitution's articles, particularly in 11:6-7, include therefore, according to the committee, sufficient grounds for the government to steer their agencies as precisely and as decisively as it considers desirable and suitable in every separate situation.]

In other words, the paragraphs regarding agencies subordination and obedience to government in the constitution were presented as having a more extensive application than the references to agencies' independence. Indeed, these were described as being relevant to only limited kinds of situations (note the quantitative loci), and even then, should be in accordance with

the government's intentions which were presented as having overriding value. The argumentation took the form of a comparison between two parts of the constitution which described the relationship between the administration and the government. This comparison ascribed different values to these different paragraphs and lent them a quantitative appearance that promoted the view of the commission that there were no barriers to government steering.

A second type of quasi-logical technique that was identified in the argumentation is the technique of definition. This occurred at the outset of the argumentation and aided in establishing the formality of thought being presented. It also assisted in giving logic to the order of the presentation. The definitions provided were with respect to steering and included a distinction between direct steering and indirect steering. Direct steering was defined as those methods that sought to return political decision making capacities to the political sphere (SOU, 1985:14). They included the government setting legislative guidelines and setting directives in the budget and were discussed in the first half of the report. Indirect steering by contrast was defined as activities to increase political influence over agencies management and included policies regarding the appointment of board members, agency directors and the organization of management in agencies. These activities coincided with the matters discussed in the second half of the report.

Techniques based upon the structure of reality were also used throughout the argumentation. In particular, argument by authority was used to obtain acceptance of the introduction of budget reforms as an instrument for direct government steering and to obtain adherence regarding the commission's proposals for recruitment of agency director generals. Two different sources of authority were used to make these respective claims. With regards to *direct steering* of agencies via the budget, the constitution was (again) cited as allowing a three-year budget, or rather as not disallowing it. The chapter on budget processes actually began with the observation that although the Constitution recognizes the parliament's right to decide upon the allocation of the state's means, it does not describe how the budget itself should be designed (SOU, 1985:61). It was stated:

Men RF reglerar inte hur statsbudgeten och anslagssystemet skall utformas. Man har ansett att grundlagen inte skall lägga hinder i vägen för hur den statliga budgetsystemet löpande skall förnyas (SOU, 1985:61).

[But the constitution does not regulate how the state budget and the appropriation system shall be designed. It should not present a hindrance to how the state budget system will be renewed on an ongoing basis.]

Together with the earlier arguments that the government's constitutional capacity to steer exceeded, or was prior to, agency independence, the discussion around the constitution's acceptance of budgetary reform acted further to move the audience to accept that steering through budgetary reform was a completely legitimate activity. Indeed, it followed from this discussion of the Constitution's prescriptions regarding financial powers that the speaker proceeded to describe recent budgetary history, current troubles and proposed solutions.

The commissions recommendations that government pursue a more active recruitment of agency directors was, by contrast, promoted by reference to the private sector. This occurred after making observations that the majority of appointments in agencies had come from within the administration itself and to a much more limited extent from politics (SOU, 1985:166-167). It was noted:

I diskussionen om delegationens befogenheter gjordes jämförelse med hur chefsförsörjningen fungerar i vissa storföretag där cirkulation och befordran av lämpliga chefsämnen styrs mycket hårt på central nivå (SOU, 1985:167, 18).

[In the discussion about the authority of the delegation, comparisons were made with how the recruitment and training of director generals functions in certain large companies, where circulation and promotion of appropriate director general themes was steered very hard from central level.]

Although two quite distinct sources of authority legitimizing the commission's proposals they fitted with the values of effectiveness and democracy and the premise that these were complementary.

Techniques based upon the structure of reality were adopted primarily in the argumentation about the proposals for budgetary change. More specifically the argument of unlimited development was used to obtain the audience's agreement that budgetary processes had already undergone *modernization* and *renewal* (SOU, 1985:62-65), and could continue to do so in future periods. The speaker offered an account of initiatives that had been taken to improve the budget since the 1970s, noting that it had been subject to modernization even before that time (SOU, 1985:62). This information demonstrated to the audience that there had already been movement towards a more improved

budget and that the proposals of the commission were merely adding to this development. It was stated for example that,

Den modernisering av den statliga budgeten som genomfördes 1980/81, *lade grunden* för en rad konkreta inslag i ett löpande arbete på att modernisera det statliga budgetarbetet (SOU, 1985:63).

[The modernization of the state budget that took place in 1980/81, *laid the basis* for a range of concrete changes in the continual work to modernize the state budget operations.]

Or that

... att väsentliga *steg (bar)* redan tagits mot ett styrssystem som mer riktar uppmärksamheten mot verksamheternas mål och resultat (SOU, 1985: 63).

[... essential *steps (that have)* already been taken towards a steering system that directs attention towards the activities goals and results.]

Furthermore, the commission noted the successes made with savings in the budget and the continued work to improve this. It explained:

*Ett fortsatt rationaliserings-och effektiviseringsarbete är därmed ett viktigt inslag i utvecklingen av budgetprocessen* (SOU, 1997:68).

[*Continued rationalization and effectiveness efforts* are thereby an important element in the development of the budget process.]

Indeed, this section of the report was filled with a number of metaphors regarding moving forward (eg. a step) or building upon, all of which complemented the argument of continuous development in the budget. By describing the budgetary proposals as part of an ongoing project, and associating this movement with an increase in value, these reforms were made to appear desirable in the text.

Together with the argument of unlimited development, was use of the argument of the causal link to demonstrate the *causes* of the remaining problems in the budgetary process and how they could be improved. Again this argument was based upon the structure of reality and relied upon accepting the reasonableness of relations between certain facts regarding the existing budgetary arrangements. The commission identified lack of precision and time as causes for the unsatisfactory reporting (from agencies) that took place within the budgetary process. This in its turn was identified as a reason for why so few decisions to re-examine the way funds were spent in particular areas did not take place within the budgetary process but through

other separate examinations (SOU, 1985:66). With regards to the timing of the budget, two kinds of problems were identified. Firstly, the period of a year was argued to be too short to make it possible for serious examination and re-prioritizing by the government to take place. This was expressed in such statements as:

(normalt) har skett ytterst få reella omprövningar av verksamheter i anslutning till det reguljära budgetarbetet...Att så är fallet hänger bl a samman med tidspressen inom regeringskansliet i anslutning till budgetarbetet. Det finns inte tid att under denna period ta tag i nya stora frågor (SOU, 1985:66-67).

[(normally) there has been very few real revisions of activities through the regular budgetary work...That that is the case is, among other things, related to the time pressure associated with budget work within the cabinet offices and ministries. There is not enough time during this period to consider new big questions.]

In addition, the timing of the actual phases within the budget were argued to bring about difficulties in using the information collected from agencies, since for example their year reports and accounts were not handed over until quite late in the budgetary process (SOU, 1985:67). Identifying lack of time as a cause for the budget procedure not being used to revise resource distribution within or across agencies, gave credibility to the commissions proposals for a three year budget. This is especially the case since a detailed account was given regarding the reporting requirements of agencies over a three year period, and because more time was argued to enable the government to be more precise in the information they expected of agencies (SOU, 1985:68-73).

(Regeringen har, som tidigare visats, under senare år givit de statliga myndigheterna stor frihet inom ramen för sina uppgifter utan motsvarande ökning av den övergripande styrningen (SOU, 1985:66))

[The government has, as shown earlier, given state agencies large freedom over the last years to conduct their work within the frames of their tasks, without a corresponding increase in the overarching steering.]

Among the arguments to structure the reality in the document, there were a number of metaphors. These acted to bring the audience to see the reforms the commission was proposing in association with the attributes of physical objects or of other activities. Among the most cited term in the document was the word *steering*, which was used in combination with other terms to make the audience conceptualize the administration as a machine that could be controlled in *precise* (another frequently cited

term) ways. Such a vision was most evident from the statement that likened the administration to a tool [redskap] for the intentions of the government and parliament (SOU, 1985:31). The commission spoke of *direct steering*, *indirect steering*, *democratic steering* (SOU, 1985:13), *budget steering* [budgetstyrning] (SOU, 1985:61), *overarching steering* [övergripande styrning], the *steering signals* [styrsignaler] (SOU, 1985:13), *styrsynpunkt* [steering perspective] (SOU, 1985:32) and the *steering route* [styrfart] (SOU, 1985:168). This terminology made it possible for the audience to conceive of administrative activities as something certain that could be *driven* by the government along a particular course. It became reasonable to think that setting goals in the budget would ensure that they are achieved or that appointing and transferring agency director generals was simply part of keeping the machine on course (SOU, 1985:14). Creating certainty was also achieved by describing the three year budget as enabling *long vision* or far sightedness [långsiktighet] to be used within the budget (SOU, 1985:68). Finally the machine metaphor in the argumentation can be associated with reference to budget proposals as ensuring the *modernization* of financial management.

Other physical attributes were also given to the reform proposals that made them appear reliable and tangible. The three-year budget was for example described as enabling *deepened* [fördjupad] examination or mention was made of *sharpening* [skärpning] directives. Similarly, the reforms regarding the appointments of agency directors included greater *mobility* or of *broadening* the (presently narrow) sphere from which directors were selected. By contrast, the problems the administration faces were given greater urgency through other kinds of physical attributes such as *time pressing* [tidspressen] situations in the one year budget or the *shrinking* resources available [krympande resurser]. Perhaps one of the most mentioned physical attributes in this document was the effects of the reforms for *strengthening* things such as the state, rather than weakening it. There was also frequent mention of political powers being concerned for societies' interest as a *whole* rather than the particular interests of experts for example (SOU 1985: 42,13).

In the presentation of reforms to the budget, reference was made to giving agencies freedom. Freedom has a lot of baggage in the western world and makes an association with reforms and philosophical ideals (Smullen, 2002). The delegation of fi-

nancial decisions were made to appear desirable through such statements as the following:

Det är kommitténs uppfattning att en förbättrad styrning från regeringens sida som en följd av det förändrade budgetsystemet bör kunna kombineras med ytterligare ökad frihet att besluta i olika frågor som rör den inre verksamheten (SOU, 1985:40, 75).

[It is the commission's opinion that improved steering from the government's side as a consequence of the changed budget system should be able to be combined with further increases in (management) freedom to decide in different questions relating to internal activities.]

Finally, there was also a dormant metaphor that could be identified throughout the argumentation. A dormant metaphor is a word that has lost association with an original meaning and appears as an obvious aspect of the sphere of the reforms the commission was proposing. Dormant metaphors are no longer a fusion with an idea from an physical object or some other sphere but instead play an active role in creating the identity of the reforms since they also provide reasons for the reforms. The term effectiveness can be observed as a dormant metaphor. It was continually cited throughout the argumentation although the speaker never defined the term. It was also given a quantitative character such as increasing effectiveness although what is increasing or how was never explained. Some examples of the use of effectiveness in the argumentation included the following citations:

Ett fortsatt rationaliserings-och effektiviseringsarbete är därmed ett viktigt inslag i utvecklingen av budgetprocessen (SOU, 1985:68).

[Continued work in rationalization and effectiveness is thereby an important element in the development of budgetary processes.]

Effektivitetssträvandena måste vidare bygga på ett ökat engagemang från myndigheternas sida (SOU, 1985:69)

[The strive for further effectiveness must build further upon increasing the engagement from the side of agencies.]

Klart är att om denna attitydförändring kommer till stånd kan effekten bli en allmän stimulans inom berörda myndigheter och därigenom också en positiv påverkan på effektiviteten i myndigheterna (SOU, 1985:169).

[It is clear that if this change in attitude is brought about the effect can be a general stimulation within the concerned agencies and thereby also have a positive influence on the effectiveness in the agencies.]



### 6.6.3 Document three - *I medborgarnas tjänst*

The commission report, *I medborgarnas tjänst* [*In the citizen's service*], was published in 1997 after being called for by the government in 1995. In contrast to many earlier commission reports examining the administration, which had given strong representation to civil servants among their appointments, academics were more strongly represented on the membership for this commission report<sup>23</sup> (Sundström, 2003:298). The exceptions were a former Justice Minister (Sven Wickbom) as chairperson, and, the selection of two civil servants including the General Director for the Taxation Agency (Lennart Nilsson), as well as a former manager within the Administration unit of the National Audit Office (Britt-Marie Bystedt). The report is 179 pages long and consisted of a summary and 15 chapters. The first three chapters presented the challenges facing the administration as a whole and the experiences of the past, while chapters 4-15 discussed separate areas of the administration, all affecting agencies, and made recommendations about these. Only a limited number of chapters (1,2,6,13) were selected for analysis because the document is too large to enable an analysis in the available time. The changes following from the chapters selected included refinement to management by results and the creation of a new organization charged with focussing upon, among other things, the competence of civil servants.

In chapter 1, three inter-connected problem areas were identified as requiring special attention by the commission. These included the difficulties of steering the administration (*svårstyrbarhet*), the fragmentation of the administration and with it the disappearance of one civil service culture, and thirdly, the challenges of internationalization for the state, particularly through the participation in the EU. This was then followed by a discussion of the administration's place within Swedish democracy including the values it should uphold (chapter 2), and, an overview of the development of the administration, together with the then prevailing ideas of administrative politics [*förvaltningspolitik*], since the Second World War (chapter 3). The values of democracy, legality and effectiveness were identified as overriding principles. The areas discussed for recommendations from chapters four to fifteen range from discussions of the structure

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<sup>23</sup> Prof. Barbro Anell, Bengt Jaccobson, Lena Marcusson, Rune Premfors, Dr Kerstin Sahlin- Andersson and Dr Torbjörn Larsson

of the administration (chapter 4), the relationship between the courts and the administration (chapter 8), public access and oversight of administrative decisions (chapter 11), the appointment of agency directors (chapter 10) and their board types (chapter 9).

The recommendations relating to management by results and civil servants were presented in chapters 6 and 13. Both of these chapters brought together problems with steering, fragmentation and the tendency to give too much emphasis to the value of effectiveness as opposed to legality and democracy. In chapter 6, the instruments available to the government and parliament for steering the administration were investigated. Although informal contacts and frame laws were also discussed in this chapter, it was noted that the introduction of management by results had been the most important change in the way that the administration was steered (SOU, 1997:76). A number of problems were identified with the way that management by results was implemented, in particular the breaking down of overarching goals for individual agencies was criticized (SOU, 1997:57, 81). This was argued, among other things, to have made reporting too detailed to be useful and encouraged a focus upon individual agencies' goals as opposed to the goals of the administration as a whole (thus promoting fragmentation). The commission proposed that the government should take the initiative to overhaul management by results in a fundamental way so that it can adjust better to the type of activities performed by each agency (SOU, 1997:86). It also recommended that independent evaluation be used in analyzing agency activities and that in order to incite cooperation within the administration it would sometimes be useful to give an overarching goal to a particular sector, rather than an individual agency, (SOU, 1997:87).

In chapter 13, the focus shifted to the role of the civil servant and to the civil service culture in Sweden more generally. It was stated that a common tradition within the administration was on the way to disappearing (SOU, 1997:146). This observation was associated with the rise of market thinking within the administration such as through changes to the employment legislation of civil servants. The commission identified legality and the democratic system within which agencies operated as offering fundamental and collective values that distinguished it from the private sector (SOU, 1997:147). It also identified special

competencies required of civil servants including the capacity to make decisions in complex situations with contrary goals and the need to strengthen such characteristics as professionalism, objectivity and legality among civil servants (SOU, 1997:150). The commission recommended that the civil servants role and culture should *live* in consciousness and discussion and that training should be taken to encourage a common ethics. In addition, it proposed further investigations into employment legislation with the view of legislating for negligence and breach of duty among civil servants.

#### *6.6.3.1 Ethos and the construction of the audience*

As with earlier documents, the commission presented itself as concerned with the broader issues of democracy, and the relationship between the state and society. Steering was presented as a central concern for Swedish democracy especially against the background of internationalization and fragmentation. The emphasis upon Swedish democracy was also underlined through various references to the Swedish constitution, Swedish traditions of government and important dates in Sweden's administrative and political history. In addition, a general overview was given of the themes of administrative politics, demonstrating the speaker's broad knowledge of the subject area. Aside from democracy, effectiveness and legality were also identified as central concerns of the administration, which together with the above, can be interpreted as appeals to a universal audience.

At the same time the commission presented itself as an expert in a number of academic theories and concepts including theories about the complexity of the state, about organizational learning, and about democracy more generally. This was reflected in the various uses of citations from academics and academic studies regarding ideas about the state as an arena (SOU, 1997:21), about closed networks (SOU, 1997: 23, 86), about the effects of performance measurement (SOU, 1997:79-85) and about ethics (SOU, 1997:146, 149) within the administration. Many of the relations and values being described as central to the analysis were also presented in a nuanced way and thereby constructed a particular audience that favors complex interrelationships and explanations. There were also quite detailed critiques presented of management by results and employment conditions, but this occurred in a very compressed way, requir-

ing an audience that could manage a number of different kinds of critiques simultaneously. This said, it should be noted that despite the existence of a number of academic ideas and citations, the text itself was written in a clear and direct way.

The speaker also constructed a particular audience interested in the historical details of the Swedish state and administration. In all of the chapters analyzed there was reference to the historical roots of different aspects of the Swedish administration. This included reference to origins of the Swedish state in the 1600s (SOU, 1997:21), its growth after the Second World War (SOU, 1997: 21), the beginnings of programme budgeting in the 1960s and 70s (SOU, 1997:76), the beginnings of the civil service (SOU, 1997:145) and the publicity principle (SOU, 1997: 145). There was also an entire chapter devoted to administration politics [förvaltningspolitik] during the period following from the Second World War, with brief comments on earlier periods. This discussion included analysis of the growth of the Swedish welfare state and more recent experience with market competition and savings. It was the only section of the report where quantitative information was predominant, illustrating state growth and expenditure. This discussion of the long history of the Swedish state concluded with the observation that economic perspectives and considerations have been predominant since the 1980s. Against the richness of the history being described, one could conclude that the historically interested audience being constructed was also one that wanted to preserve some kind of political tradition rather than an economic one.

Another particular audience being constructed by the speaker was agency directors themselves. There were various attempts throughout the argumentation to make an association between the academic theoretical ideas being presented and the experience of directors. A number of interview statements were used to illustrate the impact of results steering upon directors (SOU, 1997:78, 84) and their experience of contacts with the departments. These provide indications that agency director generals had become results orientated, but lacked sufficient contact and understanding from departments. Together with academic discussions of reductions in civil servants' employment security and observations that management by results had been designed by a closed group of financial experts, the speaker constructed director generals or civil servants more

generally as a mistreated group. Indeed, it was stated that management by results was experienced by civil servants as burdensome [betungande] (SOU, 1997:81).

Finally, the speaker also made appeals to the citizen and included them in its construction of the audience. This occurred through various statements that put the needs of the citizen as a central obligation for agencies. For example, the speaker noted that agencies must have enough independence to adapt to the needs of the citizen (SOU, 1997: 22), to allow citizens influence over decisions that effect their wellbeing (SOU, 1997:35, 39), and require a *living* consciousness of the citizen's centrality to the democratic system (SOU, 1997:147). This was interpreted as a construction of the citizens as audience or also as part of the (democratic) universal audience being appealed to.

#### 6.6.3.2 *The premises of argumentation*

The argumentation in the document departed from a number of agreements about the context in which agencies operated and about the kinds of values that should guide their activities. A truth underlying the argumentation was that the world has become a highly inter-dependent complex place in which no actor, including the state, has complete control over the outcome of actions. This truth was reflected in statements as; "Komplexiteten i den statliga förvaltningen är emellertid överväldigande" (SOU, 1997:21) [Complexity in the state administration is however overwhelming], or, to the state no longer being an actor but an arena (SOU, 1997:21). It also underlied criticisms towards setting precise goals for agencies in the budget process since these were argued to prevent agencies from taking their own initiative to respond to signals in their environment or to report information about events that did not fit with the set goals. These concerns were expressed as follows:

Det finns en uppenbar risk att kraven blir alltför bindande, och även om det finns utrymme att göra avsteg från bestämmelserna om redovisning så sker detta inte i särskilt stor omfattning (SOU, 1997:85).

[There is an obvious risk that the demands will become too binding, and even if there is space to depart from what has been requested to report, it does not occur to a great extent]

Similarly, management for results was also criticized in the first chapter of the document for embracing a hierarchical view of the state that did not fit with the need for taking initiative, encouraging experience and self renewal, to name but a few of the

phrases mentioned (SOU, 1997:22). It was against the truth that the administration must operate in this complex world that these attributes appeared important in the text. The truth of complexity in the world as a premise of argumentation made it possible to describe the problems of steering, fragmentation and internationalization in the document (SOU, 1997:24-29). This was because these things were said to have emerged from increasing numbers of actors influencing decision making and depending upon one another. It also made sensible the frequent references to the need for cooperation throughout the argumentation. I have interpreted this view of the world as a truth because it echoes theoretical discussions about governance and network theory in academic discussions of public administration and thereby represented a system of thought (See John, 2001).

Among the facts underlying the argumentation was the understanding of government activities as being multi-dimensional and ridden with value conflicts. Although related to and consistent with the truth of a complex world, this fact also existed separately from that system of thought and was more difficult to associate with some overarching view of action or actors. The description of the administration was presented in the document as follows:

Det typiska för statlig verksamhet är att dess mål är flerdimensionella. Av förvaltningsmyndigheter krävs en förmåga att hantera mål och värdekonflikter - exempelvis mellan effektivitet och rättssäkerhet ..(SOU, 1997:23).

[It is typical that the goals for state activities are multi-dimensional. The capacity to manage goal and value conflicts is demanded of administrative agencies - for example between effectiveness and the rule of law goals.]

This fact as a point of departure for the argumentation aided in demonstrating the weaknesses of setting precise goals, which was presented as the Swedish practice of management by results, since these could be pursued at the cost of other needs or values. Agreement about the fact of multi-dimensionality and value conflicts as inherent to public tasks was also a premise used to distinguish it from the private sector. This enabled the speaker to further question the applicability of management by results in the public sector, since it was identified as coming from the private sector. The speaker wrote;

Skillnaden i förutsättning är emellertid betydande, eftersom 'resultat' i det privata företaget i allmänhet är relaterat till lönsamheten, medan statlig verk-

samhet i de flesta fall saknar ett sådant entydigt resultatmått och dess mål typiskt sett är flerdimensionella (SOU, 1997:23).

[The difference in conditions is however significant, since 'results' in a private company in general are related to profitability, while state activities in most cases lack such a clear-cut result measure with their goals typically being multi-dimensional.]

In the discussion of the position and responsibility of the civil servant, the nature of administrative tasks and their distinction from private sector tasks, was a fact that also enabled criticism of changes in public sector employment conditions that made them more akin to the private sector (SOU, 1997:149). It was a starting point that underlied recommendations for greater attention to the kinds of values and duties that are important in the public sector, as well as a focus upon the competence to weigh up these values in given situations. This was expressed as follows:

Det mest centrala och det mest krävande i en hög förvaltningsetik låter sig inte sammanfattas i några enkla punkter. De krav som ställs på myndigheter och statstjänstmän är ibland motstridiga, och en viktig del av kompetens som krävs av dem är att hantera mål-och värde konflikter (SOU, 1997:150).

[The most central and demanding aspects of a high administrative ethics does not allow itself to be summarized in a few points. The demands that are placed upon agencies and civil servants are sometimes conflicting, and an important part of the competence that is required of them is to manage goal- and value conflicts.]

As we shall see the commission identified a number of values that should be central to administrative activities such as the rule of law, and, which they argued distinguished the public sector from the private sector. They did this on the basis of the fact of the special nature of public administration activities.

Agreed upon presumptions in the argumentation included presuming that commonality across the administration could be achieved through learning, despite adapting to variety at the level of the individual agency. This presumption was present in both arguments and recommendations about management by results, and also in arguments and recommendations about identifying fundamental ethical principles for making decisions within the administration. On the one hand, it was recommended that the level of detail used to steer agencies should adjust to the nature of different administrative activities (SOU, 1997:82). Here it was suggested for example that less precise goals and results be set for agencies responsible for such activities as research and culture. At the same time, the speaker

warned about strengthening individual agencies' identity at the expense of the whole administration and associated this strengthening with the focus on set goals (SOU, 1997:85). It was recommended that broad goals should sometimes not be made more precise and that sector goals even be set leaving responsible agencies to negotiate how their contributions could achieve the desired results for the whole. This presumed that individual agencies would be able to identify between themselves how their actions contributed to the *whole*, and with that learn from post evaluations about how successful their actions had been.

A similar kind of presumption could also be identified in the discussion of civil servants and the promotion of a civil service culture. The commission rejected the establishment of a civil service code since it is stated,

Enligt kommissionen vore det inte meningsfullt att försöka formulera en sådan etisk kod för de svenska tjänstemännen.....Det viktiga är att förvaltningskulturen och statstjänstemännaroller lever i medvetandent och diskussionen (SOU, 1997:150).

[According to the commission, it would not be meaningful to try to formulate such an ethical code for the Swedish civil servants...What is important is that the administrative culture and the civil servant's role lives in consciousness and discussion.]

Together with the various references to the need for civil servants to have the capacity to weigh up the applicability of contrary goals in given situations, this *living* notion of administrative culture presumed that civil servants would be able to identify the right underlying principles. This was to be promoted through training and a focus upon democratic values. At the same time, in the discussion of civil servants it was also clear that the commission would like to encourage the attainment of a shared culture and was keen to identify certain values and attributes as desirable (SOU, 1997:147). They recommended for example that civil servants be subject to breach of duty and negligence legislation or sanctions, while still expecting a reflective and adaptable approach to situations at hand. This presumed the capacity to find a delicate balance between a reflective civil servant and one that complies to the shared values of Swedish democracy.

The agreed upon values as premises for the argumentation included democracy, the rule of law and effectiveness. In the early chapters of the report the commission set out its vision of



administrative politics [förvaltningspolitik] and the content and criteria this should meet. It was stated:

Med utgångspunkt i regeringsformen vill kommissionen ange demokrati, rättssäkerhet och effektivitet som överordnande mål för förvaltningspolitiken (SOU, 1997:37).

[With a starting point in the constitution the commission wishes to recognize democracy, legality and effectiveness as the superior goals for administrative politics.]

This was then followed by definitions (a quasi-logical technique) of legality and effectiveness, although the audience is advised that "Demokrati som ett mål för förvaltningspolitiken låter sig inte lika lätt definieras och kan bli föremål för varierande tolkningar" (SOU, 1997:38). [Democracy as a goal for administrative politics does not allow itself to be as easily defined and can become subject to various translations]. From other statements in the document, however, it can be deduced that the kinds of solutions the commission were seeking are ones that do not just view the position of the administration within democracy as hierarchically subordinate to the government and parliament. Instead they desired a notion of democracy that emphasizes horizontal features, in particular where the administration is *free* to respond to citizen's needs and be subject to their influence. Such statements included the following:

Förvaltningen lyder under regeringen. Den är dess instrument för att förverkliga den politik medborgarna gett sitt stöd i riksdagsvalen, och kravet på styrbarhet måste ställas högt. Medborgarnas anspråk och förväntningar på statsförvaltningen är emellertid av den arten att myndigheterna och stats tjänstmännen samtidigt måste tillerkännas ett stort mått av självständighet (SOU, 1997: 22).

[The administration is subordinate to the government. It is their instrument to actualise the politics that citizens have given their support for in the parliamentary elections, and the demand for steerability must be set high. The citizen's demands and expectations upon the administration is however of the kind that agencies and civil servants both must be granted a large degree of independence.]

Or to put it more directly;

Demokratin som styrelseform syftar till att ge medborgarna ett så stort inflytande som möjligt över förhållanden som påverkar deras egen tillvaro, direkt eller indirekt (SOU, 1997: 39).

[Democracy as a steering form aims to give citizens as much influence as possible upon the conditions that affect their existence directly or indirectly.]

It is the value of democracy that also underlied the emphasis upon, openness (SOU, 1997:39,19) and civil servants' objectivity (SOU, 1997:150) and integrity (SOU, 1997: 22,91) throughout the argumentation.

There was also a hierarchy between the values premised upon in the argumentation that relied upon agreements that democracy and legality are actually preferable to effectiveness. This was evident in statements reminding the audience that "(E)ffektivitet i arbetet met förvaltningsärenden, frikopplad från demokratin och rättsstatens normer, är ett tvivelaktigt och ibland negativt värde" (SOU, 1997: 41). [Effectiveness in the conduct of administrative tasks, isolated from democracy or rule of law norms is a dubious and sometimes negative value]. The preference for democracy and rule of law was evident throughout the argumentation in its expressions for attaining an administrative culture that is distinct from the private sector. Such statements included:

Vissa grundläggande element måste emellertid vara gemensamma för statsförvaltningen. Utgångspunkten är att den offentliga förvaltningen är en del av demokratin och rättsstaten och att de som arbetar i förvaltningen tjänar vissa gemensamma mål, vilka skiljer dem från anställda i den privata sektorn (SOU, 1997:41).

[Certain basic elements must in the meantime be shared by the administration. The point of departure is that the public sector is a part of democracy and the rule of law and that those who work in the administration serve certain common goals, which distinguish them from the employees in the private sector.]

It became obvious throughout the argumentation that it is democracy and rule of law, unlike effectiveness, that distinguished the public sector from the private sector. Furthermore, the criticisms of management by results and changes to employment conditions rested upon the opinion that the effectiveness value was inadequate and had been taken too far.

Obtaining the audiences' adherence to the values of democracy and rule of law relied primarily upon agreements that qualitative features were most desirable. This was evident in references to the complicated tasks of the public sector and their distinction from the private sector. Descriptions of public sector activities as multi-dimensional and subject to contrary goals acted to intensify the appeal for an approach to steering that was also multi-dimensional, and does not just include management by results. It emphasized the difficulty of public sector work and thereby mad it appear special in itself. The speaker

amplified this with various examples of special public sector work stating; "(V)issa funktioner som kräver särskild kompetens är typiska för den offentliga förvaltningen" (SOU, 1997:148). [Certain functions that demand distinct competence are typical for the public administration]. Being special was not only prominent in the descriptions of public sector activities but also in the accounts of the Swedish state throughout the argumentation. This was evident in the presence of statements regarding the tradition of the Swedish state, Swedish democracy (SOU, 1997:149) or the Swedish model (SOU, 1997: 32, 91). The audience was advised for example of special Swedish features such as small departments with a long tradition of relatively independent agencies and achievements were emphasized such as the following:

(Svenska) statsförvaltningen visade tidigt också starkt positiva sidor. För att vara ett fattigt land i Europas periferi hade Sverige en effektiv, hederlig och okorrumpad förvaltning. Sverige var det första landet i världen med en heltäckande folkbokföring. Den av ämbetsmän under frihetstiden härskande riksdagen införde år 1766 den första tryckfrihetsförordningen. De statliga ämbetsmännen var den samhällsklass som framför allt kom att bära upp rättsstatsidealet (SOU, 1997:145).

[(Swedish) central administration also demonstrated early a strong positive side. For a poor country in Europe's periphery, Sweden had an effective, honest and uncorrupt administration. Sweden was the first country in the world with a complete peoples' registration. Created by bureaucrats during the period of free rule, the first press laws were introduced by the parliament in the year 1766. The state bureaucrats were a social class that above all gave representation to the ideal of the rule of law.]

Together with a chapter on the history of Swedish administration and the various references to the Swedish Constitution throughout the argumentation the conditions were set for considering prescriptions that maintained this specialness. In the chapter on civil servants the locus of the special was also complemented by another qualitative locus, the locus of the irreparable. This was evident in the statement;

(vi) är på väg att tappa bort väsentliga och värdefulla inslag i den svenska förvaltningstraditionen, framför allt sådant som är förknippat med statens kärnfunktioner (SOU, 1997:146).

[We are on the way of losing essential and valuable elements in the Swedish administrative tradition, above all what is closely connected to the state's core functions.]

Agreements about the preference for democratic values and legality were underlined by posing market values and effectiveness more generally as a threat to a special tradition.

While I have argued that agreements about qualitative loci were most prominent in the argumentation, there was also one very important quantitative aspect to the argumentation and this was the preference for doing what is best for the *whole*. Frequent reference was made to finding solutions that promote the *whole* of the Swedish administration or that satisfy *collective* goals. This was evident in subtitles such as, "En förvaltnings politik för staten som helhet" (SOU, 1997:29) [An administration politics for the state as a whole] and a number of statements like;

Men en utgångspunkt måste vara att effektivitetssträvandena beaktas främst för staten som helhet samt att andra förvaltningspolitiska värden som rättsäkerhet, insyn och demokrati inte försummas (SOU 1997: 78).

[But a point of departure must be that the striving for effectiveness considers first of all the state as a whole together with other administrative political values such as legality, insight (into public activities and documents) and democracy, so that these values are not neglected.]

Or

Förvaltningspolitiken bör stärka de krafter som håller samman helheten och främja en för all statlig verksamhet så långt möjligt gemensam förvaltningskultur och förvaltningsetik, dvs att skapa enhet in mångfalden (SOU 1997:41).

[Administrative politics should strengthen the powers that hold together the whole and promotes for all state activities, as much as possible, a common administrative culture and administrative ethics. That is to say, to create unity in diversity.]

### 6.6.3.3 *Techniques of argumentation*

The argumentative techniques adopted throughout the document included quasi-logical techniques such as definition and the whole and its parts, techniques based upon the structure of reality such as the causal link and argumentation by authority, and, arguments that structured reality including argument by example and metaphor.

In general it can be said that the quasi-logical techniques in the document focused upon elements in the text that were concentrated on promoting what is good for the whole of the Swedish administration. A number of definitions were presented in the first two chapters of the report which functioned to lend formality to the analysis and acted as arguments for what is to be important (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:215) in addressing problems of the administration. The speaker created a scheme for assessing the problems at hand that had implications for the kinds of solutions proposed. Among the defini-

tions presented at the outset of the document were definitions of fragmentation (SOU, 1997: 24), the basic frames of an administrative politics (SOU, 1997:31, 37), and, the overriding principles that the administration should hold up such as legality and effectiveness (SOU, 1997: 37-38). Difficulties with steering, internationalization and democracy, the first two being problems and the last matter being an overriding principle, were also presented as part of this discussion but were not subject to precise definition. Later in the document government's definition of management by results was also presented and judged as being too narrow (SOU, 1997:77).

In terms of the criticisms and recommendations the commission was making the definitions were useful in demonstrating that the practice of management by results had been inadequate. This was because what were argued to be the *effects* of results steering included increasing fragmentation and effectiveness at the expense of democracy and legality. Fragmentation and effectiveness for example were defined as follows:

Kommissionen har uppmärksammat det fenomen som betecknas som fragmentering: brist på sammanhang mellan den statliga förvaltningens olika delar, tendens till splittring, oförmåga att se till de gemensamma, överordnande målen. Svårstyrbarhet och fragmentering hänger delvis samman men måste ändå betraktas som företeelser av olika karaktär (SOU, 1997: 24).

[The commission has recognized the phenomenon that is fragmentation: lack of integration between the state administration's different parts, tendency to splintering,, inability to see the shared, overarching goals. Difficult steerability and fragmentation are in part associated but must anyhow be considered of different character.]

Effektivitet menas att de av statsmakterna fastlagda målen för verksamheten nås med rimlig resursinsats och inom givna ekonomiska och andra ramar (SOU, 1997:38).

[Effectiveness means that the goals set by state powers for activities are met within reasonable resources and within given economic and other frames.]

Later it was stated that:

Resultatstyrningen, liksom den omfattande delegeringen av befogenheter till myndigheterna att bestämma över den egna organisationen, har ökat fokuseringen i myndigheterna på de egna prestationerna och därmed förstärkt organisationsidentiteten inom förvaltningens olika delar. Detta kan på en gång öka effektiviteten inom olika verksamheter tagna var för sig, och försvara de krafter som håller samman den statliga förvaltningen som helhet (SOU, 1997:25).

[Results steering, such as the extensive delegation of authority to agencies to decide over their own organization, has increased the focus in agencies upon their own performance and thereby strengthened their organizational iden-

tity within the different parts of the administration. This can at the same time increase the effectiveness within separate individual activities, and weaken the powers that hold together the state administration as a whole.]

...I sin strävan att nå uppsatta mål och resultat kan förlora de för förvaltningen övergripande, gemensamma målen ur sikte. En alltför stark fokusering på resultatstyrning kan leda till ökad fragmentering (SOU, 1997:26).

[In striving to achieve set goals and results, sight can be lost of the administration's overarching shared goals. Too strong a focus upon results steering can lead to increased fragmentation.]

This observation regarding the focus upon improving individual organizational performance came to appear even more problematic against the background of earlier stated definitions and problems of fragmentation. Furthermore, together with the presentation of definitions of what an administrative politics should consider, the commission was able to give greater legitimacy to the argument that broader approaches to steering needed to be pursued such as through informal contacts and frame legislation (SOU, 1997:57, 88-94). It could then be accepted that management by results did not have to always be so precise if there are other ways of steering. In addition, the limitations of effectiveness as a principle were indicated in the discussion of management by results and pointed the reader to the desirability of the other principles democracy and legality.

The other way quasi-logical argumentation was applied throughout the document was with regard to the relationship being presented between the overarching values of democracy, legality and effectiveness. These values were presented together as the whole of what is desirable for the Swedish administration to pursue and they were spoken about as if they were units or parts within a mathematical relationship. The argumentation used was division of the whole into its parts. This was expressed as follows:

Demokrati, rättssäkerhet och effektivitet måste ses i sitt inbördes sammanhang. Förvaltningen tjänar inte demokratin väl om den inte samtidigt fyller höga krav på rättssäkerhet och effektivitet. Effektivitet i arbetet med förvaltningsärenden, frikopplad från demokratin och rättsstatens normer, är ett tvivelaktigt och ibland negativt värde.....Att finna den rätt balanserade helheten av demokrati, rättssäkerhet och effektivitet är förvaltningspolitikens mest centrala uppgift (SOU, 1997:57, 38).

[Democracy, rule of law and effectiveness must be seen in their reciprocal relations. The administration does not serve democracy well if it does not at the same time meet the high demands upon the rule of law and effectiveness. Effectiveness in the work with administrative assignments, isolated from democracy and legality norms, is a doubtful and sometimes negative

value... Finding the right balance of the whole of democracy, legality and effectiveness in administrative politics must be the most central task.]

Throughout the discussion of both management by results and the civil service culture the notion of a mathematical relationship between these values was used to emphasize the view that effectiveness had been taken too far at the expense of democracy and legality. In both cases, (an increase in) private sector or market influences were equated with an increase in effectiveness and thereby a reduction in the democratic values and legality across the whole of the administration. It was stated for example;

När konsulter analyserar förvaltningsmyndigheters problem saknas ofta demokratiperspektivet och de etiska frågorna....Ekonomisk effektivitet har blivit det överordnade (SOU, 1997:57,148)

[When consultants analyze agencies' problems, there is often a lack of the democracy perspective and ethical questions...Economic effectiveness has become superior.]

Or in the case of management by results it was explained that the focus on individual performance; "kan på en gång ha ökat effektiviteten inom olika verksamheter tagna var för sig och försvagat de krafter som håller samman den statliga förvaltningen som helhet." (SOU, 1997:57, 24-25). [can at the same time have increased effectiveness within different activities considered separately and weakened the powers that hold together the state administration as a whole.] Another way in which division of the whole into its parts was presented in the argumentation was with the notion that an increase in savings or effectiveness in one part of the administration would increase the costs in another part of the administration (see SOU, 1997:57, 85).

Among the techniques emphasizing the structure of reality throughout the argumentation, the pragmatic argument was used to demonstrate a fact-consequence relationship between management by results and other market like trends within the administration, and their undesirable consequences eg. fragmentation and loss of democratic values. Indeed, while there were a few references to positive effects (SOU, 1997:57, 79), much of the text in the chapters on steering and the position of civil servants were devoted to describing the negative consequences of recent initiatives. The fact consequence relationships identified included:

- Precise goals in management by results leads to a focus upon activities or aspects of activities that are easy to measure (SOU, 1997:57,84)
- The detailed information provided is too difficult and unclear for departments and politicians to use, so it leads to their disinterest (SOU, 1997:57, 84)
- The binding demands for information relating to precisely stated goals prevents willingness to depart from set agenda and report other information that may be important (SOU, 1997:57, 84)
- Setting detailed goals leads to focus upon individual agency performance rather than that of administration as whole (SOU, 1997:57,85)

In the case of the position of civil servants the consequences of reforms such as management by results were presented in more broad terms such as;

De förändringar kommissionen pekat på som orsaker till den statliga verksamhetens fragmentering har verkat upplösande också på statstjänstemannarollen; det kräver en viss ansträngning att hitta några gemensamma nämnare för statens alla tjänstemän. (SOU, 1997:57,146)

[The changes the commission has identified as reasons for the state administration's fragmentation has also worked to dissolve the state civil servants role; it requires a certain effort to find some common denominators for all the states civil servants.]

Or

Johan Hirschfeldt påpekar att marknadskulturens inträde i förvaltningen kan få till följd att myndighetskulturen inträde vattnas ur. Han har märkt en förändrad syn på frågor om jäv och bisysslor, känslan för var gränserna går har försvagats. Hos en del myndigheter har han funnit brister i den förvaltningsrättsliga standarden (SOU 1997:57, 146).

[Johan Hirschfeldt points out that the arrival of the market culture within the administration can have as a consequence that the agency culture is watered down. He has noticed changed perspectives upon questions about appeals and side activities, the feeling for the limits has weakened. In some agencies he has found deficiencies in the administrative law standards.]

Another technique based upon the structure of reality used throughout the argumentation was argument by authority. This is an argument whereby the prestige of the status of a particular person, profession or document is used as the proof of a particular assertion. As in the earlier Swedish documents the Swedish Constitution was referred to by the commission to support their theses about steering (SOU, 1997:57, 88), the independ-



ence of agencies (SOU, 1997: 22), the role of civil servants (SOU, 1997: 22, 148) and the primacy of the rule of law (SOU, 1997:33-34). More generally its presence throughout the argumentation acted to promote the importance of the value of democracy and its distinctiveness. Among one of the most important ways the Constitution was used to legitimate the argumentation of the commission was with regard to criticizing the need for precision in government steering and highlighting other forms of steering such as the rule of law. The preparation for making this argument occurred already early in the document when the findings of the previous *Verksledningskommittén* (document two discussed above) were explicitly rejected. The commission referred to the various criticisms within legal circles to the Verksledningskommittén's interpretation of an article in the Constitution identifying a role for precise government steering (and thus management by results), and, instead identified two other articles that brought this earlier interpretation into question (SOU, 1997: 33-34). Both of these articles related to the rule of law - that like situations should be treated alike under the law and that the law should be applied in a professional and objective way. The commission stated,

Nu nämnda bestämmelser understryker att ämbetsmannens lojalitet inte skall riktas enbart mot de politiker som har makten utan också mot lagarna (SOU, 1997: 34)

[The just mentioned regulations underline that civil servant's loyalty shall not only be directed exclusively towards the politicians that have the power but also towards the law.]

Another article of the constitution was used to make the more general point that it allowed for more horizontal views of steering; which of course was consistent with the governance perspective underlying the argumentation. This was expressed as follows:

Förvaltningen har en horisontell dimension, som kom till uttryck i 1809 års regeringsform paragraf 47, där myndigheterna och ämbetsmannen ålades att "lyda konungens bud och befallningar och räcka varandra handen till fullgörande därav och av allt vad rikets tjänst utav dem fordrar (SOU, 1997:57, 22).

[The administration has an horizontal dimension that came to expression in the 1809 Constitution, paragraph 47. Here agencies and civil servants are called to serve the kings wishes and orders and commit themselves to the fulfilment thereof and all the services that the country requires from them].

Together with the presentation of legality and democracy as being (superior) parts of the whole of the administration, the Constitution was also used to demonstrate the legitimacy of broader kinds of steering methods than (hierarchical) management by results steering through the budget.

Other authorities were also used to achieve agreement about the assertions of the commission. In particular academic commentators were directly cited, primarily from the fields of political science and law, as well as legal practitioners (See SOU, 1997:89, 146, 148-149, 150-151). For example the observations of a Lecturer in Public Administration were presented to show that the positive effects of management by results have not yet been proven (SOU, 1997:23). Similarly, the findings of a Professor in Politics were used to demonstrate that changes in civil service conditions have made government employees dependent upon their superiors and thereby silenced their criticisms (SOU, 1997:146-147). The facts about the damaging effects of market like arrangements such as management by results or employment conditions similar to the private sector were achieved in this way.

Techniques that structure reality such as example and metaphor were also identified in the argumentation. Particular examples such as direct citations from agency employees or departments were used to demonstrate that reporting of results had been a flawed process and led to the provision of information that was not necessarily relevant to agency work but fitted with the expectations of departments (SOU, 1997:57, 84-86). In addition, examples of agency activities lent legitimacy to the assertion that detailed steering was not necessary for all agencies (SOU, 1997:84-85) and that they conducted specialized work characterized by contradictory goals (SOU, 1997:147-148).

The metaphors adopted throughout the argumentation included references to the desirability of greater *openness* in the administration and its recent reform initiatives being developed in *closed circles*. The desire was expressed for a *strong* society and there were also a number of organic metaphors used to describe the Swedish state. These included the following description of the Swedish administration:

Den Svenska statsförvaltningen är ett *träd* med många *årsringar* och många *grenar*. Den har bibehållit vissa *grundläggande drag* med *rötter* i 1600 talet, under det att verksamheten utvidgats till nya *fält* (SOU, 1997:21).

[The Swedish state administration is a *tree* with many *year rings* and many *branches*. It has preserved certain fundamental aspects having their *roots* in the 1600s, while the activities have expanded to new *fields*.]

Another organic metaphor included reference to the civil service culture being *watered down*, [*vattnas ut*], which aided in the construction of the state as *fragmenting*.

*Fragmentation* was another prominent metaphor, together with *splintering* and *integration* (SOU, 1997: 24). Indeed the description of this problem of a fragmenting administration in the argumentation was almost completely reliant upon the images supplied by these metaphors since few other descriptions are given of this problem. By contrast, the use of the term the *whole* throughout the argumentation could also be identified as a metaphorical description.

Finally the term democracy was used throughout the argumentation in metaphorical ways and constituted a dormant metaphor. In this document no definition was given of democracy rather the speaker noted it is too difficult to define. It remained a reason for many of the proposals the commission was making, and created a mystery about the specialness of the Swedish state more generally. An overview of the rhetorical features identified in the Swedish documents examined is presented in table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Overview of Swedish argumentation (continues on next page)

	Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet	Regeringen, myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning	I medborgarnas tjänst
<i>Ethos</i>			
<b>Particular audience:</b>	Political/Legal science Historian	Management experts, Agency directors	Academics Agency Directors Civil servants
<b>Universal audience:</b>	Democracy, the constitution	Democracy, the constitution	Democracy, citizen, the constitution
<i>Premises</i>			
<b>Truth</b>		Specialization makes the state insensitive to politics	Relationships are interdependent, the world is complex
<b>Facts</b>	Democratic steering has been insufficient	Urgent lack of financial resources Constitution prescribes the level of steering	Government activities multi-dimensional and ridden of value conflicts Public sector work is distinctive from private sector work
<b>Presumptions</b>	Governments can be motivated to steer.  Agencies are highly independent.	Governments can steer precisely, and want to steer. Government is the only actor that can steer democratically Agencies can and will provide necessary information	Commonality and integration across administration possible despite variation  The ability to learn
<b>Values</b>	Democracy, legality, political accountability	Effectiveness and democracy	Democracy, rule of law and effectiveness
<b>Hierarchy of values</b>	Agency independence superior to political subordination in matters of the law.	Effectiveness and democracy are compatible	Effectiveness subordinate to democracy

Table 6.3 Overview of Swedish argumentation

	<b>Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet</b>	<b>Regeringen, myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning</b>	<b>I medborgarnas tjänst</b>
<b>Loci</b>	Primarily quantitative The precarious (time for change, threat to democracy).	Primarily quantitative. The precarious (threat to democracy, time for financial changes).	Primarily qualitative (unique public sector and precarious threat to public values) Quantitative- the whole
<b><i>Techniques of argumentation</i></b>			
<b>Quasi-logical</b>	<i>Definition &amp; Comparison</i> (constitution prescriptions for steering) <i>Division of whole into parts</i> (democracy)	<i>Definition &amp; Comparison</i> (constitution prescriptions for steering) <i>Division of whole into its parts</i> (overarching steering and increased management freedom)	<i>Definition</i> (fragmentation, management by results, legality) <i>Division of the whole into its parts</i> (the tensions between legality, effectiveness, democracy)
<b>Structure of reality</b>	Argumentation by authority (The constitution)	<i>Argumentation by authority</i> (The constitution and the private sector) <i>Causal link</i> (timing and consequence of budgetary changes for effectiveness) <i>Unlimited Development</i> – reforming the budget	<i>Argumentation by authority</i> (the constitution and academics) <i>Pragmatic argumentation</i> (bad consequences of market forces)
<b>Structuring reality - Metaphors</b>	mapping, steering, democracy, balance, sharpen, weak and strong state/society	Steering, deeper, broader, stronger, long sightedness, sharper, modernising, freedom, effectiveness, whole, broad, narrow	Tree, branches, dissolving like water, steering, democracy, fragmentation, whole

## 6.7 GGCT and the rhetoric of Swedish agency reform

It should be evident from the above analysis that argumentation in all the Swedish documents departed from rather broad perspectives regarding the matter of agency reform. This was expressed in references to state *steering*, *strengthening* democracy, the criteria of the Constitution, and, in the consequences of post-industrial society for the relationship between state and society. Even in the second document, which was most narrowly concerned with management reforms, attention was given to these matters. Following from Hood, such a broad conceptualization of the problems facing the administration are typical of group narratives and more specifically hierarchical accounts. Metaphors such as *steering* and a *strong* state are also consistent with hierarchical accounts and were prominent in all of the documents examined.

A number of egalitarian themes could also be identified in the descriptions of agencies and the administration more generally. Not least, *democracy* as a consistent watchword in all the documents is identified by Hood as typical of egalitarian accounts of public management reform. As we shall see, however, democracy and the egalitarian theme of informal contacts were most often used to justify hierarchical relationships within the administration, and in the third document to encourage more mutuality. Other themes and watchwords in the argumentation that corresponded with an egalitarian flavor included emphasis upon openness (low grid) and, deliberation. These themes occurred most in the third document. The prominence of both hierarchical and egalitarian arguments throughout the Swedish documents corresponds with the GGCT typification of the Swedish national political and administrative context. There were, however, some individualist themes and arguments in the Swedish official accounts but these always appeared in the context of broader concerns such as democracy.

### 6.7.1 GGCT and *Politisk styrning - administrativ självständighet*

Accounts about the possibilities for agency reform in this document were primarily hierarchical and egalitarian. Aside from the broad perspective taken by the speaker such as a concern for steering the state, other hierarchical themes included emphasis upon formal rules and the desire to establish clearer accountability relationships between politics and the administra-

tion. It was the Swedish constitution that provided the main source of rather detailed descriptions regarding public power and the legitimacy of more active government steering. These included citations regarding the subordination of agencies to the government. Another way in which this subordinate relationship was expressed was with reference to democracy and the existence of an accountability chain in which subordination of the administration to government was necessary to satisfy accountability demands.

The focus upon democracy in the argumentation could also be interpreted as including an egalitarian flavor primarily because it was to be the citizens that were to be served by the administration through accountability to government and parliament. Nevertheless, the term citizen hardly appeared. Other egalitarian themes in the argumentation included concern with the power structures in society. The need for more democracy was expressed against the observation that the bureaucracy was becoming an independent (and undemocratic) power in society (SOU, 1983:17). Hood describes stress upon power structures as a feature of egalitarian accounts and this stress is emphasized by a presentation of the growth of agency independence. Another feature in the text was its recognition of informal contacts as an important means for ensuring concordance of views between agencies and departments (SOU, 1983:100). Hood describes informal contacts as egalitarian because they encourage mutuality, there was however a tendency in the text to present informal contacts as a way for the government to influence the administration according to their intentions rather than as a mutual activity. Other egalitarian themes that were mentioned in a more cursory way include reference to citizen participation on agency boards and its history as an important means for promoting democracy within Sweden (SOU, 1983: 80-85), and recognition that more decentralization to the local level promoted the influence of the citizen upon agencies (SOU, 1983:106).

In terms of individualist themes, there were very few features in the argumentation that could be identified as corresponding to Hood's categories. There was a question raised about the limit of state growth, given budgetary problems, which may be interpreted as an individualist concern (SOU, 1983:17) and more attention to the customer as an alternative

means for steering agencies. Both of these matters constituted only a few sentences in the entire document.

### 6.7.2 *GGCT and Regering, myndigheterna och myndigheternas styrning*

In contrast to the previous document, the argumentation in *Regering myndigheterna och myndigheternas styrning* brought together hierarchical and individualist themes. The hierarchical flavor of the official account was reflected in the desire to strengthen government steering in precise ways. Even the indirect ways of steering such as proposals for greater discretion for government in the appointment and transfer of agency managers were based upon a hierarchical relationship between the administration and government. As mentioned above, these hierarchical arrangements were presented as consistent with democracy. Statements illustrating the hierarchical tone of the argumentation included the following:

..fullt tillräcklig grund för regeringen att styra sina myndigheter precis så bestämt och i den omfattning som regeringen själv finner önskvärt och lämpligt i varje särskild situation (SOU, 1985: 38).

[. sufficient grounds for the government to steer their agencies precisely as much and as decisive as it considers desirable and suitable in every separate situation.]

Other hierarchical themes prominent in the argumentation included the clarification of roles in setting out precise goals of the administration. Together with the steering watchword in this document, being precise was one of the most cited concerns. An example of statements focusing upon the precision of role content was the following account of budgetary documents:

Direktiven bör vidare ange efter vilka huvudlinjer myndigheterna bör arbeta fram det nödvändiga underlaget för statsmakternas precisering och prioritering av hur verksamheten inom angivna resursramar bör förändras under den kommande treårsperioden (SOU, 1985: 71)

[The directives should further inform about which main lines agencies should work from, to provide the necessary basis for the state powers precision and prioritising of how activities within a given resource frame should be changed during the coming three year period.]

Or

I fråga om rollfördelning mellan statsmakterna och myndigheterna föreslog budgetutredningen att styrningen av de statliga verksamheterna efter hand så långt som möjligt borde förändras så att statsmakterna mer riktade



uppmärksamheten mot verksamheternas mål och resultat och mindre mot valet av resursslåg (SOU, 1985:62).

[Regarding the separation of roles between the state powers and agencies, the budget commission proposed that steering the state activities consequently should be changed as much as possible in order for the state powers to direct more attention towards the activities goal and result and less towards the choice of resources.]

More generally the emphasis on precision was reflected in the entire discussion of the budget, wherein a very detailed programme was described including the kinds of documents to be supplied, when they should be provided and by whom. This description fitted with the mechanical metaphors adopted in the argumentation such as the administration as a tool. Furthermore, there was some reference made to compliance in the form of feedback providing the basis for future government decisions in the budgetary process. The desire for more active government steering in the argumentation was often expressed as promoting a *strong* state.

Alternatively, distaste was expressed about professionals and technocracy. This is more akin to an individualist flavor. The problem with professionals and expert knowledge in this document was that it allowed the bureaucracy to make decisions undemocratically. Instead, the commission called for using management knowledge and suggested that the role of agency director become an expertise in itself (SOU, 1985: 166) or through the greater management freedom. Other individualist themes and watchwords in the argumentation included the emphasis upon effectiveness, flexibility and savings. It should be noted these priorities were presented as consistent with the promotion of more democratic arrangements. Furthermore, there was some reference to economic incentives in the presentation of the *modernization* (another favored individualist term) of the budget, such as the introduction of interest rate incentives for agency savings and a limit to agency's cheque balance (SOU, 1985: 64). This last feature was argued to promote the cost consciousness of agency managers.

Economic incentives were also cited in the proposals for changes to the appointment of agency directors. This was expressed in relationship to encouraging the mobility of agency directors and not sanctioning them (in terms of employment conditions and pay) because they'd transferred. Other individualist flavors in the proposals for reforms to the appointments of

agency director generals included the comparisons with the operations of big business. The justifications for more active recruitment were made with references to how this was done in the private sector, and the capacity for director generals to select their management team were also justified in this way. This was expressed in the following way:

Inom näringslivet är det vanligt att nytillträdande verkställande direktörer successivt försöker omge sig med personer som han har varit med om att välja själv. Detta bl.a för att underlätta en eventuell nyordning av verksamheten (SOU, 1985:176).

[Within the business world it is common that newly appointed directors successively attempt to surround themselves with people that they have chosen themselves. This is among other things to facilitate the new order.]

It is significant to note that the argumentation in the document did not include any reference to competition or choice.

Finally, while the argumentation would appear to be primarily hierarchical and individualist, it can be suggested that the frequent references to terms and themes such as democracy or informal contacts gave it an egalitarian character. This was despite the rather hierarchical interpretation of these concepts. In reference to informal contacts for example, their purpose was presented as a means to relay clearly the intentions of government decisions or attain background information regarding agency activities (SOU, 1985: 97-99). It was not really that they should promote mutuality but rather to ensure that administrators were sensitive to the intentions of the government. Informal contacts were to ensure concurrence with the government's perspective.

### 6.7.3 *GGCT and I medborgarnas tjänst*

The official account in this document indicated a strong group flavor that was reflected in the emphasis upon the whole of the administration and finding a common civil service ethics. It was most akin to an egalitarian narrative although hierarchical and individualist themes were also present. In general, the argumentation placed various blames upon individualist solutions such as focussing upon individual agency performance and employment conditions similar to the private sector. Market values more generally were also argued to have caused the dissolution of a distinctive public service culture (SOU, 1997:146). To this extent it could be seen as a reaction to and criticism of the previous document.

The egalitarian flavor in the argumentation was drawn from the emphasis upon promoting democratic values and enabling the citizen to have "influence upon the conditions that affect their wellbeing" (SOU, 1997: 39). Although a precise meaning of democratic values was never given throughout the argumentation there were various indications that it is to be more than the traditional hierarchical chain between voters and representation in parliament and government. Indeed, the commission explicitly rejected a hierarchical approach to democracy and steering as was indicated in the following citations:

En koncentration på frågor om styrning och styrbarhet leder till en ensidig uppfattning av statsförvaltningen som en hierarki på bekostnad av frågor som gäller förvaltningens förmåga till framförhållning och initiativ, dess kunskap, erfarenhet, råttådighet....Förvaltningen har en horisontell dimension (SOU, 1997:22).

[A concentration upon questions about steering and steerability leads to a one sided perspective about the administration as a hierarchy at the cost of questions regarding the administration's ability to plan ahead and take initiative, its knowledge, experience and legal advice...the administration has a horizontal dimension.]

Det är inte möjligt att styra en omfattande och komplex statsförvaltning på ett sådant sätt att dess maktutövning helt och hållet framstår som ett utflöde av beslut fattade av demokratiskt valda organ. En sådan ordning vore inte heller önskvärd, eftersom den skulle förutsätta en starkt centraliserad och hierarkisk styrning, som inte skulle gagna effektiviteten och inte heller harmoniera med de demokratiska värdena i vidare mening (SOU, 1997:38).

[It is not possible to steer an extensive and complex administration in such a way that its exercise of power simply seems like an outflow of decisions made by democratically elected organs. Such a situation would also not be desirable, since it presupposes a strengthened centralized and hierarchical steering, that would not be conducive to effectiveness nor be in harmony with the democratic values in a wider sense.]

The kind of horizontal relationships that were envisaged, however, were not made entirely clear.

Other egalitarian features of the document included the desire for less formality and precision in the application of management by results in the budget. This desire was explained with reference to the observation that setting precise results for individual agencies through breaking down overarching goals for particular agencies in a sector could lead to a focus upon individual agency performance at the detriment of the whole. Instead the commission proposed that only sector goals be set leaving agencies to negotiate between themselves how to satisfy the overarching goal (SOU, 1997: 87). This was a solution emphasising mutuality and cooperation between agencies.

The citizen also played a prominent role in the account thus lending it an egalitarian flavor (SOU, 1997:80-83, 87, 22, 75, 147). It was argued for example that agencies require independence in order to respond to the expectations and needs of citizens. It was stated:

Medborgarnas anspråk och förväntningar på statsförvaltning är emellertid av den arten att myndigheterna och statstjänstemännen samtidigt måste tillerkännas ett stort mått av självständighet. Förvaltningen måste ha integritet (SOU, 1997:22).

[The citizens demands and expectations upon the administration is, however, of the kind that agencies and civil servants at the same time must have a large degree of independence. The administration must have integrity.]

Enabling citizens to have greater influence over the policies that effect their wellbeing (SOU, 1997:39), facilitating greater access of the administration to the citizen<sup>24</sup>(SOU, 1997:35), as well as the need for civil servants to have a *living* understanding of the citizen as their client (SOU, 1997:147) were the ways the commission described these themes. These references to serving the citizen were distinct from market kind of relationships, such as that with a customer, since they also focused upon the desire of legality, objectivity and equality of access (SOU, 1997:39).

There was also emphasis upon openness throughout the argumentation that may be interpreted as consistent with both egalitarian and individualist accounts. For example the commission criticized the closed circle of elites that developed and evaluated management by results (SOU, 1997:86), thus preventing other perspectives. This is a criticism of expertise and lack of participation. In addition, there was frequent reference to the Swedish tradition of the principle of publicity whereby civil servants have an obligation to disclose public information and citizens have access to official documents affecting them. Maintaining and strengthening this tradition of openness was identified as a means for steering. Finally, references to the desire for deliberation about the role of civil servants was especially typical of the egalitarian flavor. This occurred in the following kinds of statements: "De viktiga är att förvaltningskulturen och statstjänstemännarnas rollen lever i medvetandet och diskussionen" (SOU, 1997:) [What is important is that the administrative cul-

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<sup>24</sup> This is primarily in discussions of administrative arrangements at the level of the commune and in arguments about public insight and access of information.

ture and also the state civil servant's role *lives* in consciousness and discussion].

There were also features of the argumentation that could be ascribed to a hierarchical account of the administration. In particular, the calls for more (independent) expertise to develop results orientated management and train civil servants were reflective of a hierarchical desire for more specialist knowledge (SOU, 1997: 86, 83,147). Furthermore, recommendations to formalize informal contacts between civil servants and departments can be interpreted as emphasizing more hierarchical relationships. This was expressed in the desire for informal contacts to be documented in order to clarify accountability relationship (SOU, 1997:91) and would appear to be a kind of counter weight to the recommendation to de-formalize the setting of results for agencies. Finally, a hierarchical flavor was ascribed to the emphasis upon the rule of law and civil servants' independence in decision-making being subordinate to legislation. Although this may replace other hierarchical relationships such as the superiority of political decisions, it still bestowed authority to rules from above (see SOU, 1997:34). Formal laws were also recommended to promote a civil service culture by legislating for breach of duty and negligence among civil servants.

Finally the critique of results management that was presented in the report can be argued to correspond to Hood's description of the fatalist way of life. He explains that such scepticism and focus upon the contrary effects of reforms relies upon the role of irony to draw attention to the discrepancies between intention and consequences. Observations of startling contrary effects were presented in accounts that the shift to results steering had actually brought about more details in the steering, had led to less interest of politicians in agencies work and to reporting for its sake rather than about what was relevant (SOU, 1997:83-85). I have not included the technique of irony in my analysis but did observe that these arguments were presented using the causal link.

## 6.8 Conclusion: The translation of agency reform in Swedish official accounts

Official accounts of agency reform in Sweden have been composed of contesting statements about the role and independence of agencies within the Swedish democratic system, the relationship between effectiveness and democracy, and the benefits of specific steering and management arrangements. In the documents I have analyzed it has not been possible to speak about specific steering and management arrangements without first resolving, or at least attending to, broader concerns about the appropriate means for reform given the Swedish system of democracy. The interpretation of the Constitution has provided the primary source from which statements about the role of agencies within the Swedish democratic system were derived. This resulted in conflicting statements about the role and independence of agencies and the extent to which they can or should be subject to government steering. On the one hand, the appropriate role for agencies was constructed as a tool subordinate and obedient to government, while on the other hand they were constructed as requiring independence to guarantee legality and public service to the citizen. The kinds of statements that were important in Swedish argumentation include the following:

- The Constitution prescribes the administration as subordinate to the political sphere and therefore presents no barriers to the active government steering of agencies. (Indeed, agencies are to be a tool of government and actualize the decisions and intentions espoused in the political sphere)
- Since the government is responsible to parliament and parliament to the people, it is a necessary condition for democracy that the government has clear oversight of the activities of agencies, actively steers them, and thereby can be responsible for their activities
- The Constitution prescribes only limited independence to agencies in specific applications of law, which can also be overridden by government legislation
- Agencies have acquired independence that exceeds constitutional prescription

Or alternatively;

- The constitutional basis for agency independence (in individual cases of legal application) is to guarantee legality, agencies are therefore not only subordinate to the government but also to the law (they can depart from government directives where this is in opposition with the law)
- A democratic system aims to give citizens direct and indirect influence over the relations that affect their well-being. In order to respond to citizen's demands in such a system agencies must have sufficient independence

Corresponding with the above divisions were also conflicting statements about the desirability of effectiveness as a political goal and its consequences for democracy. Diverging statements identified included:

- Increasing the effectiveness of the administration promotes democracy and democratic institutions
- Effectiveness taken too far will have negative consequences for democracy and legality

Finally in statements about the benefits of specific steering and management arrangements, Swedish agencies were constructed through reference to the budgetary systems used to steer them and the effects of employment conditions and culture upon their work. It should be noted that official accounts included a range of statements about other specific management and structural arrangements effecting agencies such as auditing, the task features of agencies (legal, commercial, policy implementation) and their management boards, but it has not been possible to cover all of these in this chapter. The statements that were identified, however, revealed divergences of opinion about the necessity of precision in budgetary steering and its focus upon individual agencies. There were also other differences of opinion about market like arrangements for public sector employment and other aspects of agency work. Statements presenting the need for more precise decision making included:

- Setting (precise) goals in the budget will enable the government to steer individual agencies more directly and clarify the activities and goals required of them (SOU 1985:16)

- Longer time for decision making in the budget will enable precise demands to be set and improve quality of reporting back
- Giving more freedom to managers (for the allocation of internal resources) to achieve overarching goals (over longer time period) will promote effectiveness
- Introducing interest sanctions and returns for savings will promote cost consciousness
- Requiring agencies to identify areas for savings themselves (since they have the best knowledge of their area) will provide a better basis for decision making and will promote effectiveness
- Increasing the breadth of director recruitment, their mobility and tenure will promote the governments' ability to steer the administration (indirectly)

Alternatively, statements rejecting more precise decision making and the apparently market ideology it represented included:

- Setting precise goals for agencies leads to fragmentation
- Setting sector goals rather than goals for individual agencies will promote integration of the whole
- Market influences (introduced for more effectiveness) upon employment conditions and operations in the public sector have reduced civil servants independence and their commitment to public values and traditions. It has contributed to fragmentation of the state.

Constituted through these statements, it can be concluded that agency reform in Sweden has been contested in official accounts, with its meaning changing over time and resting upon different interpretations of what the Constitution prescribes and different conceptions of democracy and what is good for it. The degree of prominence of legality in these interpretations is an important point of distinction in the different interpretations. Finally, agency reform in Sweden has been constituted in statements about budgetary reform and methods for controlling director general/employee incentives and behaviour.

### 6.8.1 *The rules of speaking*

There were important similarities in the self-presentation of the speakers and their construction of the universal audience in all the official documents. This was despite different conceptions of agencies and democracy within the documents themselves,



and, despite differences in the actual composition of commission members. My analysis indicated that the credibility of Swedish official speakers required demonstration of a commitment to democracy and knowledge of the institutional arrangements that support it in Sweden. This was expressed in the presentation of articles of the Constitution and knowledge of the Swedish political system itself, such as its system of representative democracy, commitment to collective government, its corporatist character and system of dualism. This feature of Swedish ethos favored political science categories and theories, as well as historical accounts of the origins of Swedish democracy.

In all of the documents analyzed the speaker provided an account of Swedish political administrative history, whether this was about the history of dualism or of administrative change as in the first or third documents, or the history of the board system as in the second document. It is perhaps significant that in the second document, in which the greatest challenge to the tradition of agency independence was expressed, there was little discussion of this particular dualistic tradition of Swedish political or administrative history. Another implication of the requirement of Swedish speakers to announce their commitment to democracy was that Swedish speakers must present their particular initiatives with reference to the broader system and its goals. The universal audience in Sweden was constructed in all of the documents as a group concerned with the role of the agencies within democracy, and with knowledge about the developments of industrialization and complexity within society more generally. Swedish speakers tended to present the knowledge of different expert groups in quite technical ways. All Swedish particular audiences were experts. Whether it was the knowledge of political scientists, constitutional law experts or financial management, Swedish speakers gave detailed accounts of their subject areas complemented by textbook definitions and the provision of evidence from statistics and interview findings.

The conditioning of the audience to accept proposals for agency reform in Swedish official accounts relied upon the release of emotions about the goodness of Swedish democracy and existing threats to the democratic system. This occurred in different ways, such as identifying the threat to democratic power from closed technocratic groups, or the looming dissolu-

tion of the distinctiveness of the public sector. In any case, in all of the documents the value of democracy was identified as a priority. In the second document analyzed the urgency of the financial situation in Sweden was also used at the outset of the argumentation to promote the audience's consideration of proposals for more precise budgetary steering. Indeed, the locus of the precarious (a threat) was consistently adopted in all of the Swedish documents.

Swedish official accounts exhibited primarily quasi-logical argumentation to describe the benefits of agency reform. Definition, comparison and the division of the whole into its parts were all used to demonstrate the role of the administration within the democratic system and the prescriptions of the constitution for steering Swedish agencies. With regards to the proposals for budgetary reform, the division of the whole into its parts was used to demonstrate that more freedom to managers would not disrupt, and was compatible with, the *overarching steering* of the government. All of these descriptions sought to obtain the adherence of the audience by likening the rationale for agency reforms and their benefits to mathematical deduction. Arguments based upon the structure of reality were used in the argumentation to demonstrate the benefits of budgetary reforms and results orientated management. This occurred with the techniques of continuous development and the causal link being used to demonstrate to the audience that it was reasonable to believe that budgetary reforms can achieve greater effectiveness and improvements in financial management. In the third document, the pragmatic argument was used to refute the benefits of such budgetary arrangements by associating fragmentation with the budgetary reforms and with market orientated initiatives more generally.

Metaphors that were prominent in the Swedish accounts included *steering* which was used on numerous occasions, particularly in the first two documents, and in a variety of combinations such as *democratic steering*, political *steering* or budgetary *steering*. The term *democracy* was also interpreted as a dormant metaphor. This was because it was often cited as a reason for agency reforms, without detailed discussion of what was actually meant by democracy or what more democracy entailed. It was also common to find the metaphor of *mapping* and *balancing* in the Swedish documents. These were used to describe respectively the activity of the commission and the relationship between the

administration and politics or between values. In the third Swedish document there was a clear change in the kinds of metaphors adopted as reflected in the adoption of a number of organic metaphors. These included the *whole* as well as *tree*, *water* and *living*.

### 6.8.2 *The cultural flavor of official accounts*

The broad problematization of the issues facing the administration, and the state and society more generally facilitated the consistent presence of the hierarchical way of life in Swedish accounts of agency reform. Swings in the prominence lent to different cultural ways of life, could also be observed in the different documents analyzed. Over the period studied the the prominence of cultural flavors shifted from primarily hierarchical themes and arguments in *Politisk styrning – administrativa självständighet*, to hierarchical and individualist themes and arguments in *Regering, myndigheternas en myndigheternas ledning*, to egalitarian and hierarchical themes and arguments in *I medborgarnas tjänst*. Irrespective of which ways of life most characterized the themes in the documents, the Constitution and democracy were always central to the argumentation in Swedish official accounts.

The individualist way of life was least prominent and when it did appear it was always in the context of a broader concern for democracy. This was illustrated with the presentation of a number of individualist themes and arguments presented almost exclusively in the second document *Regering, myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning*. It is noteworthy that there was strong representation from financial experts among the commission members responsible for this document. The desire for more effectiveness and cost savings were argued to correspond with the attainment of more democracy. Other individualist themes and arguments identified included proposals for budgetary reforms and for changes to the employment conditions of director generals. There were arguments about giving more financial freedom to managers to promote effectiveness and cost savings. There were also arguments that financial incentives (through price signals eg. interest returns on savings), or in the case of agency director mobility, lack of financial sanctions, could promote more effective outcomes. Insofar as *broadening* the pool from which agency director generals were selected can be interpreted as promoting more competition, it was the only

reference to increasing competition in Swedish official accounts.

There were also some individualist criticisms of hierarchical features in Swedish accounts, such as the argument that the reliance of politicians upon experts in Swedish democracy made it undemocratic. A counter argument posed was that management, rather than other professions, should become an expertise of its own. Most of the individualist arguments presented in *Regering, myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning* relied upon arguments that structure reality such as the argument of authority, unlimited development or the causal link. In arguments about the constitutional right of government to steer or give more management freedom in the context of overarching steering, quasi-logical arguments were used. The metaphors used to support many of these individualist themes and arguments included effectiveness, modernization, mobility, flexibility and freedom.

As has already been noted it was arguments and themes that corresponded to the hierarchical way of life that were most prominent in Swedish accounts of agency reform. This was reflected in the broad way in which the problem of agency reform was posed, as well as in the focus upon steering, and clarifying the roles of the administration and the political sphere. An important hierarchical theme in early Swedish accounts was that the government had a constitutionally prescribed power to steer agencies and that the administration was subordinate to the government. Alternatively, in the document *I medborgarnas tjänst* the administration was argued to be not only subordinate to the government but also to the law. Both claims relied upon the authority of formal rules in the Constitution to prescribe behaviour of agencies, and in the second case other features of public law to prescribe agency decisions. In the proposals for budgetary reforms, the desire for more precise government steering was interpreted as a hierarchical argument. Finally, other arguments that corresponded with the hierarchical way of life included proposals to formalize informal contacts through their documentation. There was also the desire to use more specialist knowledge in the development of management by results and civil servants training.

Most of these hierarchical themes and arguments were posed using quasi-logical argumentative techniques. In particular the division of the whole into its parts, definition and comparison were all used in accounts of Swedish democracy and in

applying the constitution to different interpretations of the administration's role. In some cases the use of the constitution could be interpreted as argument by authority, although in general the discussion proceeded in a mathematical way with comparisons and value attributes being ascribed to particular interpretations of the constitution. The metaphors supporting hierarchical argumentation in Swedish accounts included *steering*, the *strong* state and in some cases democracy itself. Both qualitative and quantitative loci were observed to have supported these arguments.

There were also themes and arguments that were ascribed to an egalitarian flavor, although these occurred primarily in the third document *I medborgarnas tjänst*, which was prepared primarily by academic commission members. They included the argument that more independence for agencies is necessary if the administration is to respond to the desires of citizens. There was also a preference for more horizontal relationships within the administration rather than vertical relationships. Proposals to change budgetary steering instruments to setting sector goals rather than individual agency goals can also be interpreted as an egalitarian argument promoting more mutuality and cooperation within the administration. These arrangements were to reduce fragmentation. Other egalitarian themes and arguments included deliberation about the role of the civil servant and an emphasis upon more openness in policy making and in the activities of the civil servant. The desire for more openness could also be attributed to an individualist way of life, as it is low grid. Finally, the concern for power structures that was expressed in the loci (threat to democracy from organized interests/the bureaucracy) of the first two documents could be interpreted as an egalitarian concern. At the same time, both themes conceptualized the problem of the administration in broad terms, which I have interpreted above as hierarchical. Although it is difficult to specify a greater prominence of quasi-logical or arguments that structure reality when presenting these egalitarian accounts, the metaphors that were associated with them included *openness*, the *whole*, *democracy* and the *strong* state. Organic metaphors where the state is described as a *tree* or loss of values as, like *water* dissolving, may also be attributed to the Swedish egalitarian flavor.

In response to earlier individualist themes and arguments noted above, there were a number of blames put upon market initiatives in the third document *I medborgarnas tjänst*. It is diffi-

cult to ascribe these blames primarily to an egalitarian or hierarchical flavor, but rather to a group flavor more generally. The arguments that blamed market initiatives for the problems of the administration focused primarily upon its fragmentation. This was expressed in the argument that setting goals for individual agencies or that giving them more individual financial freedoms leads to a focus upon individual performance and identity at the detriment of the whole. Similarly, market values and employment conditions were argued to have dissolved public values and the distinctiveness of a public service culture. These arguments were expressed in arguments that structure reality such as the causal link and in metaphors such as the whole, dissolving or fragmentation itself.

It has already been observed in section 5.8.1 above that the Swedish speakers tend to conform to a self-presentation in which democracy, aspects of the political and administrative history of Sweden, and its institutional features are used to demonstrate credibility and knowledge. At the same time, there were some distinctions that can be observed in the way of speaking that was prominent in the different documents. These may be attributed to the ways of life being espoused. For example, the first document *Politisk styrning – administrativ självständighet*, has been described as primarily hierarchical. It is also the document in which the speaker adopted the greatest formality in terms of technical definitions and concepts and made the greatest demands upon its reader in terms of ease of reading. There were no interviews cited from director generals reported in this document and its evidence was primarily drawn from legal experts, statistics and historical material. Alternatively, in the second document *Regering, myndigheternas en myndigheternas ledning* which was found above to espouse the most individualist arguments, there was much less devotion to historical accounts and even less to political science definitions, with the focus upon management and budgetary concepts. In this document the speaker adopted a more matter of fact way of writing about management techniques with the detail, particularly of budgetary reforms, putting the heaviest demands on the reader. Sources of evidence included both interviews with agency directors and statistical information. In the final document, *I medborgarnas tjänst*, which contained the most egalitarian arguments in the Swedish case, although also hierarchical arguments, the speaker adopted a number of academic and histori-

cal sources for evidence, as in the first document, but also offers a much more accessible and direct way of presenting this information. Sources of evidence included not only academic sources but also interview citations from agency director generals and civil servants themselves.

### 6.8.3 *The relationship between official accounts and scenes of use*

Consistent with GGCT's diagnosis of the Swedish cultural context as highly egalitarian and then hierarchical, Swedish official agency talk has also revealed strong group themes and arguments. However, the official accounts were more consistently and prominently hierarchical than egalitarian. The primary concerns were steering and clarifying the relationship between the administration and the political sphere. Even in *I medborgarnas tjänst*, where some egalitarian themes appeared, the construction of agency reform continued to include hierarchical themes such as recommendations for the contribution of experts in training civil servants or upon formalizing informal contacts. In addition, the way of speaking about agency reform in Sweden was elite and favoured audiences with expert knowledge about the political system, legal matters and history. It should be noted there were themes and watchwords in Swedish documents that sounded egalitarian such as the universalizing themes of *democracy*, or references to informal contacts, but these were often used to espouse hierarchical solutions. The prominence of hierarchical themes and arguments, rather than egalitarian, is surprising because the Swedish political culture was rated highest upon egalitarianism and is widely described as being so. One explanation for this incompatibility in the findings may be that the group feel in Swedish political administrative culture is more hierarchical than has previously been thought. Like the historically interventionist role (since 1940s) of government in Swedish society, which has required enormous commitment to planning and control, it may be that there is also a tradition of hierarchical order within Swedish public administration that has escaped much academic focus upon the collective character of Swedish government. An alternative explanation is of course that the hierarchical features of Swedish official accounts have been a response to the strong independence of Swedish agencies. Their autonomy has been described as excessive and beyond the reach of government and parliament (Pierre, 2004). This may account for the emphasis upon management steering,

but it does not really address the consistent calls for a strong state and the detailed attention to roles or formal rules that were observed in the documents. Such findings correspond to descriptions of Sweden as a highly administered society (Hecló and Madsen, 1987; Huntford, 1971).

While the apparently egalitarian features of Swedish political culture are unable to account for its official agency accounts, other features of the scenes of use do correspond with the kinds of themes and arguments produced. Not least, the constitutional status of Swedish agencies entwines them in discourses about democracy and formal rules more generally. This made it difficult for speakers to ignore an account of their role within the democratic system or of legal interpretations of the Constitution. While sounding universal anyway, the construction of the Swedish universal audience as committed to democracy obtains greater particularity with the recognition of agencies constitutional status. Democracy is also a theme that has special, even necessary utopian connotations, for the social democratic image of society that has been so influential in Sweden (see Castles, 1978). Besides the relationship between these features of the scenes of use and the kind of official accounts produced, it also became apparent that the commission system itself has its own reporting traditions. It requires lengthy analyses and the demonstration of thorough, systematic knowledge of the problem at hand. It is common that academics will be members of commissions and there is an expectation that the findings will be presented in a rational expert way. Such a context fosters a way of speaking that is elite and prone to hierarchical concerns such as defining clear roles for the administration and political sphere.

Finally, and relevant to the commission system as well, the system of consensus democracy in Sweden requires knowledge that is presented in an independent way and thereby can foster consensus. Arguably quasi-logical argumentation is most appropriate to this function because of its logical appearance, which can then also avert appearing political or confrontational.



## 7 Australia: agencies enhancing customer service and promoting whole of government.

This stage we have just completed, involved setting up the organization itself, defining and moving toward personalized service and establishing business opportunities (Vardon, 1998: 2).

The clear principle underlying the concept of the agency is the government's commitment to put the needs of people for high quality delivery above the boundaries of Commonwealth departments and agencies (Hansard, 1996, 7622).

Their special status is used to symbolize a whole of government approach. They can be thought of as frontier agencies (MAC, 2004:39).

### 7.1 Introduction

Agency reform at the national level in Australia has been conceived of as the creation of organizations separate from departments but subject to the financial legislation of the wider public service. Their chief executives are directly accountable to ministers with the departments playing an advisory role regarding agency activities. There have been two kinds of initiatives that have been interpreted by Australian commentators as agency reform. The first includes a large service delivery agency, Centrelink, which on the basis of business partnership agreements, administers benefits for different government departments. The second category is executive agencies, which were defined in the 1999 Australian Public Service Act. These organizations have tended to be small and they have no distinctive contractual relationships with departments, but instead are subject to the same performance reporting arrangements as other departmental organizations. Both arrangements indicated a departure from the existing structural landscape of, on the one hand, statutory authorities with distinct financial arrangements and big departments with a number of organizational units on the other hand. Together with the devolution of more financial and personnel decisions across the core public service generally, both agency arrangements also indicated a preference by the ruling Conservative Coalition government since 1996 for more *arms length* relationships with individual entities as op-

posed to departments. This preference would already appear to be subsiding with, among other modulations, only four of the original nine executive agencies still existing (Wettenhall, 2003).

The Australian political and administrative scene brings together features of the Westminster system of government and the American traditions of federalism and a senate (Galligan, 1995). Its adversarial parliamentary system, and a policy-making tradition that is more pluralist than corporatist, have fostered competition between (most) political interests rather than deliberation and consensus. Australian culture has been characterized as highly individualist (Hofstede, 2001). This is reflected in the consistent presence of individualist themes and watchwords in documents describing agency reforms, although greater prominence to the hierarchical way of life can be identified in recent official accounts describing agencies. More specifically executive agencies have been constructed using primarily hierarchical themes and arguments in order to promote *whole of government* arrangements.

In this chapter I first discuss the use of the term agency in the Australian context (6.2). I then describe the Australian scenes of use in which agency accounts have appeared (6.3 and 6.4). In section 6.5 I provide a description of agency reform in Australia as well as an overview of the reform period. It will become evident that reforms that affected the whole of the Australian public service are to some extent equivalent to what has been considered agency reform in The Netherlands. In section 6.6 and 6.7, I analyze official accounts of Centrelink and executives agencies, as presented in the official documents I have been able to identify. Finally, in section 6.8, I conclude with a discussion of the translation of agency reform talk in Australia and its correspondence to the cultural context.

## 7.2 A word (s) on agency terminology

In the Australian administrative political context there is nothing particularly innovative about the term *agency*. It is a term that has been used widely to describe different kinds of government and private sector organizations over a long period of time. It has also been quite common to use this term to speak about government departments (Halligan, 1998). When it is used, distinctions are often made between central agencies, those departments that coordinate the activities of other departments

such as the Department of Finance or the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and line agencies, including departments that have a number of delivery units within their terrain or create policy to be implemented at the national or state level.

The terms *service delivery agency* and *executive agency* have entered the Australian vocabulary of government more recently. In the first instance the term service delivery agency was used in Australian states such as Victoria and Adelaide during the early 1990s to describe new arrangements that required the delivery of services to occur in *business like units* within departments (Co-star and Economou, 1999). At the national level, the creation of a one stop shop Centrelink has also been described in law as a service delivery agency. This is an organization responsible for the administration of a number of different kinds of social security payments for different departments. By virtue of law it is separate from any particular department but falls within the policy portfolio of the Minister for Social Security. This organization has at various times been likened by Australian officials to the UK Next Step Agencies, to the New Zealand Crown Entities or the Canadian Special Operating Agencies (Newman, 1997: 2; Vardon, 1997b; DOFA, 1998). As Vardon has stated: "Even the New Zealanders are slightly begrudging us the concept that we have, even though we stole a bit of it from them, but certainly its been developed" (Vardon, 1997b:1).

The term *executive agency* is very new to the Australian context and first appeared in the Australian Public Service Act of 1999. It is also defined as an organization separate from a government department, but generally only has its form (as a separate organization) legislated, not its task, unlike the case of the service delivery agency Centrelink.<sup>25</sup> There were originally nine executive agencies created as a consequence of this legislation and they have been described by commentators as an Australian variation, albeit with only limited significance, of the international fashion towards agency reform (Wettenhall, 2003, 11; Rowlands, 2003, 4). The chief executives of these organizations are directly accountable to the responsible minister.

Since 1997, the term *prescribed agency* has also received legislative meaning at the national level. This is a term used in the new Financial Management and Accountability Act of 1997 and re-

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<sup>25</sup> An exception is the Meteorological Executive Agency that has long had legislation describing its activities despite being a departmental organization.

fers to organizational units within departments. For the purposes of the act the definition *prescribed agency* makes it possible to speak about financial decisions and responsibilities being devolved to the chief executive of organizations within departments (Financial Management and Accountability Act, 1997). It also requires that these organizations report in budget papers and financial statements to parliament as an individual financial entity rather than as part of the department. Most organizational units with chief executives in government departments have obtained this status. Prescribed agency status also applies to executive agencies and the service delivery agency Centrelink.

### **7.3 Scenes of use I: reconstructing the political and administrative context**

Compared to the other countries in this study, the Australian political and administrative context is relatively young. Settled as a jail by the British in 1788, its institutions were initially centralized and autocratic (Singleton et al., 2000:5-6). They were utterly English and constituted the application of their naval and military colonial experience to the *barbarous* conditions of the Australian environment and its first convict settlers (Hughes, 1987). Far from the revolutions and debates for democratic suffrage in Europe and America, or even the pioneering spirit of the latter, self government was given in Australia before any sustained efforts were made to obtain it (Singleton et al., 2000:5). The Australian colonies were among the first to adopt the practices of representative and responsible government, well ahead of Europe for example (Castles, 1985:42). The wide and largely barren open spaces, together with a small population and limited private capital, provided a necessary and seemingly natural role for government in both public works and commercial activities. Doctrines of *laissez-faire* were anathema in Australia's early stages of political and economic development. Indeed, there was little philosophical inspiration for democratic institutions at all, such as the Constitution for example, rather government and politics was seen in crude instrumental terms as something to engage in order to get something out (Singleton et al., 2000:6; Encel, 1969:74). Such origins account in part for observations that it is not:

(A) country of great political dialogue or intense searching after problems (or recognition of problems that exist). There is little grandiose ideology and politics is usually considered a dirty business at that (Horne, 1964: 22)

Yet while the new world status of Australia has been argued to foster an open manner, egalitarian spirit and according to national legend a *fair go* even to the underdog<sup>26</sup>, (not least because there were few real elites in the first place), this has not been reflected in commitments to social welfare. Based in part on (the preservation of) labour scarcity and thereby high wages and full employment, Australian workers already in the late 1800s had attained some of the highest standards of living in the world, both in terms of wage levels and home ownership (Castles, 1985:95). This *working man's paradise* by means of wage regulation distracted the national conscious from the plight of non-workers and a role for government in universal welfare provision. Since such strategies could bring with it wage impediments. To this extent, notions of solidarity and the social collective were limited and provided a legacy for small government, which has since been realized. It has also been accompanied by an anti-mind style in public life where intellectuals and academic ways of speaking are generally avoided, and under the Howard government even berated, as part of the *chardonnay set*.

### 7.3.1 *The political system*

The principles of federalism characterize the Australian political system, whereby there are two levels of government with shared and overlapping powers (Galligan, 1995:34). Some commentators speak of sovereignty being divided between national and territorial governments who have a degree of autonomy (Singleton et al., 260), but formally this is not entirely correct because of the recognition of concurrent powers which gives the Commonwealth the capacity to impinge upon the balance of powers with the states (Galligan, 1995:34). There are also a number of other centralizing features in the Australian case, particularly in the realm of finance, that enable the national government to influence a number of state government decisions (Lijphart, 1999). This is not to deny, however, that the Australian states can and do play a major independent role and that Australians tend to identify themselves more with their

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<sup>26</sup> According to the White Australia Policy which existed until 1973, this fair go could be interpreted as only applying to white and preferably Anglo Saxon Australians.

state governments than the distant and removed Canberra (Galigan, 1995:52). There are six state governments in Australia which were formally separate British colonies, as well as two territory governments that have less autonomy than the states. In addition, there is a local government level in Australia although this is not recognized in the Australian Constitution. Instead, local government has been established on the basis of state government legislation and is thus limited to those functions that the state governments deem appropriate.

There are bicameral parliaments at most state (all but one), territory and national levels of government. At the national level this consists of both a House of Representatives where members are elected according to a preferential voting system based upon two parties with single member districts, and a Senate where seats are proportional to state population and members are elected according to proportional representation. The voting system in the House of Representatives is designed to support major parties (Weller and Young, 2000:162) and historically the Labour party or a coalition of Conservative and Liberal parties have formed the Government through a majority in the parliament. The preferential voting system does, however, enhance the power of minor parties because even if they are unlikely to win a seat in their own right, they may be able to bargain their preferences in return for concessions from the major parties (Singleton et al., 2000:215-216). The system of proportional representation in the Senate has enabled the election of minor parties such as the Greens and Democrats. It can operate as a check on executive dominance since it is possible that the Government will not have a majority in this house. Since the late 1960s it has become the norm that minor parties hold the balance of power in the Senate (Singleton et al., 2000:130). With the recent fourth term of John Howard's Conservative Coalition government, however, the government has attained a majority in the Senate for the first time since the early 1980s.

Despite the mediating effects of the Senate, the Australian parliament has been described as an unruly bear pit in which politics is a ruthless adversarial contest between disciplined parties (Uhr and Wanna, 2000:10). Parliamentary proceedings have been known to become boisterous in a contest of gladiatorial proportions. Flamboyant language and personal attacks are not uncommon and even celebrated by some. Adversarial politics

has been paired with a preference for simple direct language rather than detailed technical policy debates "in a country where the majority prefer to be thrifty with their expression" (Warhuft, 2004:xii). Indeed, too many big ideas and terms are prone to criticisms of "big noting and the high falutin" (Warhuft, 2004:xii).

### 7.3.2 *The core executive*

By virtue of the majority achieved in the House of Representatives, the formation of government in Australia is the direct result of elections. Within government, the cabinet represents the very centre of political power and, consistent with the Westminster system, its members also hold a seat in parliament (Singleton, 2003:138). The cabinet is composed of the leading ministers from the governing party/parties, who are also usually drawn from the House of Representatives, although it is possible that they hold a seat in the Senate. Given that party support and loyalty are such important factors in determining leadership in the Westminster system, it is these factors rather than abilities to analyze policies that most characterize ministers. With few exceptions such as the role of the Attorney General, Australian government ministers tend to be informed amateurs rather than professionals or experts in their policy field (Singleton et al, 2003:140). This is somewhat distinct from the more professional status of ministers in The Netherlands.

In Australia, it has been rare that all ministers will be members of the cabinet and instead a select group will undertake this role. There has also been a move towards distinguishing between senior ministers and junior ministers with the former being cabinet members. The way cabinet members and ministers are selected differs with the governing parties/party. For Liberal-National Party Coalition governments, it is usually the prime minister (who is the elected party leader of the majority Liberal Party) that selects the cabinet team, although choice is constrained by attending to State representation, the coalition partner, seniority and leading figures in the parties. For the Labour party, the government ministry is selected following the results of voting by Labour parliamentary members. Again consistent with the Westminster tradition, Australian ministers are subject to the convention of individual ministerial responsibility, but the cabinet is meant to be built around collective decision making and solidarity.

During the last twenty years there have been a number of debates in Australia and in other Westminster systems (see Hennessy, 2001) about the institution of cabinet government and the capacity of prime ministers to dominate this decision making body (Weller, 1985; Campbell and Halligan, 1992; Keating and Weller, 2000). This is in part a consequence of changes in the inter-relationships between policy areas, as well as the personalization of executive leadership and their public prominence to the electorate as a result of developments in media communication (Keating and Weller, 2000:58). It can be argued that this last factor is more significant for prime ministers in majority systems than in consensual systems, simply by virtue of the greater executive dominance in majority systems. In addition, the personal style of a prime minister is also of significance (see Campbell and Halligan, 1992:1-34; Singleton et al., 2003:162). The prime minister is chair of cabinet meetings and has thereby opportunities to control the agenda for discussion, the kinds of contributions allowed to members, and moments of decision making. In Australia, the growth of the prime minister's personal staff has also been identified as contributing to his influence more generally, although personal advisors are also on the rise for other cabinet ministers (Campbell and Halligan, 1992:7). Other indications of the prime minister's power in Australia include that the secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, essentially a department to serve the cabinet, has come to be seen as having a personal responsibility to the prime minister rather than the cabinet (Campbell and Halligan, 1992:7). It is certainly not merely a department to serve the cabinet and in recent years this has been reflected in the appointment of secretaries to this department who have considered their role to serve the Prime Minister.

### *7.3.3 Policy making style*

The inclusion of interest group opinion in the creation of policy has historically occurred through the party system itself in Australia. This is most evident in the relationships of the Australian Labour Party with the trade union movement and with the non-Labour parties' linkages to business, mining and agricultural interests (Marsh, 2003:192). There has been and continues to be the inclusion of agricultural, business and other professional group representation on the boards of some statutory corporations but this has never occurred in the same kind of systematic



kind as in The Netherlands or Sweden. Indeed, inclusion of interest group representatives on boards is often conceived of as involving expert opinion rather representing special interests, although the latter is of course always present. One exception to this pluralist tradition occurred during the Hawke-Keating Governments of the late 1980s early 1990s. During this period consultation with unions and agreement for an Incomes Accord in exchange for wage restraint was a feature of economic policy, as was the creation of tripartite councils representing sectors of industry to advise the government (Singleton et al., 2000: 302).

#### *7.3.4 The central administrative structure*

There are presently 18 departments in the Australian Public Service, three of which, the Department of Finance and Administration, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury, have responsibilities for coordinating activities across the administration. There is also the Public Service Merit Protection Commission, which is responsible for promoting leadership, employment policies and development throughout the administration. The present structure of the administration follows machinery of government changes in 1987 towards a smaller number (there were previously 28) of departments (Singleton et al., 2000:186; Wettenhall, 1989b). The changes have been argued to create a more effective environment for devolving management functions since oversight of devolution becomes more manageable (Hamilton, 1990). They have also meant that most portfolio areas can be represented within a smaller cabinet team, promoting cabinet's capacity to ensure their decisions impact the whole of the administration.

Prior to the creation of Centrelink or executive agencies, Australia already had a long tradition (at least by Australian standards) of arms length government in the form of statutory authorities, public corporations and companies. These types of organizations can be traced back to the period of self-government following colonial rule in the Australian States (around the 1850s) (Wettenhall, 1990:3). The lack of a vigorous private sector that could provide the resources for infrastructure, together with the long distances and harsh physical environment of Australia, provided the conditions for a strong tradition of state ownership in a variety of commercial sectors (Wettenhall, 1990; Encel, 1960). Wettenhall uses the term non

departmental public body (NDPB), that are covered by the new Financial Management and Accountability Act of 1997 or the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997, to define statutory authorities, corporations and companies.<sup>27</sup> In the latter case, these bodies are incorporated by separate statutes as financially autonomous institutions (statutory or public corporations) or constituted under provisions of corporation law in the case of public companies (Wettenhall, 2000:69). Wettenhall (2000: 75) has noted a preference for remaining public business activities to occur in the public company form under the Howard government. He has identified a number of problems with recording the numbers of these bodies in light of recent administrative changes. The Minister of Finance, recently cited the figure of 170 statutory authorities (Wettenhall, 2004:72). Elsewhere it has been noted that there are 105 bodies covered by the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act including 29 Commonwealth Companies (Department of Finance and Administration, 2005).

There has been some disagreement in Australia as to whether Centrelink constitutes a new type of organization or rather reflects the long ongoing tradition of statutory authorities and corporations in Australia (see Wettenhall, 2003; Rowlands, 2003; Mulgan, 2002). Those who emphasize its agency-like character focus upon the contract-like arrangements that the organization has pursued with a number of government departments (Rowlands, 2003). This is not a feature of the traditional statutory authorities operating in Australia. For the purposes of this study, it has also been the associations of Centrelink with agency arrangements elsewhere such as Canada and New Zealand, which have been important in defining it as an agency (Newman, 1997; Vardon, 1997b; DOFA, 1998).

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<sup>27</sup> Australian commentators are also eager to point out that this departure from the Westminster tradition of departments occurred prior to arrangements for statutory authorities/corporations in the UK (Wettenhall, 1990:10).

#### 7.4 Scenes of use II: Australian culture and GGCT

It has not been possible to identify secondary literature that applies GGCT to the national political and administrative context in Australia. In addition, there is insufficient time series data to make a replication of the study describing the GGCT mix represented in Sweden and The Netherlands. It is, however, possible to draw some conclusions about Australian political and administrative culture from some of the same statistical information used to characterize the other countries in this study. This provides some indications of the way Australian political administrative culture compares with the other countries. For instance both the 2003 and 2005 Australian Social Studies Survey provided responses to questions about group membership and citizen participation within Australia. It shows that Australian citizens are much less often members of a group than either the Swedes or the Dutch – as recorded in World Values Surveys from 1981, 1990 and 1999 - and that when they are, they are less often active members. This can be interpreted as a lower group rating in the Australian political context.

In addition, Australian citizens have been shown to participate in unofficial strikes more often than their Dutch or Swedish counterparts (World Values Survey, 1981, 1982, 1990, 1995, 1999). This would suggest a stronger tendency to demonstrate resistance and actually resist the rules of authorities, or in other words a lower grid score. Sometime ago it was noted that authority is generally despised in Australia (Horne, 1964). Horne has written: “Politicians and government officials are distrusted and the police are often hated, although there is more unconscious acceptance of authority – perhaps indifference to authority – than Australians recognize” (Horne, 1964:22). This aversion for authority has in some ways been accompanied a casual approach to authority figures, which in itself can also be associated with the new world status of Australia. Unlike Sweden or even the UK for example, there was historically no administrative class tradition in Australia (Hood et al., 2004:171). Consistent with the anti-mind characterization of Australia, figures used to indicate low grid in the other countries such as discussing and seeking to persuade friends about politics were not, however, higher in Australia. This would have provided stronger evidence for a low grid score, and by contrast may also indicate degrees of fatalism. Other research into Australian cul-

ture has indicated that it is highly individualistic. Hofstede (2001:215) for example rates Australia only second to America in his assessment of individualism, which has been described as conceptually similar to GGCT's classification of the concept (Hofstede, 2001:39). Although his study was focussed upon the private sector it does suggest and provide indications that we can also expect the public sphere in Australia to have a strong individualist flavor. From this overview of evidence it is argued that the Australian political administrative system represents a case of a strong individualist culture.

Certainly the competitive features of the adversarial political system in Australia, based upon a two party system whereby the winner takes all is consistent with characterizations of the individualist way of life which rewards winners without compromise. Similarly, the more pluralistic approach to policy making also fits with a view of the world wherein competition for resources provides the best means for allocating them. The system of individual ministerial accountability and even the possibility for prime ministers to dominate the supposedly collective decision making of the cabinet can also be interpreted as consistent with the individualist way of life. This is because the capacity of the prime minister to dominate the cabinet has been the consequence of individual electoral success, rather than hierarchical prerequisites about status and role allocation, within the political system.

### **7.5 Australian agency reforms in brief**

There have been two agency initiatives at the federal level of the Australian Public Service. The first of these was Centrelink, a service delivery agency first announced in the 1996 national budget. This organization was formed through an amalgamation of activities that had previously been the responsibility of the Department of Social Security (DSS), the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA), and to a lesser extent, the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS). It belonged to the portfolio of the Minister of Social Security, but functioned outside departmental borders. The bulk of the agency's operations were to be derived from the activities of the DSS and its tasks consisted primarily of administering the payment of financial assistant programs including employment and sickness benefits, as well as childcare

rebates and student assistance (Rowlands, 2003). The agency also has been responsible for registering, assessing and referring job seekers. It is a large organization employing more than 20,000 people and its creation left just 700 employees in the Department of Social Security (Rowlands, 2003:123).

The second type of agency initiative has been called executive agencies. This was a new type of organization created in the Australian Public Service Act of 1999. Executive agencies operate separately from departments and are directly subordinate and accountable to the minister of the agency portfolio. As will be described below it has not been entirely clear what the motivations for these agencies have been. Since their introduction, however, there have been nine executive agencies created including the National Archives, the Bureau of Meteorology and the CrimTrac Agency (provides expert support in national security and police matters) (Wettenhall, 2003:9). With the re-election of the Howard Government in 2004, there would seem to have been a change in position regarding these organizations and four executive agencies were reabsorbed into the departmental organization (Halligan, 2005).

### 7.5.1 *The contours of Australian agencies*

#### *Centrelink*<sup>28</sup>

Specific legislation entitled The Commonwealth Service Delivery Act (CSDA, 1997) provided the means by which Centrelink was granted its separate status from departments. It also defined the agency's other features such as its management board and the role of the chief executive. This act was passed through parliament with little dissent, although one substantive amendment was made to a provision which would have allowed the agency to engage staff outside of the conditions recognized in the Public Service Act (Rowlands, 2003:125). Many provisions of the CSDA, including the management board, emulated provisions traditionally adopted for statutory corporations in Australia, although unlike statutory corporations Centrelink remained subject to the same type of personnel and financial regulations as organizations within a government department (Boxall, 1997). Indeed, the chairperson of the management

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<sup>28</sup> Much of the discussion of Centrelink in this section has relied upon Rowlands (2002).

board of Centrelink was legally recognized as equivalent to a secretary of a department in Australia. This required that the organization also had the capacity to serve the chairperson in this role with the same kind of administrative capacities as a government department, for example with audit units, lawyers and personnel experts.

In addition, like organizations within a department, and unlike statutory corporations, Centrelink has been unable to enter into contracts in its own right, nor has it the power to hold property (Rowlands, 2003:127). However, the act did provide that the chief executive of Centrelink be able to enter into *arrangements* with the principal officer of a commonwealth authority (the equivalent of a departmental secretary) for the provision of commonwealth services (CSDA, 1997:paragraph 7). These arrangements have generally come to be known as business partnership agreements (BPA). Finally, another important distinction between Centrelink and a department is that Centrelink has had no direct access to the Australian government budget (Rowlands, 2003, 128). Instead, it must earn its revenue almost entirely from payments under the service agreements (Rowlands, 2003:128).

It is useful to describe more fully some of the provisions in the CSDA since the act also prescribes a number of governance arrangements with regards to reporting to the minister, receiving directions from the minister and for the appointment of management positions. Originally the act defined the board of Centrelink as being responsible for deciding the "goals, priorities, policies and strategies" of the agency, as well as overseeing the agency's performance (CSDA 1997: paragraph 12). In addition, the chairperson of the board was required to deliver the annual report of Centrelink to the minister around July every year. This report is also tabled in parliament and, like the annual reports of departments, must comply to the parliamentary standards of reporting as defined by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts (JCPA). The members of the management board, with the exception of the chief executive officer, were to be appointed by the minister, and were prescribed to include a chairperson, the chief executive officer, and at least four other members, two of which cannot be principal officers of commonwealth authorities eg. heads of departments (CSDA, 1997, paragraph 16). Following from Centrelink's initial creation it was generally the practice to select some board members from

the private sector, as well as the secretaries of the two main purchasing departments (formerly DSS and DEETYA), although other kinds of compositions were possible under the act. The board was granted the powers to appoint the chief executive officer of the agency, although this was to be done in consultation with the minister. Following the re-election of the Howard government in October 2004, the separate board of Centrelink was dismantled, and is to be replaced by an advisory board within the new Department of Human Services. This is a board to advise the minister upon the activities of all of the six delivery organizations within the department.

The act also established some conditions for the contacts between the minister and the (now dismantled) board, and more specifically for the giving of ministerial directions, (policy) notifications or making ministerial requests for information. Except for in the case of information requests, the minister must always make directions or notifications in writing to the board and the particulars of these must be published in the annual report of Centrelink. In addition, the act requires that the minister seek consultation with the board before giving directions, and that alternatively, the board advise upon the impact of these directions (CSDA 1997: paragraph 10). Mulgan (2000:17) has noted that there “were no formal written instructions made in the first year of Centrelink's operations and only two in the second year”. This may suggest that contacts occur in more informal ways. Both the chairperson and the minister were able to convene a board meeting at any time, and a meeting had to be convened on receipt of a written request signed by at least two members. It is also expected that with the creation of the new advisory board within the Department of Human Services there will be some provisions regarding formal contact between the board and the minister, although at the time of writing this had not yet been made public.

Although very much the public face of Centrelink, the chief executive officer of the agency was originally subordinate to the board, and had responsibility for the day to day administration of the agency (CSDA, 1997: paragraph 16). The chief executive reported to the board of Centrelink, who also decided her remuneration and allowances. Originally the chief executive officer of the agency had no formal accountability requirements to report to the minister, although this has been reversed with the changes in 2004 denoting the chief executive, rather than board

chair person, as statutory officer. This grants the chief executive "a range of powers, functions and responsibilities for the financial management of Centrelink, as well as a number of reporting requirements" under financial accountability legislation (Rowlands, 2003:129-130). From the time of agency creation until November 2004, Sue Vardon maintained the role of chief executive in the agency. She became a very public figure, speaking regularly to the media and various other audiences about the activities of Centrelink. She resigned in 2004 after the government's announcements of their plans to scrap the Centrelink board.

While the CSDA Act authorized the creation of *arrangements* for service between Centrelink and other government organizations, it did not provide any guidelines as to how these agreements should be pursued, nor upon the content of such an agreement. Instead, the rationale of *purchaser/ provider* as envisaged by both the Department of Finance and Administration and the National Audit Office acted as a basic framework for setting up the agreements between Centrelink and the purchasing departments (see DOFA, 1995; ANAO, 1997). Broadly speaking, in the Australian terminology purchaser/provider arrangements describe situations in which the purchaser defines what should be delivered by a particular provider, and where the provider delivers the agreed outputs or outcomes at an agreed price (DOFA, 1995:1). While the institutional relationship between purchaser and provider might vary from clarifying the relationship within an organization such as a department, to separating the roles of purchaser provider into discrete bodies - even providers outside of the public service - a contract like agreement is the basic arrangement governing this relationship. In its first year of operation, these agreements were referred to as strategic partnership agreements, but after 1998 became known as business partnership agreements (BPA). The emphasis upon partnership was presented, by commentators in both Centrelink and DSS, as distinct from a purely commercial purchaser-provider relationship, and recognized the shared mission between Centrelink and its purchasers (Blunn, 1997:4). After all, since Centrelink is not a separate entity from the Australian Commonwealth "the service agreements under section 7 of the CSDA Act are not *real* contracts as legally speaking the Commonwealth cannot contract with itself" (Rowlands, 2003:127).



The contents of the first service agreements between Centrelink and DSS were agreed upon "by a very small team working with minimal input from 'program branches' in each organization" (Rowlands, 2003:168). Nevertheless, the ANAO has noted that the agreements between Centrelink and all her purchasers (the DSS, DEETYA and DHFS) followed a series of workshops where the main principles and elements of the agreements were defined (ANAO, 1997:44). These principles included a commitment to clear measures of success and clear lines of accountability, as well as the need for balance between Centrelink's requirement of flexibility and the purchaser's need to control policy direction (ANAO, 1997:44). Among other things, these agreements have focussed upon identifying the programmes Centrelink is responsible to deliver, the performance measures and monitoring systems used to assess delivery, the payment of Centrelink for services delivered and the timing of reporting (ANAO, 1997:45). There are also provisions for how to deal with ministerial directions that contradict with established arrangements within the agreements. Other institutional arrangements that have been set up to support the establishment of the service agreements include the creation of a number of committees, at both operational and senior management level, to facilitate the business relations between Centrelink and DSS (Rowlands, 2003:168).

In its first year of use, the National Audit Office (ANAO) was in general positive about the strategic partnership agreements that had been put in place, although it was concerned about the distinctions in the structure of the agreements with different departmental purchasers (ANAO, 1997:46-47). These differences were thought to increase the level of complexity for Centrelink, which must manage these different kinds of arrangements. However, in the following years the ANAO has been critical of the failure to include unit costs for different services into the agreements (ANAO, 1999:13; Rowlands, 2003:170-171). This is particularly significant since all of Centrelink's revenue is derived from the prices established within its purchaser provider agreements. To date such revenue has been calculated by the use of a global price for all services provided within a particular agreement (Rowlands, 2003:169). In 1999, the ANAO also was critical of Centrelink's performance and noted that inaccurate decision making in the processing of payments was a significant problem. Both academic commentators and the ANAO have attributed this to

tors and the ANAO have attributed this to the emphasis placed upon customer service within Centrelink (Howard, 2003; ANAO, 2001:23).

In his own analysis of the Centrelink agreements with DSS Rowlands (2003:168) has noted that they have become far more lengthy and detailed. In the first year, for example, the agreement comprised of 10 pages describing the core agreements, with various *protocols* and *memoranda to the core agreement* giving the document a length of some 84 pages. This was more than doubled in the second year, when the business partnership agreement of 1998, which was intended for three years, became a 246 page document. The size of this agreement becomes an even more significant problem when it is pointed out that by the year 2000 Centrelink had some 22 business partnership agreements with a range of departments, as well as state and local governments (Tannahill, 2000:10). These agreements with the states and local governments have been allowed, despite no clear legal grounds for Centrelink to have such agreements with organisations outside of the Commonwealth (Rowlands, 2003: 126). Although Centrelink's purchasers have grown considerably since its creation, the great bulk of Centrelink business continues to be conducted with DHS (formerly FaCs and DSS in the lifetime of Centrelink). In terms of funding, FaCS provided 92% of Centrelink's work, while the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (formerly DEETYA) provided 5%, and all other purchasers accounted for just 3% of Centrelink's total work (Rowlands, 2003:124).

### *Executive agencies*

Executive agencies were created in the Australian Public Service Act of 1999. This legislation followed initiatives already pursued by the previous government to replace and simplify the earlier Public Service Act of 1922. It is rather broad legislation recognizing public service values, establishing the rights and obligations of APS employees, defining the powers and functions of a number of actors such as the Public Service Commissioner and providing a framework for fair employment. Among its provisions is the category of *executive agency*, which can be created on the advice of the prime minister through an order of the governor general. Executive agencies are defined as separate from government departments in Australia and are, instead, directly subordinate and responsible to the minister of the agency port-

folio. According to the Public Service Act, the head of an agency is deemed accountable to the government, the parliament and the public in the same way as the secretary of a department (APSA, 1999:35). In contrast to managers of government organizations within departments, and like the secretaries of departments, the head of an executive agency is appointed, and can be terminated at any time, by the minister of the agency portfolio. To this extent, their position outside of departments has located them much closer to the political realm. The act prescribes, however, that minister's appointments and terminations must be first preceded by a report and advice from the secretary of the department relevant to the minister's portfolio (Australian Public Service Act, 1999:36). In this way, and, through the policy advice role of the secretary of the department, departments continue to maintain influence over the management of executive agencies.

Other features of the Australian executive agency status include the provision that the remuneration of heads of executive agencies is to be determined by the responsible minister after consultation with the Remuneration Tribunal. The APSA also requires that executive agency heads, like secretaries of departments, provide an annual report of the organizations' activities to the minister at the end of the financial year. In both cases, this report must also be presented to parliament and must be in accordance with the parliamentary standards set out in the guidelines of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts. In this respect, the accountability requirements of departmental units and executive agencies are exactly the same. Rowlands (2003) has pointed out that there is no distinctive performance reporting regime required of executive agencies, such as that included within the service agreements of Centrelink. Indeed, performance matters or contract like arrangements are not referred to at all in the few documents about executive agencies which have been published. It should be noted, however, that like organizations within departments, executive agencies are required to comply to the accrual-based outcomes and outputs framework that were first introduced to the whole of the APS in 1997 (DOFA, 1998). This requires that executive agencies do embrace and report performance measurements in its annual report.

### 7.5.2 *An overview of the reform period*

The creation of *service delivery or executive agencies* at the commonwealth level of the Australian government has only been a feature of the reform platform since the election of the Conservative Coalition government in 1996. As shall be described, it has also only played a limited role in the reform trajectory and has been defined as types organizationally separate from departments. There was a long tradition of statutory corporations in Australia but this had generally been accompanied by a commitment to service delivery and policy being performed together within (mega) departments (Halligan, 1998). Despite the introduction of some *agencies*, the tradition of big departments has continued with more across the board changes being introduced to devolve financial and personnel decisions to units within departments and with demands for outcomes in performance reporting. In a way these changes go further than the requirements put upon agencies in The Netherlands, which are also departmental organizations, but without the terminology or conceptualization of these units (also often confusingly referred to as agencies in the Australian context) being separate or at a distance from departments. The arrangements to have Centrelink and executive agencies separate from departments has also been somewhat modulated since the beginning of the Conservative government's office, with the removal of Centrelink's board in 2004 and the re-categorization of four executive agencies back into the departmental organisation (Wettenhall, 2004).

Before discussing further the period of reform since 1996, it is important to note that a trajectory of reform had already been pursued prior to that time, although it was one without reference to arms-length arrangements or the international fashion of agencies. This is because this period did include initiatives to devolve management decisions to units within departments and to require agreements about resource use and performance. From 1983 the Financial Management Improvement Program (FMIP) was introduced which included a commitment to devolving more management decisions to departments (from the Department of Finance and other co-ordinating departments/agencies), and managers within those departments (Keating and Holmes, 1990; Management Advisory Board, 1992; Zifcak, 1994). The initiative included the introduction of a running cost appropriation that consolidated a number of administrative expenses and made them the prerogative of de-

partmental managers. In addition, shifting running costs over the budget year (up to 2%) and keeping efficiency savings were made possible (Keating and Holmes, 1990, 176-179). These arrangements were introduced together with performance reporting and the setting up of corporate plans - that included agreements about resource uses - within departments (Management Advisory Board, 1992:325-381).

Although the initial impact of the reform was experienced primarily at the higher echelons of the departments, it was the intention that it should also include devolution within departments and by 1992 there was evidence that this was occurring (Management Advisory Board, 1992: 102-112). Reformers distanced themselves from agency initiatives in the UK and New Zealand at this time however because devolution was not to occur in a context in which implementation was considered separate from policy. Indeed, "bringing these together has been one of the central planks of FMIP and Program Management and Budgeting (PMB)" (Management Advisory Board, 1992: 252). As one commentator involved in the reform explained:

the Australian view is that public servants should have an eye for the big picture, they should all feel in some way responsible for achieving (*policy*) outcomes cost effectively, while being held accountable only for those things over which they have control (Holmes quoted in Management Advisory Board, 1992:252, *my emphasis*).

Just prior to the change in government in 1996, however, some movements towards separation between policy and implementation were being noted (Aulich, 2000:162-163). Besides pursuing more responsiveness to political demands from the public service through the FMIP, the Hawke-Keating governments during the period from the early 1980s until 1996 also changed the tenure of higher civil servants and created a political tier in the administration (Halligan, 1997). This occurred through redesignating the head of department to department secretary, a position with a fixed contract rather than as in the past, permanency. Contracts were also used for the newly created senior executive service employees providing the means for greater flexibility but also greater politicization of the administration.

The legacy of Labour's changes to the administration was identifiable with the arrival of the new Conservative government in 1996 who immediately removed six of the existing departmental secretaries. Aside from this first decisive sweep at the administration, however, the new government was initially

vague, some suggest uninterested, in a vision for the public sector (Halligan, 2000:51). The most vocalized intentions were at first privatization, savings and workplace reform. This is reflected in the initial announcements for Centrelink in the 1996 budget that, although it included mentioning the creation of a *service delivery agency*, was most striking because it was "expected to produce approximately AUD \$146 million in savings over the three years between 1997-2000" (Budget Review, 1996). Similarly, the lead up to the legislation that would include provisions for executive agencies was dominated by discussion about intentions to deregulate employment conditions in both the public and private sectors. In a country that had already reduced its commonwealth public sector substantially since 1986, the loss of 16,000 public service positions as a result of privatization in the first two years of the Howard government (Aulich, 2000:162, Halligan, 2000:54), had undoubtedly distracted attention from the *agency* character of some initiatives. Centrelink, for example, also announced 2700 staff cuts in 1998 and another 2300 in the following years (Centrelink, 1998).

According to research by Rowlands the creation of Centrelink as a separate agency was the initiative of the heads of government departments in the field of welfare (DSS and DEETYA) pre-empting the incoming government's demands for savings (Rowlands, 2003:117-120). Separation from departments was a desirable solution for these actors because it did not require a loss of turf from one to the other department. This was also reflected in the initial board structure of the organization which gave representation to both departments (Rowlands, 2003: 130-131). Separation from departments came, however, to fit with the emerging philosophy of the government for the public sector. This included emulating the private sector through purchaser-provider arrangements, through benchmarking with private sector activities and encouraging a contestable environment in the public sector more generally (Aulich, 2000:163; Halligan, 2000:52). Following from the creation of Centrelink there were also official statements endorsing separation of policy and implementation and associating Centrelink with agency initiatives elsewhere in New Zealand and the UK. Also pointing to the one stop shop feature of Centrelink, the Minister for Social Security stated in 1997 that compared to:

service delivery agencies overseas, notably the UK and New Zealand...the new Agency takes the concept of single-point Government delivery service further. Unlike overseas counterparts, the Agency will not operate solely as an administrative entity *within (my emphasis)* a department of state, or be limited to single portfolio responsibilities (Newman, 1997:2).

In addition, the head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Max Moore-Wilton is cited as emphasizing in 1997 that;

We are seeing today a very clear movement towards the separation of policy advice and service delivery. This separation [in his view] was "absolutely fundamental to the future health of public service in this country (Rowlands, 2003: 89).

It was only after the fact of Centrelink's creation however that these rationales appeared in the Australian context.

Executive agencies were initiated through a clause in the new Australian Public Service Act of 1999, this act replaced a previous one from 1922 and was being prepared for change by the previous government. The Coalition government announced their reasons for changing this act in a discussion paper from late 1996 *Towards a Best Practice APS*. It has been cited as one of the first attempts by the government to outline their intentions for the parts of the public sector that were not to be privatized (Halligan, 2000:51). The primary focus of the report was the need to reduce personnel regulations and to devolve more powers of employment conditions to managers. It also identified the private sector as the primary benchmark for activities in the public sector (Reith, 1996:4, 6). The National Council of the Institute for Public Administration in Australia criticized the report for its lack of examination of the basic institutional arrangements for management (Rowlands, 2003:87). For the purposes of this study *Towards a Best Practice APS* was most surprising because it did not include any mention of executive agencies, although this was to become a feature of the legislation that eventually followed in 1999.

References to executive agency status were scarce during the parliamentary debates and committee procedures for the act. During the committee proceedings there were just three main points of concern raised about the original paragraphs on executive agencies. These included proposals by the Australian National Audit Office that the annual report guidelines required for executive agencies be more specified (JCPA, 1997:23), and that the explanatory memorandum of the bill provide a clearer explanation of the purpose of executive agencies. Both of these

recommendations led to small changes in the final draft of the act. The third area of concern related to the ministerial discretion being granted for the appointment, termination and remuneration of heads of executive agencies. These matters were raised by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and resulted in some minor checks to this discretion in the final Act. The checks included the requirement that the minister receive advice from the relevant departmental secretary about termination and appointment, and that he or she consult with the Remuneration Tribunal about remuneration (APSA, 1999). In the act itself it is stated that the purpose of the executive agency structure is to “provide a degree of separation from departmental management where that is appropriate to the agency functions and something less than a statutory authority is warranted” (APSP, 1999: paragraph 9.2). In addition, some effects of agency status including that “distinctness from wider departmental priorities will increase the opportunities for an agency to further its goals”. And, more obviously, that it will “provide flexibility in the appointment, tenure and arrangements of the head of the agency (APSP, 1999: paragraph 9.2).

Aside from these statements made during the legislative process, there are few other public official accounts given of the purpose of the reform prior to its introduction. There is a six page discussion paper from the development team in the Department of Finance and Administration from 1998 which describes lessons learned from the establishment of agencies in New Zealand, the UK and Canada but its link with the creation of executive agencies is not explained (DOFA, 1998; Rowlands, 2003:89; Wettenhall, 2003). Indeed, the development team no longer exists. This document does include Centrelink as an example of an Australian service delivery agency. At my request, an unpublished document was also supplied by the Public Service Commission, which gave examples of when executive agency status might be appropriate, although again, these examples are brief and without explanation (Public Service Commission, 2003). The examples listed are:

- When agency functions cross portfolio lines, making it inappropriate to place it in a portfolio department;
- When it is desirable to separate substantial service delivery functions to allow a policy department to focus on core business;



- When the agency is administering a joint Commonwealth – State initiative; or
- When it is used as an interim step to corporatization.

Executive agencies were already being created in 1998 in anticipation of the changes to the law and some of these organizations e.g. meteorology, crimtrac, archives, were designed with a management board, although the chief executive remained responsible to the minister for daily operations.

Prior to the passing of executive agency legislation, the government had cemented its arrangements for financial management that would apply to the whole of the central administration including Centrelink and executive agencies. These arrangements included new financial management legislation, an accrual based outcomes and outputs budgeting and reporting framework, and *whole of government* accrual financial statements (Boxall, 1997). The new financial legislation devolved further management responsibilities to *chief executives* (heads of agencies/organizational units) retaining only the bare essential rules and regulations" (Boxall, 1997:4). It delegates most spending decisions (as well as whether agency activities are conducted internally or externally) to the chief executive and, among other things, requires them to have their own audit committee and fraud control plan in place (FMAA, 1997). To this extent, it is quite similar to the status of agencies in The Netherlands but covers much of the departmental sphere. After an announcement in 1997, the first accrual budget was presented in 1999. This required all *agencies* to plan, budget, manage and report on accrual basis (DOFA, 1998). They also had to specify outputs, set prices for outputs and outcomes, as well as the contribution of outputs to outcomes. This information is presented in annual reports that compare planned outcomes and outputs against the actual results. Together with the devolution of personnel decisions, one commentator has noted that the effect has been an individualization to organizational units and persons such that coordinating departments have become superfluous with even the role of the Department of Finance being diminished (Halligan, 2005; Campbell, 2001).

Just as quickly as all these reforms have been put in place, the shift towards devolving responsibilities would now also appear to be tempering, and even reversing to some extent. Perhaps one indication of a turn in the tides was a controversy in 2003

about how many departmental organizations and agencies were using their own logos (Burgess, 2003b:42). The prime minister of Australia banned this activity of "having different brands" ... "because we are one Government" (Burgess, 2003b:42). Following critique from parliament, regarding the new financial arrangements, a Budget Estimates Framework Review has been established by the Department of Finance to streamline the new financial framework (Halligan, 2005). In addition, Centrelink's board was dissolved after the re-election of the Coalition government for their fourth term in 2004. A portfolio advisory board is to be established instead to oversee the six delivery organizations of the newly created Department of Social Security. This decision followed the release of the Uhrig Report into the board arrangements of statutory organizations (and included Centrelink as a case study) which found that greater clarity in board arrangements was needed (Wettenhall, 2004; Uhrig, 2003). In addition, only four of the nine executive agencies that had been created since 1998 still remain, with the others disappearing back into their departmental fold. These changes have been presented as a means to ensure more effective ministerial responsibility for policy together with operations, to ensure better coordination, and, as a part of a more general commitment to the *whole of government* (Shergold, 2004, 2005). An overview of some of the management reforms during the period discussed is presented in table 7.1.

## 7.6 The rhetoric of agency reform

The initiation and motivation for agency reforms in Australia have proved difficult to trace through official government documents. This is because both of these reforms have been introduced without a government white paper, or any other substantial official documents that have sought to explain or describe the reform. Significantly, the voice of government departments has been almost completely silent on these reforms in documents available to the public. Instead, we find in the case of Centrelink only short announcements in the budget prior to its creation of a "new as yet unnamed one stop shop service delivery agency", or, in the case of executive agencies only specific questions from parliamentarians during the legislative process to create them. The condensed nature of these references to agencies is in stark contrast to the wealth of govern-

ment literature available in Sweden and to a lesser extent in The Netherlands prior to the introduction of their agency reforms. Change has simply been made by the presentation of new legislation to a parliament in which the government has the majority in the House of Representatives.

**Tabel 7.1.** Public management and agency reforms in Australia – A chronology of events.

<p>1983 Financial Management Improvement Programme (FMIP) to devolve resource decisions and adopt resource contracts with departments is introduced, management of results.</p> <p>1987 Machinery of government (MOG) changes that reduced the number of departments to 17 <i>mega-departments</i>.</p> <p>1987 The Public Service Board is abolished and appointment powers for departmental secretaries are vested in the Department of Prime Minister &amp; Cabinet (part of MOG).</p> <p>1988 Department of Finance evaluates FMIP. Devolution occurred from Department of Finance to other departments but still limited devolution within departments.</p> <p>1989 The introduction of performance pay for the senior executive service and senior offices.</p> <p>1992. Management Advisory Board &amp; Management Improvement Advisory Commission publish their evaluation of a decade of reforms.</p> <p>1996 Budget announcement that a new service delivery agency is to be created.</p> <p>1997 Commonwealth Services Delivery Act Agency Act passed, creating Centrelink.</p> <p>1997, September. Prime Minister John Howard opens Centrelink</p> <p>1997 Financial Management and Accountability Act passed creating prescribed agencies, and enabling the shift to Accrual budgeting.</p> <p>1998 First audit report of Centrelink published by the National Audit Office.</p> <p>1999 Australian Public Service Act passed creating executive agencies.</p> <p>1999 Introduction of first accrual budget across central government.</p> <p>2003 Uhrig Report criticized accountability arrangements of boards of statutory authorities.</p> <p>2003 Prime Minister announces ban on individual agency logos</p> <p>2004 4 executive agencies return to departmental fold and Centrelink board dismantled.</p> <p>2004 Connecting Government report published.</p>
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There are, however, official speeches that have been made about the introduction of Centrelink, and a Management Advisory Commission report on whole of government, which includes references to both Centrelink and executive agencies. The speeches about Centrelink have been performed by both

politicians and by the director of Centrelink during the period from 1997. For the purposes of the rhetorical analysis in this chapter a selection has been made from the speeches given specifically about Centrelink after, or at the time, of its creation. It should be noted that there is a plethora of speeches about Centrelink from the chief executive of the organization. I have tried to become familiar with a number of these speeches and, in consultation with academics in Australia, have selected one main speech for the analysis. This is quite representative since the speeches have been rather repetitive. I have also selected a speech from the prime minister of Australia that was made at the launch of Centrelink.

Official government speeches that make specific reference to executive agencies are even scarcer than references to Centrelink. Indeed, aside from comments in legislation and legislative committees, there would appear to be complete official silence about the nature and purpose of this reform. Similarly, there has only been brief reference to the re-absorption of some of these agencies back into departments. This has occurred in media releases announcing the Howard government's fourth ministry and in speeches from Peter Shergold, the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Shergold, 2004, Shergold, 2005). The commitment to *whole of government*, however, which has been prominent in the fourth term of Howard's government and can be associated with the shift away from executive agencies, has been described in an official report *Connecting Government* by the Management Advisory Committee. This is the third document that I have analyzed and was brought to my attention by one of my national experts<sup>29</sup>.

#### 7.6.1 *Document one - The Prime Minister's address at the official launch of Centrelink, 24 September, 1997*

The Prime Minister John Howard presented this speech at the Great Hall in Parliament House, Canberra. The ministers for Social Security and for Department of Employment, Education and Training were present, as well as their departmental heads and members of the press. In addition, the speech was televised to staff at all Centrelink offices throughout Australia. On the day of this televised speech union members of Centrelink went

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<sup>29</sup> Dr David Rowlands, an expert consulted for this study, pointed me to this document after sending me a copy of Peter Shergold's speech.

on strike for 2 hours, to protest against the staff cuts that were expected to ensue from the savings the organization was being asked to achieve in its first three years of creation (Everett, 1997).

The transcript of John Howard's speech is 5 pages in length. It first describes the need for one organization, rather than many, to be responsible for payment of government benefits, as a long-standing need that will promote more efficient service. cursory comments are made primarily about the size of Centrelink and it is described as a modern, innovative reform with a human face. The speech also focuses on the policy area of social security more generally and makes brief reference to the philosophy of the government in this area. Social security is to provide a safety net for those most in need, but it should be designed in a way to discourage dependence.

#### 7.6.1.1 *Ethos and the construction of the audience*

The self-presentation of the speaker is one long familiar with the desires of the Australian community and the Australian tradition of social security. Examples are brought together of both desires from the electorate for an organization such as Centrelink, as well as references being made to its correspondence with the values of a *responsible Australian community*. Indeed, Australia and the Australian community are regularly cited throughout the transcript. The universal audience being constructed is one that is caring and decent and that will "provide a social security safety net and underpinning to those in the community who need help" (Howard, 1997:3), but also one that promotes honesty, independence and hard work (Howard, 1997:3-4). These last attributes are reflected in statements about following up abusers of the social security system and in promoting mutual obligation to those who do receive benefits (Howard, 1997:3). Such activities are described as part of being a responsible community. Although the speaker concedes his is a "proudly private enterprise government", this is accompanied by statements that this still includes a role for the public sector. This can be interpreted as an appeal to all people that this government is committed to the public sector, albeit a limited one. Finally, statements that this reform is not just for individuals but also for families can be interpreted as an appeal to the whole of the Australian community (Howard, 1997:3).

Among the particular audiences the speaker is addressing, is the audience of taxpaying voters. The appeals to this audience are reflected in statements that seek to assure the audience that the reform of Centrelink will promote efficiency and will be pursued with sensible use of tax-payers money. These appeals can be illustrated in statements regarding tracing fraud and abuse in the system, where it is said:

And we owe it to the millions of honest Australian citizens who don't try and abuse or rot the system to ensure that in all the manifestations of government, those who would seek to do so, are properly pursued in accordance with the due processes of the law (Howard, 1997:3).

Or in the following statement where an appeal to the universal audience is also shown to be consistent to the desires of the particular audience of tax payers:

We need to deliver services in an efficient and friendly manner but, nonetheless with an eye to our overall obligations to the taxpayers of Australia who pay for the services and the support which is delivered to others within the community (Howard, 1997: 4)

Taxpayers and voters are being constructed as hard working people and they are being assured that their money will be used wisely since only those assessed as needy will be offered assistance by Centrelink. The rest, like all decent Australians, will have to work for their success.

Finally, there is a particular audience of Centrelink staff being constructed throughout the transcript. This is significant given that the speech was accompanied by union strikes. It is stated for example, "And those who work in the various agencies of the government and those who will work for Centrelink in the modern face of a reformed and innovative service delivery system your work is highly valued" (Howard, 1997:2). Or alternatively, it is a major reform that "will have a lasting impact on the morale of those who work in this area. And we're talking about a very large number of people whose work is greatly valued..." (Howard, 1997:5). Both of these statements demonstrate the speaker's appreciation of Centrelink employees and constructs them as highly regarded persons. It suggests that striking would be unreasonable and unnecessary since they are already highly valued. Finally, there is an indication that Centrelink will also be good for them because "it will give a new sense of career and a new sense of career opportunity to the thousands of people who work for Centrelink" (Howard, 1997:2).

These statements can all be interpreted as appeals to the staff, and voters more generally, listening to the live telecast of Howard's speech.

#### 7.6.1.2 *The premises of argumentation*

Agreements about the structure of reality in this transcript begin from the truth that the provision of public services has long been characterized by dependency and fraud, and that this can be changed. This is a truth because it can be related to a system of facts about the self-seeking interests of individuals who will take advantage of welfare possibilities. It is suggested they will be discouraged from working because of the possibilities for financial support and that they will use the system, if there is not adequate control of it. Statements from which this truth can be drawn include the following:

We need, as far as possible, to take away the notion of dependency from the delivery of services. (Howard, 1997: 4)

the minister..... has pursued...eradication to the maximum extent possible of fraud and abuse within the social security system (Howard, 1997:3).

Another way in which the truth regarding the motivations of individuals is reflected is in reference to the value that social security is for the needy. Given this principle, it can be asserted that those not eligible, particularly the fraudulent, are not needy. Of course this rests upon the presumption that policy has adequately protected the needy. Finally, the connection between dependency and fraud with a truth about incentives is also indicated quite directly when Howard states the

need to look at such things as service delivery through Centrelink as a partnership....which encourages people and gives them the incentive to work hard and to achieve and to get ahead and to succeed"...(Howard, 1997:4).

While the truth that public services have been susceptible to abuse (because of people's motivations) can hardly be interpreted as having a direct implication for the argument that Centrelink is a desirable innovation, it still operates to enhance the desirability for a new kind of approach to service delivery. The need for an *innovation* such as Centrelink is more obvious when there is agreement about the weaknesses of the past.

A fact that can be identified as acting as a starting point for the argumentation includes the fact of existing dissatisfaction with social security services and the claim that all recipients have to visit a number of agencies in order to obtain their bene-

fits. This is reflected in statements about "hearing complaints about the number of agencies you had to visit" (Howard, 1997:2), or in the argument that "the consolidation of services"... "will lead to less public dissatisfaction" (Howard, 1997: 2). Accepting the fact that visiting a number of different organizations has been a problem for people, makes it possible to accept that bringing services together is a good thing.

Among the presumptions in the argumentation, is the presumption that the services being brought together will reduce the need for individuals to go to several other organizations. There is also the presumption that social security policy already adequately protects the needy. Finally, with the claim that Centrelink will provide more efficient service as a one stop shop, is the presumption that there are no extra costs to create the agency and that staff will embrace it enthusiastically.

Related to the truth about individual incentives, a value premising the desirable in the argumentation is the value that dependency is bad. This is reflected in statements that *dependency* should be removed from the delivery of services and in the requirement that recipients of social security do something for the assistance they receive. This is expressed as follows:

we have a right, as a responsible community, to ask those who are receiving help, where it is reasonable to do so, that they do something in return for that assistance and something that is commensurate with the help and their circumstances (Howard, 1997: 3).

This statement reveals a vision of public services that would disallow dependency and require recipients to have an obligation to the community for their assistance. Its presence in the text acts to promote the view that Centrelink will be part of a *responsible* approach towards the needy - that is, an approach that discourages dependency. The value that dependency is bad is also accompanied by the value that workers or rather taxpayers are good and need to be considered in policies about social security. Howard recognizes this value in his recognition of the "need to deliver services...with an eye to our overall obligations to the taxpayers of Australia who pay for the services and the support which is delivered to others within the community" (Howard, 1997: 4). Finally, in association with the value that dependency is bad, and the truth of individual's motivations, is the value that government support should only be offered to the needy. This is a value representing the desire for limited government.



Hierarchies of values premising the argumentation include the superiority of people who work for their money (and pay taxes) above those who receive benefits, and the superiority of the private sector above the public sector. In the first instance the superiority of tax-payers over those who receive benefits is reflected in statements that those who receive social security benefits have an obligation to taxpayers. This is somewhat concealed in the use of terminology as mutual obligation whereby it is stated that those who receive assistance, should be required do something in return. It becomes more obvious however in descriptions of recipients of social security as *dependent* (Howard, 1997:4), and therefore inadequate compared to those who do not receive benefits, who work, and are therefore good and independent.

A hierarchy of values that emphasizes the superiority of the private sector over the public sector is reflected in statements that emphasizes that the public sector can be of value if it operates like the private sector. This is pointed to in statements such as the following:

Reform and renewal and innovation is not only confined to the private sector of the Australian economy. If we are to realise the true potential of Australia as we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century we must constantly look to ways of not only improving the efficiency with which the private sector operates but also the efficiency and the compassion with which services to the less fortunate, in particular in our community operate (Howard, 1997: 4).

Here we are being advised that the public sector can be just as good as the private sector if it also conforms to principles (identified as private sector principles in the text) like renewal, innovation and efficiency. There is also a particular history of the public sector being painted in this statement since it would suggest that renewal, innovation or efficiency have never before been characteristics of the public sector. Other ways in which the hierarchy between the public and private sector is articulated are in references describing the activities of the public sector as business activities. We are told for example that "if only they (beneficiaries) could go to one place and have all their *business* done in that one spot it would be a lot more efficient" (Howard, 1996:2). The allusions to improving the public sector through Centrelink continually rely upon references to terms, like business or efficiency, which are then also equated with the private sector in the text. Setting up a correspondence between the private sector and the desirable operations of the public sec-

tor rests upon the view that the private sector ranks higher upon the hierarchy of ways of delivering services than the public sector. By contrast, the values of the public sector are never explicitly identified in the transcript, rather Howard simply states that "(M)ine is a proudly private enterprise government" (Howard, 1997:1).

A preference for quantitative loci is demonstrated in the way that Centrelink is shown to be a good initiative in the argumentation. This occurs through emphasizing the size of the reform and is evident in the following citation:

In administrative terms, this is probably the biggest single reform undertaken in the area of service delivery during the past 50 years. And it is a very special tribute to the ministerial leadership of my colleagues....(Howard, 1997: 1).

Other examples of quantitative loci throughout the transcript include references to the number of Centrelink staff, the geographic spread of its offices, as well as the enormity of Centrelink services. We are told for example that:

Centrelink will provide services and payments to over 7.8 million Australians, including 1.6 million pensioners, almost two million families receiving family allowance and 800,000 unemployed people (Howard, 1996:4).

Other quantitative loci include that Centrelink will be more efficient, more human, will make more sense and bring more hope (Howard, 1997:2,3). The effect of the presence of these loci upon the persuasiveness of argument, by virtue of the common places that more is better, should not be underestimated (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:85).

Alternatively there is also an appeal to the qualitative locus of difficulty. This occurs by observing that the creation of organization such as Centrelink has long been desired but has never been able to get off the ground. A suggestion is made that the task has been a difficult one that acts to promote its appeal to the audience. The difficulty of creating Centrelink is emphasized in the following way:

And over the years, at various stages, attempts were made to do this and suggestions were made that it would actually happen. But it has taken the past 18 months and the arrival of a new government and, if I may say so, new Ministers to bring it about" (Howard, 1997:2).

Or

But ladies and gentleman, the size and dimension of this reform should not be underestimated. It represents something that previous generations of ad-

ministrators at the Commonwealth level have dreamt of doing but haven't been able to do" (Howard, 1997:4).

Finally, there is also some use of the qualitative locus of unique throughout the argumentation since Centrelink is described as a *unique Australian way* of delivering reforms or as a carving out a *completely different horizon* (Howard, 1997:2) in government.

### 7.6.1.3 *Techniques of argumentation*

Quasi-logical techniques are completely absent from the argumentation adopted in this speech. Instead the argumentation relies upon techniques based upon the structure of reality, such as the pragmatic argument, and techniques that structure reality, such as metaphor.

A pragmatic argument is one that seeks to evaluate an event or change in terms of its favourable or unfavourable consequences. In the presentation of the creation of Centrelink, the primary way in which it is argued to be good is with reference to its good effects. These include reducing the need to go to many services, to bring about more efficiency, to provide a human face, a new sense of career opportunity to staff, and to work against dependency (Howard, 1997:2, 4). Since there is no detailed explanation as to how these effects relate to the creation of Centrelink, aside of course from the idea that it involves a shift of a number of functions to one organization, the audience is again being asked to accept a coexistence between Centrelink and these positive effects. The emphasis upon the claimed effects of Centrelink forces an evaluation of it to take place with reference to these effects, and since they are presented as positive, they promote the attractiveness of Centrelink.

In addition, the audience's willingness to accept these effects, is promoted by a further twist in argumentation of a more personal nature. Howard connects the very creation of Centrelink with his own personal experience and knowledge, as well as with the integrity of the government. This is reflected in the following citation and is known by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca as the technique of interaction between the person and his act (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003: 293). Howard states:

From the moment I entered Parliament in 1974 and began talking to constituents about their various problems in my electorate in Sydney, I began hearing complaints about the number of agencies you had to visit....And

what focused my mind at the time was that so many people felt that if only they could go to one place and have all their business done in that one spot it would be a lot more efficient (Howard, 1997:2).

The reasonableness of the claim that Centrelink has been created to reduce irritation for beneficiaries is being supported by the person John Howard and his own political career and knowledge. A more direct appeal to the audience leading them to evaluate Centrelink with reference to John Howard occurs towards the end of the transcript when it is stated:

And I am somebody who's very dedicated to sensible reform and change where necessary in all sectors of the Australian community (Howard, 1997:5).

Centrelink is being presented as a good thing since John Howard would only support reforms that make sense. On other occasions the creation of Centrelink is also being associated with the Coalition government more generally. For example, it is said to be regarded "as a very important face of my Coalition government as we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Howard, 1996:2). Or "I am very excited and proud to be the head of the government which has been responsible for such a major public sector reform" (Howard, 1997:5). Both of these associations act not only to promote Centrelink as a good reform, but also to represent the Coalition government as a successful government.

Finally the metaphors used to make Centrelink appear like an attractive reform include references to it bringing about a *human face*. This attributes the bodily features of a person to Centrelink and can be interpreted as an attempt to distinguish it from being de-personalized, an attribute often associated with bureaucracy or big organizations. It gives the impression that Centrelink is being created to help its users.

A dormant metaphor in the argumentation is observed in the use of the term efficient throughout the document. This is never defined in the argumentation and is given a reason for the reform such that it becomes a part of Centrelink's identity without explanation of what it means to be more efficient and how this will occur.

### 7.6.2 *Document two - Three stages of an evolving model to a One Stop Shop - Challenges at each stage, 1998*

This document is a speech by Sue Vardon, who was chief executive at the time of its presentation. The speech was per-

formed at a National Conference of the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA). This is a professional association whose members are primarily made up of senior public servants from the three tiers of government in Australia, as well as academics ([www.ipaa.org](http://www.ipaa.org)). The theme of the conference was *Service Delivery to the Community: A critical time for reflection* and the audience consisted primarily of practitioners and some academics.

The transcript of the speech is 15 pages long. It begins by describing the creation of Centrelink and distinguishing this from the way other government organizations are designed and operate. The audience is presented with the development of the organization over time and this development is distinguished by different phases. The speaker argues that the one stop shop status of Centrelink has been an overwhelming success in promoting the delivery of customer service and that it will continue to improve its customer orientation through both developing a *personalized* and *holistic* approach, as well as through the use of information technologies. Indeed, these product innovations are envisioned to promote the recognition of Centrelink as "a world leader in management and organizational reforms" (Vardon, 1998:12).

#### 7.6.2.1 *Ethos and the construction of the audience*

The self-presentation of the speaker is one of a business manager as is reflected in the terminology of Centrelink as a business, as operating in a contestable environment and having customers. The concepts and terminology adopted throughout the transcript reflect primarily business management ideas and techniques, as well as familiarity with information technology. At the same time, these concepts are presented as compatible with promoting relationships between citizens and government and between government and the community. It is said for example that the changes proposed will make it easier for citizens to do business with government or that customer service improvements in the local office are making differences to the community. To this extent, the speaker is making customer service appear appealing to a universal audience.

Other features of the transcript that may be interpreted as an appeal to the Australian universal audience include the overview of key drivers to achieve customer satisfaction. These include the client being treated as an individual and dealing with caring

staff with positive attitudes (Vardon, 1998:3). Although it may be suggested that these features are appealing to all people, it can be argued that for an individualistic society such as Australia, these attributes are particularly valued. There are also various references to the large size of Australia, the services that are offered in rural and regional areas, and reference to particular Australian towns and communities (Vardon, 1998:5, 7). This demonstrates the speaker's familiarity with the Australian people and lends legitimacy to the emphasis upon technology since it can be presented as helping communities and promoting contact with them.

Given the emphasis upon business management ideas and concepts including *key drivers*, *business re-engineering* and *work flows* it can also be argued that the particular audience being constructed is a business management audience. Aside from the use of more general business terms throughout the transcript such as customer and business, this includes quite direct references to management consultant texts such as *harvesting best practice*, finding the internal *entrepreneurial spirit* and getting *quick wins*. Constructing a business management audience may also be apparent from the use of comparisons with the business world, for example the information technology ideas presented by the speaker are "applications" that "have been observed in a range of call centre environments - insurance companies, public utilities, commercial telemarketing operations" (Vardon, 1998:6). In this account, Centrelink's customers are also not distinguished from the kinds of customers that businesses deal with, suggesting that it is not really Centrelink's customers the speaker is addressing. For example, it is said that customers can use information technology when they choose to update their details (Vardon, 1998:6) or that with the new service delivery model, services will be tailored to meet people's need (Vardon, 1998:11). None of this recognizes that Centrelink's customers are generally disadvantaged groups who cannot choose which payment they obtain or the regulations under which they obtain it.

Another particular audience the speaker is addressing is the staff of Centrelink. Both the motivational tone taken by the speaker to encourage best practice and the many references to what new arrangements have required of staff and made possible for them, is indicative that this audience has also been included in the constructions of the speaker. The staff of Centrelink are constructed as having experienced great challenges over

the last years through requirements of savings and the reorganization of Centrelink. They are described as being less satisfied with their job but still committed to Centrelink. Congratulations to them are prominent throughout the text such as "It is to the great credit of the public sector that our staff particularly came through" (Vardon, 1998:3-4). Attention is devoted to the efforts they have made to achieve better customer service and an element of competition is introduced noting that if all offices achieved the productivity of leading offices (Vardon, 1998:4), national targets would be met in no time. Concern is also expressed for staff satisfaction noting that "the service offered to external customers will only ever be as good as the service staff receive from each other" and a survey is cited regarding this matter. Finally, various training possibilities are identified in customer service and in leadership, it is noted the "Customer Service Officer Traineeship...will give people a nationally recognized qualification" (Vardon, 1998:9). These references seek to obtain the trust of Centrelink staff that their efforts will be rewarded and to motivate them to work better together to achieve better customer service.

#### 7.6.2.2 *Premises of argumentation*

It has not been possible to identify the truths that premise the argumentation. The fact that customer service has been bad in the past is an important premise of the argumentation. This fact is reflected in the emphasis upon improving customer service throughout the argumentation. It is perhaps the most cited term in the speech and there are various references to doing research into improving customer service and setting up customer service principles. There is however no mention of how customer service was managed in the past except for the following citation: "One of the key challenges of the creation stage was undoubtedly cultural change and improving customer service" (Vardon, 1998:2).

Another fact that can be discerned from the argumentation is that Centrelink is operating as a business in a contestable environment. This fact is evident in such statements as: "The Departmental secretaries reserve the right to find alternative providers if Centrelink cannot deliver to agreed levels" (Vardon, 1998:2) or that "moving into a contestable environment, many of our staff fear privatization" (Vardon, 1998:4). This fact is never supplemented by information regarding Centrelink's

competitors and, as we shall see, accompanies the central value in the argumentation that Centrelink should work as a business, not that it is one. By starting from the fact that Centrelink is operating in a contestable environment, however, it becomes legitimate to speak of the various business improvements being identified in the speech.

Among the presumptions that can be identified as starting points in the argumentation, is the presumption that it is only good customer service that will make Centrelink's clients happy rather than the policies it is implementing. This is reflected in various statements about the desire for better customer service and how Centrelink is trying to achieve this. Vardon speaks of the conduct of various customer service surveys in order to inform how Centrelink can improve its work, as well as listing various customer service goals such as giving accurate information and prompt service. The relationship between social security policy and the happiness of the people that Centrelink deal with is never recognized throughout the argumentation. In fact policy is never identified at all, which is a consequence of presenting Centrelink as a business.

A second presumption that can be identified from the argumentation being pursued, is the presumption that the customers of Centrelink will have the ability to use and have access to Centrelink's new and envisioned product innovations. This starting point of argumentation can be discerned from the emphasis throughout the document upon these product innovations, which are primarily technological innovations. They include: "online claim forms, email broadcast facilities tailored to specific groups of customers, interactive voice response (IVR) units, electronic lodgement of forms and multimedia pay-phones" (Vardon, 1998:5). Reference is also made to kiosks with integrated phone functionality, these would enable customers to "update their own data, choosing the time and place that this happens themselves" (Vardon, 1998). The description of these high tech product innovations are presented in the part of the text describing the second and third stages of Centrelink's evolution. Information technology is argued to promote Centrelink's achievement of better customer service and is used to demonstrate that Centrelink has embraced a way of working that is different to its old fashioned past, and "near paperless" (Vardon, 1998:5).



All of these claims and the argumentation that technology will promote customer service rest upon the presumption that Centrelink customer's are able to use these new high tech product innovations. There is no reference to the difficulties that the elderly, the long-term unemployed or indigenous people - all important customers of Centrelink - might be expected to encounter with increased use of information technology. As will become clearer in further analyses of this text, the silence on this matter is in part related to an almost complete absence of any detailed or *personalized* reference to Centrelink's customers. These persons are primarily known as customers in the text, and sometimes as citizens or Australians, this is illustrated by following citation, "many Australians want to do business over the Internet". The presumption that anonymous Centrelink customers will be able to use the product innovations that are envisioned to promote customer service, also invokes a silence about what Centrelink might be able to do to alleviate barriers to the use of these innovations.

Premises of argumentation based upon the desirable include the desire or value of customer service. The improvement of customer service as a primary value throughout the argumentation is evident from the prominence in the text that is lent to customer service, and the almost complete absence of other priorities. There is some limited reference to the need to know more about costs or the desire to increase productivity, that might suggest other motivations for creating Centrelink, but these occasions are so few and are never presented as being antagonistic to customer service. Numerous mention is made of the conduct of surveys to measure customer satisfaction and it is stated: "Customers need to receive the most accurate, recent and comprehensive answer to their enquiries at the first point of contact" (Vardon, 1998:5). Customer service is also the central aim of a more *personalized service* in the organization through *one main contact* (Vardon, 1998:5, 10).

The value of customer service is actually part of a preference for business like values more generally in the argumentation. This is evident in the continual characterization of Centrelink as a business rather than a government service. One citation at the very beginning of the transcript points implicitly to this agreed upon value. It states:

When the government set up Centrelink, it started with a vision to make it easier for citizens to do business with the federal government (Vardon, 1998:1).

This is rather exceptional citation because it is one of the three occasions in the document when the term citizen is used; all other reference to users of the service are customers. Nevertheless, in this citation citizens are *doing business* with government. The preference for business techniques and ideals is quite explicitly declared in the adoption of such terminology as outlets, brand names and customer to describe the activities of Centrelink throughout the transcript. However, the value-laden character of these terms is, at the same time, quite implicit. Indeed, the way in which these terms are adopted in the text gives the impression that it is not just desirable that Centrelink works in a business-like way, but rather, it is a fact that Centrelink is a business. This is illustrated by the following citation;

Centrelink has over 400 outlets - including 22 Call Centres - around Australia, providing services to some 6.2 million customers. We send out 81 million letters and receive 19.2 million phone calls each year. Our offices have over 520,000 booked appointments each month.....Establishing a business as large as this and enhancing a customer service ethic in each and every one of our people has been a challenge.. (Vardon, 1998:2)

Other phrases which act to characterize Centrelink's work as a business activity include the expressions *doing business with government*, *establishing business opportunities*, and, *a way of doing business which was completely different from previous experiences*. This last phrase is particularly important in make the business status of Centrelink appear a fact because it suggests that the delivery of government services has always been a business activity. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2003) recognize that when "inserted into a system of beliefs for which universal validity is claimed, values may be treated as facts or truths". They argue however that to make values appear as facts, the details about Centrelink being a business for example should not be specified since this would reveal the ideological character of government being a business. The absence of details about the identity of Centrelink's customers or its monopoly status therefore promote the fact-like character of being business like and conceal its value character.

There are other elements in the document, however, that do reveal that a premise about the desirability (not the fact) of business like government has been a starting point of argumentation. This is most evident in references to pre-Centrelink days

and also to the uniqueness of Centrelink. The creation of Centrelink is described as "the unlocking of relationships between government departments at all levels" and new "opportunities to redesign the way governments deliver services to its citizens" (Vardon, 1998:1). In a list of attributes learned it is claimed that "we are moving from a situation where we (Centrelink) received large amounts of money with relatively undefined costs to a price per service per customer situation"(Vardon, 1998:4). These descriptions, as well as the priority given to customer service throughout the text promote, and indeed, depend upon the view that being business- like in the delivery of government services is a good thing.

The argumentation departs from a hierarchy of values where being business- like is superior to being government- like, or in this document bureaucratic. This hierarchy is reflected in descriptions of the past and what Centrelink has changed from. It involves associating being business like with improvement and being bureaucratic as limited. This hierarchy is not surprising given the desire to make a business - like value, customer service, central. Some ways in which the past or government activities are described include the following statement about the relationship between Centrelink and its departmental clients:

We are mutually dependent with them on streamlining our process to make service delivery easier for both staff and customers. This requires a move from traditional bureaucratic interaction to genuine cooperation (Vardon, 1998:8).

Clearly being bureaucratic in this statement is traditional, undesirable and not enabling cooperation. It may be interpreted that the use of certain terms throughout the argumentation also sets up an anti-bureaucracy standpoint such as the emphasis being placed upon offering a *personalized service* or wanting a *near paperless-one only contact* with customers. In both cases stereotypes of bureaucracy such as being impersonal or requiring lots of form filling are being posed to give greater appeal to what Centrelink intends to be e.g. personalized and without paper. More generally, the intensity with which the speaker focuses upon customer service and satisfaction lends it superiority to all other types of relationships that might exist between individuals and government services. Indeed, other kinds of relationships are presented in this document as having equivalence with a customer relationship, as is reflected in statements about the citizen doing business with government. Another example of how

the speaker does this is by stating that customer service changes such as introducing baby changing facilities in *outlets* are "making a difference to communities" (Vardon, 1998:3).

The use of quantitative loci is evident in the descriptions of the organization Centrelink, as well as from the references to figures from surveys and benchmarking studies. In contrast to Centrelinks' earlier status within a department, where we are told it had just one function and one department, we are also advised that Centrelink now has many functions and many departments (Vardon, 1998:1). Numbers are also used to illustrate the focus upon customer service in Centrelink, since we are given the numerical details of a number of surveys and benchmarking studies. For example Centrelink's national survey of customer satisfaction is said to comprise of "1400 customers", "100 questions" and "run three times a year" (Vardon, 1998:2), while there are also surveys conducted for individual customer service centres comprising of "55, 000" completed customer interviews.

Qualitative loci are prevalent in the argumentation and are adopted primarily at the beginning of the speech when Centrelink is being compared to its earlier existence. In these paragraphs the audience is exposed to the way that Centrelink is distinct. We are told it is a *one stop shop*, it is *separate* from the department, it has a board with an *independent chairman* and *no direct access to public funds* but rather *service - contracts*. All of these distinctions relate to the value of Centrelink being business -like, as discussed above, but they also act to promote Centrelink's prestige in the opinion of the audience by highlighting its unique character. From a rhetorical perspective, a focus upon the unique is considered one of the common places in which the speaker is able to gain the agreement of the audience. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca explain, this is because "(T)he unique is original, stands out from other things and for this reason it is remarkable and pleasing to the masses" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:90).

### 7.6.2.3 *Techniques of argumentation*

Quasi-logical techniques adopted by the speaker include definition and comparison. This is used to obtain the audience's adherence to the view that Centrelink has been and will be able to continue to improve customer service. Based upon information collected in value creation workshops with customers and staff,

a list of key drivers for customer satisfaction are presented as having been identified in phase one of Centrelink's evolution (Vardon, 1998:3). These include the following:

- Be understood and treated as an individual;
- Receive complete, accurate and reliable information;
- Deal with skilled and knowledgeable staff;
- Receive prompt, efficient and responsive service;
- Have confidence in the process, to get the results and the right answer the first time;
- Tell their story once; and
- Deal with caring staff with positive attitudes (Vardon, 1997:3).

Although this is a rather abstract list, that few would refute, it still acts to bring formality to the argumentation and provides a basis for assessing how well customer service is being satisfied. It may be argued that it also has a factual presence (not quasi-logical) in the argumentation because it has been based upon what customers of Centrelink have said they want. This definition becomes useful later in the argumentation because it is compared, albeit rather superficially, with plans for stage three of Centrelink's development. The speaker is then able to demonstrate, or rather state, that their plans for new service delivery models in stage three, such as a *one main contact* or *life events model*, will enable Centrelink to focus upon the individual, let them tell their story once and so on (Vardon, 1998:10 -15). Together with information technology that enables customers to test a number of scenarios regarding their circumstances, these plans are the basis for arguing that Centrelink will offer a more *personalized* customer service (Vardon, 1998:11).

Argumentative techniques based upon the structure of reality are most prominent in the argumentation and include the argument of unlimited development and arguments of authority. Unlimited development is an argumentative technique which insists in always going further in a certain direction and is accompanied by a continuous increase of value (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:287). The very title (Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop) and organization of the information presented in this transcript (in three development phases) represents this technique of claiming always to be going further. The audience is ushered through three successive phases of Centrelink's development beginning with the already completed stage of its creation, to the present stage of consoli-

dation and then finally to a future phase when a new service delivery model will be implemented. These phases are presented as part of a process of continually enhancing customer service and the continuing evolution of Centrelink (Vardon, 1998:2). The argumentation identifies what has been learned in the consolidation phase and where the organization is now *moving*. A range of techniques and ideas such as benchmarking, a new leadership model, or new service delivery model, are all identified as enabling the organization to go further. This is illustrated by the following citation:

We're also using value creation workshops to get people who are in an internal service role to listen to their customers, find out what it is they value and begin to deliver services which add value...In this way, we'll also ensure that the service to external customers continues to improve (Vardon, 1998: 8).

Another way in which the claim of continuous development is presented is demonstrated by the discussion of the consolidation stage, which is the beginning of going further. It is said:

This stage, which we have just completed, involved setting up the organization itself, defining and moving toward personalized service and establishing business opportunities. In other words it was a transitional process (Vardon, 1998, 8).

In arguing about continuous development, the speaker also uses a negative picture of the past, such as "this requires *a move from traditional bureaucratic interaction to genuine partnerships co-operation*" (Vardon, 1998, 8: *my emphasis*). As we shall see there are also a variety of traveling metaphors adopted to enhance this idea that continually improving is possible, not least, *moving down a path, being on the road to, or even identifying our best migration path*.

Complementing the technique of unlimited development is also the argument of authority throughout the argumentation which borrows prestige from a person, object or document in order to obtain agreement from the audience (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:305-310). In this case the authority being used to establish that Centrelink will continue to improve customer service is technology itself. References to technologies occur primarily in the discussion of Centrelink's consolidation phase. This takes up approximately seven pages of the document with five of these pages being almost totally devoted to describing technological initiatives. Some of these initiatives include offering more services through the Internet, using in-

teractive voice response (IVR) units in a number of call centres and video conferencing facilities for customers in isolated rural areas. In part the argumentation about technology can be seen as the causal link since it relies upon the fact that using more technology will lead to better customer service in Centrelink. However, the extent of examples provided and the focus upon the description of the technologies themselves would suggest the speaker is using their presence alone to establish agreement from the audience. We are told for example about intelligent two way electronic commerce, about the IVR (interactive voice response) experience and how using these are all about *harvesting best practice* (Vardon, 1998:5). All of these references seek to obtain agreement that Centrelink is improving its work practices simply by virtue of the fact that it has or intends to use technological advances. To this extent the argumentation in the text reflects an assertion dependent on the authority of technology.

In order to increase the presence of such a fact-consequence relationship between Centrelink and improvements in customer service, argumentative techniques that seek to establish structure of reality are also adopted. In particular, we find a number of illustrations being used in order to strengthen the view that Centrelink will and has been improving customer service. These illustrations include references to conducting surveys about customer satisfaction and also benchmarking of customer service in different Centrelink offices. The document states:

Major externally conducted surveys of customer satisfaction at both the national and local level have been carried out to provide a firm basis for understanding and responding to customers' needs and expectations of good service delivery (Vardon, 1998:2).

And,

A biannual national survey of customer satisfaction (contracted to Yan Campbell Hoare Wheeler) was put in place by DSS in November 1996 and has been run three times since then to provide an ongoing benchmark of customer satisfaction....The survey's questions are based on the major drivers of customer satisfaction identified in the National research and from November this year will also include questions on the main commitments in Centrelink's customer charter. The results are provided at office level and are also aggregated to area and national level to provide a very accurate picture of customer satisfaction (Vardon, 1998:2).

Furthermore, the audience is also advised of the completion of a number of value creation workshops which have involved staff listening to some 8100 customers about what they expect. These kinds of activities are said to have made clear the "key

drivers of customer satisfaction and helped to shape Centrelink's strategic direction" (Vardon 1997:3). All of these illustrations provide an indication to the audience that Centrelink is doing a lot to improve customer service, and by their very presence promote the idea that enhanced customer service has been achieved. It is significant to that results regarding customer's actual experiences with Centrelink are never supplied only their opinions about what they want are identified.

Metaphors are also used to structure the reality in the argumentation and include as mentioned above a number of traveling terms, which make an association between the changes that Centrelink is introducing and traveling towards a better place. Such phrases in the argumentation include being *on the road to*, *leading the way* in customer service, identifying the major *drivers* of customer satisfaction and Centrelinks strategic *directions* (Vardon, 1998:3, 4, 12, *my emphasis*). They all act to bring the audience to see that Centrelink is and will improve its work. There are also other physical features being attributed to the activities of Centerlink which make them appear more tangible and real. A gardening metaphor is used in the description of Centrelink *harvesting* best practice (Vardon, 1998:4, 12) and a sewing metaphor in them offering a *seamless service* (Vardon, 1998:5), this is one without holes.

The description of Centrelink offering a *personalized* service is also metaphorical and makes it possible to associate the payment of benefits with special attention for the individual. Indeed, this is the single most important way in which this argument is made throughout the transcript, since for the rest individuals do not really appear accept as customers. With reference to the use of information technology the adoption of the term *personalized service* wherein customers are able to access and supply information when they choose, or test different scenarios, is particularly significant (Vardon, 1998:5-8,11). This is because it distracts the audience away from the possibility that these facilities could lead to less attention for the individual and less access to the organization, since it reduces contact with individual people in the organization. It can also be argued that the description of Centrelink as a *business* with *outlets*, a *brand*, a *one stop shop* are all metaphors since Centrelink is not a business or a shop but a government organization.

Finally the argumentation relies upon the dormant metaphor of the customer. This is a dormant metaphor because aside



from the term customer the audience is offered little insight into what this object in the text actually is. By using the term customer, an association is made with people shopping and choosing their products at Centrelink. An association with the unemployed, elderly or indigenous is lost, thereby also making many of the initiatives of Centerlink such as technology or working on signage appear like good, reasonable, *quick win* initiatives. The customer can also be considered a dormant metaphor in the argumentation because it acts as a motivation for the reform.

### 7.6.3 Document three – *Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges*

The report *Connecting Government* describes arrangements and strategies for facilitating coordination and cooperation between government agencies (organizations within departments, as well as executive agencies and Centrelink) across departmental boundaries. It was prepared by the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) and published in 2004. The MAC is a forum of departmental secretaries and agency heads representing all 18 Departments, the Public Service Commission and 5 other agencies, among them the new director of Centrelink, Jeff Whalan. It is chaired by the secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Dr Peter Shergold. Under the Australian Public Service Act of 1999, the MAC was established to advise the Australian government on matters relating to the management of the Australian Public Service. It has a rather broad advisory function and its reports are often best practice guides directed at an audience of managers within the public sector itself.

The report is 254 pages long consisting of a preface from the secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and seven chapters. Its findings are based upon 10 case studies which are presented and discussed in appendixes, as well as a literature review. The main objective of the report is to demonstrate the way that whole *of government* arrangements, which are narrowly defined as agencies (in its general understanding) working across portfolio borders responding to particular issues, have become a government priority (MAC, 2004:4). It is also the intention of the committee to “offer(s) a checklist of issues to consider” for ensuring successful whole of government work (MAC, 2004:1, 4). Significantly, both Centrelink (referred to as agency arrangements) and executive agencies (referred to

in the report as special purpose agencies and frontier agencies) appear in the report as two kinds of options, among other available structures, for pursuing whole of government activities. Following an introductory chapter on the whole of government priority (chapter 1), each chapter focuses upon one aspect of whole of government arrangements and the strategies or options available for making this aspect conducive to successful coordination and/or collaboration. The features discussed include structure and processes (chapter 2), culture and skills (chapter 3), information and communication infrastructure (chapter 4), budget and accountability arrangements (chapter 5) and engagement beyond the Australian government (chapter 6). In addition, there is also a chapter devoted to managing crisis (chapter 7).

In my analysis I have focused upon chapters 1 and 5, as well as sections in chapter 2 on achieving better cross portfolio coordination through agencies that serve many departments (such as Centrelink) and special purpose agencies (executive agencies). These chapters have been selected because they bring together an overview of the report and its goals (chapter 1), as well as describe the role of Centrelink and executive agencies (chapter 2) within the government's *whole of government* agenda. I have also considered the case study report on the executive agency, the Australian Greenhouse Office, in my analysis. Chapter 5 has been selected because it identifies arguments about the financial system of the administration, including that of Centrelink's and executive agencies, and how it can address the priority of *whole of government*. This chapter is particularly significant because it identifies the lack of consistent financial systems as a barrier to coordination and collaboration, and argues for a more active role for the Department of Finance in guiding *whole of government* projects. It can be considered an example of the recent shift in Australia away from devolving management responsibilities to individual units.

### 7.6.3.1 *Ethos and the construction of the audience*

The self presentation of the speaker is one of a guide or consultant providing managers with an overview of the features of *whole of government* work and how to promote its success in practice. This is reflected in the simple language adopted throughout the report, which is sustained even on quite specialist matters such as the budget and accountability framework (chapter

5). A user friendly focus may also be discerned from the very brief descriptions of examples provided from the case studies, and the use of summary boxes and checklists to highlight to readers what they need to know about particular features of whole of government work (MAC, 2004:1-2, 19-20, 35, 38, 75-76). The focus upon the particular audience of managers within the public sector is openly announced on the first page of the document where it is stated: "The report offers a checklist of issues to consider, which agencies should adopt as routine" (MAC, 2004:1). Similar kinds of appeals to managers are also made in other statements such as: "the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) initiated a review of relevant experience to identify better, *practical ways* of working across organisational boundaries" (MAC, 2004: 3 *my emphasis*); and "The report is supplemented by Good Practice Guides to *assist those involved on the ground* in whole of government activity" (MAC, 2004: 3, *my emphasis*). Credibility and trust for the speaker among public managers is pursued by demonstrating knowledge of specific cases in the document, as well as by references to theories and academic work (MAC, 2004: 12-13), but then in a very broad brush, pragmatic way. There is no justification given for the selection of cases for example, nor are there specific theoretical definitions offered for the features assessed in the cases. A summarized literature review is also provided in the appendix to the document and provides easy to read evidence of some of the *best practice* tips being proposed, as well as an overview of relevant issues (MAC, 2004:223-233).

There are recurring references to the central role ascribed to the prime minister and cabinet in coordinating whole of government priorities, as well as repetition of statements about the requirement of the APS to be responsive to elected government (MAC, 2004:2-5, 8-9, 12, 21-23). This can be interpreted as part of reminding the particular audience of managers of their obligations, but it can also be interpreted as constructing a particular audience of the prime minister and cabinet itself. Indeed, the report has literally been prepared for the secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The centrality of ministers and government in the report is expressed in such statements as: "Making whole of government approaches work better for *ministers and government* is now a key priority of the APS" (MAC, 2004, 2, *my emphasis*). It is also stated that "The cabinet, under the prime minister's leadership, is the principal coordina-

tion forum of the executive arm of the Australian government” (MAC, 2004: 21) and there are many references to *whole of government* activities that have been, or will be, initiated by the prime minister or the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (MAC, 2004: 8-9, 21-23). The way that these kinds of statements give a strong and positive presence to the activities of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and actually prescribe an active role to them as opposed to other central departments, could be interpreted as speaking to the desires of this department. At the same time, this central role is also sometimes presented as a taken for granted feature of the Australian tradition and context, thereby making the interests of such a particular audience, an appeal to the universal audience in Australia. An example includes the following reference that appeared after a discussion of the UK arrangements for whole of government outcomes where both the Cabinet Office and Treasury are said to have played a role:

In Australia, *the centre of government* – the Prime Minister and Cabinet – is playing an increasing role in coordinating whole of government responses and prioritising whole of government issues (MAC, 2004, 12, *my emphasis*).

It can also be observed that the requirement that the APS be responsive to government is often followed in the document by statements that *whole of government* priorities will ensure responsiveness to the community since it entails more integrated services. Such considerations in the document can be considered to be appeals to a broader, more universal audience, since it seeks to illustrate that the priority of whole of government, as envisioned by the prime minister and cabinet, will also bring benefits to the general public. Statements that illustrate such appeals include:

There is also recognition that whole of government activities can be responsive to community needs for better coordination of services or policies (MAC, 2004: 3).

As in the previous documents, presence is also given to observations that public demands for “services...to be tailored to their particular needs” (MAC, 2004:2) have increased. In this document, however, it is *whole of government* responses rather than a business rationale that can address this issue. More generally, the concern for coordination (a term sometimes presented in the document as synonymous with whole of government) is described as having a strong tradition in Australia and

as being aligned with responsiveness to the community and citizens. This occurs by demonstrating knowledge of past initiatives that are presented as examples of whole of government activities (MAC, 2004:6-9) and by citing a rather famous Royal Commission report authored by a well respected former public servant and Australian public figure, Nugget Coombs. This Royal Commission is presented and cited in the document as follows:

A landmark Australian report promoting new whole of government approaches was the Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration (RCAGA), published in 1976. It argued that a new style of public administration was required which placed more emphasis on

...availability of a comprehensive service at the local level ...[which] gives the citizen a greater sense of being in touch with the decision-makers rather than an amorphous, unreachable department. (MAC, 2004: 7)

The presence of such statements acts to assure the audience that whole of government arrangements will not only promote good management or the interests of government, but also the community as a whole. It constructs a universal audience that is not only concerned with the demands of government as dictated by the political system, but also with the demands for access and (customer) service from the Australian community. References to the Coombs Royal Commission on Australian government administration can also be identified as a special appeal to the universal audience in the Australian political and administrative context by virtue of its renown among actors in that context. Similarly, the presence of a theoretical basis (however brief) as well as the more general knowledge demonstrated about whole of government initiatives in numerous cases and in academic literature in Australia and elsewhere (Canada and the UK) function to promote the universal esteem of the speaker.

Other ways in which appeal is made to a universal audience include references to the relationship between a whole of government approach and the national interest, whether it be in terms of promoting the Australian economy (MAC, 2004:5), dealing with problems of the environment, an aging community or national security (MAC, 2004:4). Although not prominent in the body of the entire text, it can also be observed that the inclusion of cases charged with strong national feelings such as the Australian Olympics (MAC, 2004:211-222) and the response to the Bali bombings (MAC, 2004: 190-199) act to

strengthen belief in the speaker that taking a whole of government approach must indeed be a priority for all Australians.

### 7.6.3.2 *Premises of argumentation*

Agreements upon which the argumentation for a whole of government priority are premised include the truth that the world has become more complex. This truth can be derived from observations about the various causes that have required a “whole of government” response such as the “complexity of social problems” (MAC, 2004, 4-5). It is summarized “(T) he world is more complex and there are new challenges such as security and counter terrorism” or “managing a sustainable environment”. Technology and globalization are also cited as reasons and evidence of this more complex world. As in the third Swedish document, the notion that the world has become more complex can be considered a truth because it represents an association with bodies of theory such as governance or network theory that also identify the need for shared objectives and cooperation. Indeed, the literature review at the end of the document as well as descriptions and citations discussing the elements of a whole of government approach include titles with the terms network theory, governance and the UK’s joined up government in them (MAC, 2004:12). Consistent with a network theory approach is also a chapter devoted to engagement with actors outside of government and reference is made to the need for establishing *social coalitions* and for *horizontal management*. It will become more evident below, however, that while associating complexity with a theoretical system and truth, Australian official rhetoric still asserts the need for vertical management from central government. There is also less explicit reference to *mutual* inter-dependency than in the third Swedish document.

The agreed upon facts that can be observed in the argumentation include the fact that the Australian public expects services (from government) to be “tailored to their particular needs” (MAC, 2004, 2) and that this in turn requires “more concerted action”. The fact of increasing expectations from the public, together with (the fact of) globalization and (truth of) complexity, is part of demonstrating the *imperative* for a *whole of government* response. Another fact that would appear to be agreed upon throughout the document is that the government is doing, and has already done a lot, to promote whole of government activities. This includes the creation of the Cabinet Policy Unit and more recently the Cabinet

Policy Unit and more recently the Cabinet Implementation Unit (MAC, 2004:8, 13), as well as the creation of organizations such as Centrelink and executive agencies (MAC, 2004: 38-39). It is stated for example; “The establishment by the Howard government of the Cabinet Policy Unit (CPU) reporting to the prime minister is a sign of the growing importance of *whole of government* coordination” (MAC, 2004: 23 *my emphasis*). Similarly, the creation of the National Oceans Office (which was, but is no longer, an executive agency) is described as “the quintessential whole of government idea” (MAC, 2004: 40). Finally, another fact premising the argumentation is that the outcomes and outputs budget has been a success and offers the flexibility to provide appropriate arrangements for whole of government projects (MAC, 2004:75).

Among the presumptions that premise the argumentation, is a very broad presumption that it is possible to arrive at generalizations about best practice from particular cases (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2000:350). This presumption is reflected in the central role that case studies play throughout the argumentation in demonstrating both examples of *whole of government* approaches and also providing the basis for recommendations about conditions of success as presented in brief best practice checklist boxes (see MAC, 2004: 1, 29,35, 38, 39). It is also stated in the second chapter of the report that the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet “should use their experience (of whole of government projects) as a basis for spreading advice on best practice in whole of government work through a web presence” (MAC, 2004:23). Alternatively another presumption present throughout the argumentation, but only analyzed in the first chapter of the report, is that managers and leaders will be able to identify the kinds of incentives and rewards that are necessary to promote behaviour that corresponds with a whole of government approach (MAC, 2004:14). This presumption underlies arguments about how to promote cultures that can conduct successful whole of government projects. There are also the presumptions that it is possible to plan ahead and ascribe clear distinct roles for such arrangements. These presumptions are prominent in repeated recommendations that good planning and clear accountability arrangements promote the success of whole of government. Finally, related to knowing about incentives and planning, is another presumption about leaders being able to show the way to success (MAC, 2004: 19).

This is reflected in the central role attributed to the prime minister and cabinet in the whole of government agenda, and the call for a more active guidance role for the Department of Finance in developing budgetary arrangements for whole of government projects.

With regards to premises about the desirable in the argumentation, it is clear from the title of the report, and also in its introductory statements, that a whole of government approach is a priority. The primary value of whole of government is illustrated by opening statements such as the following:

Making whole of government approaches work better for ministers and government is now a key priority for the APS. There is a need to achieve more effective policy coordination and more timely and effective implementation decisions, in line with the statutory requirement for the APS to be responsive to elected government (MAC, 2004: 2).

It is clear from the above, and from other statements throughout the argumentation, that the priority of whole of government is primarily about making coordination and executive control central values in the argumentation. It is said for example that the use of whole of government “in the Australian context has generally implied an emphasis on breadth (*whole*) and on government (*especially Cabinet and the ministry*), emphasizing that public sector agencies are focussed on the government’s policy and operational agenda” (MAC, 2004:3, *my emphasis*). Other statements reflecting a preference for the central role of cabinet and government in setting the agenda for whole of government projects and agencies more generally include references to it “reflecting the elected government’s overall policies and priorities” (MAC, 2004:4). At the same time, the report also recognizes other values and priorities such as being able to respond to citizens (MAC, 2004:3, 7) and *tailoring* services to the public’s needs (MAC, 2004:2). Finally, meeting cost objectives (MAC, 2004: 9, 10), having clear accountability relationships (MAC, 2004: 15, 83) and transparent reporting (MAC, 2004: 76, 78, 88) are other values described in the report. These sorts of values are generally expressed in sections and chapters on the budget and accountability framework.

Among the hierarchies of values ascribed to in the report is the value of vertical management or accountability above horizontal management. This hierarchy is also often expressed as a preference for the government to direct whole of government arrangements and for the value of coordination above collabo-



ration. These different features of whole of government are however often presented throughout the report as compatible, even inter-changeable. This is most obvious by the replacement sometimes of whole of government with the term coordination (MAC, 2004:6), and at other times with other terms such as horizontal management (MAC, 2004: 3, 22, 23). Both the preference for vertical accountability arrangements, for government as the central coordinating actor, and the pursuit of equivalence between coordination and compatibility is illustrated by the following citation:

A particular challenge is to improve cross-agency coordination and *collaboration* while maintaining *vertical accountability* (MAC, 2004:15 *my emphasis*).

This equivalence is however not always conformed to and there are numerous occasions when the preference for vertical management/accountability, or for the government as the central coordinator are expressed. This occurs despite recognition in a few instances that “clear vertical accountability...may make collaboration across organisational boundaries difficult” (MAC, 2004: 6). Indications of the greater value placed upon vertical accountability as opposed to horizontal arrangements and collaboration include the following references:

For very important issues it is likely that the government or the prime minister will identify an imperative to tackle a problem through a whole of government approach (MAC, 2004:11).

It is when issues span one or more portfolios that *coordination (horizontal management)* can become particularly difficult. In principle, the Cabinet and the prime minister, or ministers acting bilaterally coordinate across portfolios (MAC, 2004:22).

It should be noted that these kinds of statements appear in the document alongside others that indicate that collaboration is about informal sharing or being accessible to communities, although these kinds of statements are far fewer in number than references emphasizing central government coordination (coordination appears more than 100 times while collaboration just 40). They are also never presented as contrary to vertical management or central government coordination. This is aided by identifying examples of horizontal management at the top of government (such as having two ministers responsible for the same activity) (MAC, 2004:15), together with vertical management over the administration.

A hierarchy between whole of government projects above individual units contributing to it, can also be observed in the presentation of the value of whole of government. It is stated for example that:

The distinguishing characteristic of whole of government work is that there is an emphasis on objectives shared across organisational boundaries, as opposed to working solely within an organisation (MAC, 2004: 3).

Similarly, a proposal in the document to reward behaviour that contributes to whole of government objectives as opposed to the aims of particular organizations is also indicative of this hierarchy. There are, however, important limitations to its operation in the argumentation that are related to the narrow characterization of whole of government objectives as being only suitable to particular projects. For example, it is argued that a whole of government approach is not suitable to all circumstances and that priorities of cost and time need also to be assessed, and may take priority. This is expressed as follows:

A strong message from literature and case studies analyzed for this report is that whole of government approaches to complex problems should only be undertaken when necessary....there is also a warning about judicious use. It is costly and time consuming and competing political and community agendas can undermine its objectives (MAC, 2004: 10).

Another limitation to the value of the whole of government arrangement above, the individual organizational unit, is evident in the ambiguities in recommendations for financial reporting on whole of government projects. On the one hand, statements that the outcomes and outputs framework has the flexibility to record single (consolidated) outcomes for the projects as a whole would suggest that this is considered desirable (MAC, 2004: 77, 78). On the other hand, however, three of the four appropriation models presented as candidates for whole of government reporting all maintain separate reporting of individual agency contributions, and then attribute the (accumulated) whole of government outcome to an individual agency. The one model which did allow for single outcome reporting (called the single outcome) was described as having the disadvantage that "accountability is diffuse" (MAC, 2004: 83). More generally, this is consistent with the preference discussed above for vertical accountability above horizontal accountability and collaboration. As elsewhere throughout the document, however, tensions between the whole and the individual unit are

played down by statements such as the following which suggest compatibility is possible:

The challenge is to balance agencies' ability to manage and account for these [whole of government] measures while at the same time addressing parliament and stakeholders needs to see the whole picture (MAC, 2004:77).

Direct reference to tensions between vertical accountability and horizontal arrangements, coordination and cooperation or vertical accountability and reporting on the whole, are all avoided by lack of detailed discussions or examples of such instances in the body of the report. Instead there are only claims that these two kinds of accountability arrangements have been successfully combined.

Both quantitative and qualitative loci can be identified throughout the report. In contrast to earlier Australian documents which emphasized the qualitative loci of the difficult and unique, the quantitative locus in this document emphasize the enduring. The quantitative locus of durability relies upon a higher value being placed upon that which is eternal (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003, 87) and can be observed in descriptions of whole of government as a "longstanding feature of Australian public administration" (MAC, 2004:6). This is supported by a brief historical description of initiatives to promote service integration or coordination across government (MAC, 2004:6-9). Aside from the claim that the creation of the prime minister's office not long after Federation (1900) was one of the first attempts at whole of government coordination, all the other examples cited occur after the 1970s. Most significant, for the purposes of this study, is the description of Centrelink and its one stop shop character as part of this long tradition of coordination. It is stated:

Centrelink is an example of a government provider which delivers a range of income support and employment services. One-stop shops are a single point of service for clients. One stop shop concepts were first raised over 25 years ago in the Coombs report and were reflected in the emerging client focus across all portfolios in the 1980's (MAC, 2004:37).

This description of Centrelink which seeks to establish its credibility because it is part of a (quantitative locus) enduring tradition is in stark contrast to the previous document which relied upon its (qualitative locus) new and unique character. Other quantitative loci used in the document include claims that whole of government approaches enable more effective policy (MAC, 2004:2), more cooperation, make government services

more responsive and accessible (MAC, 2004: 5), enable more integrated service delivery arrangements (MAC, 2004:5, 10) provide more timely implementation (MAC, 2004:,2), and even encourage the establishment of “more enduring outcomes structure” (MAC, 2004:79).

There are also continuities in the kinds of qualitative loci adopted in this and previous documents. In particular, the qualitative locus of the difficult is prominent and is reflected in the various references to the *challenges* (MAC, 2004: 2, 4, 9, 77) facing government today and the warning that a whole of government approach should not be taken lightly” (MAC, 2004, 2). The descriptions of frontier agencies (used when referring to executive or special purpose agencies) having to deal with contentious and complex issues may also be interpreted as relying upon the locus of difficulty to condition the audience to see these as good arrangements. Consistent with a preference for the enduring, however, there is mention of the possibility for these structures to be wound back after a period to “more permanent structures” (MAC, 2004, 39). In addition, the qualitative locus of timeliness is sometimes used in this document to condition the audience to accept that whole of government arrangements are especially important now. This locus is reflected in such statements as “the imperative for a whole of government focus is stronger than ever before” (MAC, 2004:9). It is also reflected in the use of the phrase *the imperative* on a number of occasions to impart a sense of urgency to pursuing whole of government projects. The locus of timeliness is a qualitative locus valuing the precarious or fleeting and is actually the exact counterpart of the locus of the enduring. The way these two kinds of loci are brought together can be seen in the statement; “While *not new*, for the reasons outlined earlier, the *imperative* for a whole of government focus *is stronger than ever before*” (MAC, 2004: 9 *my emphasis*).

### 7.6.3.3 *Techniques of argumentation*

Both the quasi-logical techniques of definition and comparison can be identified in the argumentation. Definition is used to focus the audience’s attention upon the priority of “whole of government”. In the introductory chapter to the report, a definition of whole of government is presented as follows:

Whole of government denotes public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government re-

sponse to particular issues. Approaches can be formal and informal. They can focus on policy development, program management and service delivery (MAC, 2004:4).

This definition is further refined with the speaker advising that:

(C)oordination has been a longstanding feature of Australian public administration with three main types of whole of government activity:

between Australian government agencies;  
between different levels of government; and  
between the public, private, non-profit and community sectors  
(MAC, 2004:6).

The use of definition operates to bring formality to the argumentation and thereby promote its esteem in the eyes of the audience. It also enables the audience to see the forthcoming material presented in the report as examples of whole of government activities. Another function of definition is that it can enable the speaker to exclude certain elements or ideas from the focus of argumentation. It can be observed that this particular definition distracts from possible difficulties in identifying *shared* goals (as opposed to imposed goals) and its (possible) incompatibilities with an “integrated government response”. To this extent the definition aids in concealing tensions (and the hierarchies of values) between coordination and cooperation, and, vertical and horizontal management. It is noteworthy to mention that there is very little further reference or explanation regarding informal approaches to whole of government, the term just appears sometimes in the case studies. Other definitions that do appear in the chapters analyzed include the definition of outcomes, outputs and administrative items (MAC, 2004:76-77). This occurs in the chapter on the budget.

The quasi-logical technique of comparison is also adopted to organize the material presented throughout the report and in the case studies although, as will be discussed further below, the prescriptions for best practice from these case studies are primarily based upon other types of argumentative techniques. The technique of comparison can be observed from the identification in the first chapter of a “series of common principles and challenges that need to be met for whole of government initiatives to be successful” (MAC, 2004:12). These common principles have been drawn from an academic publication and are presented in a diagram in the first chapter of the report. They include four main elements; culture and philosophy, new

accountabilities and incentives, new ways of developing policy and designing programs/delivering services, and, new ways of working. Each element is broken down into different features such as shared outcomes and reporting under new accountabilities, or a collegiate approach for new ways of developing policy. It is “(A)gainst this framework” that the speaker then identifies the “main challenges” or rather criteria, that need to be addressed to promote whole of government in Australia such as considering the budget and accountability framework, culture and capability, new ways of working etc. These criteria then become the means for assessing best practice throughout the chapters and case studies.

This occurs by devoting a chapter to each of the main criteria and by presenting each of the case studies according to their responses to the criteria; how they adapted structure and processes, culture and capability, information management and infrastructure, the budget and accountability framework, and wider connections outside of the APS. They can be considered as a kind of measure against which each of the cases can be described and evaluated, with commentary being given regarding when the response was effective or not. The measure is, however, never really elaborated since addressing issues of structure or culture can, and does occur, in different ways in the whole of government cases. Therefore the comparison is somewhat incomplete but still enables the speaker to present the findings in a way that adheres to a mathematical system of reasoning. This is because in each case the presence of each of the best practice criteria, however vague, are assessed. It may be suggested that the argument by comparison is also supported by arguments of authority in this case because the best-practice criteria are drawn from an academic article about UK experience, itself a kind of proof that they must be valid criteria.

Argumentative techniques based upon the structure of reality are prominent in the report and include argument by authority, the causal link and unlimited development. These kinds of arguments rely upon achieving solidarity between *accepted beliefs* and the ideas one wishes to promote. The references to the Coombs Royal Commission report (MAC, 2004: 7, 37) and its association with the whole of government initiatives being presented in this report can be identified as argument by authority. This is because this earlier (prestigious) report is being used to show that the government’s whole of government priority is a

good thing and must be concerned for ensuring the responsiveness and accessibility of the administration to the community, since a citation from the Coombs report shows this to be important (see further causal link below). Its very presence in the report is part of indicating that coordination and whole of government are part of the Australian tradition. It often appears together with reference to Centrelink and thereby aids the audience to see that such arrangements really are about doing the best to respond to citizens or customers.

The causal link is used to demonstrate more specific connections between whole of government initiatives and working in a best practice way. Indeed, it is used to demonstrate why the government prioritizes a whole of government approach, the effects that can be expected from the initiatives described, as well as to identify the specific factors that will promote successful whole of government initiatives. In the first chapter of the report, the causal link is apparent in the description of “external and internal drivers” for a whole of government approach (MAC, 2004: 4-6). The external drivers or causes of a whole of government approach include:

- The complexity of some social problems;
- Globalisation and the need to remain competitive and achieve productivity gains (“greater integration and shared infrastructure offers one of the opportunities for such gains”);
- Technological change;
- The demand from customers and clients to be more accessible; and
- Government requires close links with external advisors and must have the capacity to assess this advice (MAC, 2004: 4-5)

Among the internal drivers or causes identified for having a whole of government priority is the risk that previous priorities, such as devolution, may subvert collaboration. It is stated:

There is some risk, however, that devolution of authority to agency heads and clear vertical accountability for agency outcomes may make collaboration across organisational boundaries more difficult (MAC, 2004: 6).

At the same time another contrary link is made between the flexibility fostered by devolution and the capacity it can provide for finding innovative solutions. It is stated:

The flexibility fostered by devolution, however, could also be used to explore innovative solutions to complex problems, including solutions to requiring among cooperation among agencies with external groups (MAC, 2004:6).

In these citations, a shift is made from identifying the internal cause of the whole of government priority (past policies for devolution) to causes for successful solutions of complex (whole of government) problems (the flexibility attained from devolution).

In the chapters I have analyzed the consequences expected to follow from whole of government arrangements are primarily identified in the discussions about cross departmental partnerships: agency arrangements (including Centrelink) and Special Purpose Agencies (including executive agencies). Under the sub-heading *Cross-departmental partnerships: agency arrangements*, it is explained that this whole of government structure, which includes Centrelink, “will typically occur because of an ability to provide a better, less costly and more convenient service” (MAC, 2004:36). There are no further explanations as to how this will occur except for a listing of the features of this type of arrangement as including: opportunities for efficiencies (duplication otherwise exists) (MAC, 2004:37)

It is noteworthy that a motive for the creation of Centrelink is described as follows: “(I)ntegration was a the heart of the Centrelink development” (MAC, 2004, 37). It is also described, with reference to the Coombs report, as being part of an emerging *client focus* (MAC, 2004:37). This is part of the *external driver* argument that whole of government arrangements such as Centrelink have been created to promote accessibility and service to the community (see above). Causes for the creation of executive agencies are also identified

Some special purpose agencies have been created outside normal departmental structures to deal with issues that are important, contentious across a range of stakeholders and not yet mature in the way in which they are perceived by the public or managed within government. Their special status is used to symbolize a whole of government approach (MAC, 2004, 39).

These kinds of organizations such as the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) are described as being able to “reassure external stakeholders that it is an expert body, neutral between the contending interests of a range of external stakeholders” (MAC, 2004: 39). Its separateness is argued to bring about (the appearance of) neutrality and thereby *balance* the tensions between different interests. Other kinds of effects attributed to



the creation of AGO include “the opportunity to develop real depth of skill in a very complex subject and... factual framework to underpin discussions of policy options at secretarial, ministerial and cabinet level” (MAC, 2004: 39). It is to make possible the presentation of “one consistent view of (complex) policy”, rather than many views separated into different organizations, and to ensure that “policy learns from implementation experience”. Again there is little further explanation as to how all these things will happen except that these bodies are special purpose agencies bringing together resources from different parts of the administration.

Other causes or conditions for best practice in whole of government initiatives identified throughout the report include early planning (MAC, 2004: 15, 17, 41, 88), identifying clear lines of accountability (MAC, 2004: 15, 38, 22) and support and clear articulation of goals from leadership in the APS. Statements regarding good planning as a cause for success occur in all the chapters analyzed. For example in discussions of budget arrangements it is stated: “Planning is considered an important aspect, as many challenges are able to be resolved early in the process” (MAC, 2004: 15) or the “key to maximising flexibilities of an outcomes budget is early consideration of arrangements” (MAC, 2004: 75). Similarly, in the discussion of executive agencies, or in this report *frontier agencies*, planning as a cause for success is presented as follows:

A key to the successful creation of a frontier agency is in early planning. Planning should focus on inculcating a new set of values related to the new agency’s charter and could encompass physical co-location, single IT and financial systems, and staff development work to develop a new culture and set of values relevant to the new agency’s charter (MAC, 2004:41).

In this citation, some reference is also made to the focus of other chapters in the report and their influence upon good whole of government arrangements such as shared information systems and a shared culture, but one that is open to different perspectives (MAC, 2004:14).

Reference to accountability arrangements bringing about successful whole of government initiatives also appear throughout the report and can be illustrated by the following citation: “(I)here is strong agreement that clearly defined accountability arrangements are important for successful whole of government work” (MAC, 2004: 15). This cause also often appears in the best practice checklists presented in various chap-

ters and corresponds to emphasis upon clear tasks and roles for different actors occupied with whole of government work (MAC, 2004: 38). There is also specific mention of leaders playing a central role in setting clear whole of government goals and thereby ensuring its success. It is stated for example,

*The clear articulation of guiding government philosophies and priorities by the prime minister and senior ministers is in itself a powerful mechanism to encourage coherence in policy advice and service delivery across the government administration (MAC, 2004: 22 my emphasis).*

Another way in which APS leaders are argued to bring about successful whole of government projects is by providing role models of collaboration (MAC, 2004, 25) and being able to show the way forward:

Experience has shown that secretaries are often able to resolve the way forward on difficult whole of government issues more quickly and effectively than lower-level committees (MAC, 2004: 19).

In the presentation of budget and governance arrangements, the recommendations that the Department of Finance be consulted (early) to give advice on these features may also be attributed to the requirement for leadership and guidance in order to achieve successful whole of government arrangements (MAC, 2004: 75, 88).

Finally, it can be noted that other causal links are mentioned broadly at the beginning of the report, although not further specified in the chapters that I have analyzed. This includes the “use of incentives and rewards” to promote collaborative behaviour in whole of government projects and “increasing mobility across organisational boundaries” to broaden public sector perspectives (MAC, 2004: 14). These can be interpreted as further initiatives that can be used to promote the success of whole of government.

Another argumentative technique which can be observed in the document on at least two occasions is the argument of unlimited development. This is a technique which seeks to obtain the audience’s agreement by showing them that there is always the possibility to go further in a certain direction and increase value on the way (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:287). In describing the priority of whole of government and the desire to learn about best practice from case studies in the report, the committee makes reference to the capacity for

continual improvement in future whole of government arrangements. It is stated for example:

The increasing pressure on the APS demands that its history in whole of government work is understood to ensure that it is not necessary to 'reinvent the wheel', yet work practices are continually improved (MAC, 2004:1).

Similarly in the discussion of the evolution of the outcomes and outputs framework it is noted that "The Australian outcomes and outputs framework has been progressively refined on the basis of experience" (MAC, 2004: 78). The argument of continuous development is not central to the findings in the report about what constitutes best practice. It does however play a role in obtaining the audience's agreement that whole of government initiatives, and in the above citation its outcomes and output budget, have been good things.

Arguments that seek to structure reality are also very prominent in the report and apparent in both specific examples and illustrations identified in various chapters and in the use of metaphors. Given that the report has been built upon case studies, it is perhaps not surprising that it is littered with examples (MAC, 2004: 5, 6-9, 11, 12, 36, 39) although not all of the examples provided in the body of the report, such as Centrelink, are among the case studies investigated. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca distinguish between argument by example and argument by illustration, with the former acting to establish a rule/argument, while the latter acting simply to illustrate a rule that the speaker has already established (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:350-360). These two types of argumentative techniques can be difficult to distinguish. In both cases, however, a passage is being made from the particular features of case to some general point. Three cases in the argumentation that can more clearly be interpreted as examples to establish a rule include reference to the UK approach to whole of government outcomes (MAC, 2004, 12), to Australian budget and governance arrangements such as in Victoria (MAC, 2004, 79-80, 83-86), and to the National Heritage Trust (MAC, 2004, 84). In the first instance of the UK approach to whole of government, the argument is being established that such initiatives should be centrally coordinated. It is stated:

Countries differ in the approach taken to drive a greater whole of government orientation, consistent with different government philosophies and approaches to public sector management. Key differences appear in the degree to which the approach is driven from the Centre.....In the UK, whole

of government outcomes and cross cutting targets are centrally set and monitored.....In Australia, the centre of government – the Prime Minister and Cabinet – is playing an increasing role in coordinating whole of government responses...(MAC, 2004: 11-12).

The example of the UK is being given to demonstrate that it is reasonable that a central actor, in the Australian case the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, take a leading role in coordinating whole of government activities. The use of the UK as a legitimate example for Australia's reform activities to follow is presumably supported by beliefs that both countries are part of a similar Westminster tradition. In the descriptions of examples of the Victorian Government's "high level whole of government outcomes" (MAC, 2004: 79-80) and of accounts of arrangements in the cases such as the National Heritage Trust and National Illicit Drug Strategy (MAC, 2004, 84-86), the rule is being established that whole of government outcomes do not need to be measured in a consolidated way. In all of the cases provided, measurement of targets takes place at the level of individual agency contributions, with in some instances a relationship being established to some higher level outcome. There is some admission that measurement of a consolidated outcome would be possible and even have some advantages, but all the examples in the document and the value of accountability lead the audience to accept that this is unnecessary.

Finally, the National Heritage Trust example is also used to demonstrate some problems with whole of government projects since it is observed that "the lack of financial management information systems (FMISs) across the Australian Government" has created some problems for cooperation (MAC, 2004:86-87). This provides the reasoning for a proposal for the Finance department to develop and maintain standard templates, as well as adding to early arguments for giving Finance a guiding role in establishing governance arrangements for whole of government projects (MAC, 2004: 87).

References to other cases in the argumentation that can be interpreted as illustration, since they correspond with arguments established through other means such as the causal link, include cases of cross departmental partnerships and frontier agencies. For cross departmental partnerships, the cases of the Australian Taxation Office, Australian Customs Service and Centrelink (MAC, 2004: 36-38) are used to illustrate that these types of bodies are a way to achieve whole of government objectives for service delivery and policy implementation. In all

cases descriptions are given of how these organizations serve different departments, thereby apparently, achieving less costly and/or more convenient service (see causal link above). In the case of Centrelink (and Australia Post), the descriptions include references to providing an *integrated service* thereby being more responsive and accessible to customers (see causal link above) (MAC, 2004: 5, 37). In illustrating the rule that separate agencies will provide a means for cooperation for contentious issues, since they are neutral, the cases of the Australian Greenhouse Office and National Oceans Office are briefly described (MAC, 2004: 39-40). Accounts of their scientific expertise act to enable the audience to see that they will promote neutrality and cooperation.

More generally, references to specific cases are used throughout the report to establish that the Australian government is and has always done a lot to promote whole of government. They also act to divert attention from tensions between the different goals (see hierarchy of values) and proposed effects of whole of government since the kinds of cases presented together as examples of whole of government illustrate the pursuit of one or other of these values. As part of demonstrating whole of government as a strength of the (*enduring* see loci) Australian tradition, quite different sources and cases are brought together (MAC, 2004: 7-9). There is the Coombs Commission citing *comprehensive service* as giving “the citizen a greater sense of being in touch with decision makers” (MAC, 2004: 7), the 1987 machinery of government changes helping to “integrate policy, programme and service delivery” (MAC, 2004: 7), *coordination* of the states *increasing cooperation* and the *Business and Community Partnership initiative*.

Among the numerous metaphors used throughout are the terms *integrate* (MAC, 2004: 9, 7,12), *broadening* perspective (MAC, 2004: 20, *broad* outcomes (MAC, 2004: 58, 82, 83, 85, 89), seeing the *big* or *whole picture* (MAC, 2004: 58) and *whole of government* itself. All of these terms are used to bring the audience to see that the various activities being pursued or proposed by the government are, as in the title, *connecting* the parts of government and thereby promoting coordination and cooperation. While terms like broad, whole and big picture come from physical attributes, the term *integrate* has its origin in mathematics, and provides a means of conceiving of units as parts of a whole. There are also references to greater *flexibility*

(MAC, 2004: 11, 70, 80, 82, 41) increasing *mobility* (MAC, 2004: 19), *key* priorities (MAC, 2004: 4, 5, 7-10, 13-16, 19) *balancing* agencies abilities (MAC, 2004:52, 81), *sharpening* responsibilities, *strong* agreement (MAC, 2004: 15, 20) and *heightened* requirements (MAC, 2004: 22). In the presentation of the outcomes and outputs framework, the term *transparency* is used to describe its role in ensuring good whole of government arrangements (MAC, 2004: 76, 80, 85). As in earlier Australian documents sewing metaphors such as *tailored* (MAC, 2004: 7, 10, 20) and *seamless* services (MAC, 2004: 4, 20, 21, 42) as well as, driving metaphors such as *drivers* (MAC, 2004, 34) of the shift to whole of government can be observed. Furthermore, an association is made with the battlefield or new adventures/lands when describing special purpose or executive agencies as *frontier* agencies (MAC, 2004: 20, 26, 44, 46).

Finally, the term *whole of government* may be interpreted as a dormant metaphor. This is because, although it is given an express definition in the document, it clearly takes on more meanings throughout the argumentation and even becomes a reason of itself for some of the initiatives being described. Whole of government is for example equated sometimes with greater coordination, and at other times collaboration. It is also used to describe both horizontal and vertical management arrangements. According to a computer search the term itself is used some 600 times throughout the document. In descriptions of frontier agencies it is even identified as a reason for their creation since they are “the quintessential whole of government idea” (MAC, 2004: 45). An overview of the rhetoric of Australian official agency accounts is presented in table 7.2.

## 7.7 GGCT and the rhetoric of Australian agency reform

Australian agency rhetoric reflects primarily individualist ways of life, although in the third document some hierarchical arguments can also be observed. In the case of the prime minister’s speech at Centrelink’s launch this rhetoric focused not so much upon arguments about the agency itself or agency arrangements but rather arguments about social security systems and policy. A preference for arrangements that provide strong incentives for individual’s to work can be identified. There is thus also some reference to hierarchical themes such as compliance to social security legislation.

Table 7.2 Overview of Australian argumentation (continues on next pages)

	Prime Minister's address official launch Centrelink	Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop	Connecting Government
<i>Ethos</i>			
<b>Particular audience</b>	Taxpaying voters Centrelink staff	Business manager - key drivers, business re-engineering, entrepreneurial spirit	Agency managers
<b>Ethos Universal audience</b>	The Australian community A safety net for those in need.  For individuals and families	Centrelink staff Customer service for the community and for citizens doing business with government  Key drivers of customer service  Australian community regions	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet  Tailored services for community members  The Coombs report and government access to citizens  Australian tradition of government  National causes such as the Olympics and security
<i>Premises</i>			
<b>Truth</b>	Social security tampers with the incentives of individuals to work.		Complexity of policy problems (environment, security)
<b>Facts</b>	Dissatisfaction with existing services. Fact that beneficiaries go to number of agencies and are unhappy about this	Customer service has been bad in the past  Centrelink operates in a contestable environment	Expectations for tailored services  The Government has been doing a lot to promote whole of government

Table 7.2 Overview of Australian argumentation (continues on next pages)

	Prime Minister's address official launch Centrelink	Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop	Connecting Government
<b>Presumptions</b>	Creation of Centrelink will reduce the running around of beneficiaries.  The needy are protected by social security arrangements.	It is delivery not policy that can satisfy customers  Centrelink customers will be able to use its IT applications	Existing financial system is flexible enough to serve whole of government arrangements It is possible to generalize about best practice from particular cases  Leaders know the kinds of incentives necessary to promote whole of government behaviour and can plan for whole of government arrangements  Leaders will show the way to success
<b>Values</b>	Dependency is bad	Customer service and business like values	Coordination, executive control, responding to citizens and customers savings and accountability
<b>Hierarchy of values</b>	Superiority of those that work over those that receive benefits  Superiority of the private sector over the public sector	The business like present is superior to the bureaucratic past	Coordination over cooperation, vertical management over horizontal management, clear lines of accountability over cooperation, low costs above cooperation



Table 7.2 Overview of Australian argumentation (continues on next page)

	<b>Prime Minister's address official launch Centrelink</b>	<b>Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop</b>	<b>Connecting Government</b>
<b>Loci</b>	<p>Primarily quantitative loci more efficient, more human, size of Centrelink</p> <p>Qualitative loci the unique Australian way, difficulty of reform</p>	<p>Quantitative loci the size of Centrelink and statistics</p> <p>Qualitative loci Centrelink as unique, the challenge</p>	<p>Quantitative loci, the enduring (Centrelink and the Australian tradition eg, more coordination, more effective policy</p> <p>Qualitative loci, Timeliness (urgency) Difficulty (frontier agencies) and whole of government challenge</p>
<i>Techniques of argumentation</i>			
<b>Quasi-logical</b>		<i>Definition and comparison</i> (key drivers customer service)	<i>Definition</i> (whole of government, outcomes, outputs and administered items)
<b>Structure of reality</b>	<p><i>Pragmatic argument</i> (effects of Centrelink for efficiency, staff, the public)</p> <p><i>The person and the act</i> (Centrelink is good because of the good sense of the person John Howard)</p>	<p><i>Argument by authority</i> information technology</p> <p><i>Unlimited development</i> (evolution of Centrelink and customer service)</p>	<p><i>Argument by authority</i> principles whole of government success</p> <p><i>Unlimited development</i> (whole of government success and learning, refining outcomes)</p> <p><i>Causal link</i> (internal and external drivers)</p>

Table 7.2 Overview of Australian argumentation

	<b>Prime Minister's address official launch Centrelink</b>	<b>Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop</b>	<b>Connecting Government</b>
<b>Creating structure of reality - metaphors</b>	A human face, a new horizon and efficiency	On the road, leading the way, harvesting, seamless service, personalized service, customer  <i>Illustration:</i> that Centrelink is improving customer service	Integrate, broad, whole picture, flexibility, mobility, <i>key</i> priorities, balancing, transparent, sharpening, strong, tailored, seamless, drivers, frontier, whole of government  <i>Illustration:</i> cross departmental agencies work to promote whole of government, frontier agencies can manage contentious issues  Example: Australia following the UK in having a central coordinator of whole of government

Alternatively, in the few arguments made about the agency arrangements, we find a preference for efficiency from consolidation of services. In accounts from Centrelink's director we find primarily individualist and low grid arguments about the agency's service delivery. These are arguments about the agency's contestability, its focus upon personalized customer service, benchmarking and innovation. In the *third document*, there is a mix of primarily hierarchical and some individualist arguments observed.

#### 7.7.1 GGCT and the address at the official launch of Centrelink

It has been difficult to assess the argumentation in this transcript from the themes and watchwords ascribed to GGCT because much of the content of the document focuses upon loci of size, the unique and the difficult. In addition, many of the arguments espoused to promote Centrelink are primarily arguments about social security policy rather than about public management reform. These are arguments for a basic social security safety net that stresses the desire to promote the independence of beneficiaries of social security and that encourages people to work hard for their (financial) success. Such preferences are reflected in the following kinds of statements and can be interpreted as an individualist bias for arrangements that stress that individuals are self-interested choosers and require financial incentives to work:

we need as far as possible, to take away the notion of dependency from the delivery of services. We need a balance between compassion and responsibility (Howard, 1997: 4).

we need to look at such things as service delivery through Centrelink as a partnership, a partnership between all sections of the Australian community to see that we have a society which encourages people and gives them the incentive to work hard and to achieve and to get ahead and to succeed..."(Howard, 1997: 5).

There are also statements about following up upon fraud within the social security system and these can be interpreted as protecting an individualist way of life through hierarchical measures to ensure compliance.

With regard to the organization of Centrelink, there are two main arguments that can be discerned. On the one hand, Centrelink is argued to bring about "less public dissatisfaction" because it enables people "to have all their business done in that one spot" (Howard, 1997:2). This can be interpreted as an individualist argument because it refers to the customer (business) relationship that Centrelink link has with its clients, although the term cus-

tomer does not appear in the transcript. On the other hand, Centrelink is presented as a desirable arrangement because it:

(i)n one very big stroke...cuts through (that) duplication. Centrelink consolidates in an efficient, modern fashion the major service delivery activities of the Federal Government (Howard, 1997, 5).

This is an argument that big organizations with many services are preferable to smaller organizations with limited focussed tasks because they can reduce waste through duplication. In his earlier work Hood has noted that consolidation has not been the property of any single political tendency and has been propounded by both industrial capitalists as well as communists (Hood and Jackson, 1991:116). I have interpreted this consolidation argument as part of the broader individualist way of life being propounded in the text, although it clearly the preference for big organization also has affinities with the hierarchical way of life.

### 7.7.2 *GGCT and Three stages of an Evolving model to a One Stop Shop – Challenges at each stage*

The construction of agency reform presented in this transcript corresponds most with the remedies and watchwords of the individualist way of life. There are three features of the argumentation that give it an individualist character. These include the presentation of Centrelink as a business subject to market - like forces, in the construction of Centrelink customers as individuals requiring personalized service and choice in product range, and in the focus upon innovation through technology. It is significant that in this individualist account there is actually very little direct reference to individual incentives of staff, customers or politicians.

The presentation of Centrelink as a business throughout the argumentation occurs with direct references to it as a business operating in a contestable environment and in the focus upon customer service. The fact of existing competition is presented as a motivation for staff to perform and keep their business and enhance customer service (Vardon, 1998: 4). Other ways in which arguments about market like forces are being used to promote the agencies activities include statements about prices and the use of benchmarking in the organization, for example:

During a recent benchmarking study we identified those offices which are leading the way in productivity...as a result of this study we have established a national productivity target for the end of 1999 based on the existing performance of our top offices (Vardon, 1998:4).

It is being suggested that these price signal and competition arrangements will ensure that Centrelink will perform.

Individualist themes also appear in the argumentation through the description of customers and customer service more generally. Centrelink customers are described as individuals freely choosing their products and requiring *personalized* tailored services. In the discussion of technological applications, for example, it is stated that "Centrelink is moving down a path where our customers can update their own data, *choosing* the time and place that this happens themselves" (Vardon, 1998: 6) or, we are "giving customers greater choice of access" (Vardon, 1998:12). Both of these statements reflect a bias for arrangements in which the individual has some freedom to choose preferred products and satisfy their own self-interest.

A third feature of the argumentation that perhaps reflected an individualist bias was the emphasis upon technology throughout argumentation. This is used to demonstrate the speaker's willingness to use a number of bold applications to innovate and offer more choice to customers. It reflects a kind of unbridled enthusiasm for always trying something new and is consistent with the individualist way of life's focus upon solutions and always seeking techniques to get better (Hendriks, 1996:62). Some of the ways in which technology is presented as a solution and innovation for the agency are:

Centrelink is moving towards the electronic gathering of customer data by exploring new technologies and industry best practices, and trialing methods which allow customers to have entry in to Centrelink payment systems... (Vardon, 1998:5).

Finally, there is another feature of the argumentation that I have been unable to ascribe to a particular way in life, in part because it has not been mentioned by various commentators on grid group cultural theory. This is the argument that the delivery focus of Centrelink will enable policy makers to learn from delivery and thereby improve policy. Given that this argument suggests a bottom up approach to policy making, it maybe interpreted as reflecting a low grid argument. It is also expressed in the document using egalitarian sounding words like mutuality, although to support the business contract between the agency and departments. Vardon states:

...One of the consequences of Centrelink delivering services to similar customer groups is that we not only help our clients with improvements to service delivery but we are also able to assist with policy feedback. In addition, we are in

a position to observe two different departments working with the same customer group and the need for them to more closely align their policies (Vardon, 1998:8).

### 7.7.3 *GGCT and Connecting Government: Whole of government responses to Australia's priority challenges*

The arguments in this document correspond most with the favoured themes and watchwords of the hierarchical way of life, although some individualist and egalitarian themes can also be identified. Consistent with the hierarchical way of life there is reference to the broader problems of society as expressed in statements about the complexity of some policy issues and a central role is ascribed to the government for defining solutions in matters of crisis (MAC, 2004:17). These statements are, however, limited to certain kinds of situations and no broad commitment is made to steering society. Instead, a whole of government approach is presented as having a project like character that should only be applied “when there are clear benefits” to be made (MAC, 2004:1).<sup>30</sup> Various options for pursuing whole of government are identified and advice on best practice is given. These features of the argumentation which emphasize *tailoring* whole of government arrangements to particular problems, as opposed to some systematic view of the administration may be interpreted as more consistent with an individualist way of life, despite the other hierarchical features of the document.

Hierarchical elements in the argumentation can be discerned from the central role ascribed to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in coordinating whole of government arrangements. Although it is recognized that other departments have an obligation to promote whole of government, the document clearly identifies a key role for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Similarly a hierarchical bias is present in the repeated reminders that the administration is required to be responsive to ministers and the government. These themes are expressed in statements such as:

...the centre of government – the Prime Minister and Cabinet – is playing an increasing role in coordinating whole of government responses and prioritising whole of government issues (MAC, 2004:12)

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<sup>30</sup> One exception is in the presentation of cabinet arrangements as exemplary of a long standing tradition of whole of government or rather coordination in Australia. This is part of showing whole of government as an enduring feature of the administration. It does not include statements about cabinet steering society, however, nor does it play a central role in the best practice advice for the case studies discussed.

More generally, the preference for, or at least maintenance of vertical management, as opposed to horizontal management, can be ascribed to a hierarchical way of life.

Similarly, the concern for maintaining clear lines of accountability in whole of government arrangements is consistent with the hierarchical way of life. In statements about cross-departmental agency arrangements (such as Centrelink), indirect references to accountability can be discerned from the emphasis upon clear role definition. This is expressed as follows:

At the heart of best practice for agency arrangements is the careful definition of the task, agreement on the respective roles and resourcing, attention to legal powers or constraints....(MAC, 2004:38)

In accounts of budgetary and governance frameworks for whole of government it becomes clear that the preference for clear roles is also related to being able to ascribe costs in a *transparent way* which is consistent with an individualist way of life (see Hood, 2003:113).

Another theme in the document that may be ascribed to the hierarchical way of life, is the emphasis upon early planning. Planning fits with the hierarchical bias for obtaining more managerial grip over the problems facing the administration. It is a term featured in most chapters of the report and would seem to be the key to success in all cases of whole of government arrangements, even though these arrangements are said to be suited to complex policy issues, and thus, less amenable to early and clear planning. Below is an example of how planning is described as promoting the success of frontier agencies:

A key to the successful creation of a frontier agency is in early planning. Planning should focus on inculcating a new set of values related to the new agency's charter and could encompass physical co-location, single IT financial systems and staff development work to develop a new culture and set of values relevant to the new agency's charter (MAC, 2004: 41).

The need for planning is also used throughout the documentation to justify the role of central agencies, such as the Department of Finance and Administration, to guide whole of government initiatives at an early stage (MAC, 2004:75).

Finally, the argument that frontier agencies have been created to provide neutrality and expertise in the coordination of contentious issues (MAC, 2004:39) can be interpreted as indicative of the hierarchical way of life. This is because hierarchists are most likely to put their trust in expert knowledge to resolve the problems facing government and society.

As has already been noted, an individualist bias in the argumentation may be discerned from the perspective that there are *various options* for addressing whole of government arrangements. This is reflected in the analysis of different kinds of structures that may be instrumental to whole of government goals, as well as different kinds of budgetary arrangements (chapter 2 and chapter 5). A citation not previously mentioned actually expresses this best:

A whole of government orientation and capacity to work collaboratively does not imply a 'group think approach'. Indeed, the application of diverse perspectives on particular issues is an important element in providing good policy advice to government (MAC, 2004:47).

Other individualist themes include brief mention of the desire to be able to provide tailored services to customers (MAC, 2004:1) and in arguments that consolidation of services will promote cost savings and efficiency (MAC, 2004: 36). It is noteworthy that in the account of "cross departmental partnerships agency arrangements", which includes Centrelink, the language changes to referring to such arrangements as providing *organizational flexibility* rather than coordination (MAC, 2004:36). Another individualist theme in the argumentation is the recommendation that incentives and rewards be adopted to promote whole of government behaviour (MAC, 2004: 14). In the chapters I have analyzed this was given only fleeting reference, although it plays a more prominent role in the chapter on culture (chapter 3).

Egalitarian themes and arguments emphasising mutuality and participation were more fleeting in the argumentation but may be ascribed to the identification of consultation as important in promoting whole of government initiatives. This occurs in the first chapter of the report when describing the history of whole of government in Australia. It is stated:

Until the 1990s many integrated initiatives were top-down, focusing upon policy coherence. In the last few years there has been a new suite of whole of government projects aimed at coherent delivery of support to communities, regions and individuals, with an emphasis on community consultation and participation (MAC, 2004:8).

More generally the use of terms such as collaboration, cooperation and horizontal management throughout the document all promote the view that the speaker is interested in processes and forms of organisation that embrace mutuality. As has been discussed in section 6.6.11 above, these kinds of adjectives are generally used to apply to arrangements affecting the elite of the administration such as within cabinet or between departmental secretaries (see also



MAC, 2004:28). The references to the importance of informal relationships, however cursory, can also be interpreted as indicative of the presence of some egalitarian themes. Criticisms of past policies such as devolution are presented in egalitarian ways such as pointing to its consequences for collaboration (as opposed to coordination). This is expressed as follows:

There is some risk, however, that devolution of authority to agency heads and clear vertical accountability of agency outcomes may make collaboration across organisational boundaries more difficult (MAC, 2004: 6).

It should be noted that this argument is also immediately countered by the speaker in observing that devolution may also provide the *flexibility* for finding *innovative solutions* to whole of government problems.

Finally, as in the second document analyzed in this chapter, there is reference made to the capacity of both Centrelink and executive agencies to provide feedback to policy makers in order to improve policy. This can be interpreted as a low grid argument for *bottom up* policy making. In chapter 1 for example it is noted that bringing together policies and programs is a challenge for many agencies, particularly given conditions of complexity, and that;

One of the solutions is to try to form feedback loops between service delivery and the policy process to unlock the lessons learnt in service delivery (MAC, 2004:10).

Similarly, getting “feedback on program design” (MAC, 2004: 38) is one of the best practice tips listed when using agency arrangements such as Centrelink, while in presenting the former executive agency the Australian Greenhouse Office it is stated:

By bringing together the major greenhouse programs, it ensures that policy learns from implementation experience and that the total effect of Australia’s efforts to constrain emissions can be accounted for (MAC, 2004:39).

In contrast to other statements in the document that the administration is to be responsive to central government policies, these statements suggest some leeway for central government to be responsive to the policy and delivery problems encountered by the administration. They indicate some egalitarian themes in the document.

## 7.8 Conclusion: The translation of agency reform in Australia

Official accounts of agency reform in Australia comprise statements about both Centrelink and the creation of executive agencies. Statements about Centrelink have constructed it as a *one stop shop* consolidating functions and thereby promoting *personalized* customer service and efficiency. The use of technology within Centrelink has also been prominent in official talk which has described it as an innovation promoting customer service. In the early years of Centrelink's creation, its business like character was most prominent in the agency accounts as expressed in descriptions of its *contestability*, *brands* and *outlets*. More recently, however, this terminology has subsided with greater emphasis being lent to the way it integrates services and facilitates *whole of government*. While consolidation of services was always identified as a feature of Centrelink, in the early years it was part of a business like feature while later it has been part of coordination more generally. It is significant to note that while providing *seamless, tailored* customer service and using information technology have remained features of the official talk describing Centrelink throughout the period studied, this has been accompanied by shifts in emphasis from it being new and unique, to being an example of a long standing Australian tradition. Alternatively, the few statements that I have been able to analyze about executive agencies have emphasized their neutrality and expertise. They are presented as having a special status distinct from normal departmental structures, although their uniqueness may only be temporarily necessary, as the speaker identifies a preference for permanent or enduring structures.

In the documents I have analyzed, the separate or semi autonomous status of Centrelink has not played a particularly prominent role in showing it to be a desirable arrangement. It was mentioned fleetingly in early documents to indicate its unique business like status, and in the third document to show it as an example of *organizational flexibility* enabling the integration of services. Instead, at least in the early years of Centrelink's creation, it has been the autonomy, or rather independence of Centrelink's customers that has been more prominent. On the other hand, the separate status of executive or rather frontier agencies is used in accounts to demonstrate their neutrality. The main arguments constructing agency reform in early statements about Centrelink can be listed as follows:

- Centrelink offers a unique and new service delivery model;
- The consolidation of services promotes personalized customer service;
- The consolidation of services promotes efficiency;
- The consolidation of services promotes ease of access to customers;
- The consolidation of services enables policy to learn from delivery;
- Contestability will promote the attainment of high levels of customer services; and
- The creation of Centrelink has been part of battle against 'dependency' upon social security.

In more recent accounts of the *whole of government* priority in Australia, Centrelink and executive agencies have appeared as examples of organizational forms to promote coordination across government. This has been expressed in statements identifying *integration as at the heart of Centrelink* and *frontier agencies as quintessential whole of government* arrangements. The kinds of arguments accompanying these accounts of agency reform have included:

- Successful coordination to respond to complex problems requires direction from the centre of government;
- The administration has a statutory obligation to be responsive to cabinet and government;
- Devolution of management freedoms presents risks to successful coordination and collaboration;
- Devolution enables innovative responses to be made to complex problems;
- Uniform financial systems are necessary for cooperation and coordination;
- Financial incentives and rewards promote whole of government behavior;
- Centrelink is exemplary of a long standing tradition of coordination in Australia;
- Consolidation through organizations such as Centrelink promotes ease of access to customers;
- The separation of frontier agencies from departments promotes neutrality and thus the ability to manage contentious issues;
- The special purpose character of frontier agencies have enabled expertise to be consolidated thereby also pro-

- moting an ability to manage contentious issues and speak with one voice about them; and
- Specialization of delivery into one agency (Centrelink or executive agencies) provides the opportunity for policy to learn from implementation.

From the statements and arguments presented in this chapter, both continuities and discontinuities can be observed in the official meanings associated with agency reform. The discontinuities are not only related to shifts in the official rhetoric about agencies but also in the type of agency (Centrelink or executive agencies), being discussed. For Centrelink, the continuities in meaning have included its consolidating character, purpose to promote efficiency and customer service, although its contestability and unique business-like character have disappeared, or were discontinued with the rise of *whole of government* priorities. For executive agencies, I have only been able to present statements from one point in time and these have highlighted their separateness for the purposes of expertise and neutrality. In both cases, irrespective of whole of government, the role of agencies to feedback their particular delivery knowledge to policy was identified. In addition, with the whole of government priority, both agencies have been presented as part of a *connected* administrative apparatus responding to central government demands and policy complexity. This was not a feature of earlier statements about Centrelink which was presented as existing almost solely for service delivery, its customers and business opportunities.

### 7.8.1 *The rules of speaking*

The official accounts describing Australian agency reform analyzed in this chapter has been produced by quite different speakers, and in different forms such as in a speech or advisory committee report from within the administration. Nevertheless, they have all sought to attain credibility for their arguments by demonstrating concern for the Australian community as a whole through, for example, references to how Centrelink represents a commitment to a responsible community (Howard, 1997) and regional areas (Vardon, 1998), and how whole of government initiatives, including Centrelink and executive agencies, are part of pursuing Australia's national priority problems (MAC, 2004). Customer service issues, whether expressed in terms of easy access (Howard, 1997) or tailored services (Vardon, 1998; MAC, 2004) have also consistently

been used to demonstrate that agency arrangements are good for the Australian community in general. The construction of a universal audience that seeks and demands good customer service is continually present. In all of these accounts the speakers adopt a simple, direct style of speaking, with few technical terms, although, as will be discussed further below, business consultant jargon is prominent in the speech by Centrelink's then director, Sue Vardon. There is also little attempt to use scientific evidence as expressed through applying theories or justifying selection of cases, and when references to these things do occur in the third document, it is in a pragmatic way rather than seeking to demonstrate application of an explanatory system. To this extent the knowledge being embraced by the speaker is matter of fact about what constitutes *best practice*, and even rejects an ethos that adopts specialist vocabulary.

The kinds of particular audiences being constructed by the speakers in the different documents vary considerably. The speech by Prime Minister John Howard is primarily concerned to emphasize, even stimulate concerns of taxpaying voters, while that of Sue Vardon's focuses upon demonstrating fluency in the language of business consultants. Her presentation of Centrelink as a business appeals to an audience that embraces primacy of the private sector, a view that was being propounded by the Australian government at that time (see Halligan, 2000:52). Both speeches also include some reference to the staff of Centrelink, recognizing their efforts, as well as identifying the career benefits likely to follow from the creation of Centrelink. The construction of this audience may be interpreted as operating both to applaud and motivate Centrelink staff, as well as to signal to outsiders that it would be incorrect to think that they are being disadvantaged from Centrelink's organizational arrangements. Finally, in the Management Advisory Commission document, the speaker is constructing the particular audience of managers within the administration, as well as appealing to the opinions of the higher echelons with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, including the Prime Minister himself. These appeals are evident in the specific addresses to managers which seek to advise them of the available strategies that the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet recognize as promoting whole of government.

The conditioning of the audience, or rather pathos of Australian rhetoric about agency reform shifts from provoking emotions about the individual, whether it be as a *hardworking* tax payer, *de-*

*pendent* beneficiary or *personalized* customer to provoking emotions about a unified response to complex policy problems. In the first two documents, agency reform or rather Centrelink is conceptualized as a business enabling the audience to accept that it can address public dissatisfaction and promote customer service. This conceptualization also legitimates a focus upon the value of customer service itself and the primacy of individual enterprise as opposed to dependence. Good feelings about Centrelink are stimulated by celebrating its business - like character as indicated by references to its contestability, brand and outlets. In the third document, it was the challenges of complex problems, the tradition of executive control, as well as the knowledge of leaders and experts that made coordination an important feature of agency arrangements and the context in which they work. While the earlier documents emphasized the unique features (qualitative loci) of Centrelink, it is the Australian tradition of coordination (quantitative loci – the enduring) that is used to enable the audience to see that agency arrangements are a good thing. Irrespective of whether it was to promote the values of business or coordination, the locus of difficulty was always prominent in Australian accounts of agency reform, which conditioned the audience to see it as good because it responded to challenges.

Australian accounts about agency reform relied primarily upon logos based upon the structure of reality or that structures reality. There was limited application of quasi-logical argumentative techniques and when this occurred it was arguments by definition and comparison that were used. In both the second and third documents, for example, definition was used to describe respectively the key drivers of customer service and the whole of government priority. The effects or motivations for agency reform were usually always argued using the technique of the causal link or the pragmatic argument. These relied upon the reasonable belief that Centrelink would promote efficiency or the executive agencies would be able to respond to contestable policy issues because they are specialist and neutral. Both the techniques of unlimited development and argument by authority appeared in the second and third documents. These were used to demonstrate that Centrelink would continue to improve its *business*, that the outcomes budget was being continually refined and that government initiatives were good because they adopted information technology and relied upon academic knowledge about best practice in the UK. Alternatively, in the first document it was the credibility of the person John How-

ard, through the technique of the person and the act, which was being used to convince the audience that Centrelink was a sensible reform. The metaphors used in the documents included *efficiency*, *tailored*, *seamless* and *personalized* services, *best practice*, as well as, *broadening*, *integrate* and *whole of government*. It is significant to note that while there were changes in the metaphors across all the documents, *tailored* services remained a metaphor in the third document, together with somewhat contrary metaphors such as *broadening* or focusing upon *whole of government*.

### 7.8.2 *The cultural features of official accounts*

The cultural character of Australian rhetoric consistently corresponded with some of the favored themes of the individualist way of life, although in the third document this was secondary to the prominence lent to hierarchical themes and arguments. A shift could be observed in the period studied from sole reliance upon individualist themes to describe administrative arrangements (hierarchical themes were noted in the description of social security policy in the first document) in the first two documents, to rhetoric that borrowed from all three active ways of life, but where hierarchy was most prominent. The consistent presence of individualist themes and arguments was however still evident in the repeated attention to the satisfaction and expectations of customers in all the documents, and with the identification of efficiency as an effect of Centrelink. Alternatively, the greater presence of hierarchical themes in the third document was expressed in, among others, arguments about the need for central coordination from the executive and with the identification of expertise in frontier agencies to resolve contentious issues. In contrast to Centrelink, there were only hierarchical themes associated with frontier or rather executive agencies in the documents studied.

Themes and arguments reflecting an individualist bias in the rhetoric included references to the satisfaction of customers, the provision of *personalized* and *tailored* services, the consequences of consolidation in Centrelink for efficiency, the conceptualization of Centrelink as a business in a *contestable environment*, the emphasis upon innovation and technology, and, references to incentives and rewards for *whole of government* behavior. In the third document analyzed, an individualist bias can also be ascribed to the shopping list account of available options for best practice, whole of government approaches. This is consistent with narrow accounts of the problems facing the public sector, rather than a principled view

about the relationships between government and society, and it was also maintained even when recognizing the complex problems facing society. In accounts of structures such as Centrelink and executive agencies, these options were considered forms of *organizational flexibility*. Another feature of the whole of government document that may be attributed to an individualist bias was the desire for transparent cost and outcome structures for individual units. Most of the argumentative techniques used to present individualist themes were based upon the structure of reality or sought to structure reality. Pragmatic arguments and the causal link were used to demonstrate efficiency and the authority of information technology was used to show the audience that Centrelink was an innovation. In addition, the technique of unlimited development was used in convincing the audience that Centrelink would continue to improve its customer service and that the outcomes structure of the (whole of government) budget would be continually refined. The kinds of metaphors that were used in the first two documents, where individualist themes were the most prominent, include traveling metaphors, *efficiency*, a *human face*, as well as, *personalized*, *tailored* and *seamless* services. The locus of the unique was also used to support these individualist themes.

Hierarchical themes and arguments in the rhetoric included the subordination of the administration to the political sphere, the need for central coordination, as well as the emphasis upon clear roles and early planning. These kinds of arguments were expressed in statements about the obligation of the administration to respond to the executive and in the consequences of good planning and clear role definition for successful whole of government arrangements. They all appeared in the third document which was primarily characterized by arguments based upon the structure of reality and arguments that structure reality, although quasi-logical techniques seeking to show conformance to whole of government best practice could also be identified. The example of coordination in the UK was used to establish the rule that central coordination was legitimate, while the causal link was adopted to demonstrate that early planning and the expertise of frontier agencies will promote whole of government success. The metaphors used in the document which explicitly support these kinds of arguments included *whole of government*, seeing the *big picture*, *broad*, *integrate*, *balancing*, *strong*, *sharpening* (responsibilities), *vertical management* and *key* priorities. Other metaphors that appear in the document include *flexibility*, *transparency*, as well as *tailored* and *seamless* services.



A few egalitarian themes and watchwords are also present in the third document in statements about the desire for more horizontal coordination, collaboration and cooperation. It can also be associated with references to informal relationships. The most important group blame in the document, that uses egalitarian terms emphasizing mutuality, is the recognition that devolution of authority to individual units has the risk of hindering collaboration. This may be interpreted as an argument featuring an egalitarian bias. It uses the technique of the causal link, which is based upon the structure of reality. A metaphor in the document supporting mutuality includes references to the desire for *horizontal management*.

### 7.8.3 *The relationship between official accounts and the scenes of use*

The Australian cultural context has been diagnosed as highly individualistic and this corresponded with the cultural flavor of the accounts used to construct agency reform. In particular, appeals to the Australian universal audience consistently articulated a commitment to tailoring or personalized customer service, even in the third document when hierarchical themes were prominent. The view of society as composed of atomized groups of customers and taxpayers can also be related to the liberal welfare state tradition of Australia and its small scale of public welfare by comparison to Sweden and The Netherlands. It also reflects a political tradition that conceives of political engagement in instrumental terms, e.g. to get something out of it, rather than for other democratic values.

Other features of the accounts that may be ascribed to the scenes of use described in this chapter included the predominance of speech presentations by individual actors such as the Prime Minister and the Director of Centrelink itself. Aside from legislative and audit documents, these were the only kinds of official documents that could be identified for describing the Centrelink reform, and even these were after it was introduced. Similarly, there were also only limited documents providing accounts of executive agencies, with their appearance being a side role in the document analyzed rather than something requiring great explanation. Both these features of the accounts, the possibility for individual actors to construct the reform for their own purposes and audiences without reference to any established official blueprint, as well as the lack of substantial justification for the reform, are consequences of the political system in Australia. The executive is not required to provide detailed justifications for their reforms, except for by introducing new legislative arrangements in a parliament in

which they have the majority in the lower house. Finally, the prominence of arguments based upon the structure of reality in Australian accounts may be associated with the adversarial political system in Australia that thrives on short sharp one-liners, rather than detailed principled analyses.

## 8 Comparing official agency talk: the influence of context or story?

(a)t väsentlig *steg* redan tagits mot ett styrssystem som mer riktar uppmärksamheten mot verksamheternas mål och resultat (SOU 1985:40:63).

[that essential *path* already taken *towards* a steering system that directs more attention towards the activities' goal and result. *My emphasis*]

Het beheer bij de rijksoverheid is volop in ontwikkeling. Op de fundamenten die sinds 1985 met de operatie comptabel bestel zijn gelegd, wordt in dit rapport verder gebouwd (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991:I)

[Management within the central government is *developing* in abundance. The foundations that were laid in 1985 with the operation accounting system, are *further built* upon in this report. *My emphasis*]

This stage, which we have just completed, involved setting up the organization itself, defining and *moving toward* personalized service and establishing business opportunities (Vardon, 1998:8 *My emphasis*).

### 8.1 Introduction

In the previous empirical chapters, detailed analyses of official agency accounts in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia were presented, together with some initial observations about the role of the national *scenes of use* in shaping these accounts. Agency constructions would appear to vary significantly across the countries from being an *accountable* alternative to ZBOs in The Netherlands, to promoting democracy (in one way or another) in Sweden, to promoting customer service in Australia. The durability and mix in the cultural flavor of these national accounts also varied across country and time. In this chapter it becomes possible to compare not only the differences in official agency accounts, but also to identify similarities. Patterns in differences and similarities across high group consensus cultures *vis a vis* low grid consensus cultures provide further evidence of the role of the *scenes of use* in shaping official accounts. Alternatively, similarities in agency accounts across all cultural contexts would indicate that there has been an agency story traveling independent of context.

This chapter will first return to the cultural character of official agency accounts in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. In section 8.1 I will compare these cultural flavors as well as the network of statements that have supported them. This enables an initial evaluation of the limits of national official discursive formations

and their differences and similarities. *National styles of speaking* will then be analyzed further in section 8.2 by assessing the durable features of ethos, pathos and logos in the different cultural political, administrative contexts. In section 8.3 I will return to the cultural and political administrative features of the national scenes of use and these will be compared. This will include a comparison of the forums from which officials have described agency reform, the actual speakers delivering accounts and their audiences. Correspondence of the cultural flavor of talk with the cultural context will be checked and discussed. Together with *national styles of speaking* this section will enable an evaluation of the role of the cultural political and administrative context in shaping official agency accounts. In section 8.4 the analysis will shift to a consideration of the influence of cultural stories upon official talk. It will describe and compare ethos, pathos and logos when the three of the active ways of life featured in agency accounts and they way these rules of speaking changed when shifts in cultural flavor occurred. It will be shown that there have been similar individualist and group stories traveling across cultural contexts but that these have been embraced to different degrees in the countries under study. High group stories have featured more in high group consensus contexts while individualist stories have featured more in the low group adversarial context. Finally, in section 8.5 an analysis will be presented of the way that national styles of speaking and the rules of telling culturally flavored stories have interacted to produce official agency accounts. The chapter will then be concluded in section 8.6 with the observation that while there have been some striking similarities in official agency talk the differences have been extensive, significant and durable.

## **8.2 The cultural character of official agency accounts and their network of statements**

The national official accounts of agency reforms analyzed in the previous chapters have revealed a plethora of statements about agency reform, the conditions and motivations for its introduction, and the kinds of benefits it is to bring about. It has been noted that in each country different preoccupations featured in official agency talk such as accrual accounting and ministerial accountability in The Netherlands, the constitution and democracy in Sweden and customer service in Australia. Some durability could be observed in the cultural character of official agency accounts in each of the

countries. In both Australia and Sweden this was observed in the consistent presence of respectively individualist themes and arguments, and hierarchical or high group themes and arguments. Dutch accounts were characterized by some rotation in the prominence of the individualist and hierarchical ways of life over time. The cultural mix of themes and arguments in each of the official documents in each of the countries are presented in table 8.1. The first cultural type identified in each box, was more strongly represented, or rather more numerous in the document analyzed.

**Table 8.1.** An overview of the national official documents and their cultural character

<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<i>Verder bouwen aan bebeer</i>  Individualist, hierarchical some egalitarian	<i>Politisk styrning - administrativ sjähständighet</i>  Hierarchical, some egalitarian watch- words	<i>Prime Minister's speech at the launch of Centrelink</i>  Individualist
<i>Verantwoord verzelfstan- dingen</i>  Hierarchical, individua- list, some egalitarian watchwords	<i>Regeringen, myndigheter- na och myndigheternas ledning</i>  Hierarchical, indi- vidualist, some egali- tarian watchwords	<i>Three stages towards an evolving model</i>  Individualist
<i>Verder met resultaat</i>  Individualist, hierarchi- cal, some egalitarian watchwords	<i>I medborgarnas tjänst</i>  Egalitarian, hierarchi- cal, individualist	<i>Connecting government</i>  Individualist, hierar- chical

In order to make an initial evaluation of the similarities and differences in the official agency accounts and their cultural character, it is useful to map out and compare the main national statements. A comparison of the national network of agency statements enables the identification of the different national limits of official agency talk and the discursive formation in which similarities have occurred. It can also aid further insight into the different rhetorical situations in which official agency accounts have been produced. In the following sections I will present an overview of the main official agency statements across the countries. Given the wealth of

statements collected, I have distinguished between those that refer to the relationship between the political and administrative sphere, statements regarding internal administrative arrangements, and those characterizing the relationship between the administration and external actors.

### *8.2.1 Statements describing the relationship between politics and the administrative sphere*

The statements describing the relationship between politics and the administrative sphere included concerns about the appropriate roles of actors within these spheres and statements about ensuring accountability. I have also included statements regarding the broader goals of the political-administrative system.

Compared to the other countries, it is the wealth of statements about the relationship between politics and the administration in Sweden that becomes immediately apparent. Although sometimes adopting different interpretations, many of the Swedish statements used constitutional prescription (formal rules) to describe the appropriate relationship between, and roles of, the political and administrative sphere. These included prescriptions about agencies' subordination to the political sphere and their independence. In stark contrast to the other countries, Swedish agency accounts included recommendations for very clear and direct political action to intervene within the administrative sphere, such as through budgetary steering (whether precise and detailed or overarching) and the active recruitment of agency general directors. In The Netherlands, agency reform was also presented as desirable because of the possibility of ministerial intervention into agency activities, but no specific kinds of arrangements for doing so were identified. Further differences between Sweden and the other countries included references to the broader goals (such as legality, democracy and effectiveness) that should govern the entire political-administrative system. There were also statements about actors in the political sphere being able to make better political decisions on the basis of agency budgetary reporting in Sweden.

In all of the countries reference was made to the importance of accountability and the claim that agency reform could in some way promote or protect this. There were however important differences in the way that agency reform or arrangements would protect accountability. For example in The Netherlands it was stated that the mere presence of agencies, unlike ZBOs, within departments was enough to ensure the protection of ministerial account-

ability. This was because there would be no legal barriers to ministerial intervention. Particularly in *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen*, but also in other Dutch documents, distinctions between organizational type and its consequences for accountability were repeatedly mentioned. Furthermore, the Dutch stated that more content would be given to ministerial accountability through agency reform since performance information would be reported to parliament and ministers would have to be answerable for this. A similar kind of statement was also observed in Sweden, although it was the government that was to be made accountable to parliament for the achievement of agency goals in the budget. In Australia, the term accountability only appeared in the third (not speech) document *Connecting Government* and compared to the other countries, was conceived in more narrow ways such as ensuring the clear attribution of costs within the budget. There was no concern about holding the government or a minister accountable for Australian agency activities.

A second similarity across all the countries, although again expressed in different ways, included statements regarding the subordination of the administration to the political sphere. These statements were presented together with concerns about political accountability, particularly in Sweden and The Netherlands. As already noted above, the Constitution played an important role in defining the relationship between the political and administrative sphere in Sweden. In all Swedish documents there was recognition that the administration was subordinate to the government, although only in *I medborgarnas tjänst* was this presented as sometimes being in conflict with subordination to the law. The contesting interpretations of constitutional prescriptions in the Swedish documents meant that sometimes subordination to the law was seen as overriding subordination to the government. In The Netherlands references were made to the *primacy of politics* to express the desire for the administration to act in accordance with the *commands* of ministers. The preference for agencies over ZBOs was part of the desire to ensure that the administration could be made to do what ministers instruct. In Australia, the relationship between the political sphere and administration was described primarily in *Connecting Government*, where it was said the administration was required by law to be responsive to the government. In table 8.2 an overview is presented of the main statements referring to this sphere in each country.

**Table 8.2.** A comparative overview of statements about the relationship between the administration and the political sphere

<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lines of accountability between agencies and ministers are transparent because agencies remain within the ministerial departments.</li> <li>• Agencies are more accountable to ministers than ZBOs, because unlike ZBOs, there is no legal barrier preventing intervention in agency operations.</li> <li>• The reporting of agency results gives the parliament greater insight into agency products and services, and, requires ministers to be accountable for these.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The constitution prescribes agencies as subordinate to the political sphere.</li> <li>• The constitution presents no hinder to the active and precise steering of agencies by the government.</li> <li>• Since the government is responsible to parliament and parliament to the people, it is a necessary condition of democracy that the government actively steer agencies and have a clear oversight of their activities.</li> <li>• The constitution prescribes only limited independence to agencies in specific applications of the law, but these laws can also be overridden by government legislation.</li> <li>• Agencies have acquired independence that exceeds constitutional prescription.</li> <li>• The constitutional basis for agency independence is to guarantee legality, agencies are therefore subordinate to the government but also the law.</li> <li>• The government should set overarching goals for particular sectors rather than individual agencies, in order to avoid the risk of fragmentation.</li> <li>• Increasing the effectiveness of the administration promotes democracy and democratic institutions.</li> <li>• Effectiveness taken too far will have negative consequences for democracy and legality.</li> <li>• Requiring agencies themselves to propose areas for savings will provide a better basis for political decision-making.</li> <li>• More time in the budget will promote better reporting from agencies and better political decision-making.</li> <li>• The active recruitment of director generals and changes to their tenure will ensure compliance to political intentions.</li> <li>• Informal relations enable politicians to identify their intentions to the 'sensitive ear' of administrators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The administration is required by law to be responsive to the executive.</li> <li>• Establishing clear lines of accountability in whole of government arrangements is desirable and requires the maintenance of distinct accounting units in the budget.</li> </ul>



The main similarities and differences in official agency statements regarding the relationship between the political and administrative sphere are presented in table 8.3. It is noteworthy that most of the statements describing the relationship between the political and administrative sphere in official agency accounts supported hierarchical themes and arguments about steering and political control. The exception was reference to agency reform promoting individualist financial accountability through outcomes budgeting in Australia.

**Table 8.3.** Similarities and differences in statements about the political and administrative sphere

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency reform promotes accountability (N, S, A)</li> <li>• The administrative sphere is subordinate to the political sphere (N, S, A)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political accountability in N, S versus financial accountability in A</li> <li>• Organizational type promotes accountability, N</li> <li>• Constitutional prescription, S</li> <li>• Political steering through budget and recruitment, S</li> <li>• The administration subordinate to the law, S</li> </ul>

N = The Netherlands, S = Sweden, A = Australia

### 8.2.2 *Statements regarding internal arrangements within the administrative sphere*

Official agency accounts describing internal arrangements within the administrative sphere included statements about agency reform promoting efficiency and cost consciousness and, by contrast, statements in Sweden and Australia about the risks of individual performance for the administration as a *whole*. In The Netherlands and Australia, there were also statements about exposing agencies to forms of competition. I have included a statement from Australia regarding policy learning from delivery in this section because it was presented, briefly in the documents *Three stages of an evolving model to a One Stop Shop - Challenges at each stage* and *Connecting Government*, as if rational feedback would occur within the administrative system (eg. between agencies and departments) without any political influence or consequences. In some ways this statement is similar to a Swedish statement in the section above about budget reporting improving political decision making since both recognize the capacity to learn from the administration. In Sweden, however,

this was conceived of as part of clarifying the relationship between the political and administrative sphere, since agency reporting was to provide political actors with a better capacity to make priorities in the budget. Alternatively, in Australia feedback loops between delivery and policy were generally presented in stories about improving delivery and customer service and (apparently) had nothing to do with politics. In table 8.4 an overview of the statements describing the internal arrangements in the administrative sphere are presented.

**Table 8.4.** Statements regarding the internal arrangements within the administrative sphere

<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<p><i>More freedom</i> to make financial decisions will (unlike cash based accounting) enable managers to make more efficient decisions.</p> <p>New <i>more flexible</i> financial arrangements will (unlike cash based accounting) enable financial incentives to be introduced to encourage more efficient decisions.</p> <p>Accrual accounting enables the calculation of cost prices, thereby promotes cost consciousness and provides the means for identifying financial incentives.</p> <p>Benchmarking of performance promotes efficiency.</p>	<p><i>More freedom</i> to managers in pursuing overarching goals will promote effectiveness.</p> <p>Introducing interest sanctions and returns into the financial system will promote cost consciousness.</p> <p>The delegation of freedoms and focus upon individual performance may lead to behavior that does not promote the whole of the administration.</p> <p>Market influences upon employment conditions have reduced civil servant's independence and their commitment to public values and traditions.</p>	<p>Contestability promotes keeping business</p> <p>The consolidation of services promotes efficiency.</p> <p>Devolution of management freedoms presents a risk to successful coordination and collaboration.</p> <p>Financial incentives and rewards promote whole of government behavior.</p> <p>The consolidation of services enables policy to learn from service delivery.</p>

As is evident from the table, in all countries official agency accounts were composed of similar statements about agency reforms promoting efficiency or effectiveness. Indeed, in The Netherlands and Sweden, this was identified as one of the primary benefits of their agency reforms. It was stated that the autonomy granted to

agency managers through new financial and budgetary systems would bring about more efficiency and effectiveness. In Australia, Centrelink (but not executive agencies) was also argued to promote efficiency but this was presented as a consequence of the consolidation of a range of services into one organization. The presentation of Centrelink as a business with *brands, outlets and customers* overshadowed such matters of efficiency in Australian accounts, but at the same time made it possible for the audience to see it as a taken for granted part of *keeping business*. Statements that efficiency would be a consequence of agency reforms can therefore be considered a similarity across the countries although for different reasons and with higher degrees of prominence in The Netherlands and Sweden, as opposed to Australia.

Related to the priority of efficiency, in both The Netherlands and Sweden, a second similarity can be noted in statements made about financial measures promoting cost consciousness. In The Netherlands the calculation of unit costs for agency products was said to promote cost consciousness and thereby efficiency, while in Sweden statements were made about the introduction of interest rate rewards and sanctions upon the financial accounts of agencies promoting cost consciousness. In Sweden, these sanctions and rewards can also be interpreted as introducing incentives for good financial behavior within agencies, while in The Netherlands there were also other kinds of incentives for good performance proposed. For example, in *Verder bouwen aan beheer*, it was suggested that agencies be able to keep their efficiency wins and in *Verder met resultaat* financial rewards and sanctions for individual performance were identified as means for promoting results orientation (Ministerie van Financiën, 1998:28). In the Swedish documents there were no references to individual financial incentives to promote efficient behavior. In the Australian documents about Centrelink, price per service was also mentioned although this was again part of doing business rather than specifically attaining efficiency or productivity. There was no mention of financial incentives for staff in the documents describing Centrelink although they were to be motivated and become customer orientated through training courses and career opportunities. Alternatively, in the *Connecting Government* document financial incentives were identified as a means for promoting *whole of government* behavior in Australia. A third similarity in the statements about internal administrative arrangements therefore includes the reference to financial incentives

in all countries, but only individual financial incentives in The Netherlands and Australia.

A fourth similarity between Dutch and Australian accounts, but not the Swedish, was the inclusion of statements about competition. In both cases the references were brief and with little description of how competition had been used. For example the Dutch evaluation document *Verder met resultaat* found that the use of bench marking and quasi-market arrangements could explain improvements in the efficiency of agencies, although little information was provided about which benchmarking arrangements. Alternatively, in Australia, Sue Vardon announced in her speech *Three stages of an evolving model to a One Stop Shop* that contestability would promote Centrelink's ability to keep customers. Again there was no information provided about alternative providers of Centrelink's services and the statement was made within the broader story of Centrelink as a real business not a government organization.

A fifth and contrasting similarity to many of the above-mentioned statements, were the references in Sweden and Australia to the possible negative effects of agency reform for the administration. In both countries the granting of freedoms to agencies, and in Sweden the focus upon individual agency performance, was said to have presented a risk to achieving benefits for the whole of the administration and for coordination. These statements appeared in the most recent documents analyzed in Sweden (*I medborgarnas tjänst, 1997*) and Australia (*Connecting Government, 2004*), and followed earlier statements about the various benefits of agency reform for efficiency and performance. They were also presented in accounts that identified the need to be able to respond to complex issues in an international policy environment. In both countries they constituted a shift from earlier arguments about agency reform, although in Australia such statements appeared together with the recognition that organizational flexibility through agency arrangements could also promote the capacity to identify innovative solutions to complex problems.

Differences in official statements describing the way agency reform effected internal administrative arrangements occurred primarily in Australia and Sweden, with all the statements in The Netherlands having some similarities in one or both of the other countries. In Australia, distinct statements were made about organizational flexibility promoting the ability of the administration to respond to complex issues, and about their agency re-

form/Centrelink constituting the consolidation of services. In Sweden, distinct statements were made about the effects of market values within the administration reducing civil servant independence in agencies and the commitment to public values.

An overview of the similarities and differences in official statements about internal administrative arrangements are presented in table 8.5. It is noteworthy that many of the statements regarding the impact of agency reform upon internal administrative arrangements, and particularly financial or business arrangements, provided evidence of an individualist cultural flavor in official accounts. The exceptions were group blames upon market values in Sweden and upon the risks of an individual agency focus for coordination and cooperation in Sweden and Australia.

**Table 8.5.** Similarities and differences in statements regarding the internal arrangements within the administrative sphere

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency reform promotes efficiency or effectiveness (N, S, A)</li> <li>• Autonomy granted to managers will bring about efficiency/effectiveness (N, S)</li> <li>• Cost prices will promote cost consciousness (N, S)</li> <li>• Individual financial incentives will promote performance (N, A)</li> <li>• Forms of competition eg. benchmarking to promote performance (N, A)</li> <li>• The focus upon individual agency performance and delegation presents the risk of fragmentation (S, A)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidation of services will bring about efficiency (A)</li> <li>• Organizational flexibility may promote the attainment of innovative solutions to complex problems (A)</li> <li>• Market values have brought about a threat to civil servant's independence and commitment to public values (S)</li> <li>• No individual financial incentives (S)</li> <li>• No mention of competition (S)</li> <li>• No fear of fragmentation with internal autonomization (N)</li> </ul>

N = The Netherlands, S = Sweden, A = Australia

### 8.2.3 *Statements regarding the relationship between agencies and the external environment*

Official accounts of agency reform were also composed of some statements about the relationship of agencies with their external environment. These only appeared in Sweden and Australia, with Dutch official references to actors or events outside of the political administrative system being either completely absent or mentioned very briefly through references to customer satisfaction indicators

in *Verder met resultaat*. Statements regarding the relationship between agencies and the external environment were most prominent in Australia where both customer service and the creation of executive agencies to manage contentious policy issues such as environmental problems were identified. There was also one reference to agency reform promoting citizen's access to government, although little explanation was given to how this was distinct from customer access in Australia. Another statement about agency reform specific to Australia was the role of Centrelink in eradicating dependency on social security. In responding to contentious issues, the separation of executive agencies in Australia was constructed as promoting their neutrality and enabling the administration to speak with *one voice* to the external environment. An overview of the statements about the relationship between the administration and the external environment are presented above in table 8.6.

**Table 8.6.** An overview of statements regarding the relationship between the administration and external actors/ environment

Sweden	Australia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies require sufficient independence to respond to the demands of citizens and their democratic right to influence the conditions affecting their wellbeing.</li> <li>• The independence of agencies promotes legality in decision making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidation of services promotes ease of access to customers and citizens.</li> <li>• Devolution provides organizational flexibility to respond to complex issues.</li> <li>• The creation of Centrelink has been part of the battle against <i>dependency</i></li> <li>• Separation of executive agencies promotes their neutrality</li> <li>• Separation of executive agencies from departments promotes the ability to manage contentious issues.</li> <li>• Special purpose character of executive agencies consolidates expertise and enables them to speak with one voice about contentious issues.</li> </ul>

In Sweden, most statements about actors and the environment external to the political administrative system occurred in the document *I medborgarnas tjänst*. This document challenged (hierarchical) conceptions of democracy in earlier Swedish accounts of agency reform and argued that sufficient agency independence was necessary to enable the administration to respond to citizen desires and give them influence. There were also statements about the inde-

pendence of agencies promoting the legality and fairness of decisions made about citizens. To this extent, statements about the relationship between the administration and the external environment in Australian and Swedish accounts were entirely different. They also supported both high and low group cultural themes.

#### 8.2.4 *An initial evaluation of similarities and differences in official agency accounts*

This initial overview of statements about the official accounts of agency reform in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia reveal different networks of statements. Differences in the degree to which certain kinds of official statements constituted all of what was said about agency reform in the different national documents can be clearly distinguished. It can be observed that Dutch official agency accounts have been almost exclusively focused upon internal administrative arrangements, Swedish accounts have been primarily concerned about the relationship between the political sphere and the administration, while Australian accounts have lent greater focus to relationships between the administration and external actors. Such differences were also apparent in the stronger emphasis given to the hierarchical way of life in Swedish accounts where there was more focus upon political steering and constitutional rules. Alternatively the individualist way of life was stronger in Dutch and Australian accounts where there was respectively almost exclusive focus given to internal administrative arrangements in The Netherlands and both internal and external administrative relationships in Australia.

Yet there were still other similarities observed in the statements produced. These included a hierarchical emphasis upon political accountability and steering in Sweden and The Netherlands and group concerns about the consequences of agency reform for coordination and cooperation in Australia and Sweden. In The Netherlands and Sweden there were a number of similarities in the individualist descriptions about their financial reforms, such as claims they would promote agency performance through cost consciousness and greater managerial autonomy. While in The Netherlands and Australia individualist similarities also occurred with references to competition and individual financial incentives. Finally, in all countries the individualist way of life appeared in claims that agency reform would promote efficiency in one way or another. I will return to these similarities when assessing the rules of telling culturally flavored stories in section 8.5.

### 8.3 National styles of speaking: the link to context

The durable rhetorical features of national agency accounts can be ascribed to the context in which these accounts have been constructed. This is because similar patterns in rhetorical strategies over time, irrespective of the speaker, suggest a typical way of speaking in a particular context. In this study the durable features of official agency talk across the countries have been labeled their *national styles of speaking*. The role attributed to context in determining this style is strengthened when patterns in rhetoric can be identified across the high group consensus/low group adversarial divide. Indeed it can be shown that similar rhetorical strategies were adopted in the high group consensus cultures *vis a vis* the low group adversarial cultures, although there were also some important distinctions between Dutch and Swedish official talk. As will be shown below the high group consensus contexts consistently embraced more group themes than the low group context and less individualist themes. In addition they favored political values, a more scientific ethos and quasi-logical argumentative techniques over time. These rhetorical features sustained the high group, and more particularly hierarchical flavor, of their official agency accounts. Alternatively, private sector values, a more informal way of speaking together with more arguments based upon the structure of reality were characteristic of agency talk in the low group adversarial culture. These features sustained the stronger presence of the individualist flavor in Australian official agency accounts. In both Sweden and Australia, the consistent character of ethos, pathos and logos over time could be quite clearly associated with particular GGCT flavors. This was most strongly reflected in the construction of their universal audiences and in the repeated patterns of their pathos. By contrast, Dutch rhetorical features were less consistent over time, making the diagnosis of a national style of speaking more difficult.

#### 8.3.1 *Similarities and differences in the ethos of official agency accounts*

The universal audiences constructed by the speakers in each country were different. In the Netherlands the speaker sought to give agency reform broader appeal by expressing concern for ministerial accountability and through assuring the audience that its findings had been the outcome of consultation with *speaking partners*. Alternatively, in Sweden the universal audience was consistently



constructed through demonstrating a commitment to democracy, as well as knowledge of the Swedish institutional arrangements and history. In both cases the universal constructions could clearly be associated with national political and administrative features, such as a strong tradition of ministerial accountability or agencies with constitutional status, and there was a commitment to public or political values. By virtue of their consistent presence in both Dutch and Swedish official documents, the replication of social science principles in justifying case study selection (in The Netherlands) or in identifying political theories and concepts (in Sweden) may also be interpreted as the speaker seeking to establish universal credibility in these high group consensus cultures.

In Australia, the universal audience was constructed in all the documents by reference to tailored customer services as a primary desire of the Australian people, there was little discussion of actual administrative arrangements. Academic evidence was also used in the third Australian document *Connecting Government*, but in a more user-friendly way than either the Dutch or Swedish accounts. In contrast to the Dutch or Swedish documents, there was no attempt to demonstrate a scientific rationale for statements about agencies in any of the Australian documents and the speakers adopted fairly simple, direct language, demanding little intellectual effort from their audience. In table 8.7 a comparison of the universal audiences of official accounts in each country is presented. The black italicized words represent the similarities of respectively public values and scientific rationales in the high group consensus cultures.

**Table 8.7.** Ethos – the universal audiences compared

<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<i>Ministerial accountability (public value)</i> Consultation	<i>Democracy (public value)</i> Political and administrative history	Customer service (private sector value)
<i>Scientific rationale</i>	<i>Scientific rationale</i>	Simple and direct approach

All of the differences in universal audiences indicate that making agency reform appear good and acceptable required the construction of a different community of minds in each of the countries. In the high group consensus cultures there was a patterned commitment to public values and scientific logic. In the low group adver-

sarial culture, Australia, there was much less reference to the public nature of agency reforms and instead private sector values featured together with an informal way of speaking.

Against the background of the cultural flavors found most consistently to characterize agency talk over time in each of the countries, it is useful to reflect upon how these might correlate with the construction of the universal audience. Indeed one of the advantages cited for combining GGCT with the New Rhetoric was the link that could be made between the broader political character of a national context and the universal audience (see section 4.3). In the Netherlands, reference to consultation and speaking partners clearly corresponds most with the mutuality themes favored by egalitarians. This was given cursory reference in two of the Dutch documents. By contrast, ministerial accountability is more difficult to situate according to the ideal stories identified in chapter 3. At the level of the government and political cultural context individual ministerial accountability has been associated with the individualist way of life in this study, however in Dutch official agency accounts it has been used to describe the relationship between the political and administrative sphere. More specifically it has featured in hierarchical stories about political control of the administration and to this extent has consistently supported the presence of hierarchical themes and arguments in Dutch agency accounts. Therefore it can be said that ministerial accountability has constituted a hierarchical feature of Dutch official accounts although it is likely that it has been its ambiguity that has enabled it to provide universal appeal. After all ministerial accountability represents a number of broad political ideals inherent to many democratic systems. Indeed one cannot help but wonder if it is applicable to a range of cultural contexts and thereby all three active GGCT ways of life. This aside, consistent reference to the hierarchical advantages of ministerial accountability and to *egalitarian* speaking partners would indicate some correspondence with diagnoses of Dutch culture although it is the hierarchical flavor, rather than egalitarian flavor, that has been more prominent in the construction of the universal audience.

In Sweden the universal audience was constructed as committed to democracy and historical accounts of the Swedish political and administration. While democracy was identified as an egalitarian watchword in chapter 3, like Dutch ministerial accountability, it more often supported hierarchical stories about political control and role differentiation in Swedish agency accounts. It is also a

rather broad idea with an ambiguous character that clearly enables it to capture universal appeal, rather than one way of life. Alternatively, the consistent presence of historical accounts in Swedish official documents is more easily reconcilable with a strong group commitment. It sought to construct a collective memory about the origins of Swedish institutions and to legitimate concerns for far reaching and distinct public values. The academic nature of the analyses (as reflected in the use of theoretical categories from political science) gave the speaker an expert character. Indeed in both the Netherlands and Sweden a similar expert voice was achieved and used to attain credibility through the expression of commitment to scientific rationales. Hood has argued that an expert ethos is typical of the hierarchical way of life. As in The Netherlands, these features of Swedish ethos correspond most to the hierarchical way of life rather than the egalitarian culture, which was rated higher in both countries. Nevertheless it can still be said that the universal audiences in both high group contexts exhibited a high group cultural flavor. The cultural diagnoses of the universal audiences are presented and compared in table 8.8.

**Table 8.8.** Comparing cultural diagnoses and predictions with the universal audience

	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Political culture</b>	Egalitarian/Hierarchical	Egalitarian/Hierarchical	Individualist
<b>Durable cultural flavor of <i>ethos</i></b>	Hierarchical/Egalitarian expert	Hierarchical expert	Individualist motivator
<b>Hood's characterization ethos</b>	Authority figure	Authority figure	Individual battling collective pressures
<b>Universal audience</b>	Hierarchical/Egalitarian	Hierarchical	Individualist
	Ministerial accountability	Democracy	Customer service
	Scientific ethos	Scientific ethos	Informal, simple & direct
	Speaking partners	Political/administrative history	

In Australia, the universal audience was consistently constructed as committed to customer service. This is an unambiguous individualist theme, matching the highly individualist Australian political

context, which was presented in a very informal way. The speakers consistently adopted the character of a motivator rather than scientific expert. Patterns observed in the construction of the universal audiences across high group consensus context and low group adversarial contexts were not replicated in the construction of particular audiences. Indeed, some similarities in this category were observed between both high group consensus contexts and low group adversarial contexts. In all countries a particular audience of managers was constructed.

Among the most striking similarity across high group consensus contexts and low group consensus contexts was the construction of a particular audience of management consultants in The Netherlands and Australia. In the Dutch evaluation document *Verder met resultaat*, the Australian document *Three stages to an evolving model to a one stop shop*, and, to a lesser extent, *Connecting Government*, the speakers sought to motivate managers with consultant speak and best practice guides. Terminology throughout the documents included *learning by doing*, identifying the *key drivers*, *best practice* and finding *quick wins*. It was characteristic of these documents to make some reference to administrative heroes or champions that were “seeking their farthest limits”, and, to provide their readers with summarized self-help tables or boxes. Another consistent feature of these documents was reference to the provision of other guide books available from the speaker on the matters being discussed. The second Swedish document also sought to provide practical solutions to the problems of managers but it never adopted the same overt business consultant tone.

A second similarity observed in both The Netherlands and Sweden was the construction of a particular audience of finance or accountancy experts in the Dutch document, *Verder Bouwen Aan Bebeer*, and in the budget chapter in the Swedish document, *Regering, myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning*. The speaker demonstrated their financial expertise through use of technical financial and budgetary terms and quite detailed accounts of the working of the systems and their steady refinements. It was also typical of these documents to focus upon the problems in the financial system and how they could be made more effective or efficient and results orientated. The identification of financial incentives for improving financial decision-making was another common feature of these texts in constructing the particular audience of finance/accountant experts. It is noteworthy to mention that while the budget was also

discussed in accounts of agency reform in Australia it was never presented in the same detailed or technical way.

Other particular audiences that were constructed in both Swedish and Australian accounts included the staff or civil servants within agencies themselves, and citizens. In both cases, however, the similar audiences of civil servants/staff was still characterized differently. In Australian documents, the speakers gave special recognition to Centrelink staff as hard working, providing valuable contributions and being offered career opportunities through agency reform. Alternatively, Swedish *stats tjänstemannen* (public administrators, literally state service men) were constructed in *I medborgarnas tjänst* as being burdened by the shifts towards private sector management practices. These were presented as a threat to the integrity of public administrators. Swedish civil servants were appraised for their ability to manage conflicting goals rather than career prospects. In contrast to the motivational pats on the back that the Australian Prime Minister and Centrelink director relayed to Australian staff, it was expert legal opinion and studies that were used to demonstrate the loss of integrity for *stats tjänstemannen* [civil servants, literally State Service Man], as well as the need for a distinctive conception of civil service work. With regard to the construction of the particular audience of citizens, it is observed that in Australia these were primarily identified as tax-payers, voters or consumers in their accounts of agency reform. The *Connecting Government* document made one reference to arrangements such as Centrelink enabling citizens to be more *in touch* with government, thereby recognizing some desirability for citizens to participate or at least be close to decision making. Alternatively in the Swedish document *I medborgarnas tjänst* citizens were identified as the primary actor for which the administration and democracy was to serve. In the Dutch documents, there were no references to citizens or customers in their constructions of agency reform, and only limited references to staff.

Specific to the Swedish documents was the construction of particular academic audiences that were familiar with political science, constitutional law and administrative history. This was reflected in the use of political science terminology and theories, and, in the accounts of Swedish administrative history. Although some of these features can be interpreted as part of the universal Swedish audience, in many cases, and especially in *Politisk styrning – administrativ självständighet* [Political steering – administrative independence], the detail of analysis was to satisfy a specialist. The provision

of statistical evidence was also prominent in the first and second Swedish documents and was then described over many pages with diagrams. This was in stark contrast to the business statistics presented in two or three sentences by Sue Vardon in her account of Centrelink's customer service approach. Specific to the Dutch accounts of agency reform was the construction of a particular audience concerned with the organization of internal government and the delineation of distinct organizational categories and arrangements. In table 8.9 an overview and comparison of the particular audiences constructed is presented. Where possible a cultural flavor is also ascribed to the characters constructed.

**Table 8.9.** An overview and comparison of the construction of particular audiences

<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Agency managers</b>	<b>Agency managers</b>	<b>Agency managers</b>
<b>Business consultant</b> (individualist)	Legal/pol history expert (hierarchical)	<b>Business consultant</b> (individualist)
<b>Financial expert</b> (hierarchical)	<b>Financial expert</b> (hierarchical)	
Organizational expert (hierarchical)	Citizen (egalitarian) Public administrators	Voter and customer (individualist) Agency staff

In contrast to the universal audience constructions, and with the exception of Sweden, the particular audiences constructed included cultural elements that had not been diagnosed as predominant in the different political contexts. Indeed, the construction of such a strongly individualist particular audience in the form of business consultants was surprising in the high group consensus context of The Netherlands.

*8.3.2 Similarities and differences in the premises of argumentation or pathos*  
The audiences in each country were in general conditioned by the speaker to accept agency reform through a range of different facts and values such as the wild growth of ZBOs in The Netherlands, the problem of agency independence and constitutional prescription in Sweden, and social security fraud in Australia. The most considerable differences were observed in the identification of values and the hierarchy of values. There were some similarities in the premises of argumentation across all the countries, or across different cultural contexts, as was reflected in the desirability of efficiency in all countries, and the problem of complexity in both

Swedish and Australian documents. In Sweden and Australia there was evidence of a durable pathos in the form of the loci that was consistently adopted to sensitize their audiences to agency reforms. The consistent adoption of these loci would suggest that they are part of the national style of speaking. As will be shown they corresponded respectively to high group and individualist themes. The Dutch were more ambiguous in their use of loci and lacked a favored qualitative locus over time.

The adoption of the values of efficiency or effectiveness was an important similarity across all the countries. This was used to present agency reform as a desirable solution. In addition official accounts in all countries made reference to the problem of accountability, which prepared the audience for thinking that agency reform could resolve such matters. Accountability was however used differently in the national documents. In the Netherlands and Sweden emphasis was upon improving ministerial or government accountability through agency reform, while in Australia it was to ensure clearer financial accounting units. Another premise that appeared in all countries was the presumption that governments or ministries would know how to steer or coordinate agencies. Such premises were apparent from claims that better performance or efficiency would be the consequence of agency reforms. It was most prominent in the presumptions of early Swedish documents which were preoccupied with government steering in general, as well as in the Australian document, *Connecting Government*, which emphasized the centrality of the cabinet and their role in leading and coordinating the administration.

In both Sweden and Australia the similar truth of complexity was used to sensitize the audience to the need for greater collaboration and coordination within and among agencies. This was to justify changes in agency arrangements that focused upon the *whole* of the administration. In *I medborgarnas tjänst* complexity was presented together with an emphasis upon inter-dependency, which unlike in Australia raised questions about the capacity of the government to steer. As will be shown in more detail below all of these similarities in the rhetorical features of agency accounts across different cultural contexts apply to particular kinds of cultural stories about agency reform.

In all the countries, and almost all the documents, both quantitative and qualitative loci could be identified. Dutch official accounts were distinct for the variation in the loci adopted over time. Agencies were presented both as new and *unique* in documents

published by the Ministry of Finance, interchanged with the Ministry of Home Affairs accounts which presented them as offering purely quantitative benefits such as *more* accountability and efficiency. Indeed this Dutch document, *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen* [Accountable Autonomization], provided the only example of premises that relied solely upon quantitative loci. Its exclusively quantitative focus could be explained because the speaker was seeking to convince the audience that agency reform was a means to preserve the convention of ministerial accountability, rather than being focused upon it as a change in the Dutch administration (see Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2003:85-87). The locus of the unique was also adopted in Australia to promote the introduction of Centrelink, but in Sweden the unique was used primarily to describe the Swedish administration as a whole rather than agency reform.

The Swedish rhetoric was distinct for its consistent use of the precarious or rather threat to democracy (or to public service values), in sensitizing the audience to the urgency of the reforms being proposed. This locus did not appear in any of the other countries. It was power structures such as the expansion of bureaucratic/expert power and organized interests in post industrial society that posed the threat to the government's *democratic steering*. Such a concern for power structures has been defined as egalitarian by Hood, nevertheless in the Swedish document these threats were to be kept at bay by more and precise hierarchical steering from the government. More generally concerns about threats to tradition or institutions have been considered a group concern by GGC theorists (Hendriks, 1996:60; Thompson et al., 1990:26). The egalitarian way of life for example has been typified as seeing vulnerability and collapse as eminent (see section 3.5.2). Similarly hierarchical societies have been described as needing to recall many reference points in the past to legitimate activity (Douglas, 1987:80). Both features were typical of Swedish talk. In addition the locus of timeliness was important in the early Swedish documents *Politisk styrning – administrativ självständighet, Regering, myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning*. It aided the speaker in demonstrating that the time for making changes to established relations between the politics and the administration was ripe. This occurred through references to the inability to change the relationship in earlier periods and with the acknowledgement that constitutional debate now made it possible in Sweden. In *Regering, myndigheterna en myndigheternas Ledning* the locus of timeliness was used in observing



that the changing environment of agencies had not (yet) been responded to with changes in the agencies (SOU, 1985:40, 31). In Australia, the locus of timeliness was also used in the document *Connecting Government*, but this was to show that the complex global world had made the need for “whole of government arrangements” “stronger than ever before” (MAC, 2004:9).

Contrasting loci such as that of the unique and the enduring were used in Australian documents to describe Centrelink. Nevertheless the Australian style of speaking was distinct from that in other countries for its consistent adoption of the locus of the difficult. This appeared in all of the Australian documents and was used by the speaker to show the audience that the reforms being described or proposed were good because they were difficult, or in the Australian words, a *challenge*. The challenge is a concern that can be deemed typical of descriptions of the individualist way of life which views the world as conquerable and presenting the creative individual with endless possibilities (Hendriks, 1996:61; Thompson et al., 1990:26, see also chapter 3). In contrast to high group contexts, the individualist society has been argued to have a weaker memory. “This must be so because the competition drives out some players and brings upstarts to the top, and with each change of dynasty, public memory gets rearranged” (Douglas, 1987:80). Arguably the locus of the difficult (challenge), and also of the unique, is instrumental to continually sensitizing the audience to different ways of doing things. The locus of the difficult did appear in the other countries such as in the Dutch document *Verder met resultaat* but never in the same consistent way over time.

Finally, it was only in Australia that the locus of the enduring was used to demonstrate that Centrelink was good because it was part of a long-standing tradition of coordination. While this was a call to tradition, the document only recorded a few examples since the beginning of the federation in 1900, the official beginning of Australian *national* political history. This was in contrast to the Swedish accounts describing arrangements since the 1600s. An overview of the main similarities and differences in the pathos of national agency accounts is presented in table 8.10.

**Table 8.10.** Comparison and overview of similarities and differences in the premises of argumentation.

	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Differences</b>	Facts about ZBO problem  Clear principles ensure order in practice	Facts about agency independence Constitutional prescription	Facts about social security fraud Dissatisfaction customers
Locus		Precarious (egalitarian)	The challenge (individualist)
<b>Similarities</b>			
<i>Truth</i>		Complexity	Complexity
<i>Facts</i>	Ministers know how to steer	Politicians know how to steer	Leaders know how to steer
<i>Values</i>	Efficiency Ministerial Accountability	Effectiveness Government Accountability	Efficiency Financial Accountability
<i>Loci</i>	Unique (individualist)	Timeliness	Unique (individualist) Timeliness
	Quantitative	Quantitative	Quantitative

8.3.3 *Similarities and differences in the techniques of argumentation or logos*  
 The techniques of argumentation adopted across the countries exhibited patterns across the high group consensus contexts and low group adversarial contexts. In particular, quasi-logical argumentation was more prominent in The Netherlands and Sweden, while arguments based upon the structure of reality more often characterized official agency accounts in Australia. This finding corroborates earlier observations about the kinds of *rational* information that is instrumental to consensus democracies and identifies a style of speaking which is distinct to those scenes of use (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002). In all of the countries, there were also metaphors observed which revealed both similarities and differences. Different metaphors included the term *verzelfstandigen* in The Netherlands, democracy, democratic steering, the *strong* state and organic metaphors in Sweden, and the more extreme business metaphors in Australia. Among the similar metaphors there was flexibility and traveling metaphors adopted in all countries, freedom and steering in The Netherlands and Sweden, transparency in The Netherlands and Australia, and, balancing, the whole and *sharpening* responsibilities in Australia and Sweden.

Quasi-logical techniques such as definition and comparison were used in documents produced in all of the countries, although as already mentioned, with different prominence. In the Dutch documents it was used to show that proposals for agency reform constituted a form of results management, and that the conditions for results had been achieved. It was also used to demonstrate that internal autonomization was a preferable and more accountable way to adopt accrual accounting within the administration. In Sweden, definition and comparison were used primarily to demonstrate that more precise steering of agencies from the political sphere would be consistent with constitutional prescription. Definitions were also enunciated in the document *I medborgarnas tjänst* where words such as fragmentation and legality were defined, as well as terms such as results orientated management. While multiple definitions often featured in the Dutch and all Swedish documents, they were only used in the last two Australian documents and then once or twice. In the speech about Centrelink's evolution definition and comparison were used to demonstrate that key drivers for customer service would ensure greater customer satisfaction and improvements in service delivery. Alternatively, in the *Connecting Government* document definitions of whole of government, as well as the features of the budget were presented.

The quasi-logical argument of the division of the whole into its parts was only applied in the Dutch and Swedish documents. This was used in The Netherlands to demonstrate that agency reforms constituted changes to the budgetary system at the micro level and did not disturb the macro principles of the system. It was also used to show the audience that the problem of choice for type of autonomization could be analyzed according to certain think step principles. In Sweden, the division of the whole and its parts was used to demonstrate that formally Swedish agencies were subordinate to the political sphere. It was used to show that proposals for agency reform constituted a change from detailed to overarching steering, thereby enabling more management autonomy for resource decisions, while still ensuring political responsibility for goal setting. Finally, Swedish accounts of agency reform also used the division of the whole into its parts to demonstrate the relationship between the values of democracy, effectiveness and legality, and the necessity of keeping these in *balance* when pursuing agency reforms.

Arguments based upon reasonable belief, or rather the structure of reality, were also applied in all of the countries. They included

arguments of authority, of unlimited development, and the pragmatic and causal link arguments. Arguments by authority were only identified in the Swedish and Australian documents and used respectively, the prestige of the constitution or academics, and the prestige of technology to persuade the audience that proposals for agency reform should be accepted. Significantly, the argument of unlimited development could be identified in all of the countries and was adopted when demonstrating to the audience that financial reforms or changes to performance measurement constituted continuous improvements. This, together with the use of the causal link to demonstrate that agency reforms would bring about more efficiency or effectiveness was among one of the most striking similarities in the argumentative techniques adopted across the countries.

Techniques that structure reality, and particularly metaphors which I will focus upon here, were identified in all of the documents constructing agency reform. Similarities in the metaphors adopted across all the countries included references to the *flexibility* of agencies or agency arrangements. In Sweden and The Netherlands, use was made of the terms *freedom* to enable the audience to associate their agency reforms with good, positive arrangements. In addition, both of these countries adopted terms such as *steering*, as well as *grip* and *command* in The Netherlands, to demonstrate that the *freedom* of agencies could still be controlled by the political sphere for purposes of accountability. In Australia, a similar kind of metaphor visualizing control could not be identified although in *Connecting Government* emphasis was placed upon having *strong* leaders and *strong* governance arrangements, but never a *strong* state as in Sweden. Only in Sweden was steering used not only with reference to the state but also to society.

Other metaphors adopted across countries include the use of the term *transparency* in The Netherlands and Australia. In The Netherlands this was used to show that clear organizational types would promote accountability, while in Australia it was used to show that the outcomes budget could facilitate clear lines of accountability. Another term to enable the audience to see that agency or whole of government arrangements are accountable in Australia included *sharpening* responsibilities. In Sweden and Australia the term *balance* was used to describe finding the correct relationship between the administration and the political sphere, as well as between values such as effectiveness and democracy in Sweden, while in Australia it was used to describe finding appro-

priate measurement systems that met parliament's needs as well as that of stakeholders. It was also used to talk about meeting appropriate levels of efficiency as well as providing *seamless* services. Both Sweden and Australia adopted the terms *broadening*, *mobility* and the *whole* to show that their administrative systems were responding to problems of complexity and the need for cooperation or coordination. The *whole* in Sweden was however used to refer to the administration as a whole, while in Australia it was used to speak about particular *whole of government* projects. Finally traveling metaphors could be observed across all the countries although they tended to be different kinds of traveling metaphors. In the Netherlands reference was made to *rigging up one's sails*, while in Australia it was *key drivers*, *being on the road*, and *leading the way* that emphasized the progress of their reforms. Some traveling metaphors were also identified in Sweden, although they were not as numerous, for example mention was made of *being on the path* and the term *modernization* was used to enable the audience to see that budgetary proposals were part of an ever evolving development. Finally, some similarities were observed in the dormant metaphors of efficiency or effectiveness in at least one of the documents in each of the countries.

Significant differences in the metaphors adopted could also be identified. In particular, the business metaphors used in Australia to describe Centrelink were extensive. They characterized its services as *brands*, its offices as *outlets* and social security beneficiaries as *customers*. The references to *personalized* and *tailored* services used in *Three stages of an evolving model to a One Stop Shop* and the *Connecting Government* document can be interpreted as part of the broader business metaphor that was used to promote agency reforms and activities in Australia. Neither of these terms appeared in either the Dutch or Swedish documents, nor was there more than a fleeting reference to the customer in the first Swedish document. There were also the metaphors of giving government a *human face* or *being in touch* with government in the Australian document, associating government activities with the features of a person. The business metaphors in particular gave Australian official accounts their strong individualist flavor.

By contrast, many of the Swedish metaphors were drastically different to business terms, and, included organic metaphors describing the state as *a tree* or civil service culture dissolving or literally being *watered down*. There was also the frequent use of the term democracy which I interpreted as a dormant metaphor in Swedish

documents because it was continually identified as a reason for agency reforms, but with very little account of what more democracy was or what consequences it would entail. Other metaphors distinct to the Swedish case included the intention to *map* the problems facing the administration, like a geographer or world conqueror. Together with the frequent use of the *steering metaphor* and references to the *strong* state, it can be said that Swedish metaphors gave a group flavor to their agency accounts, and more often a hierarchical flavor than an egalitarian flavor.

Finally, the most important and distinct metaphor in the Dutch case was the description of bodies at arms length from the administration as the activity of *autonomization*. This enabled the autonomy of agencies to be viewed as a controlled autonomy (Smullen, 2003), and also to distinguish it in favorable ways from external autonomization (ZBOs), since it was internal. In contrast to Australia and Sweden, it is more difficult to identify some distinctively Dutch character of the metaphors that were used in their documents, except for the contrasting nuances that are represented by the term autonomization itself, and the different traveling metaphors mentioned above. An overview of the logos of official accounts is presented in table 8.11.

**Table 8.11.** Comparison and overview of similarities and differences of national logos

	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Similarities</b>	Primarily quasi-logical	Primarily quasi-logical	
	Flexibility	Flexibility	Flexibility
	Traveling metaphors: rigging up sails	Some traveling metaphors: on the path	Traveling metaphors: on the road
	Some business metaphors		Business metaphors
	Steering	(Democratic) Steering	
	Transparency		Transparency
<b>Differences</b>			Primarily arguments reasonable belief
	Autonomization	Strong state	Outlets, brands
		Organic metaphors	Government as human face

The comparison of the rhetorical features of agency accounts in high group consensus contexts *vis a vis* the low group adversarial context strengthens evidence about the role of context in shaping official agency accounts. In particular, it has been shown that in both The Netherlands and Sweden (high group consensus contexts), the universal audience was constructed as committed to public values and a scientific rationale. In presenting themselves to the audience the speakers sought credibility by assuming an expert and elite character. They also always used quasi-logical argumentation. Alternatively in Australia, the low group adversarial culture, the universal audience was constructed as committed to the private sector values of customer service and the speaker sought credibility by being simple and informal. Australian speakers always adopted arguments based upon the structure of reality. In both Sweden and Australia it was possible to identify very clear national styles of speaking about agency reform over time. This was reflected in the expert speaker in Sweden, the pathos of the precarious (threat) and the predominance of quasi-logical argumentation. In Australia the national style consisted of an informal speaker, the pathos of the difficult (challenge) and the predominance of arguments based upon the structure of reality. The Dutch case has been more ambivalent with the speaker adopting both an expert and consultative character, the pathos also swung from the unique to quantitative loci and while quasi-logical argumentation was most prominent, arguments based upon the structure of reality were also frequently adopted. In table 8.12 an overview of the national styles of speaking in each country is presented.

**Table 8.12.** An overview and comparison of the national styles of speaking in official agency accounts

	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Ethos</b>	<b>Expert Mediator</b>	<b>Expert</b>	Personal Motivator
<b>Pathos</b>	Unique/ Quantitative	The precarious	The challenge
<b>Logos</b>	Quasi logical  <b>Control metaphors</b> <b>Business metaphors</b>	Quasi logical  <b>Control metaphors</b> Organic metaphors	Based upon structure of reality  <b>Business metaphors</b>

In table 8.1 above it was already noted that the durable cultural features of agency talk in each country exhibited a mix between hierarchy and individualism in The Netherlands, primarily hierarchical themes and arguments over time in Sweden, and primarily individualist themes and arguments over time in Australia. An examination of the national styles of speaking in each country also corroborates these cultural features of the official agency talk in each country. Expert speakers in both The Netherlands and Sweden are consistent with Hood's description of a hierarchical ethos, given the prominence of quasi-logical argumentation in these high group countries and its compatibility with an expert style, these argumentation techniques are also arguably typically of a hierarchical way of speaking (see section 8.5.2 below). The commitment by the Dutch speaker to consultation can be interpreted as an egalitarian feature of Dutch agency talk, while the mix of control and business metaphors highlights the mix of hierarchical and individualist argumentation. Aside from the already mentioned hierarchical features of Swedish ethos and logos, the Swedish pathos of the precarious (threat) can be interpreted as typical of an egalitarian narrative because of its focus upon power structures. The numerous control metaphors identified in the Swedish case also contribute to the hierarchical features of Swedish talk, although the organic metaphors are more difficult to define into a certain way of life. Finally the features of the Australian national style of speaking are all consistent with a strong individualist flavor, the informality of the speaker, motivational style, as well as the pathos of the difficult (challenge) and business metaphors all conform to characterizations of the individualist way of life. More generally, it can be said that group themes and cultural flavors such as the hierarchical have clearly been more prominent in the high group consensus contexts, while the individualist themes have been more prominent in the low group adversarial context. There has nevertheless been a substantial lack of egalitarian themes in all countries and most significantly in the high group cultures. The correspondence between the durable cultural flavors of agency talk and cultural political and administrative context are examined in the next section.

#### **8.4 Comparing the scenes of use: the correspondence between talk and context**

One of the explanations for the character of official agency accounts considered in this study has been the role of the scenes of



use, or rather the cultural political and administrative, context in shaping national agency talk. While the analysis thus far has been concerned with comparing the cultural flavor of official agency talk, the patterns in the national styles of speaking across high group consensus contexts *vis a vis* low group adversarial contexts would already indicate that context has influenced the kind of talk produced. It has been found that high group consensus contexts favored more group themes, an expert speaker, quasi-logical argumentation and control metaphors, while the low group adversarial context favored more individualist themes, a motivational speaker, arguments based upon the structure of reality and business metaphors. This would indicate that there is some correspondence between the respectively high and low group cultural character of the countries and the cultural flavor of their official agency accounts.

In addition, the more numerous individualist themes in Dutch official accounts *vis a vis* Swedish accounts, together with its more ambiguous (individualist/hierarchical) national style, may be attributed to the higher ratings of individualism ascribed to the Dutch context than in Sweden. It is however the lack of egalitarian themes in the high group, and more specifically, high egalitarian cultures that has been most surprising. As has been noted in both the Dutch and Swedish empirical chapters, this observation raises some questions about the relevance of the GGCT diagnoses of political culture to the administrative arrangements in these high group consensus countries. The correspondence between the cultural flavor of official accounts and national political culture are compared in table 8.13.

**Table 8.13** Correspondence between political culture and the cultural flavor of official accounts

	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Political culture</b>	Egalitarian/ hierarchical (individualism higher than Sweden)	Egalitarian/ hierarchical	Individualist
<b>Cultural flavor official accounts</b>	Individualist/ hierarchical some egalitarian watchwords	Hierarchical/ egalitarian some individualist themes	Individualist some group themes

In chapters 3 and 4 the GGCT proposition that social relationships and attitudes, as reflected in talk, are mutually reinforcing was presented. It was to provide a possible contextual explanation for talk since it was expected that the same prominence, or con-

stellation of ways of life of the political culture would also be exhibited in their national official agency talk. The way that the categories of grid or group applied to the political and administrative sphere was not always clear. Instead I tried to identify some structural features that appeared to correspond to the ideal descriptions of each of way of life, such as the consensus or competitive features of the political system. This approach was most difficult when assessing corporatist policy-making traditions or the structure of the administration, but I still remained open to the view that these features also reflected the broad political culture of the countries under study. Since such consistency in the cultural mix throughout the political administrative system would verify some of the grander claims made about the applicability of cultural mixes to different levels of scale (see section 3.5.3). The mix of contextual features that I identified in each country are presented and compared in table 8.14.

**Table 8.14.** Overview and comparison of the cultural and political administrative sphere

	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Culture</b>	Egalitarian/ hierarchy (More individualist than Sweden)	Egalitarian/hierarchy	Individualist
<b>Political system</b>	Consensus	Consensus	Adversarial
<b>Core executive</b>	Weak prime minister office  Strong min. accountability	Strong prime minister office (traditional status)  Collective Government	Strong prime minister office (status through competition)  Min accountability
<b>Policy style</b>	Corporatist	Corporatist (centralized and unified)	More pluralist
<b>Admin. structure</b>	Agencies marginal	Agencies dominate	Mix Centrelink significant in structure, Executive agencies marginal
<b>Agency status</b>	Accounting status	Constitutional status	Parliamentary statute

Furthermore it was thought that the concept of the universal audience would provide evidence of the broader political culture

being addressed since even when talk was produced in a smaller policy making community with its own cultural character, reference to the broader culture would still be apparent. To some extent this was observed in The Netherlands where the egalitarian theme of consultation was one of the (cursory) features of their universal audience. In Sweden this was less the case with the egalitarian watchword democracy being adopted primarily in hierarchical ways. In Australia there was clear correspondence between the universal audience and the strong individualist characterization of the political culture. Thus it can be said that the relevance of the apparently dominant culture in the political sphere was less important in accounting for agency talk in the consensus democracies than in the adversarial democracy. This refutes suggestions that the same kinds of cultural mixes will be replicated at lower levels of analysis. Nevertheless it was observed that other political administrative contextual features such as ministerial accountability or ZBOs in The Netherlands, and the constitutional status of agencies in Sweden were central themes in their agency talk. To this extent it was clear that context did play a role in shaping their official talk, although not because they were egalitarian features of the culture. Indeed the cultural character of agency talk in the high group consensus contexts would suggest that the rhetorical situations in which agency reform were constructed, particularly in the case of Sweden, were more hierarchical than the egalitarian diagnosis of the political culture.

The greater distinctions between diagnoses of political culture and the cultural flavor of agency talk produced in the consensus contexts are arguably not surprising given the tendency for a greater distance between the political and administrative spheres in consensus democracies. It was already noted in the Dutch chapter for example that de-politicization of issues was a common feature of political decision making and involved referring matters to an expert committee at a distance from the political sphere. This was functional to promoting a consensus style at the political level since party compromises could be made about what appeared to be politically neutral facts. An expert way of speaking, and according to GGCT a hierarchical ethos, has already been identified by political scientists as a typical way of speaking in consensus democracies (Andeweg and Irwin, 2002). In this study the rhetorical situations or forums in which agency reform was constructed were briefly described. There was a clear distinction between the high group consensus contexts and the low group adversarial context,

with the forums from which the speakers delivered their accounts in the former contexts being much further from the political sphere. In The Netherlands this included expert committees coordinated from within different departments, while in Sweden it was consistently the commission system which has generally been described as an independent policy making body. Both forums were addressing elite political actors.

By contrast, the speakers in the Australian case delivered their accounts from the apex of the administration, for example from offices equivalent to departmental secretary, or indeed in the case of the Prime minister from the political sphere itself. The actual audiences to the Australian forums included in at least two of the cases the general public. These features of the rhetorical situations in which agency reforms were constructed in high group consensus contexts *vis a vis* low group adversarial contexts clearly have implications for their relevance to the broader political culture. The closer the forum to the political sphere, such as in the Australian case, the more likely it is to reflect the broader political culture. It may be suggested that it is typical of high group cultures, and particularly egalitarian political cultures, to privilege policy forums at a greater distance from the political sphere. To this extent the cultural political context has played a role in shaping agency rhetoric in high group consensus contexts although this is not directly reflected in the cultural flavor of their agency talk.

In addition, the actual speakers that have been privileged to speak about agency reform in the different political cultures can also be argued to have shaped the cultural flavor of talk. It was observed that in the high group consensus contexts it was primarily groups of experts that were responsible for describing agency reforms while in the low group adversarial context it was more often politicized individuals. This can also be argued to have had implications for the expert or political flavor of the accounts. Furthermore the composition or character of the speakers changed to a greater or lesser degree in all countries. In the Netherlands it has been finance experts that have dominated agency accounts although other civil servants with different expertise were represented on the document published by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The changes in the speakers together with the forums from which they spoke, was also accompanied by changes in the cultural flavor of their talk. When financial officials dominated there was a more individualist cultural flavor to the agency talk. The composition of the speakers in Sweden also changed quite dramatically

over time. In the first document, *Politisk styrning – administrativ självständighet*, there were more parliamentarians (and some academics) present on the commission, while there were more financial experts from within the civil servants involved in the preparation of *Regeringen myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning*, and more academics involved in the preparation of *I medborgarnas tjänst*. As in The Netherlands when financial officials were prominent among the speakers in Sweden there were more individualist arguments. Swedish financial speakers never obtained the same dominance in the commission system, as Dutch financial speakers delivering accounts from the Ministry of Finance. Alternatively when political speakers dominated Swedish accounts there were more hierarchical themes and when academics spoke there were more egalitarian themes.

In Australia it can be said that all the speakers were political actors to the extent that they were either a member of government (the Prime Minister) or actors that obtained their function through political appointment. This is arguably a reason as to why the cultural flavor of their talk changed less dramatically over time. When there was a change in cultural flavor to more hierarchical arguments in Australia, this occurred when there had also been a change in the actual audience receiving the account. There was a change from an audience of the general public in earlier accounts to an audience of political elites in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in the third document *Connecting Government*. These observations would suggest that the scenes of use have influenced the cultural flavor of agency talk not only through the character of the broader political culture, but also through the rhetorical situations and speakers that they have privileged to describe agency reforms. If we consider the various rhetorical situations in each of the countries whereby it was primarily dominant expert speakers from different forums addressing political and administrative elites in The Netherlands, a mix of expert speakers addressing political and administrative elites in Sweden from the same forum, and different actual political speakers addressing primarily the general public in Australia, it is not surprising that they were respectively focused upon internal relationships, political and administrative relationships and external relationships (see section 8.2 above). In turn the rhetorical focus clearly had implications for the cultural flavor of talk. The forums, actual speakers and audiences addressed in official agency reform accounts are noted in table 8.15.

**Table 8.15.** Overview and comparison of the rhetorical situations

	The Netherlands			Sweden			Australia		
<b>Docs.</b>	Verder bouwen aan beheer	Verantwoord verzelfstandigen	Verder bouwen aan resultaat	Politisk styrning – administrativt självständighet	Regering, myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning	I medborgarnas tjänst	Prime Minister's speech	Three stages to an evolving	Connecting Government
<b>Forum</b>	Ministry Finance	Ministry Home Affairs	Ministry Finance	Commission system	Commission system	Commission system	Launch of Centrelink	Address to IPAA Conference	Management Advisory Board
<b>Actual Speaker</b>	Primarily financial officials	Mix of officials from different ministries	Primarily financial officials	Primarily politicians	Primarily financial officials	Primarily academics	Prime Minister	Director of Centrelink	Departmental secretaries & some agency Directors
<b>Actual Audience</b>	Administrative and political elites	Administrative and political elites	Agency managers, Administrative and political elites	Political and administrative elites, organized interest groups	Political and administrative elites, organized interest groups	Political and administrative elites, organized interest groups	Centrelink staff and general public	Practitioners and academics	Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet

The comparison of correspondence between the cultural political context and the cultural flavor of talk thus far would indicate that identifying the role of the cultural political and administrative context in shaping agency talk is more complicated in the high group consensus cultures than in the low group adversarial context. This is because the lesser prominence of egalitarian themes than hierarchical themes in the high group contexts has the consequence that direct correspondence between the predominant political culture and cultural flavor talk was not found. Indeed turning the GGCT proposition of mutuality around it can be said that the prominence of the hierarchical flavor in Swedish accounts and in the Dutch case the mix of individualist and hierarchical flavors of agency talk would indicate that they have been produced in contexts that are respectively hierarchical and hierarchical/individualist. Such a finding can be consistent with the diagnosis that Dutch and Swedish political cultures are highly egalitarian, if the political culture is distinguished from the culture of the rhetorical situations in which agency reforms have been constructed in these countries. Given their distance from the political sphere, it seems likely that the forums responsible for describing agency reforms in the high group consensus cultures *vis a vis* the low group adversarial contexts are more likely to exhibit a different cultural flavor than the political sphere. Indeed these egalitarian political cultures have previously been characterized as preferring more expert and thus hierarchical kinds of knowledge. In addition, the speaker would also appear to play a role in shaping the cultural flavor of talk. This was most apparent when finance officials spoke since in even in high group consensus contexts this led to more individualist stories. In the Dutch case the character of the actual speaker, such as financial officials, provides an alternative explanation for the cultural flavor of talk than the individualist ratings of the political culture. It can be argued that individualist talk was more present in The Netherlands than Sweden, and obtained its most vivid business consultant flavor in *Verder met resultaat* primarily because of the extent of the dominance of financial officials. Nevertheless it can still be said that the Dutch high group cultural context has played a role in shaping agency talk to the extent that it has privileged financial experts to speak. As in Sweden, it has also still produced more group themes in its official accounts than the low group adversarial context, Australia.

## 8.5 The rules exhibited by cultural themes: the role of stories

The comparison of the rhetorical features of agency accounts has thus far focused upon similarities and differences at the national level of agency talk. This has revealed some distinctive national styles of speaking that were durable over time in the countries under study. It has also been possible to identify ways of speaking that were typical of high group consensus contexts as compared to low grid adversarial contexts. While national styles of speaking can account for both similarities in agency talk across similar cultural and political administrative contexts and their differences to official agency accounts in different cultural contexts, they cannot account for the similarities observed in official agency talk across different contexts. These may be explained by similarities in the rules of speaking at the level of cultural themes and stories. Similarities in the rhetorical features of the same culturally flavored stories across different contexts would suggest that it is the stories themselves, rather than context that has been responsible for shaping official agency accounts. The rules of telling culturally flavored stories will be assessed by comparing the ethos, pathos and logos of the different ways of life when they appeared in the official accounts across the countries. It will also be assessed by analyzing how the rules of speaking changed when there were cultural shifts in official agency accounts. Such an analysis of the cultural stories provides the opportunity to assess Hood's suggestions for the ethos, pathos and logos (see section 3.6, table 3.5) that are characteristic of each way of life. These can be compared with the empirical findings observed in the countries under study. Findings of particular rules of speaking that are consistent for the ways of life across the countries would contribute theoretically to GGCT. This is because uncovering such rules would refine existing classifications of the cultural ways of life. I have only focused upon the three active ways of life in this section.

### 8.5.1 *The individualist way of life and rules of speaking*

Individualist stories were defined in this study by such themes as striving for efficiency, the use of (financial) incentives and cost prices, the introduction of competition and a focus upon customer service. As was noted in section 8.2 some of these themes were observed across all countries, although most were observed in Australia with greater frequency over time. Individualist stories



tended to focus upon internal relationships within the administration or relationships between the administration and the external environment. It is noteworthy that when individualist stories appeared in both The Netherlands and Sweden, the actual speakers delivering the accounts included a predominance of financial officials. In Australia, by contrast, individualist accounts were delivered by a range of different kinds of officials close to the political centre. There were some consistencies in the construction of the particular audience when telling individualist stories across the countries.

When individualist stories appeared in Sweden and the Netherlands they included a particular audience of financial experts. Given the description of the ideal stories used in this study, it can be said that these kinds of speakers were actually hierarchical, even though they may have presented some individualist themes. In other words the ethos was hierarchical but pathos and logos may have been individualist. In Australia and The Netherlands there was also a particular audience of business consultants constructed when individualist stories were told.

This business consultant ethos was observed in the documents *Verder met resultaat* and *Three stages to a one stop shop*, it exhibited an entirely different motivational tone to the other documents analyzed in The Netherlands. It was only in Australia that taxpayers, voters or customers were constructed as particular audiences to individualist accounts. In all the countries individualist stories also constructed a particular audience of managers and made some reference to their desire for different financial arrangements or *best practice* advice. Only in Australia was there some correlation between the construction of the universal audience and individualist themes, this entailed the construction of a universal audience committed to customer service.

The pathos of individualist stories also exhibited some similarities across the countries. In particular the locus of the unique was adopted in both The Netherlands and Australia to sensitize the audience to the individualist virtues of agency reform. Furthermore a very prominent self-help tone was used to motivate audiences through catchy slogans like *learning by doing* and with self help tips for best practice. In Sweden the pathos of the threat to democracy, or rather the precarious, continued to characterize the argumentation of Swedish documents, even when individualist stories were being propounded.

The most striking similarity in individualist stories across all countries was the adoption of more arguments based upon the structure of reality. In Sweden and the Netherlands, this was most strongly exemplified in the documents *Verder met resultaat* and *Regering myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning*, which both exhibited individualist themes. The argument of unlimited development was adopted in all countries to make individualist claims about agency reform attractive. This occurred when the speaker sought to convince the audience that organizational changes such as Centrelink, or changes to the financial system and performance measures in The Netherlands and Sweden, would constitute a further step in the continuous improvement of these arrangements. Similarly, the causal link or pragmatic argument was consistently adopted to show that efficiency or effectiveness would be achieved by the introduction of changes to agencies' financial or organizational arrangements. One exception to the observation that most individualist stories always adopted similar logos based upon the structure of reality was the use of the quasi-logical arguments of definition and comparison to assess customer service in Sue Vardon's account of Centrelink.

Similar metaphors could also be observed across the countries when the individualist way of life appeared in official agency accounts. In particular the term flexibility, as well as traveling metaphors about moving along a road, path or waterway were typical of individualist stories. In Sweden the term *modernization* was also used to make their individualist claims. While similar metaphors were adopted in all countries in order to accentuate the individualist possibilities of reform, they were far more encompassing in Australia. Australian individualist stories included a whole series of individualistic metaphors such as the provision of *personalized* or *tailored* customer service or the presentation of social security provision as having a *brand*. These kinds of metaphors made the association of Centrelink with a business so intertwined that it was difficult to conceive of it as anything else. Finally, it should be noted that *transparency* was a metaphor used to support Australian individualist stories about maintaining individual cost units in the assessment of budget outcomes, although as we shall see below, it is used to support hierarchical arguments in the Dutch case about distinct organizational types. Transparency clearly has been given different meanings in these contexts. In table 8.16 the rhetorical features of the individualist stories across the countries are compared with Hood's suggestions. There is some correspondence be-

tween the suggestions of Hood and the characteristics of the individualist stories observed in this study. In particular the traveling metaphors can broadly be associated with the idea of public management as an individual skill since they invoke questions about how the traveler is to manage their form of transport, identify directions and even short cuts. It is more difficult to identify correspondence between an ethos where the speaker presents him/herself as a loner battling collective pressures. The typical way that the business consultant presented him/herself in Dutch and Australian accounts was through encouraging individual motivational, for example both speakers identified heroes of management and used catch cries like learning by doing. In my analysis of the documents I have identified a self-help ethos in the texts but Hood has identified this as pathos.

**Table 8.16.** An overview and comparison of the rules of telling individualist stories across the countries

	<b>Hood</b>	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Ethos</b>	Lonely figure battling the collective	Financial expert (Hierarchical) Business consultant	Financial expert (Hierarchical)	Business consultant
		Managers	Managers	Managers
<b>Pathos</b>	Self help	The unique	The unique	The precarious
<b>Logos</b>		Continuous development	Continuous development	Continuous development
<b>metaphors</b>		Flexibility	Flexibility	Flexibility
	Public management as individual skill	Rigging one's sails	Taking the path	On the road

### 8.5.2 *The hierarchical way of life and rules of speaking*

Hierarchical stories were characterized by such themes as steering, planning, clear delineation of roles such as the separation between policy making and operations, and the application of formal rules. These stories tended to focus upon the relationship between the political and administrative sphere or upon the relationship with the external environment. Hierarchical stories appeared in the

Dutch documents *Verder met bebeer*, *Verantwoord verzelfstandigen*, the Swedish documents *Politisk styrning – administrativ självständighet*, *Regering myndigheterna en myndigheternas ledning*, and in the Australian document *Connecting Government*. In all of these, except for *Verder bouwen aan bebeer* where individualist arguments were also prominent, the argumentation included some reference to the need for agency reforms in the context of broader problems of society such as complexity or specialization, or given broad political principles or goals such as the primacy of politics and the position of government in relation to society. In both The Netherlands and Sweden hierarchical stories appeared in all of the documents irrespective of the membership of the commissions speaking. They were more prominent in The Netherlands however when the Ministry of Home Affairs was responsible for the report and when experts from a range of ministries were represented. In Sweden they were most prominent when the commission was composed of politicians while in Australia they were most prominent when groups of civil servants presented a report to their administrative superior, rather than the general public.

The ethos of hierarchical stories revealed the construction of similar particular audiences of experts in The Netherlands and Sweden. These included an academic audience, financial experts, or experts on the organization of government. By contrast, the particular audience constructed for Australian hierarchical argumentation was the politically superior office of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Hierarchical accounts featuring an elite expert audience were, in the most consistent and detailed ways, exhibited in the Swedish accounts with their long reports featuring extensive discussions of problem analysis, history of the administration, political theories and terminology. The ways of speaking in these reports and their very length did not make them accessible to a general public even though formally outside voices may be given opportunities to comment on the contents. The focus upon political history and theories can also be interpreted as concurring with the Swedish universal audience which was an audience committed to democracy and the constitution.

There was a tendency to adopt more quantitative loci when sensitizing the audience to hierarchical conceptions of agency reform across the countries. This was exemplified in the Dutch document *Verantwoord Verzelfstandigen* which relied solely upon quantitative loci to convince the audience that agencies were a superior means to ensuring the *primacy of politics* and protecting minis-

terial accountability. It was also evident in the Australian document *Connecting Government* which adopted the locus of the enduring when, in contrast to earlier accounts of Centrelink as unique, described it as part of a “long standing Australian tradition”.

The Swedish documents also provided a number of examples of *more is better* in their conditioning of the audience although they also used the locus of the precarious and timeliness to make their hierarchical arguments persuasive. Furthermore the premise that authorities such as the government, ministers or cabinet or department of finance would know how to steer or regulate agencies was a typical way that the audience was conditioned to believe that hierarchical solutions would be beneficial.

The adoption of hierarchical themes and claims were generally accompanied in all countries with greater use of the quasi logical argumentative techniques. This even occurred in Australia where quasi logical argumentation was the exception. Especially in the Dutch and Swedish examples of hierarchical accounts it was typical of the speaker to present proposals for agency reform within a system of arrangements such as micro changes to the financial arrangements while maintaining macro principles, or, ensuring that agency independence did not disturb the democratic chain of accountability to the people within Sweden. These kinds of themes, which were described to justify steering of agencies, used the quasi-logical argument of the division of the whole into its parts. Definition and comparison were also used in these countries to show that formal rules had been applied such as constitutional laws in Sweden or the conditions for obtaining agency status in The Netherlands. In Australia, where quasi-logical argumentation was rare, definition and comparison was used to show whether principles of best practice had been applied in case studies in the document *Connecting Government*. There were some exceptions to the use of quasi-logical argumentation to make hierarchical claims, for example the argument that informal relationships could be used to clarify the intentions of politicians to administrators in Sweden was based upon reasonable belief. This is however an exceptional example in itself because informal relations were considered an egalitarian theme in this study, although it was used in hierarchical ways in Sweden. For example to promote political control in *Regering, myndigheterna och myndigheternas ledning* and clearer lines of accountability in *I medborgarnas tjänst*. An overview and comparison of the rules of telling hierarchical stories across the countries is presented in table 8.17.

**Table 8.17.** An overview and comparison of the rules of telling hierarchical stories across the countries

	<b>Hood</b>	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Ethos</b>	Authority	Financial expert Organizational expert	Financial expert History expert	Business consultant (individualist)
<b>Pathos</b>	Teacher and pupils	More is better	More is better	The enduring
		The unique (individualist)	Timeliness	Timeliness
			The precarious	
<b>Logos</b>		Quasi logical	Quasi logical	More quasi logical
		Steering	Steering	Integrate <i>Connecting</i> government
	Public management as a captained team game		<i>Strong</i> state	<i>Strong</i> leaders (individualist)
		Internal autonomization	Whole	Whole
		Command	Balance	Balance
		Grip	Sharpening	Sharpening

The metaphors used to make hierarchical themes and arguments appealing across the countries also demonstrated similarities. These included the use of the terms *steering* in Sweden and The Netherlands, the terms *vertical* accountability in The Netherlands and Australia, and the terms *broad*, *sharp*, *strong*, *balance* or *imbalance* and *whole* to describe relationships within the administration in Sweden and Australia. In The Netherlands, distinctive metaphors to make hierarchical claims included *autonomization*, *grip* and *transparency*. In contrast to the use of transparency to describe the (individualist) relations between cost units in Australia, in the Dutch account transparency was used to describe clearly defined organizational types such as ZBOs and agencies. The most overtly hierarchical and group metaphors appeared in Sweden and The Netherlands with respectively terms such as the *strong* state, *steering* society, and in the Dutch case getting *command* and *grip* of the admini-

stration. There were few similar control metaphors identified in the Australian documents, the term steering never appeared and instead the speakers identified coordination and *integration* as important or the need for *strong* leaders. An emphasis upon leadership could also be consistent with the individualist way of life which features individual skill or advancement through competition (and skill).

There was clear correspondence between Hood's suggestion that the hierarchical speaker would present him/herself as an authority and the expert speakers identified in The Netherlands and Sweden. Again it is more difficult to comment upon the correspondence with the pathos of the teacher to a pupil and the emphasis upon quantitative loci identified in the hierarchical stories. The control metaphors however do encourage associations with Hood's descriptions of hierarchical metaphors describing the need for a captain to steer the ship or rather team.

### 8.5.3 *The egalitarian way of life and rules of speaking*

Egalitarian themes and arguments were assessed in this study as emphasizing participation, mutuality and informal contacts, as well as highlighting a concern for deliberation and power structures. Hood has also identified democracy as a watchword in egalitarian stories. These characterizations presented some problems because, as was shown in the Swedish chapter, apparently egalitarian themes like democracy or informal contacts were often used to support hierarchical solutions such as more precise and detailed political steering (see section 8.5.2 above). Similarly collaboration was an important theme in the Australian document *Connecting Government* but this was secondary to (hierarchical) coordination.

A second problem with assessing the rules of egalitarian stories has been their lack or only fleeting use across the countries. This provided only limited material for a comparative assessment, with most egalitarian themes appearing in the third Swedish document, *I medborgarnas tjänst*. Thirdly, there were some low grid and high group themes that could be consistent not only with egalitarianism but also the individualist or hierarchical way of life. At the conclusion of this section I will briefly point to these cases.

Egalitarian watchwords and themes were observed in the ethos of Dutch and Swedish accounts. The construction of the universal audiences in these countries alluded to egalitarian themes such as the commitment to consultation in The Netherlands and to democracy in Sweden. It has already been noted however that the

Swedish group commitment to democracy was ambiguous since it featured hierarchical solutions in two of the documents, such as greater political control. Nevertheless it can be argued that the Swedish speakers sought to attain credibility through the egalitarian baggage of the term democracy. The durability of these features in Dutch and Swedish accounts over time were ascribed to the national style of speaking in those countries. Changes in the construction of the particular audience, together with the adoption of egalitarian stories, also occurred in Sweden. In the document *I medborgarnas tjänst*, which featured the most egalitarian themes, the speaker adopted a more direct and informal style than in previous Swedish documents. The evidence to attain credibility was also composed of more interview material from managers than in previous Swedish documents.

In *Connecting Government*, the Australian document with some egalitarian themes, group constructions of the audience were most apparent in some changes in the universal audience. In contrast to previous documents this included a commitment to solving difficult national policy problems such as national security, together with a commitment to customer service. Egalitarian themes were most prominent in Sweden when academics dominated commission membership. They appeared in all countries, including Australia, when groups were speaking.

The sensitization of the audience to egalitarian stories relied primarily upon the premise of complexity in the policy environment in both Australian and Swedish documents. This fact was to move the audience to see the need for greater mutuality between agencies in the form of collaboration or more *horizontal* accountability. It was also the precursor to accepting group arguments, both egalitarian and hierarchical, that called for a greater focus upon the *whole* and for governance more generally. It is difficult to distinguish loci which were specific to egalitarian stories. This is because in *Connecting Government* the quantitative locus of the enduring was used, which I have interpreted above as typical of a hierarchical story, while in *I medborgarnas tjänst* it was the qualitative locus of the unique that was used to describe the distinctiveness of public sector tasks as opposed to private sector tasks. Both loci were adopted to promote collective traditions. In Sweden the pathos typical of national styles of speaking had some egalitarian traits. This included the locus of the precarious, or threat to democracy, as well as the threat to democracy from growth of corpo-



ratist or administrative power. A concern for power structures has been defined as typical of an egalitarian story.

Egalitarian themes and watchwords in the logos of accounts were most clearly adopted in the form of blame upon past individualist solutions. In both Sweden and Australia this occurred with the claim that the focus upon individual agency performance and accountability presented risks to collaboration and encouraged fragmentation. Egalitarian concerns for the citizen were observed in Sweden with the argument that greater independence for agencies would enable citizens to have a greater influence upon policy outcomes (SOU, 1997:57, 22). Furthermore there was the egalitarian argument that greater deliberation about the role of civil servants, rather than a code of conduct, would best encourage commitment to a public service ethos. All of these claims were made using arguments based upon the structure of reality (the causal link). In table 8.18 a comparison of the rules of telling egalitarian stories across the countries is presented.

**Table 8.18.** An overview and comparison of the rules of telling egalitarian stories across the countries

	<b>Hood</b>	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Australia</b>
<b>Ethos</b>	Member of persecuted solidaristic group	Mediator (speaking partners)	Expert with less formality (hierarchical)	Business consultant (individualist)
<b>Pathos</b>	Outrage against abuse at the top		The precarious (threat to democracy)	The enduring
<b>Logos</b>			Causal link	Causal link
<b>Metaphors</b>	Public management as non-captained, non-competitive group sport		Whole	Whole
			Organic metaphors eg. living conscious, watering	Citizens being <i>in touch</i> with government

In addition metaphors were particularly important for such egalitarian claims. Indeed sometimes it was the metaphor alone that gave official accounts their egalitarian quality. Focusing upon *horizontal* relationships was a common theme to both *I medborgarnas tjänst* and *Connecting Government*, with the Swedish document emphasizing greater mutuality within the budget and the Australian document encouraging more communication across the higher echelons of departments. In *Connecting Government* there was some reference to citizen participation but this occurred in a cursory way through statements such as agency reforms enabling the citizen to have more access to and be more *in touch* with government services.

There was some consistency in the adoption of organic metaphors to accentuate the egalitarian quality of stories. This was evident in the metaphors adopted in *I medborgarnas tjänst* but is also apparent in the term *whole* which was used to promote egalitarian (and hierarchical) themes about mutuality. Examples of the way organic metaphors were used in egalitarian stories included arguments about deliberation encouraging a *living* consciousness among public servants that their primary duty is to the citizen (SOU 1997:57,147). There was also the visualization of the state as a *tree* and concern that a public service tradition was *watering* away with the introduction of more market like arrangements. Given the lack of national comparative material it is more difficult to associate these organic features with egalitarian stories as such, since these may also be ascribed to Swedish culture and landscape more generally (see Mels, 2000).

Finally there were some low grid arguments concerning openness and policy feedback. In both cases greater participation and more bottom up communication was encouraged. These themes may be consistent with both individualist and egalitarian stories. They concerned closed policy making circles in Sweden and policy makers learning from service delivering in Australia. They adopted arguments based upon the structure of reality.

The ethos in egalitarian stories according to Hood, a member of a persecuted group, was not identified in this study. Instead the only construction of an audience that seemed to use egalitarian ideas to promote credibility was the emphasis upon *speaking partners* to attain the agreement of the Dutch universal audience. I have described this ethos as a mediator. There was also some correlation between Hood's description of egalitarian pathos as outrage at abuse at the top and the Swedish pathos the precarious. This was

because the precarious in Sweden was characterized by concerns about the threat to democracy from the growing influence of (corporatist) interest groups and a specialist bureaucracy. The metaphor of the *whole* would seem to fit most neatly with Hood's description of egalitarian metaphors encouraging a view of public management as a non-captained, non-competitive team sport.

#### 8.5.4 *Shifts in cultural flavor and the rules of speaking*

Aside from focusing upon the rules of speaking at the level of cultural stories, the shifts in cultural stories can also be used to provide evidence of consistent rhetorical features across countries when certain stories are being told. This is particularly important because while it is difficult to distinguish between the influence of context or story when cultural themes match context (eg. is quasi logical argumentation the consequence of story or context in high group countries?), shifts at the level of stories provide further evidence of patterns in rhetorical features at the level of cultural stories themselves. In all countries there were changes in the extent to which certain stories were embraced over time. In Australia and Sweden, however, the shifts were more clearly towards a new cultural commitment such as the arrival of hierarchy in Australian talk or the arrival of individualism in Swedish talk. In the Netherlands the shifts were more dramatic as was reflected in drastic changes in pathos or metaphors, but this occurred within the same existing mix of ways of life. It can be suggested that a shift in Dutch talk had already occurred in The Netherlands with the initial creation of agency reform because this represented a shift from past ZBO arrangements. The initial creation of agencies or rather *internal autonomization* was the Dutch equivalent of joining or connecting up government.

In Australia the adoption of more hierarchical (and group) arguments occurred together with the construction of a particular audience of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. There was the pathos of the enduring to describe Centrelink as opposed to the pathos of the unique in earlier documents. In addition there were more quasi-logical arguments than in previous Australian documents. The adoption of clearly hierarchical metaphors however was limited to references to *vertical* coordination and having *strong* leaders. Nevertheless as in Sweden the metaphor of the *whole* was adopted to promote the group themes in the document. These changes in the rhetoric were consistent with changes in emphasis towards more hierarchical argumentation in The Netherlands,

where this was also accompanied by more quantitative loci and more quasi-logical argumentation than the individualistic Dutch documents. In both Australia and Sweden the shift to more group arguments occurred together with similar pathos and logos about respectively complexity and the flaws of past individualist arrangements. This shift echoed the changes in the international agency story, described in chapter 2, after a period of promoting individual performance and efficiency.

In Sweden the shift to more individualist arguments occurred together with shifts in logos. The other rhetorical features of Swedish accounts, ethos and pathos, proved less variable when the story changed in the Swedish context than in the other countries under study. Nevertheless there was a clear shift towards more arguments based upon the structure of reality when there were low grid arguments in Swedish documents. Most important of these were the adoption of the argument of unlimited development, traveling metaphors and the metaphor of flexibility when delivering individualist stories. Also in The Netherlands it was clear that the more individualist arguments were accompanied by more arguments based upon the structure of reality and the pathos of unique. It was also evident that the individualist stories in the high group countries, like the initial construction of agency reform in the international community, emphasized autonomy as a solution together with the focus upon results.

The similar patterns in the rhetorical features accompanying shifts in stories provide strong evidence that certain stories, not just context, shape official accounts of agency reform. It has been shown that individualistic stories featured financial speakers, the pathos of the unique, arguments based upon the structure of reality and both traveling and business metaphors. By contrast, hierarchical stories featured more group speakers addressing political elites, more quantitative pathos, quasi-logical argumentation and control metaphors. The metaphor of the *whole* was adopted to support both hierarchical and egalitarian themes. Patterns in egalitarian stories were difficult to identify in this study because of their lack. Nevertheless when they did appear it was evident that the metaphors were most important in promoting egalitarian ideas. These included organic metaphors. The patterns identified in culturally flavored agency stories in this section were to some extent consistent with Hood's suggestions of ethos, pathos and logos. In particular the metaphors fitted neatly with his descriptions of typical cultural characterizations of public management. The most cor-

respondence was observed in his descriptions of typical ethos, pathos and logos for hierarchical stories. The ethos and pathos that I have identified as typical of the favored stories of each way of life is an original contribution of this study.

For the purpose of identifying the role of stories in shaping official agency accounts, the likeness in the themes characterizing individualist stories was most significant. The high group consensus countries in particular were exceptional in their emulation of the initial accounts of agency reform in the international community. These were already described in chapter 2. Similarly the adoption of more group themes in the low group adversarial context, as well as the later Swedish document, mimicked the shift towards agency and management autonomy as a problem. To this extent the identification of similar cultural stories across different cultural political administrative contexts can be attributed to the spread of international stories to national contexts.

### **8.6 Translating agency reform: the interaction between cultural context and the rules of telling culturally flavored stories**

The analysis of the preceding sections indicated that both the cultural political and administrative context, as well as certain culturally flavored stories, have contributed to the construction of official agency accounts. Indeed, it can be argued that they have interacted to produce three quite different national accounts of agency reform. The cultural flavor of the national official accounts under study also changed over time, but within the limits of a broader national style of speaking. It is now possible to discuss how the influence of the cultural political and administrative context has interacted with certain cultural stories to produce three distinct tales about agency reform. Most significantly it can be shown that different official accounts were constructed because different culturally flavored stories were adopted to different degrees across the countries. The high group consensus contexts embraced individualist stories to a lesser degree than the low group adversarial context, while the low group adversarial context embraced group stories to a lesser degree than the high group consensus contexts. This was primarily reflected in the number of cultural themes adopted and the nature of the metaphors across the countries. The notion that change in talk was tempered by consistent cultural preferences over time was most strongly reflected in the universal

audiences which remained the same in almost all the documents in all countries, with the exception of the most individualistic Dutch document *Verder met resultaat*. It has already been shown that this ethos was primarily hierarchical (rather than egalitarian) in the high group consensus contexts, and individualistic in the low group adversarial context. By contrast, the pathos and logos of talk was subject to greater variation. These rhetorical features were most sensitive to the influence of different cultural stories.

Irrespective of the mix of cultural flavors exhibited in the national official accounts, it was shown that some continuity in talk always remained. This was reflected in the *national styles of speaking* in each of the countries. Expert speakers, quasi logical argumentation and control metaphors were most typical of the high group consensus, while an informal speaker, arguments based upon the structure of reality and business metaphors were most typical of the low group adversarial context. In both Sweden and Australia typical national pathos were also identified over time such as the pathos of the precarious in Sweden and the pathos of the challenge in Australia. The Dutch had the least consistent national style with dramatic changes in their pathos and metaphors occurring together with shifts in both the speaker and emphasis upon different culturally flavor of stories. It can be said that the Dutch accounts were most sensitive to changes affected by stories. This was reflected in their ability to shift from the locus of the unique to purely quantitative loci, and from strong control metaphors like *command* and *grip*, to strong business metaphors. It was also evident in shifts in the particular audience from experts to an audience of business consultants. The national styles of speaking across the countries were shown to correspond to the high group cultures of The Netherlands and Sweden, and the low group culture of Australia.

To the degree that national styles of speaking existed in the different countries, these acted to temper the influence of culturally flavored stories on official agency accounts. More specifically they tempered the adoption of internationally fashionable stories of agency reform. Since national style reflected the cultural character of the context/rhetorical situation, its tempering influence can be interpreted as the cultural context setting the limits of cultural shifts. This was most clearly observed in Sweden and Australia. In the comparison of the adoption of culturally flavored stories above (section 8.5), it was shown that individualist stories were adopted least in Sweden and in the most salient ways in Australia. Swedish

individualist accounts never adopted the themes of individual financial incentives or competition, the locus of the unique was not used to promote individualist stories, and their particular audiences remained (hierarchical) experts. The egalitarian pathos of the precarious remained in Swedish accounts, even when individualist stories were told. By contrast, Australian individualist stories exhibited vivid business metaphors to the extent that it was sometimes difficult to conceive of their agency arrangements as anything other than a business. The opposite was true when high group stories were adopted in low group Australia. Australian officials never adopted the same control metaphors as in the other high group countries and the speaker maintained an informal style. While there was more quasi-logical argumentation when hierarchical stories were told, these never exceeded Australian arguments based upon the structure of reality. There was a shift towards the locus of the enduring, but it was accompanied by the more durable locus of the challenge. The Dutch case also conformed to this pattern of group culture setting the limits in agency talk. While its embrace of individualist stories exceeded Sweden it was still more subdued than the Australian case. When it exhibited high group stories these were also more intense than in the Australian case although it was significant that Dutch accounts never adopted the group metaphor of the *whole*. Instead it can be argued that Dutch used the term internal autonomization to counter more fragmented arrangements such as ZBOs.

The Dutch case also highlighted another, to some extent alternative, influence upon the interaction between context and story. This was the influence of the actual speaker upon the degree to which certain cultural stories were adopted. In the Dutch case it became most evident that the cultural flavors of the stories embraced changed quite dramatically with the speaker. In particular, the commitment to individualist stories was strengthened when financial officials delivered agency accounts. The most poignant example of their influence was exhibited in the evaluation document *Verder met resultaat*, which presented an agency account that even echoed the user friendly self help style characteristic of Australian talk. The preference of financial officials for individualist stories was also exhibited in Swedish accounts which only exhibited individualist themes when financial officials were represented on the commission. This would indicate that financial officials have been responsible for spreading the individualist story to the high group consensus contexts. Indeed they achieved the greatest convergence

in story across high group contexts with low group contexts, or rather between Northern European countries and an Anglo – Saxon country, which was observed in this study. Given the resemblance of their story with early accounts of agency reform in the international community, it can be said that it has been financial officials that have linked national accounts with an individualistic international fashion. This still does not discount that individualist stories were adopted to a lesser degree than in Australia and high group stories to a greater degree than in Australia. It does indicate however that it is not just cultural contexts that have their favored stories but also actual speakers. On the one hand the speaker is a contextual influence because they have been privileged to speak within a certain cultural political and administrative constellation, but on the other hand it is also correlated with certain stories because of speaker preferences. They therefore facilitate the interaction between (international) stories and context.

The adoption of other cultural stories was also shown to be associated with changes in speakers or the rhetorical situations, although the same degree of convergence in cultural stories as occurred with the individualist story was never achieved. It was noteworthy for example that high group stories, and particularly the hierarchical story, appeared when group speakers were responsible for the accounts in all countries. Even in Australia, where change in speaker affected the story the least because of the closeness of all speakers to the political sphere, the shift to more hierarchical themes occurred when it was a group speaker addressing a political elite, rather than individuals addressing the public. In The Netherlands the shift to a hierarchical story occurred together with the Department of Home Affairs being responsible for the agency account, while in Sweden the dominance of academic speakers occurred together with more egalitarian themes. All of these observations would strengthen the argument that speakers also have favored stories that are not always consistent with the broader cultural political context. Indeed it was argued that the greater distance of the speakers from the political sphere in the high group consensus contexts exacerbated the likeliness of adopting cultural stories distinct from the political sphere. The identification of a role for the speaker, or rhetorical situation, in shaping official accounts of agency reforms raises a challenge to claims that it is primarily the reactions to stories that are responsible for changes in public management arguments (Hood, 2000:11). This study would suggest that a shift in cultural stories, even those corresponding to



international fashion are dependent upon the preferences of the speaker. In addition, it can be suggested that the likeliness of adopting internationally fashionable stories is increased when the speakers, as can be argued for financial officials, are part of a professional network active within the international discourse community.

## 8.7 Conclusion

This comparative chapter has fulfilled a number of functions. It has enabled an assessment of the convergence in official agency talk across countries, it has provided the opportunity to evaluate the rhetorical features of cultural stories in empirical cases, and most importantly it has become possible to assess the role of the cultural political and administrative context and/or story in shaping official agency accounts. It has been shown that while there are significant differences in the official talk in all countries, patterns in the similarities and differences across high group consensus contexts versus low group adversarial contexts would indicate that the cultural context plays an important role in determining the kinds of accounts that are constructed. This was reflected in the expert ethos and logos in the high group consensus contexts and the more informal argumentative features of the low group adversarial context. Group themes and metaphors were more prominent in the agency stories of the high group consensus contexts, while individualist themes and metaphors were more prominent in the stories of the low group adversarial context. It has however been the hierarchical, rather than egalitarian flavor of high group, which was most central to the construction of talk in the high group consensus contexts. This was, among other things, also reflected in the hierarchical nature of their universal audiences. I have suggested that the hierarchical culture, rather than the egalitarian has been more characteristic of the rhetorical situations in which agency reform was constructed in the high group consensus contexts.

The distance of the forums and speakers from the political sphere in the high group consensus countries reduced the relevance of the predominant (egalitarian) political culture, in explaining the cultural flavor of talk. Instead the relevance of the predominant egalitarian culture was expressed through privileging groups of (hierarchical) expert speakers that produced reports with a scientific flavor. This is functional to consensus politics. By contrast, in the low group adversarial context Australia, a direct rela-

tionship was found between the individualist cultural political context and the cultural flavor of talk. This was facilitated by privileging speakers that were close to the political sphere. In addition, the short chains of reasoning exhibited in the low group adversarial context can be argued to facilitate competition in this context. Aside from their closeness to the political sphere, the character of the speaker has also been important in determining the cultural flavor of talk. In particular, when finance officials spoke in high group consensus contexts, they brought with them more individualist stories. This is a contextual variable to the extent that within the existing cultural and political administrative constellation, these speakers were privileged to speak. At the same time, it has also been argued that speakers have their own favored stories and, to this extent, provide an opportunity for certain cultural stories, rather than cultural context, to influence official talk. Indeed it has been found that not only context but also certain stories have acted to shape official agency accounts. The identification of the particular rhetorical features of culturally flavored agency stories has been a original contribution of this study. It verified some of Hood's descriptions of the typical rhetorical features of the ways of life, in particular his description of the hierarchical way of life.

The most convergence in official agency talk occurred with the adoption of similar individualist stories across all countries. To a lesser extent there were also similar group stories across different contexts. When individualist stories were told in all countries they were characterized by the same argumentative techniques such as the argument of unlimited development, the metaphor of flexibility and traveling metaphors. In Australia and The Netherlands convergence of individualist stories was also exhibited by the construction of the same business consulting audience and the pathos of the unique. When group stories were told in all countries they were characterized by more quantitative pathos and quasi-logical argumentation. In Australia and Sweden convergence of group stories were characterized by the premise of complexity and similar metaphors of the *whole*, *sharpening* and *balancing*. When such convergence across different contexts occurred it reflected shifts observed in the broader international community. As discussed in chapter 2 initial international solutions characterized by more autonomy, results and business performance were replaced by concerns about fragmentation and the whole. Nevertheless the degree to which different cultural flavors were adopted across the countries was tempered by the political administrative culture. In-

dividualist stories were adopted to a lesser degree in the high group consensus cultures than the low group adversarial culture, while group stories were adopted to a lesser degree in the low group adversarial culture than the high group consensus cultures. Australia and Sweden provided the most extreme examples in this regard as exhibited by their respectively more salient individualist and group metaphors. The Netherlands was extreme in the adoption of contrasting cultural stories. It is difficult to know whether to attribute this to its higher individualism than in Sweden or to the predominance and shifts in certain speakers. I have attributed it to the capacity of finance officials to (sometimes) dominate agency talk in The Netherlands.

A final observation to make about the convergence in talk across all of the countries is that it has always occurred within a different discursive network of statements and a different rhetorical situation. There was also a national style of speaking which was distinct to each country, whether it was a preference for the metaphor of *autonomization* in The Netherlands or durable pathos in Sweden and Australia. These different contextual circumstances have the consequence that while similar rhetorical features and labels may be observed across countries, such as the metaphor of the *whole* or *transparent* or the term *accountability*, there is always a great probability that they will not attain the same meanings. The variations in both the institutional and discursive contexts have the consequence that despite some convergence in talk, there will not always be convergence in meaning.



## 9 Conclusion

### 9.1 Introduction

This study has focused upon the official accounts of agency reform, explanations for these accounts, and the extent to which convergence in official agency talk can be observed. It has been shown that while there is some evidence for convergence in national agency talk, the differences in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia are substantial and significant. Among some of the most important differences in the official accounts between high-group consensus cultures and the individualist-adversarial culture have been features of the national styles of speaking and the degree to which different culturally tinted stories were embraced.

In the high group consensus cultures the replication of scientific evidence was important in obtaining credibility with the audience, as was the use of political ideals to construct the universal audience. Quasi-logical argumentation or formal reasoning was a durable feature of the argumentative techniques used in official documents. Alternatively in the low grid adversarial culture, Australia, credibility was obtained by addressing the audience in a more informal, uncomplicated way and private values such as customer service were used to obtain universal agreement. Short chains of deductive reasoning as revealed by the consistent use of arguments based upon the structure of reality were adopted. These similarities in the national styles of speaking among high group consensus cultures and differences from the low group adversarial culture have been ascribed to the cultural character and political administrative context of the different countries. More egalitarian and hierarchical watchwords and themes were adopted in the high group consensus cultures over time, while more individualist watchwords and themes were adopted in the low grid adversarial culture.

There were also some significant differences between the two high group consensus cultures in this study. In particular, The Netherlands had a greater tendency to embrace individualist themes and in general had the least consistent national style. As in Australia but unlike Sweden, Dutch officials constructed a particular audience of business consultants and sometimes adopted the pathos of the unique to promote their agency reforms. There are

two ways to interpret this finding. First, these more individualist themes and styles in The Netherlands can be ascribed to the higher degree of individualism within the Dutch culture and political administrative system compared to Sweden. Alongside group watchwords and metaphors as *speaking partners* and *grip*, the appearance of individualist story lines in Dutch official accounts reflects the more heterogeneous political administrative culture in The Netherlands. Alternatively, the heterogeneity in Dutch official accounts can be ascribed to the different kinds of official speakers (Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Finance) that were privileged to speak about Dutch agency reform. According to this interpretation individualist stories were more prominent in Dutch official accounts because of the dominant role that the Ministry of Finance played in both designing and presenting agency reforms in The Netherlands compared to Sweden. Indeed in both countries individualist stories have appeared when finance experts were members of the commissions speaking. In The Netherlands however there have been more opportunities for finance experts to dominate official accounts because of the rhetorical situation in which agency reform has been constructed. Departmental reports in The Netherlands have been more dominated by financial officials than the commission system in Sweden.

The finding that some convergence was observed in official agency talk across all countries, irrespective of cultural political and administrative context, would suggest that an international agency story has to a degree traveled independent of context. This consistent story across time and space was characterized by the use of the argument of unlimited development when describing individualist themes and solutions, as well as similar metaphors such as flexibility. In both high group consensus cultures such stories only appeared when finance officials played a direct role in delivering official accounts. They have been the carriers of individualist rules of speaking about agency reform in The Netherlands and Sweden and have been responsible for translating the international story about the agency fashion to official accounts within these national contexts. More generally, the different particular audiences within each country also revealed that the actual speaker presenting official accounts was important in the construction of agency reforms in official accounts. The actual speaker played a central role in determining the kind of interaction that took place between contextual influences and the rules of telling stories in the different national accounts. They were responsible for linking certain stories

with the contextual features in which they presented agency reform.

In this concluding chapter I will return to the central focus and findings of this study followed by a more direct response to the research question. Then in section 9.3 I will evaluate the theories adopted and their strengths and weaknesses in analyzing and explaining official agency rhetoric. Some suggestions for further research will be made. This will be followed by a more general reflection upon the rhetoric produced about agency reform in the different countries. Rhetorical analysis can provide insights into the kind of knowledge that has been deemed acceptable by policy makers and can be used for assessing the state of official public administration knowledge. Finally in section 9.4 I will make a final comment about the findings in this study and the possibilities that they suggest for convergence in official public management talk and its meaning.

## 9.2 The research, central findings and research question

This research has sought to examine the kinds of official accounts that have been produced about agency reform in different cultural political and administrative contexts and the reasons for similarities and differences in national agency reform talk. It has considered two explanations for official agency accounts, the cultural and political administrative context, and the rhetoric, or rather, rules of telling different kinds of stories. With regard to the cultural/ political/ administrative context, my analysis sought to identify the extent to which diagnoses of national political culture could explain the character of official accounts about agency reform. This assumed that if a context had been diagnosed as high group, the kinds of themes and arguments that would be used to describe agency reform would also be high group. Throughout this study I have also included an account of the political administrative system together with a description of cultural character to describe the *scenes of use* in which official accounts were produced. This was because according to GGCT the kinds of social relationships or modes of organizing present in different political and administrative contexts reflect the prevailing cultural configuration, themselves even cultivating or reinforcing particular cultural biases. The design of this research also provides an opportunity to check the extent to which diagnoses of national political culture can apply at the level of the administrative context and to talk.

At different times throughout my analysis I have tried to show how different kinds of structural features within the political and administrative context correspond to the political cultural character of different contexts. In particular, it was noted that in the countries with the highest group (egalitarian and hierarchy) ratings, The Netherlands and Sweden, there were also consensus democracies where mutuality across parties and actors in political decision-making was characteristic of the system. In Australia where individualism is rated the highest, there was also an adversarial system whose primary mode of operation is competition between parties. Showing the relationship between the political administrative structures and cultural character was difficult, however, and not always possible. I have nevertheless remained open to the scale claim that existing administrative relationships will reflect the prevailing cultural biases in the broader political context.

A second explanation for the kinds of official accounts produced has been the identification of regularities in the stories themselves or rather the extent to which an international fashion can be observed in the stories being told. It was suggested in the introduction to this study that stories tend to have a life of their own and may be able to travel independently of context. In this study such an explanation was assessed by the degree to which similar *rules of speaking* were observed across the countries examined and the extent to which the same kind of pendulum swings occurred in official accounts. It was shown in chapter 8 that depending upon the cultural bias of the stories and themes being enunciated, there were certain regularities in the rhetorical features of the story being told, and in particular in their pathos and logos. This explanation becomes difficult to substantiate, however, when cultural scenes of use and the cultural bias of the story match, since the rules of speaking can be understood as a consequence of the scenes of use which have enabled such a culturally biased story to be told.

As I have tried to demonstrate in the previous chapter, however, it is possible to conceive of an interaction between the *rules* at the level of the story and the *national styles* of speaking that characterize different cultural political and administrative contexts. Indeed, I have shown in the previous chapter that both explanations play a role in accounting for the kind of official accounts that have been made about agency reform in the countries under study. The interaction between these explanations depends upon the position of the speaker within the political administrative context, the pos-



sibilities that institutional arrangements permit to them to dominate the story being told and deploy their own favored stories. The closer the speaker is to the political sphere the more likely that his or her official account will correspond with the diagnosis of political culture. The central role that the speaker plays in influencing the interaction between story and context was reflected in the variations observed in the *ethos* of official accounts in each country (see section 8.3).

Against the background of these two rationales, the role of context or story in determining official accounts about agency reform, it is now possible to identify some of the main findings of this research. Firstly, high group cultures with consensus democracies such as the Netherlands and Sweden were shown to privilege groups of expert speakers to give the official descriptions of agency reform in detailed reports. Their reports were in most cases also prepared for elite audiences such as political, administrative and corporate elites in Sweden or for department heads or financial officials, cabinet and parliamentary expert committees in The Netherlands. In both countries it was found that quasi-logical techniques were a preferred way of convincing their audiences, although The Netherlands showed a greater propensity than Sweden to use techniques based upon the structure of reality. Some important reasons for this differences have been identified, not least the higher individualism in the Dutch context and the dominance of Dutch financial speakers, which will be discussed further below.

By contrast, low grid cultures with majority based or adversarial systems such as Australia (highest in this study on individualism), were, at least in the case of Centrelink, shown to privilege individual speakers. The speakers in this culture tended to be closer to political power, whether it was the Prime Minister himself, or speakers required to report to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. These speakers always included references to audiences external to the political system and in particular voters or customers. This occurred even in official administrative reports and not only in the speeches examined. They favored argumentative techniques based upon the structure of reality to promote their agency reforms. These observations indicate that that the political and administrative context, together with the kind of speakers they privileged, had implications for the kind of accounts that were produced about agency reform. The influence of contextual features was observed in the national styles of speaking. Group consensus cultures, privileging expert committees at a distance from

political power, favored a more expert/quasi logical description of the reforms, while low grid adversarial cultures gave more possibilities for individual speakers close to political power, who in turn favored argumentative techniques based upon the structure of reality or reasonable belief.

Secondly, this study has provided findings about the correspondence between the cultural, political and administrative context and the cultural flavor observed in the official accounts about agency reform. Australia in particular provided the clearest example of a correspondence between diagnoses of the political culture and the cultural tint of agency reform stories. Consistent with its highly individualist culture, Australian official agency accounts exhibited a strong commitment to individualist themes over time. The pathos of the difficult (challenge) and a universal audience committed to customer service appeared repeatedly in Australian accounts and illustrated its individualist style. There were also correspondences between the diagnoses of the Swedish cultural political and administrative context and official accounts, but the relationship was less clearly one - dimensional. If taken as a high group (egalitarian and hierarchical) culture, it can be argued that a strong correspondence was found between the political culture and the official rhetoric. In particular the pathos of the precarious - the threat to democracy- and the metaphor of the *whole* were consistent features of the national style of speaking over time and reflect egalitarian/high group preferences. The commitment to democracy in Swedish accounts, however, was more ambiguous. It was sometimes used to support hierarchical themes and at other times egalitarian themes. In general, it was also hierarchical stories that were more consistently adopted over time in official Swedish accounts despite its stronger egalitarian ratings. This may suggest that Swedish political culture has been more hierarchical than previously thought or that there is a difference between the broader Swedish political culture and the culture at the administrative level at which agency reforms have been initiated and discussed. The location of the commission system at a distance from the political sphere and its characterization as an independent advisory body support the latter explanation of a difference in the cultural character between the two spheres.

The Netherlands has been the most exceptional case in this study. Only cursory correspondence has been found between its apparently strong egalitarian culture and the cultural character of official accounts of agency reform. Group metaphors more gener-

ally were also less prominent over time in The Netherlands compared to Sweden and the metaphor of the *whole* never appeared in official accounts. Instead Dutch accounts were consistently individualist and hierarchical, with one or other of these ways of life being most prominent in each of the documents examined. Indeed, contrasting pathos such as more is better (quantitative loci) or the unique (qualitative locus) were observed together with changes in the documents, the cultural character of the stories and the speakers. This has made it more difficult to identify a typical Dutch national style of speaking, aside from a strong preference for quasi-logical argumentation and some commitment to scientific rationales within ethos. There are a number of explanations for this apparent lack of correspondence between official talk and national political and administrative culture, some of which tend to reinforce one another. Firstly, while the Dutch, like the Swedes, were diagnosed as high group, they were rated higher on individualism (low grid). This lends them a more paradoxical cultural character than observed in Sweden, which is undoubtedly reinforced by the structural features of the Dutch political administrative context such as its highly fragmented character. In such a context extreme contrasts in official accounts of agency reform are hardly surprising.

Secondly, the location of Dutch speakers within different parts of this fragmented system, such as the Ministry of Finance and Home Affairs, also provides an explanation as to why there were contrasts in the official accounts. When Finance spoke there was greater emphasis upon individualist themes and arguments while the Home Affairs publication focused more upon hierarchical themes and arguments. Given their responsibility for coordination within the administration, and in the case of Finance, for financial resources, both speakers are arguably more inclined to adopt individualist and hierarchical themes. This does not necessitate that egalitarianism is not prominent in the broader political administrative system, but rather that it has not been a feature of the smaller and closed discourse community at the administrative level at which Dutch agency reforms have been described.

Thirdly, compared to the location of the speakers in the other countries, the Dutch speakers were composed almost solely of civil servants and most firmly situated as internal to the administration. They were primarily addressing parliamentary financial committees, as well as other departments, and were therefore solely concerned with themes about the internal organization of the admini-

stration. This is different to Australia where the speakers were arguably closer to political power and always addressing a broader audience of voters or to Sweden where an independent commission was to provide a broad account of administrative problems to the government, parliament and agency community. Since the diagnoses of political administrative culture used in this study have been derived from citizen's attitudes and arguably reflect a broader or higher level of analysis than the rhetorical situation observed in the Dutch case, it is also not surprising that correspondence between national political culture and the cultural flavor of stories was not observed. This does however refute grander claims made by GGC theorists about the applicability of the same cultural mixes to different levels within a social system. By contrast, the greater external orientation of the rhetoric in the other countries was more applicable to the diagnosis of the cultural political and administrative context at a broader level and through citizen's attitudes. Given the most prominent cultural character (hierarchical/individualist) of Dutch official accounts it can be said that Dutch agency reforms were constructed within a rhetorical situation that was hierarchical and individualist. As in Sweden where differences were also observed between the political culture and cultural accounts produced within the administration, the lack or limited presence of egalitarian themes and arguments does not discount the stronger presence of an egalitarian culture elsewhere in the political and administrative context. Nonetheless it is still remarkable that the universal audiences in both high group consensus countries were characterized by hierarchical tints in their descriptions of ministerial accountability and democracy.

It is notable that in both high group consensus countries there were greater differences found between the cultural style of official rhetoric and the characterizations of cultural political and administrative context. This can be ascribed to the greater distance between the speakers in the administration sphere from the political arena in these countries and the more politicized character of the administrative sphere in Australia. In addition, as noted above the infiltration of individualist themes and arguments in the high group consensus cultures can be ascribed to the inclusion of financial experts within the expert committees speaking about agency reform in The Netherlands and Sweden. Aside from its stronger individualist culture, the greater opportunity that the rhetorical situation presented to Dutch finance officials in their own departmental reports, together with the greater individualist orientation

of the finance profession can account for the greater penetration of individualist stories in Dutch official agency accounts than Swedish accounts. Finally, although not thoroughly investigated in this study, it can be suggested that the dominant Dutch speaker, finance officials, have been more active and embedded within the international discourse community of agency reformers, than the speakers in the other countries. This would increase the likeliness of producing reform stories that were different to the broader political culture.

A third finding in this study has been that it is not only political administrative culture as reflected in *national styles of speaking* and themes about agencies that can account for the official stories, but also the rules of speaking at the level of the culturally tinted stories themselves. This was reflected primarily in the pathos and logos that were exhibited when different cultural themes were adopted across the countries, and in some of the shifts that could be observed in agency stories themselves. It was shown that when certain kinds of themes and arguments were espoused across all of the countries, in particular individualist or hierarchical stories, they exhibited some similar rules of speaking such as the argument of unlimited development (individualist) or the metaphor of the *whole* (high group). More generally, individualist stories exhibited more arguments based upon the structure of reality while hierarchical stories exhibited more quasi-logical argumentation. Other regularities that were observed in the cultural stories included the apportioning of blame upon past (individualist) stories, such as coordination, in order to justify new cultural (hierarchical) ways of life. The observation of similar shifts in such culturally different contexts as Australia and Sweden would indicate that these shifts are a property of the stories themselves, rather than the cultural context. They can be interpreted as evidence of a similar international agency story that has been imported to different contexts in order to construct national official accounts of agency reform. As was shown in the adoption of individualist stories however the degree to which pendulum swings in talk occurred was not only dependent upon cultural context, but also the speaker.

A fourth finding is, however, that while there is some evidence to indicate that the cultural character of official accounts were influenced by the (international) rhetorical rules of speaking about certain themes, these were never entirely autonomous and always interacted with influences from the national cultural context and national styles of speaking. The different cultural stories did not

just travel intact but were translated to the national contexts (see Sahlin-Anderson, 1996, 2001; Smullen, 2003b). This was most clearly illustrated in Australia and Sweden where shifts in the cultural bias of stories, or rather pendulum swings, were limited by the national political and administrative culture. In the more individualistic Australian political administrative culture this was observed in a voracious embrace of individualist themes and stories, with only a limited shift in more recent times to a group focus upon the whole. It was also noted in the more prominent presence of arguments based upon the structure of reality despite shifts to more hierarchical argumentation, although more quasi-logical arguments were adopted than in previous documents. Despite more hierarchically tinted themes and arguments in recent Australian accounts, the universal audience continued to be constructed in the same way and remained committed to individualist themes such as customer service or the pathos of the difficult (challenge). The shift to more group themes and arguments did not disrupt national cultural commitments to a more individualist style. Similarly in Sweden, where a strong group culture was diagnosed, the embrace of individualist themes and arguments were rather limited in agency rhetoric, while the shift to more group themes and arguments was much stronger. For example when describing individualist themes and arguments the pathos of the unique was never adopted in Sweden as in the other countries, while the threat to democracy (egalitarian/group pathos) remained a consistent presence in official accounts. The stronger presence of quasi-logical argumentation also remained over time despite shifts in the cultural tint of official accounts. Finally, the construction of the universal audience committed to democracy also persisted over time irrespective of shifts in the cultural tint of official accounts. While pendulum swings were not really observed in the documents analyzed for the Dutch case in this study, the different emphases given to different cultural themes, were still always accompanied by a commitment to an expert scientific audience, even in the most individualist document *Verder met resultaat*. Similarly, quasi-logical argumentation was always present which can be attributed to its high group-consensus culture. It can be suggested that the emphasis upon agency reform or internal autonomization in Dutch accounts constituted a shift from earlier preferences for ZBOs (external autonomization) before the period analyzed in this chapter. If this is so internal autonomization was the equivalent of a Dutch metaphor for the *whole*. To the extent that the political culture ex-

hibits a national style, it sets the limits within which the shifts in the cultural character of official stories take place. These limits are also dependent upon the speakers privileged and the forums which they are speaking from. Since the favored stories of particular speakers or professions will also influence the kinds of cultural stories adopted.

Finally, a fifth observation to make is that the pendulum swings in agency official accounts have occurred more quickly in the more individualist-adversarial culture of Australia than in the high group consensus countries analyzed in this study. In just a period of 8 years the pendulum has swung in Australia from individualist themes to more hierarchy, while no such swing was observed in The Netherlands over a similar period of time. This has been ascribed elsewhere (Pollitt & Boukaert, 2004:47) to differences in the adversarial and consensus democracy systems which are subject to quicker cycles of change as a consequence of the resources ascribed to political actors to make change, and more generally to the maintenance of competition within the system. It has not been possible to confirm from this study that the pendulum swings in rhetoric about agency reform in an (highly individualist) adversarial system such as Australia have the capacity to be greater, in the sense of swinging wider in all directions, than was observed in a (high group) consensus system such as Sweden. However, the greater prominence of the loci of the challenge and unique or new in Australia suggests that it is more susceptible to wider pendulum swings than the consensus countries, simply because the appeal of always presenting something new demands greater volatility in reform proposals. Such a short public memory has been deemed typical of individualist cultures while more hierarchical cultures such as Sweden exhibited a greater commitment to the history of their institutions. The lack of wider swings observed in Australian agency reform talk in this study can be ascribed to the reign of the same Liberal Conservative government over the period observed in this study. I will now present more direct responses to sub questions of the research question that were posed at the outset of the study.

### *9.2.1 How has agency reform been constructed in official accounts in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia?*

Official agency accounts of agency reform in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia were composed of different constellations of statements, national rhetorical styles, cultural themes and rules of

speaking. In the Netherlands agency reform was constructed primarily as a unique alternative to ZBOs by the Ministry of Finance. The kinds of arguments to promote agency reform were primarily about the benefits of an accrual accounting system for greater efficiency and cost consciousness, as well as arguments about the protection and promotion of ministerial accountability through agency reform. These latter claims were made primarily through comparing the status of agencies with the legal status of their more numerous counterpart ZBOs. Indeed, many of the Dutch official statements about agency reform were primarily focused upon the internal organization of the administration. Over time the Dutch official story about agency reform consistently exhibited individualist and hierarchical elements, although one of these ways of life was always presented as more prominent than the other. Indeed, Dutch official agency accounts were distinct in this study because of the capacity to produce stark contrasts in the pathos and logos of the stories being told over time. This was reflected in the adoption of both the locus of the unique to only quantitative loci, and in metaphors describing agency reform as *business redressing* or about obtaining more *grip*. When the Ministry of Finance delivered its accounts of agency reform, the individualist way of life was most prominent and emphasized the unique, while the hierarchical way of life prevailed in accounts published by the Ministry of Home Affairs and emphasized more is better. The rhetoric of Dutch official accounts included the construction of a universal audience committed to the convention of ministerial accountability in the first two documents, while in all the documents there was also a universal commitment to findings based upon consultation with *speaking partners*, as well as paradoxically, scientific principles. Irrespective of which stories were being told in The Netherlands, Dutch speakers always adopted some quasi-logical techniques in each of the documents analyzed.

In Sweden, agency reform was constructed primarily as a means to promote democracy. This entailed contested arguments about the prescriptions of the constitution for agency independence and their position within the democratic system. Sometimes they were constructed as primarily subordinate to the political sphere, while other times they were constructed as serving the citizen and as primarily subordinate to the law. Much of this argumentation was pursued through interpreting the constitution and the constellation of statements produced were primarily focused upon the relationship between the political and administrative sphere. Swedish offi-



cial accounts consistently exhibited a hierarchical tint over time, although this occurred sometimes together with individualist arguments and other times together with egalitarian arguments. The speaker in Sweden was always the commission and irrespective of its membership, the Swedish national style speaking always consisted of the construction of a universal audience committed to democracy. They also tended to use academic theories and concepts to give credibility and provided an account of Swedish administrative history. Swedish speakers always used the qualitative locus of the precarious (the threat to democracy) to sensitize their audiences to the proposals for agency reform being pursued and, as in The Netherlands, they always adopted techniques based upon quasi-logical argumentation. When there was a greater presence of politicians on the commission there were more hierarchical arguments posed about the relationship between the political and administrative sphere, and about planning more generally. In addition, the document with financial officials was the only one to exhibit individualist themes and arguments in Sweden. Alternatively when there were more academics present on the Swedish commissions describing agency reform, more egalitarian themes and arguments were adopted.

Australian official accounts constructed agencies primarily through arguments about promoting customer service and responding to complex policy issues. It included arguments about consolidating services for efficiency and customer service, as well as arguments about separating agencies from departments to ensure neutral responses to complex problems. There was a primary focus upon the relationship between the administration and actors or events external to the political system in their official accounts. The official accounts consistently exhibited individualist themes and arguments over time, although in the last document there was a shift towards more hierarchical and egalitarian themes and arguments. Irrespective of the cultural tint of stories, the universal audience was consistently constructed as committed to customer service in Australia. Australian speakers tended to avoid adopting an expert tone in their self presentation and preferred a simple direct way of addressing their audiences. They consistently used the locus of the difficult, a *challenge* and the *new* and unique to sensitize audiences to their agency initiatives. With few exceptions, they also almost always adopted arguments based upon the structure of reality. Since all of the speakers in Australia were closer to the political sphere there was less variation in the cultural character of their sto-

ries, although it is remarkable that the hierarchical themes and arguments appeared when a committee presented agency official accounts to their internal administrative superiors.

9.2.2 *What have been the similarities and differences in official agency accounts and why are there similarities and differences?*

The similarities and differences in official agency accounts were observed at two levels. When identifying a national style of speaking in the official accounts it was noted that in both The Netherlands and Sweden there was a tendency across all the documents to seek some credibility through giving the speaker a similar expert character, whether it was one committed to presenting findings in a scientific way or through adopting academic theories or concepts. There was also a greater tendency to use quasi-logical argumentation than in Australia. These similarities can be attributed to the high group consensus culture of these cultural political and administrative contexts which require knowledge that appears independent and expert in order to promote consensus.

There were also some differences noted between Sweden and The Netherlands, not least the greater propensity of the Dutch to adopt arguments based upon the structure of reality, to adopt more individualistic pathos such as the unique, and, to embrace individualist themes and arguments more extensively than in Sweden. This may be attributed to the diagnosis of the Dutch political administrative culture as being more individualistic than the Swedish culture. In addition, it can be attributed to the different kinds of official speakers that have been privileged to offer official accounts of agency reform in these different cultural configurations. The dominant role that the Ministry of Finance has played in acting as official speaker in The Netherlands has undoubtedly promoted a greater emphasis upon individualist themes and arguments in Dutch official agency accounts and on the internal focus of the argumentation. Alternatively, it has been the traditions of speaking within the commission system that have ensured a broad more hierarchical account of management reform and its consequences for steering and society more generally in Sweden. There were different group metaphors adopted in the higher group cultures such as *autonomization* in The Netherlands or *democratic steering* in Sweden which can also be attributed to the preoccupations of different speakers in the different countries. Indeed it is worth mentioning that the metaphor of the *whole* was never adopted in Dutch official agency accounts or rather an emphasis upon less

fragmentation was reflected in the more diluted term *internal autonomization*. Finally, in both high group consensus countries there was still a difference in the universal audiences constructed although both identified specific political ideals such as democracy and ministerial accountability.

Aside from similarities and differences in official agency stories between the high group consensus cultures themselves, there were also important differences between the official accounts identified in these cultures and those in the individualist adversarial political and administrative culture of Australia. Not least among these was the greater prominence of individual speakers providing the official accounts of agency reform and the more extensive embrace of individualist themes and arguments. These were expressed in arguments about competition and metaphors for a *personalized* service or an agency as an *outlet*. This stronger commitment to individualist themes corresponds to Australia's stronger individualist culture. The Australian style of speaking about agency reform consistently revealed a more user friendly, simplified way of presenting findings over time. There was also a greater tendency to adopt arguments based upon the structure of reality and to adopt the pathos of the *challenge* (locus of the difficult). Unlike the high group consensus cultures the universal audience in Australian culture was constructed as being committed to a more generic or rather private sector ideal, the promotion of customer service. The greater consistency in official accounts about agency reform in Australia can be attributed to the closeness of all the speakers to the political sphere.

There were also some similarities across all the countries that can therefore not be ascribed solely to the cultural political and administrative contexts in which they appeared. In this study I have ascribed these similarities to the rules of telling culturally flavored themes and stories. The identification of the rules of telling cultural flavored stories from empirical findings is an original contribution of this study. Similarities across all countries occurred primarily in logos and included the adoption of the argument of unlimited development, (based upon the structure of reality), and traveling metaphors when describing agency reform in individualist ways. There was also the tendency to adopt more quasi-logical argumentation when discussing hierarchical themes and arguments. In The Netherlands and Australia, there was some convergence in aspects of ethos, pathos and logos when making individualist accounts. This occurred with the construction of a particular busi-

ness consultant (self-help) audience, the adoption of the unique to sensitize the audience and as mentioned above the argument of unlimited development. Of course in both countries these similarities can be attributed to higher degrees of individualism *vis a vis* Sweden, which maintained an expert tone of speaking even when financial officials were presenting accounts. In Australia it can also be attributed to the closeness of the speakers to the political sphere and the role of one speaker as Director of a business-like arrangement, while in The Netherlands such a construction of the audience only occurred when the Ministry of Finance authored an evaluation document to inspire more agency creation. It is the role of the speaker in linking context and story that has been emphasized in this study. In all countries managers were included as a particular audience when individualist stories were told, although in different ways.

In addition, there were similarities in some of the features exhibited in hierarchical stories across different contexts. Once again it was the themes being discussed as well as the actual speakers that governed the production of these similarities. They included the greater adoption of quasi-logical argumentation when telling high group stories in Australia and similar metaphors such as broad, whole, sharpening or balancing in the hierarchical accounts produced in the most culturally different contexts in this study, Sweden and Australia. In both cases hierarchical stories appeared when committees were delivering their accounts to elite audiences, e.g. administrative superiors in Australia, political, administrative and corporate elites in Sweden. Finally, there were similar egalitarian blames observed in Australian and Swedish documents, when shifting away from individualist stories. In both countries the dangers that devolution and focusing upon individual performance presented to the whole were identified when moving towards more group themes and arguments. The observation that there were certain rules of speaking about different kinds of cultural themes and stories indicates that the story also played a role in influencing national official agency accounts. Indeed, the kinds of similarities in talk that were observed across national contexts and their pendulum swings replicate elements and changes in the agency story that has been observed at the level of the international community. To this extent it has been the translation of the international agency story by their different kinds of speakers within national contexts that has been responsible for the observed similarities in official agency talk.

### 9.3 Theoretical contributions and evaluation

The application of GGCT and the New Rhetoric in this study provides the opportunity to reflect upon their contributions to understanding empirical phenomena in public management. It also provides the opportunity to consider the nature of these theoretical perspectives and how well they can support international comparative research. Indeed, it has been an often cited advantage of GGCT that it enables variety in empirical phenomena to be compared (Hood, 2000; Douglas, 1999). It is claimed that it can do this even within a social constructivist perspective that recognizes shifts in meaning. In chapter 3, it was explained that GGCT was to be applied at two levels of analysis and for two purposes. On the one hand it was used to diagnose the national political context within which agency reform had been pursued, while on the other hand it was used to categorize the kinds of themes and arguments that appeared in the different documents. This was to enable the assessment of national political culture as an explanation for the rhetoric that was produced in the different countries. It relies upon the GGCT claim that a cultural way of life is *structure with attitude*, where social structures such as political and administrative systems mutually reinforce and, are reinforced through, attitudes, such as those reflected in rhetoric. For two of the three countries under study, Australia and Sweden, it can be argued that GGCT did provide a satisfactory explanation for the official agency rhetoric produced. The Australian political culture is strongly individualist, therefore it produced agency rhetoric that was also strongly individualist, or Sweden has a strong group political culture and therefore the rhetoric it produced was also strong group, even when, in both cases, there were reactions in rhetoric. This is not to ignore, however, that the cultural type *alone* was not completely satisfactory in understanding the rhetoric in these cases, particularly in Sweden, nor could it explain the Dutch rhetoric. In all of the cases it was necessary to point to other structural features of the scenes of use, such as the constitutional status of agencies or the dominant presence of ZBOs, in order to understand the rhetoric. Of course, it may well be that these features of the political administrative context are consistent with their cultural character as diagnosed by GGCT but it is yet to be shown *how* such political or organizational structures fit with the GGCT categories of grid and group (see Hendriks, 1998; Hood, 2004). Indeed the finding that

official accounts at lower administrative levels did not match the cultural mix of ways of life at the political level in consensus countries, would suggest that existing categorizations of political cultures are not applicable to the administrative level. Rhetorically the *compatibility or mutuality condition* which contends that the cultural character of social relationships or attitudes reinforces one another requires a high degree of acceptance from the audience. There needs to be further research into administrative cultures and how they correlate, if at all, with broader the political culture.

Related to the use of national political culture as an explanation for the rhetoric, and its more limited explanatory success in the Dutch case, is the GGCT claim that the viable ways of life only go out into the corners of their matrix. This is the theoretical claim that there will be clear commitments to particular ways of life, although these may occur in combinations with one another. In practice, such finely grained experiences of culture will always be more difficult to observe although clearly some contexts or situations are more complex than others. It has been observed in this thesis that the Dutch political cultural context presents a number of paradoxes and it may well be the case that these create complications that exceed clear classification into a limited number of polar ways of life. This is a criticism of the simplicity of GGCT which has been noted elsewhere (see Hood, 2000:226-230) and should be tempered by recognition of the clearer correspondence that was found in the less fragmentary systems of Australia and Sweden. An associated but alternative reason for the lack of correspondence between Dutch rhetoric and culture may be that the level of national political culture was too far from the internal administrative level or audience at which Dutch agency rhetoric was pitched. Again in a fragmented political administrative system such as The Netherlands, this may be of greater consequence than in Sweden and Australia, where the cultural shades are arguably less dramatically contrasted. Clearly, the level of analysis to which GGCT is applied within the scenes of use has implications for its ability to explain official rhetoric.

So far I have commented upon some of the limitations in the use of GGCT to diagnose national political culture and provide an explanation for official agency rhetoric, but the primary empirical contribution of this research has actually been the application of GGCT to agency rhetoric. It was shown that GGCT provided a very useful tool for capturing and demonstrating great variety in the meanings that have characterized agency reform across the

countries. Using the three active ways of life it has been possible to reveal and categorize the different kinds of stories and arguments that were being told about agencies in the different countries. For example the individualist themes which were most prominent in Australia such as customer service, the hierarchical themes such as formal rules and roles prominent in Sweden and the mix of themes relating to ministerial accountability and accrual accounting in The Netherlands. Together with the New Rhetoric the categorization of official rhetoric into GGCT's ways of life has made it both possible to speak more clearly about the kinds of convergence in talk that has taken place, and also the kinds of differences in talk. It has been possible to observe that individualist stories have appeared in all countries throughout the period studied, but also to show that there have been differences in the selection and number of individualist arguments made. As families of types, the ways of life enable the researcher to demonstrate and speak about how different strains of individualism are adopted in different contexts. This brings further nuance and understanding to discussions about convergence and the way that management reforms travel. GGCT proved very useful in diagnosing and describing shifts in agency rhetoric.

The focus that GGCT brought to the research and its ability to capture variety was nevertheless accompanied by a wealth of variety in talk that could not be captured completely. The empirical data revealed a number of themes and arguments that had not been discussed or clearly placed before in GGCT literature, such as arguments about consolidation or feedback loops between policy and operations (see chapter 6) or mutuality between agencies with a set sector goal in the budget (see chapter 5), thereby requiring me to consider their placement within the matrix. This presented a problem of classification as I tried to consider how to interpret the data in the language of the ways of life (see also Maesschalk, 2004a:367-369). In addition some themes such as *democracy* or *ministerial accountability* can appear rather general and applicable to more than one way of life. Indeed, in terms of rhetoric their ambiguity can be distinctly useful. It can be considered a theoretical contribution of this study that it has attempted to classify or identify further arguments and themes that need to be classified according to the GGCT typology, thereby opening up new discussion about how it is to be interpreted within public management. It was also noted that agency rhetoric in the different countries was focused on different levels of the administration, which also is

likely to have different implications for the prominence of ways of life in arguments. For example the hierarchical way of life is more likely when focusing on relations between politics and the administration and so on. GGCT proponents in public management have not yet given much attention to the implication of these kinds of differences in levels. No doubt there will remain debate about some of the interpretations of cultural stories in this study but this promotes further refinement of the theory. As with any theory, the other danger of the typology as a lens for interpreting the data is that it can distract the researcher from other features of the documents. Certainly, it is more appealing to focus upon the themes and arguments that are easiest to interpret. To some extent, this danger has been averted through the addition of rhetorical analysis since it has required a quite different gaze at the texts. I have also always focused upon the main conclusions of documents and what have been important in reaching these, as well as conducting detailed inventory of all texts to reduce my own blind spots to national ways of speaking.

Finally, given the greater focus that Hood has sought to give to the fatalist way of life in public management (Hood, 2000:145-167), it must be noted that its identification in official documents was extremely limited. One exception was the interpretation of the unintended effects of result steering in *I medborgarnas tjänst* as reflecting fatalist skepticism. These were arguments that results steering had actually brought about greater detail in steering and had resulted in managers writing reports for the sake of auditors rather than for future planning or about what is living in the organization (SOU, 1997:83-85). My inability to identify fatalist stories is according to some GGCT proponents not surprising since it is typical of the fatalist way to be silent and let the other ways of life speak for them (Mamadouh, 1999a:400; Hendriks, 1996:62). In addition, it was noted in chapter 3 that the fatalist way of life was less likely to feature in *official* rhetoric about agency reform because it was at odds with the speaker obtaining a degree of certainty about what to do. It is arguably more likely that fatalist stories can be found in unofficial arguments as presented by managers within organizations themselves or by other actors outside of the political administrative system such as the media. Similarly, egalitarian themes and arguments were also few and far between in the documents I have analyzed. It may also be that these are more likely to be espoused by actors outside of the administrative system. In addition, the rhetorical situations and actual character of



the agency reforms I have studied, such as the financial changes in Sweden and The Netherlands, has limited the possibilities for egalitarian constructions.

As with the GGCT typology, the application of the New Rhetoric also presented problems of interpretation, particularly because some of their categories are not mutually exclusive. I have already discussed this in chapter 4 on research design and noted some different possible interpretations in my empirical chapters. With respect to argumentative techniques problems with applying particular categories generally occurred *within* the three general argumentative types, eg. quasi logical arguments, arguments based upon the structure of reality (was it pragmatic or causal?) or arguments that structure reality (was it an illustration or example?) and not across them, thereby limiting this weakness of the technique. One exception was distinguishing between arguments by comparison (quasi logical) and arguments based upon authority (based upon the structure of reality). In contrast to GGCT, the New Rhetoric has a far less extensive record in empirical application and a smaller pool of resources to draw from in applying it. To an even greater extent than GGCT, this has the drawback that much time was spent laboring over the interpretation of the empirical data. At the same time, this makes the identification of problems in interpretation that have occurred in this research of even greater significance for its refinement. Although it has been widely criticized because of interpretation problems, the category of the universal audience proved to be extremely useful in speaking about differences that could be observed in national accounts of agency reform. It is a barometer of the kinds of knowledge considered true and right in different contexts and together with its potential links to national styles of speaking provides its own characterization of culture. Indeed by distinguishing between particular and universal audiences it was possible to give a more tuned and nuanced description of culture within a particular rhetorical situation. To this extent it can be argued that rhetorical analysis itself can provide a better insight into administrative culture and policy communities than GGCT. This was demonstrated in the cases of The Netherlands and Sweden where it was the rhetoric that revealed differences from diagnoses of national political culture. These advantages of linking the New Rhetoric with accounts of context makes it more desirable to pursue further comparative public management and policy research in this vein.

The New Rhetoric has also provided further suggestions for refining the GGCT typology and how it can be expected to appear in different empirical contexts. The addition of rhetoric to GGCT has already been suggested by Hood (2000). In this study I have been able to assess his predictions for ethos, pathos and logos, together with different cultural stories. This has shown that the argumentative techniques (logos) in particular, and to a lesser extent pathos changes with different kinds of stories and that these changes are patterned. Individualist stories generally adopt arguments based upon the structure of reality while hierarchical stories showed more affinity with quasi-logical argumentation. There were also certain metaphors that clearly supported particular cultural stories across the countries such as flexibility or travel metaphors for individualist stories or the whole for group themes. As has already been mentioned the differences in the speaker or audience construction (ethos) has been particularly insightful in understanding cultural context.

A final theoretical contribution of this study has been its attempt to conduct a comparative study within a social constructivist framework. In seeking to demonstrate the differences in the national meanings associated with an apparently international fashion and common discourse community, the typologies of GGCT and the New Rhetoric have provided me with the theoretical tools for comparing apples with pears. It has been possible to give quite detailed accounts of the similarities and differences in national official accounts of agency reform. This has, however, together with the language differences, been extremely time consuming and labor intensive. It has also meant that the comparisons themselves require detailed explanation and cannot be very quickly summarized. Together with the inability of GGCT to offer complete explanations for the rhetoric, at least in the simple terms of its ways of life, the comparisons also meant that different aspects of the scenes of use, as described in the detailed accounts of empirical chapters, were identified as contributing to the rhetoric produced, for example the presence of ZBOs or the constitutional status of agencies. While this clearly reflects the differences in the actual scenes of use and is true to the complexity of different contexts, it also has the implication that these explanations have not always been sought from the comparison as such but from the detailed analysis of the single case. One exception was the adversarial versus consensus democracy divide which, together with and as part of national political culture, provided reasons for differences in the

adoption of respectively arguments based upon the structure of reality and quasi logical argumentation.

#### 9.4 Reflecting upon official knowledge in public administration

Another criticism of GGCT has been that it does not relate to the practice of public management and the problems facing public managers (Hood, 2000:223). Certainly, this criticism could also apply to the New Rhetoric and, as the previous section demonstrates, the main contributions of this research would seem to be theoretical refinement. It was also argued in chapter 3, however, that both of these theories present the possibility for practitioners and policy makers to be confronted with and reflect upon the official knowledge that is used to support reform initiatives and their *blind-spots*. While not ignoring that there is also a wealth of other unofficial knowledge that informs practice, the findings of this research can promote greater consciousness of the boundaries of official knowledge and what not to forget completely when the pendulum swings. To put it another way neither GGCT nor the New Rhetoric provide answers to normative questions about *what should be done*, but their categories do enable us to identify some of the limits of certain stories and knowledge. They open a space for considering the consequences of these blind-spots and how we can thicken certain plots and meanings or reveal subject positions that have been silenced. Not only can we reflect upon the appropriate content of reforms themselves but also on the official role that is envisioned for actors such as policy makers, managers and citizens.

In the description of the four GGCT stories in chapter 3 some blind-spots to these stories were already identified such as the hierarchist's misplaced trust in authority and expertise, the individualist's lack of consideration for corruption or cooperation and the egalitarian's inability to respond to failures stemming from unresolved feuds. Similarly, the premises of argumentation and particularly the category presumptions, in the New Rhetoric help to identify some of the aspects of arguments and stories that have been less developed or ignored in official accounts. From the application of both theories it is possible to see that official accounts do continue to place a large degree of faith in the capacity of individuals in positions of authority to ensure that agency reform does meet goals of efficiency or accountability. This was reflected in the arguments about ministerial accountability in The Netherlands

where agencies were preferable to ZBOs because ministers could intervene in the operations of the former and presumably ensure that they functioned adequately and accountably (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991; Commissie Sint, 1995). In two of the Swedish documents it was also apparent in the faith put in politicians to be interested in setting and following up upon performance objectives and knowing how to identify precise goals or in their capacity to keep bureaucracy at bay (SOU, 1983, 1985). It was also reflected in the faith in formal laws such as the constitution to provide the ultimate guidance on how agency reform should be pursued. Faith in authority and expertise was also reflected in Australian arguments that executive agencies would be able to speak with one voice and give a neutral response to complex policy. All of these presumptions are likely to find weakness in practice.

In individualist stories there was often the presumption that civil servants' incentive systems were understood and that they would respond in an appropriate way that was desirable to financial rewards. This was reflected in Dutch desires to introduce performance pay and in Australian proposals for rewards for cooperative behavior. Such recommendations are blind to the effects that these arrangements have upon ethical behavior and the possibility for gaming or even corruption. Finally, egalitarian proposals for more mutuality within the budgetary system in order to promote cooperation (SOU, 1997) or about a deliberative approach to ethics, lack responses to the problem of what to do when agreement cannot be found. This study reminds us that all solutions have their drawbacks and limits.

There are four more general observations that can be made about the official rhetoric analyzed in this research. Firstly, detailed accounts of the practice of agency reform were surprisingly few and far between in the official documents analyzed. Instead most of the information about practice was presented in a very superficial way stating for example that benchmarking was present (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991) or that governance arrangements were clear in agencies (MAC, 2004), whatever that might mean, or that the factual activities of agencies could be distinguished from their legal activities (SOU, 1985). Such statements, based upon limited explanation or even observation, suggest a great deal of confidence and certainty in the management arrangements pursued and suggest the need for more fatalistic stories in order to encourage more reticence about what to do. The one exception was *I medborgarnas tjänst*, which provided some detailed case studies and interview

statements from directors regarding the use of results management. However, much of this information was presented in such a compressed way, that it was difficult to absorb, let alone appreciate these findings.

A second observation, related to the first, is the very limited role and voice that managers and employees of agencies were given in the accounts of agency reform. Particularly in the accounts of financial changes managers only appeared to legitimize the changes being pursued with claims that they met the problems managers had already identified (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991; SOU, 1985). This was sometimes expressed using statements from managers themselves. While managers and employees did seem to feature more in individualist stories (Ministerie van Financiën, 1991; Ministerie van Financiën, 1998; Howard, 1996; Vardon, 1997; SOU, 1985), there was little analysis of their motivations apart from financial or career opportunities. Such limited conceptualization and distance from other features of manager's work or their goals is surely likely to only increase the lack of relevance of official accounts to practice. Again the exception was *I medborgarnas tjänst* which did seek to describe some of the conflicting goals public managers face and even to encourage more deliberation about their role.

Thirdly, it is clear from the analysis of official accounts that arguments about citizenship and the effects of agency reform for citizens remains a very limited and undeveloped concept in official circles. Their role was cited most frequently *I medborgarnas tjänst* with statements about the desire to give them greater influence or make them a part of a *living consciousness* within the administration (SOU, 1997). In numbers of words/statements in the document, they still appeared in a fairly limited way and few practical means, aside from law enforcement, were identified for promoting this. There was also only limited attempt to discuss how more participation might be achieved or promoted through agency reform. In the other documents where citizens appeared it was primarily as a voter in the democratic system (SOU, 1985) or as a customer (Howard, 1996; Vardon, 1998) with little reflection upon the consequences of this for the democratic system as a whole or for the opinions of citizens about this characterization.

It may well be that these last two observations cannot be changed within official stories, because of the appropriate ways of speaking in existing political administrative institutions. If this is the case, then it can come from other actors outside of the system,

ideally in a dialogue with policy makers. Such dialogue may promote more enriched or useful meanings for big ideas such as (ministerial) accountability, democracy and customer service, than appeared in this study. The way that agency reform has been constructed by managers themselves or by other actors outside of the political system has not been investigated in this study and is certainly an area for future research (see Smullen, 2003b).

Finally, a fourth observation for management practice in this study regards the changing nature of official talk and management fashions. As noted above it became apparent in many of the documents analyzed that agency reform initiatives were advocated on the basis of very limited research findings or even upon questionable findings. The Dutch evaluation document *Verder met resultaat* was an example of the latter. New changes, particularly in Australia, were also introduced with again little detailed evaluation or analysis of the previous reforms. It sadly remains a common but all too relevant criticism that more time and detailed analysis needs to be devoted to the assessment of management reforms and fashions before they are implemented. Furthermore, observations of the dominance of Dutch financial officials and their role in translating individualist stories to the high group consensus contexts invites further investigation into the operation of this professional network within national and international communities. The similarities and differences in their speaking styles and influence in different contexts are also of interest.

## 9.5 Last word

This study has shown that each national context has its favored themes, speakers and ways of speaking about agency reform, but also that different kinds of themes and stories have their favored style and rules. These have interacted to produce different tales about agency reform which, while demonstrating striking similarities when particular *acts* are played out, are actually being performed in grander *plots* that are entirely different, with different *starring roles*, and, audiences, and in completely different *theatres*. To this extent, it can be said that like observations about convergence in management practice (Pollitt, 2001; Pollitt, 2006) convergence in agency reform talk is also striking but limited, while divergences are significant, resilient and extensive. It also alerts reformers and other actors wishing to promote particular management ideas to the ways of speaking which may best obtain acceptance in different national political administrative systems. This study has shown for example that quasi-logical argumentation is most valued in Sweden and The Netherlands, while arguments based upon the structure of reality are more likely to win acceptance in Australia. It has also revealed that pathos such as the precarious in Sweden, the unique in some cases in The Netherlands, as well as the challenge in Australia are likely to promote the success of reforms. Given that different stories themselves also have their favored ways of being told, successfully packaging just any management idea to different audiences is highly unlikely and would require a great deal of *inventio* [invention] from the speaker (Vickers, 1988:62). Such a Hercules of rhetoric was not found among the speakers observed in this research.

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**Appendix A – Expert questionnaire and list of experts for selection of documents**

**A. 1 Expert questionnaire**

(1) Can you please identify the five most important government documents that have initiated, described or evaluated agencies (*national title*) in *country* during approximately the last twenty years? Under the title of the document could you also identify why this document is selected.

Title of document	Type of reforms	Yr	Series or author
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

(2) Which government documents about (*national title*) - if any - have focussed most upon agency independence or freedom during approximately the last twenty years?

(3) Please identify whether you agree that these documents have been of importance and rate them according to the level of importance you believe they have had in the discussions and initiation of agency reforms more generally.

Name of document	Important? (Y or N)	Rating
A.		
B.		
C.		

**(4) Are there other government documents, not noted in the list above or mentioned in your earlier answers, that you would identify as initiating important agency reforms in the last 20 years?**

#### **A.2 List of experts The Netherlands**

Walter Kickert, Professor of Public Administration, Erasmus University, Rotterdam

Nico Mol, Professor of Business Economics for the Public Sector, University of Twente, Twente

Drs Ronald Oosterom, Former Director of the BIFI unit Ministry of Finance

Dr Peter Van der Knaap, Director of Policy Evaluation, The Netherlands Court of Audit

#### **A. 3 List of Experts Sweden**

John Pierre, Professor of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg

Rune Premfors, Professor of Political Science, University of Stockholm, Stockholm

Lennart Gustaffson, Director, Ministry of Justice

Dr. Richard Murray, Chief Economist, Swedish Agency for Public Management

#### **A.4 List of experts Australia**

John Halligan, Professor of Public Administration, University of Canberra

Roger Wettenhall, Professor of Public Administration, University of Canberra

David Rowlands, Senior Director, Performance Audit Services Group, Australian National Audit Office

Richard Collis, Officer for Administrative Rearrangements, Australian Public Service Commission

## Appendix B – Chapter 4 inventory of documents

### B.1 Description of *Verder bouwen aan beheer* [Further building on management]

#### B.1.1 *Structure of Verder bouwen aan beheer*

##### *Chapter 1: Reconsidering financial regulations*

Recent developments and discussions about financial management are briefly described. The focus upon efficiency improvements and upon accounting legislation is highlighted through references to various reports. The government directive for the workgroup is described. It is to discuss the desirability of differentiation in financial regulations. Consideration is to be made of legal arrangements for change and the procedures that need to apply for change and the role of different actors to oversee changes within the (budget) procedures. The structure of the report is then described.

##### *Chapter 2: The financial regime*

The workgroup have made an inventory of bottlenecks in the existing financial regime. They have done this by considering the experience of government units with different kinds of expenditure patterns. An overview of the different types of units considered is listed. The 5 bottlenecks that have been identified are then also listed. They include problems in the apparatus budget, the one year limit, the lack of incentives for efficient operations, the budget system and accountability procedures. These problems are then briefly explained. The existing principles/features of the financial regime are then described, they include, among others, universality, ministerial accountability and authorization procedures. The macro goals of the financial system and budget system are also identified. It is explained that there are tensions between central principles and interests and de-central interests. Solutions to bottlenecks need to be consistent with macro goals.

##### *Chapter 3: A vision of financial management*

The need to be conscious of tensions between changes to financial management and macro goals is re-stated. A brief history of developments in financial management is provided. Management was largely excluded from attention until the mid 1980s. Changes as a consequence of the Operation Accounting System [Operatie Comptabel Bestel] are described, as well as the decentralization of

(financial) accountability. These developments are referred to as a shift towards a new steering model, results orientated management. This model is then defined. There is a discussion of the application of the model to different types of organizations, no blueprint is said to exist and application needs to take consideration of the possibility of improving efficiency from differentiation. In addition, the consideration of ministerial accountability needs to be made. The consequences of results orientated management for the roles of coordinating actors/units are described. In particular the roles of accounting units, personnel and financial/economic units, the Ministries of Finance and Home Affairs, the Court of Audit and parliament. International examples of financial changes and agency creation are recorded. These include references to the UK, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark and Canada.

*Chapter 4: Revising financial regulations*

The chapter focuses upon possible changes that can be made in the existing financial regulations without disrupting macro objectives. It discusses changes to the apparatus budget, personnel formation, work conditions and rewards, office space expenses, the limits of the one year budget, the possibility to reserve funds over time, the introduction of efficiency incentives and wins, as well as the possibility for lending. Changes to most, although not all of these arrangements (such as loans), are recommended.

*Chapter 5: Streamlining the budget process*

Following from the proposals for changes in the financial regulations described in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses upon possible changes in the budgetary process. It seeks to identify ways that new flexibility in the financial regulations and a focus upon results can be better integrated into the budget process. It discusses upon budget frames, less consultation about budget agreements, incorporating budget reserves, accountability and control, more attention for critical examination of the budget, such as through performance measures.

*Chapter 6: Internal and external autonomization*

Despite changes mentioned in the previous two chapters, an optimal business operation may still require *further going special regulations*. This can apply for example for goods and services where price forming is possible and where different forms of autonomization could be appropriate. Forms of autonomization are listed and defined including internal and external autonomization. The choice between these forms requires assessment of the extent to which

limiting ministerial accountability is desirable or possible. It is noted that choice is often made for ZBOs because of business desires, at the expense of ministerial accountability. Agency status now provides the possibility of satisfying business ways of operating, as well as protecting ministerial accountability. The agency status is described as involving more authority together with more accountability. Different possible features for agency status are described. The maintenance of ministerial accountability together with agency status is described and contrasted with the situation of ZBOs. Changes to the Accounting legislation are proposed. The features of agencies are discussed in greater depth including ability to use accrual accounting, reserve funds etc, as well as having a separate account with the Ministry of Finance. Procedures for including agencies within the budget system are discussed, as well as procedures for their creation. They are to be characterized by expectations for efficiency improvement and have greater accountability requirements in terms of performance measures.

#### *B.1.2 Problematization in the text and word searches*

*Terminology:* There is frequent reference to the operation accounting system and to accounting and financial concepts. These include financial regulations such as the apparatus budget, reservation possibilities and end of year limit, and financial arrangements such as different kinds of accounting systems and accounts. The terms efficiency and results orientation are frequently cited, and the role of financial actors frequently discussed. Exceptions to purely financial management references are references to ministerial accountability and ZBOs. Selection of cases and a typology of organizational types used to select the cases is discussed.

*The problems and solutions:* A central problem in the text is the inefficiency of the existing financial regime. In addition, there is the observation that ZBOs are inappropriately being adopted as a means to use obtain greater flexibility and results in financial and business operations. The solution to financial problems is to maintain macro principles such as ministerial accountability, while adjusting micro principles through differentiation in the financial system.

*Characteristic questions and/or statements:* The core idea is that through the delegation of certain responsibilities for the apparatus budget to organizational units, and the creation of incentives in the financial regime, tasks will be performed more efficiently. The agency is intended for units in the public sector where greater efficiency can



be obtained via special management rules. An important instrument in acquiring (financial) resources and the generation of efficiency wins, can be to pass on the costs that government organizations make to the eventual purchasers of goods and services. The situation can occur where from the point of view of ministerial accountability, the preference is for performance of tasks within the public sector, but that certain business desires, despite changes in financial regulations, lead to the choice for external autonomization. This is an inappropriate choice. Characteristic of agencies is that they have more authorities/capacities than normal organizational units. Through offering space for changes in the cash position of agencies within the rules of the budget, it is guaranteed that agencies can freely focus upon results.

*Word counts and searches:* Efficiency, results, freedom, autonomy, independence, space, supple, autonomization, ZBOs, special, new, differentiation, flexibility, ministerial accountability, steering, business, incentives, competition, more/less, whole, consultation/speaking partners.

## **B.2. Description of Verantwoord verzelfstandigen [Accountable autonomization]**

### *B.2.1 Structure of Verantwoord verzelfstandigen*

#### *Chapter 1: Introduction*

An earlier report focusing upon the separation of policy and implementation is cited. Better functioning government through such arrangements is said to require a consequent and systematic approach, which this report seeks to provide. The findings in the report are based upon four organizations, the commission sought to obtain insight into the concrete problems that play a role with autonomization. The speaking partners that have been consulted are identified. It is on the basis of these insights that the commission has identified attention points for future autonomization projects, in particular for ministerial accountability, steering relationships and instruments.

#### *Chapter 2: Why autonomization*

Separation of policy and operations is said to bring about transparency and efficiency, but this requires clear and systematic divisions of accountability. The theme autonomization is discussed, it is said to have become a fashion and in particular external autonomiza-

tion has come to be seen as a solution to all kinds of problems. The discussions about autonomization have often excluded attention for the primacy of politics. They have tended to focus upon how to autonomize which is unsatisfactory. It is time to return to the core of the matter: improving steering relationships and clearer organizational forms.

*Chapter 3: Accountability and steering*

Three forms of autonomization are identified and defined. They include privatization, external autonomization and internal autonomization. The implications of internal and external autonomization for ministerial accountability are discussed. It is said that external autonomization does not reduce the primacy of politics although accountability to the parliament has a different content. It is focused upon the possibilities outlined in specific legislation, thus steering only takes place at the *head lines*. The role of parliament in this situation is discussed and possibilities for change if legislation is unsatisfactory.

The differences in the ministerial relationship with internal and external autonomized organizations are compared. External autonomized organizations are not hierarchical subordinate to the minister while internally autonomized organizations are. In contrast to externally autonomized organizations, the minister can intervene into the operations of internally autonomized organizations. The same kind of steering instruments are said to be able to be applied to both internal and external autonomized organizations. A list of different ways to separate an organizational unit from a department is presented. In addition, an overview of the desirable forms of steering such as performance orientated is presented.

*Chapter 4: When and how to autonomize*

A range of assumptions that according to the commission can disrupt careful decision making around autonomization, and particularly external autonomization, are presented. They include lack of knowledge about new flexibilities within the financial system, the idea that autonomization can protect one from budgetary cuts, the idea that it can limit political intervention. Think steps for a systematic approach to decision making about autonomization are presented. Legitimate reasons for the choice for external autonomization are identified.

*Chapter 5: The necessary steering relationships*

The main steering relations that are important when a unit is autonomized are identified. They include the business operations, the financial relations, the personnel and work conditions, information provision and organization, regulation, evaluation, public control, an interface. Each relationship and the activities associated with them are described briefly.

*Chapter 6: Recommendations*

The recommendations of the commission are presented including the introduction of the think steps, the more limited use of external autonomization, the role of Ministries of Finance and Home Affairs in coordinating autonomization.

*B.2.2 Problematization in the text and word searches*

*Terminology:* There are continual references to different kinds of organizational types, or arrangements, their formal definition, accountability divisions and legal status. Political principles and ministerial accountability are also frequently cited together with a focus upon steering relationships. There is also some reference to efficiency and financial relationships. The selection of cases upon which the findings are based upon is presented.

*The problems and solutions:* The growth of ZBOs and lack of systematic forethought are central problems in the text. This is presented as a problem for transparency and also ministerial accountability. Ensuring that ministers are able to intervene in organizational operations is a way to protect accountability. In addition, a systematic and principled approach, which means clearly defined organizational types, to autonomization is thought to protect accountability and transparency.

*Characteristic questions and/or statements:* The division of accountability and the design of steering must be conducted on the basis of a systematic approach. Substantive and principle questions over the primacy of politics, the position of the state in relation to and sometimes in society, and the democratic legitimacy, are not or to an unsatisfactory extent raised. A good and carefully designed policy towards autonomization can contribute to an adequate separation between policy and operations. From the perspective of the autonomized organization, there is in the case of external autonomization no direct hierarchical subordination towards the minister. The commission believes that the creation of externally autonomized organizations should occur in only limited situations. In stark contrast to externally autonomized organizations, interven-

tion can occur in the operations of internally autonomized organizations.

*Word counts and searches:* internal autonomization, external autonomization, more/less, transparency, efficiency, ministerial accountability, accountability, division, steering, freedom/independence/space, horizontal and vertical, grip, command, complete/limited, whole, consultation/speaking partners.

### **B.3. Description of Verder met resultaat [Further with results]**

#### *B.3. 1 Structure of Verder met resultaat*

##### *Chapter 1: Objective and justification*

The cabinet announced the need to perform an evaluation on agency reform some years after its introduction. The intention of agencies was to promote efficiency through results orientated management and this report is to evaluate the extent to which this has been achieved. In addition, it seeks to learn and obtain insight into the experiences of existing agencies. A third objective of the report is to assess the extent to which changes at the micro level of agency finances have disrupted macro objectives. This question also relates to the possibility of extending accrual accounting to other organizations that are not agencies.

The 14 agencies included in the evaluation research are presented and described and the method of research is explained. The findings are based upon a questionnaire and interviews. It is recognized that while there has been attempt to use objective information, there is no control group for the evaluation and its questions. The inter-departmental character of the research group is described.

##### *Chapter 2: Motives for the application of agency status*

The formal reasons for the creation of agencies are first described with reference to bottlenecks in financial management. The motives that the researched agencies identified are also presented in a table. They included bottlenecks, the agency identity and separation of policy and operations. Each motivation is described with some reference to interview findings. The initiators of the reform status is are also listed, they included the political/bureaucratic leaders, the former together with the agency, the agency or other.

##### *First intermezzo*

In order to learn from agency experiences, attention is focussed upon how the creation of agency status was experienced. These experiences are to be included in a handbook. A number of features of the process of creating agencies are described including: informing personnel and creating support, introducing accrual accounting and the opening balance, the changes necessary for administration such as training, attention for organizational culture and steering. Under each heading various problems and successes with introducing agency status are described.

*Chapter 3: Results orientated management*

The introduction of agencies was intended to bring out about more results orientated management. This type of management is defined. The extent to which the researched agencies exhibited the features of results management are listed in a table and then described in more detail under sub-headings. The description is broken by informative boxes presenting information about the theory behind agency status. One box focuses upon the separation of policy and operations and what this entails for agencies and departments. A second box discusses the roles of owner and principal and the possibility that the mother ministry can play both roles. A desire for distinguishing these roles is expressed. An analysis of the extent to which steering of the organizations have shifted from inputs to steering on performance is presented. This was assessed primarily by the existence of quasi market practices or output and cost prices within the organizations. Shifts in the intensity of the relationship of the agencies with financial units in departments and the ministry of finance are assessed and the introduction of performance rewards in the organizations is discussed.

*Chapter 5: the conditions of agency status*

The three conditions for obtaining agency status are presented and described. The conformance of the researched agencies to these conditions is then assessed. First the identification of measurable products and services and the existence of performance measures are discussed. An overview of the quantitative and qualitative performance measures within the organizations are provided, together with the observation that they have been changing over time in the organizations. This is identified as part of the continued learning process. Second the existence of accountant's declaration prior to agency status is examined, with findings presented. Third the condition that a real possibility to demonstrate greater efficiency exists

is examined. This condition is briefly described, but no findings from the organization concerned are presented.

*Chapter 6: More efficient operations?*

Before the question of whether agencies have led to greater efficiency is examined, it is stated that it needs to be considered whether it may have contributed to efficiency. A citation regarding the greater consciousness of an agency into their work and environment is presented. This is followed by the observations that it is too early to assess whether greater efficiency has occurred in 7 of the 14 organizations. Furthermore it is noted for the other 7 organizations that there are indications that greater efficiency has occurred through lower cost prices, a positive end balance and higher productivity. Efficiency improvements based upon cost prices, as well as number of complaints, is presented for one of the organizations under study. An overview of stimulants to efficiency in the organizations examined are then identified. These include greater flexibility in financial arrangements, greater cost consciousness, bench-marking and quasi-market arrangements in some organizations. Examples of costs over time, tariffs and benchmarking arrangements in different agencies are presented in boxes. The presence of scientific evidence for efficiency improvements is discussed. The difficulties in assessing the role of agency status in efficiency improvements are identified. The findings to questions about any existing problems with agency status are presented.

*Tweede intermezzo: cultural change and side effects*

As part of the objective to obtain insights into the experience of existing agencies, a discussion of the extent to which cultural change and negative or positive side effects have been experienced is presented. There is a table identifying how applicable these things are to the agencies. Cultural changes such as greater cost consciousness, results orientation, business orientation or external orientation are noted. Positive side effects are discussed such as transparency, the streamlining of their budget procedures and by some a stronger identity. Negative side effects were also identified including the perception of negative effects from too much autonomy, greater attention from mother ministries and the Ministry of Finance and the amount of information that had to be provided.

*Chapter 6: Making conditions of agency status more precise*

It is argued that the current conditions need to be improved. The limitations of each condition are noted such the condition for measurable goods and services needing to be replaced by a re-

quirement that goods and services be measured by volume and performance measures, such as a cost price model. In addition an accountants declaration was not found to be adequate to ensure good administration. It should be accompanied by a plan for the administration and information provision. Finally the third condition was found to be inadequate. It is argued that the current conditions are too completely focussed upon the agency concerned and not upon the external relationship with the mother ministry for example. Proposals for making the current conditions more precise are listed and then described in more detailed. The proposals include a description of business process and cost price model and the identification of efficiency indicators.

*Chapter 7: Norms, allocation and control*

The macro objectives of the budget are identified and described. The role that agencies have played within each of the objectives is then described in more detail. It is found that they have not disturbed existing macro objectives at all. Indeed it is suggested that through the use of performance measures such as cost and output, they will assist in achieving macro objectives more successfully.

*Chapter 8: Further with results*

The proposal to extent the accrual accounting systems to other organizations besides agencies is discussed. The experience noted over the last years, including agencies, is said to indicate that it is desirable to steer more organizations according to agreements about performance and cost. This evaluation is said to provide insight into the desirability of extending accrual accounting to other/non-agency organizations. The advantages of accrual accounting are listed, together with some of the findings from the evaluation. The observation that some agencies experience the identity as too autonomous is discussed. To this extent lending accrual accounting to non-agency organizations is desirable. It is also argued that the agency status has proven its value in attaining more flexible, results orientated and efficient management. It is recommended that it continue to play an important role in the goal for results orientation. There is more discussion about broadening the use of an accrual accounting system to other organizations but with the observation that this is not to be a goal of its own but rather a goal to achieving greater results orientation. The recommendation for more precise conditions for agency status and for attaining the use of an accrual accounting system is made.

### *B.3.2 Problematization in the text and word searches*

*Terminology:* Business-like terms are frequently cited for example owner and purchaser, benchmarking, prices, products and services. There are also references to learning by doing, business operations, business resources/means and business redressing. References to the financial character of agency reforms are also frequently cited through terms such as the accrual accounting system, the opening balance, reserves, and the apparatus budget. The terms results orientation and efficiency also appear frequently throughout the text. Finally there are references to the scientific validity of the findings, the policy *theory* behind agencies and the need for the creation of support (draagvlak) for agency reforms through consultation.

*The problems and solutions:* The primary concern of the text is attaining more efficiency. There would appear to be no doubt that this can be achieved through the introduction of accrual accounting.

*Characteristic questions and/or statements:* The agency is intended to be an instrument for bringing to life the concept of results orientated management, and thereby greater efficiency. In this first intermezzo the experiences of the 14 agencies with the actual rigging up of the organizations will be discussed. These experiences will be reworked into a handbook for agencies. Agencies use a special form of results orientated management because they have a unique and different financial management system. Of great importance for change (in attitudes) is employees of agencies have a personal interest, through incentives, for a more performance orientated way of working. From the questions and answers of the 14 agencies...can be seen that in the future changes and improvements in the performance measures shall be made. One agency sought to carry responsibility over as far as possible.

*Word counts and searches:* Results orientation, efficiency, freedom, autonomy, space, flexibility, transparency, ZBOs, ministerial accountability, owner/purchaser/principal, difficult, new, more/less, incentives, competition, cost conscious, difficulty/challenge, steering, children's shoes, step by step, rigging up.



## Appendix C – Chapter 5 inventory of documents

### C.1 Description of Politisk styrning – administrativ självständighet [Political steering – administrative independence]

The central conclusion is that there is no constitutional barrier to the political steering of agencies. It is also found that agencies have acquired independence that far exceeds their constitutional status. This has meant that the capacity of government to be accountable to parliament for administrative activities is limited. The unclear role of boards within agencies has resulted in a lack of clarity regarding the relationship between the political and administrative sphere. The regulatory role of agencies has expanded exceptionally to such a degree that the political sphere is unaware of the kinds of regulations being made and how they are used. Some aspects of agency independence are said to be controllable through a greater use of the existing political powers to steer agencies and through a greater activity within parliament to keep the government accountable for agencies activities. It is more difficult to address the independence of agencies that has arisen through complexity and through the limits that political decision makers have put on their own steering capacity by certain organizational arrangements.

Three possible roads to address the independence of agencies are identified. (1) to return decision making competencies back to the political sphere and thereby strengthen their steering capacity (2) increase the political influence upon the management organs of agencies or (3) increase society's influence upon agencies through decentralization or increase market steering.

#### *C.1.1 Structure of Politisk styrning – administrativ självständighet*

##### *Chapter 1: Introduction*

Main objectives of initial commission investigation are listed. The motivations for an additional investigation about the independence of the administration and the capacity for political steering are described. A number of parliamentary motions highlighting concerns about the administration are cited. An overview of previous investigations into the state administration is presented. There were previously studies recommending closer cooperation between ministries and the administration. Two central issues relating to the political steering are identified, firstly the democratic chain is defined wherein public power is united with responsibility and ob-

tained from the people, and, increasing international concern about the influence of bureaucracy as an independent power.

*Chapter 2: The constitutional foundations for steering*

Constitutional descriptions of public power and its legitimate use are listed. Such values as equality before the law, the protection of welfare, equality and minorities are identified. The four available methods for using public power are identified these include through appointment powers, regulatory powers, the financial powers and control powers. Each of these powers were first briefly defined, followed by more thorough descriptions. Both appointment and regulative powers are said to have been delegated to the administration in both informal and formal ways. The control and financial powers are said to be primarily with parliament although they rely upon agencies to use these. Also the form of the budgetary process is said to be at the discretion of the government.

*Chapter 3: Government's steering function*

Different constitutional periods are described. Descriptions of the government's role in the most recent constitution are more limited. The administration's role is described primarily through their responsibility for applying the law. Citations from earlier commission reports are used to convey concern lack of mention of government's steering role in the constitution. The dualistic history of the Swedish administration is described and its origins. Various recommendations that have been made in the past to amend the clove between ministries and agencies are discussed. These go back to the early 1800s. The constitutional role prescribed to agencies is described together with the citation of articles from the constitution. It is stated that the article regarding agencies' independence aims to guarantee the rule of law, rather than limit government control. The constitution is said only to describe agencies role to apply the law rather than their other more extensive factual activities. It is also explained that the parliament is the legislator and that the government is responsible for a number of regulations that can prescribe and limit competence of administration. To this extent the administration is described as a tool of the government and agency independence is said to have only weak support in the constitution.

*Chapter 4: The administration's increasing independence*

The government is said not to use their constitutional power to steer agencies. This is because they do not have the resources to do so nor do they have ambitions to exercise such extensive con-

trol. Many decisions have been delegated to the administration. Four tendencies that have limited the political spheres' steering of the state are described. These include (1) growth and creation of agencies, (2) increasing responsibility and competence for regulation and frame budgets (3) increasing influence of boards and (4) increasing influence of actors other than the parliament or government upon the administration. Each of these tendencies were described in detail with statistics and interview findings to illustrate the growth. There is concern that the shift to more overarching steering has left agencies immune for democratic steering.

#### *Chapter 5: Steering and responsibility*

It is argued that the independence of agencies does not have strong support in the constitution and that political power has been weakened. Proposals to address the imbalance between the administration and political sphere that was established in the 1800s have never been successfully implemented. A list of intentional reasons as to why agencies are protected from detailed steering is presented. It is clear however that the consequences of successive shifts in delegation to the administrative sphere have not been examined for their collective effects on the democratic system's functional competence. Three areas in which uncertainty prevails about the rights and responsibilities of the different political and administrative tasks (1) the government's responsibility for administrative activities (2) the boards of agencies and (3) the exercise of regulative power. Each of these areas are discussed in more detail. Factors contributing to agency independence are described as well as the extent to which these can be influenced by the political sphere.

#### *C.1.2 Problematization in the text and word searches*

*Terminology:* Much reference to political theories and ideas including dualism, the people's sovereignty, post industrial society and bureaucracy as independent power, the democratic chain and roles of political actors, constitutional definitions and legal rules throughout.

*The problems and solutions:* The text begins with a description of the concern with the administration and lack of democratic insight into its operation. There are accounts of the growing complexity of the state, interest group influence and the rise of the bureaucracy as an independent power in society. There is also exclusive attention for the way parliamentarians have described the problem of the administration. The emphasis upon formal rules and in par-

ticular the prescriptions of the constitution as the source for describing appropriate distributions of power within the state, throughout the text, would indicate that it provides the guide to how power is to be distributed. There is primary concern for clearly defined roles of the administrative and political sphere. The problem of excessive agency independence is noted already in the introduction.

*Characteristic questions and/or statements:* The *democratic steering* of state activities is presently unsatisfactory. How far will this development go (towards agency independence)? We are focused upon the questions about the administration's democratic steering and steerability. The administration is a tool for the government to steer the state. It is true that the political organs formal influence has widened through the growth of the public sector and regulation, but at the same time politicians' real room to maneuver [politiskhandlingsfrihet] has been curtailed. The administration is subordinate to the government.

*Word searches and counts:* steering, democracy, independence, freedom, space, clove, rule of law, chain, whole, mapping, factual, balance, tool, clove, sharpening, power, strong/weak, narrow/broad, direction, build up, flexibility, citizen, director general, civil servants, formal/informal contacts.

## **C.2 Description of Regeringen, myndigheterna och myndigheternas ledning [Government, agencies and agency management]**

This report seeks to identify both direct and indirect ways in which the government can steer, particularly in light of financial hardship. Since there is no constitutional hinder to government steering, the commission is concerned to identify means to increase political influence upon the administration and therefore also promote effectiveness and democracy. 72 recommendations for change are identified. In the chapters I have analyzed the report finds that three year budget is an important means to promote political influence. This is because it enables the government to receive more detailed information about the activities of the administration and make decisions about changes over a more extended period of time. It is also recommended that term of director generals be shortened and that the government be able to transfer them more quickly.

*C.2.1 Structure of chapters examined in Regering, myndigheterna och myndigheternas ledning**Chapter 1: Points of departure*

There are two areas of concern for the commission to develop government's direct steering of agencies and to focus upon management functions in the administration. An overview of the findings of Politisk styrning- administrativ självständighet is presented. It is said that more information about the factual relationship between agencies and government, about agency boards and about director generals, is required. An overview of the constitution and its interpretation in relation to agency independence is presented. There is also a brief account of the significance of the problem of steering. In particular, the growth of bureaucracy and expertise is argued to be undemocratic. Distinctions between direct and indirect steering are presented.

*Chapter 3: Budget processes*

Improving the functioning of budget processes is of increasing importance given the priority of effectiveness. Constitutional prescriptions about financial powers and processes are discussed. An overview of changes to the budget system is presented. It describes changes since the early 1970s. The problems of the existing budgetary system are also described. These include current financial pressures, the freedom left to agencies to make (political) priorities about cuts, time pressure which prevents possibility for politicians to make real changes to budgetary decisions, agencies lack possibility or motivation to identify areas for cuts, and quality of their reporting is poor. Proposals for improvements to the budget process are presented. These include increasing the long sightedness of the budget through planning and more political decisions about effectiveness goal of agencies, earlier identification of political directives to agencies. Agencies should be given increasing freedom to decide about resource use over a longer time period than one year. There should be more incitements to more efficient decision making, such as requiring agencies to identify how budget frames can be cut, the government should set more precise goals. A detailed overview of a multiple year budget frame system is presented including accounts of document exchange and reporting back as well as the kinds of freedoms that should be granted to agencies and their managers.

*Chapter 10: Directors and their immediate subordinates*

The commission finds that, where they exist, boards should have a function in the appointment of director generals, this increases their responsibility and thus accountability for agencies. At the same time it is noted that this should occur after consultation with the government. An overview of existing recruitment arrangements is presented. Studies identifying the kinds of people that become directors and how are described. This description uses a range of statistics. There is also an overview of discussions to improve recruitment including references to private sector practices. The desires for a broader recruitment base and more timely recruitment are expressed. A range of means to increase mobility in director general recruitment are identified including a shortening of terms, possibility for government to transfer director generals, the removal of financial dis-incentives to change function and the creation of a new unit to facilitate quick transfers.

### *C.2.2 Problematization in the text and word searches*

*Terminology:* The report begins with reference to a range of political science terms, particularly in the description of the need for political steering and the growth of the bureaucracy as an independent power. There are a number of sections devoted to the interpreting the constitution and to legal definitions. In the budgetary chapter there are also a number of technical budget terms and financial themes, while the chapter on director generals focuses upon employment conditions.

*Problems and solutions:* There is an immediate concern for the reduction in economic resources and the priority that this lends to effectiveness. Agencies independence has weak support in the constitution. The state bureaucracy remains insensitive to parliament and government's steering signals. The problem of bureaucracy is an international problem about the rising specialization of society and corporate influences. The time is now right for developing different technical solutions for examination of resource use. The recruitment base of director generals is too narrow. Director generals find current terms too long and heavy.

*Characteristic questions and/or statements:* The fundamental demand upon the public sector is to function as an effective tool for actualizing the parliament and government's intentions. Reduced budget frames have the consequence that effectiveness becomes a more important priority. The director general function should be an expertise of its own rather than another kind of specialist. It is especially important that the democratic/political powers are not weak-

ened. It is they alone that ensure that look after the *whole* and keep other powers at bay. The constitution does not regulate how the state budget and appropriation system should be formed. It presents no hinder to renewing the budget. A better decision making basis in the budget is necessary for the government to increase the precision in their demands upon agencies.

*Word searches and counts:* steering, democracy, whole, complete, freedom, flexibility, broad/narrow, strong/weak, balance, sharpen, efficiency/effectiveness, precise, modernization, path, direction, development, long sightedness, time pressure, deeper, managers, citizens, civil servants, formal/informal contacts.

### **C.3 Description of I medborgarnas tjänst [In the citizen's service]**

The report considers central principles and overarching questions about the role of the administration in its whole. It is concerned with the difficulties of steering, fragmentation and internationalization and addresses these matters with a focus upon the primary values of effectiveness, legality and democracy. In the budgetary chapter I analyze it recommends the management by results be fundamentally reexamined, that there be a shift towards more mutuality between agencies in the same sector within the budget, that there be more openness and expertize in the development of budgetary reform and that informal contacts be documented. In the chapter on the role of civil servants it finds that there should be more deliberation about their role and a greater focus upon training. It is also found that the law should be used to ensure that civil servants meet their obligations to the citizen.

#### *C.3.1 Structure of chapters examined in I medborgarnas tjänst*

##### *Chapter 1: Main observations*

Origins of Swedish state and increasing complexity are briefly described. Distinctions between state and society have become more blurred, the state has become an element of a strong society, an arena rather than actor. It has become fragmented and difficult to steer. The *steer-ability* of the administration, its fragmentation and internationalization are all discussed under separate headings. Among the themes discussed under steering is the introduction of management by results. It has changed the relationship between the administration and political sphere. It is described as inspired

by private sector even though there are fundamental differences between the nature and goals of public and private sector work. There is uncertainty about the impact of these reforms. They have contributed to fragmentation and blurred distinction between public and private sphere. Examples of fragmentation and internationalization are provided.

*Chapter 2: Administrative politics content and tasks*

The foundations of the Swedish administrative politics are described with reference to the constitution. Its basic principles are listed including requirements for accessibility to public documents. The democratic chain is described and reference is made to participation in the international community. The characteristics of the Swedish administrative model are described including principle of collective government, small ministries and independent agencies. The lack of clarity about steering of independent agencies and discussion of this in earlier reports is noted together with the relevant constitutional passages. Legal obligations of the administration are described, as is expertise and knowledge of tasks. The communal level is also discussed. Administrative politics is defined by a further list of features including structure, management, steering and control, as well as long term renewal and reform matters. The overarching goals of the administration are presented. It is said that a balance must be found between the rule of law, effectiveness and democracy.

*Chapter 6: Steering*

The issue of political steering is presented with reference to recent attention for its importance and methods for steering are identified. There is that observation that greater emphasis upon effectiveness has been accompanied by more private sector steering techniques and values. The introduction of results steering is identified as the most extensive change to political steering. Its history and origins within the administration are described, as the changes it has entailed. Among its effects are found to be greater cost consciousness, increasing attention for results and strengthened agency independence. There is also attention for unintentional effects such as greater (burdensome) detail and precision in the result demands from the political sphere, or the tendency to provide information that is asked for, as opposed to information that is important, the tendency to measure what is easy and asked for and the effect of promoting individual agencies focus upon their own performance as opposed to that of the whole. Lack of interest



from ministries and politicians in the detailed reporting from agencies is noted. A range of studies and interview findings are cited to support these claims. There is also a discussion of small and closed group which has been responsible for the creation of results steering. Recommendations for cooperation between agencies about the kinds of results to be achieved in a sector are described. There is also discussion of documenting the informal contacts that support results steering. Finally frame laws as a means to steer are also described.

*Chapter 13: Civil servants' position and responsibilities*

Brief descriptions of the Swedish tradition of civil service and its position of authority within society are presented. The Swedish civil service is said to have exhibited positive characteristics very early including lack of corruption and effectiveness. It was also among the first to introduce freedom of information, keep a national registry and uphold rule of law ideals. Market values are identified as disrupting Swedish public service tradition and also contributing to the fragmentation of the state. Citations from legal experts are used to support this claim. These market values have been introduced through changing personnel legislation and results steering. Personnel changes have reduced independence of civil servants by making them more dependent upon their superiors. It is public values that are said to distinguish civil servants from private sector employees, in addition public tasks are described as multi-dimensional and special. It is stated that there must be a living consciousness that the citizen is the primary principal of civil servants. Duties of civil servants are described, as well as the competency to manage special nature of public tasks. Concern is raised about the way that effectiveness has come to dominate priority making, at the expense of legality. The legal requirements of civil servants are described.

*C.3.2 Problematization in the text and word searches*

*Terminology:* Both political science and historical terms and theories are adopted. These are used to describe the tradition of Swedish politics, complexity and governance within society, and the democratic steering chain in the Swedish state. There is also a wealth of citations from political scientists. In addition, citations from legal experts are prominent in the description of the role of civil servants is prominent. There are also various references to articles in the constitution.

*Problems and solutions:* The state is described as having become an arena instead of an actor, it is subject to inter-dependencies between a wide range of actors. The problem of complexity is identified and the consequence of inter-dependency that this has. Fragmentation is identified as a central problem for the administration while the citizen is identified as the primary principal to government and the administration. Deliberation is thought to maintain the citizen as a living idea, as well as the civil servant. The work of the public sector is multi-dimensional and subject to value conflicts, it is to this extent distinct from the private sector.

*Characteristic questions and/or statements:* Steering of the administration is a central democratic question. It is also an issue that has broadened from vertical conceptions to more horizontal conceptions where the administration aids the political sphere in its work and also enables the citizen to participate. The Swedish state is a tree. Results steering has contributed to the goal of effectiveness but has also weakened the powers that hold the state administration together as a whole. The internal coherence is threatened by results steering, as is the Swedish public sector culture. The administration is not only subject to government directives but also to the law. The effectiveness goal has been taken too far. Organizational identity has been strengthened by results steering, which has increased the risk that individual agencies priorities become more important than what is best for the state as a whole.

*Word searches and counts:* democracy, steering, whole, results steering, citizen, civil servant, tree, root, water, dissolve, vertical, horizontal, special, effectiveness/efficiency, flexibility, balance, openness/closedness, clear transparent, strong/weak, formal and informal contacts.

## Appendix D – Chapter 7 inventory of documents

### D.1. Description of The Prime Minister's address at the official launch of Centrelink

The primary conclusions to be made from this speech are that the creation of the service delivery agency, Centrelink, is to bring about an efficient service through the consolidation of services, easier access to customers and greater career opportunities for staff. It is compatible with the private enterprise passion of the government since the agency's creation has occurred together with a commitment to a safety net for those in need, for eliminating fraud, discouraging dependence and to that extent ensuring incentives for hard work. These are apparently the attributes of a responsible community.

#### *D.1.1 Structure of speech*

1. Thanks to various ministers and the employees of Centrelink who are viewing via a video hook up are first expressed.
2. Identifies the importance of introduction of Centrelink by referring to it as an innovation concerned with service delivery. In addition, it is described as the biggest single reform ever undertaken and congratulations to the responsible ministers are expressed.
3. Recognizes the private enterprise passion of the government but still expresses commitment to a strong public sector providing necessary services. These are described as compatible commitments.
4. Centrelink is described as the culmination of the aspirations of people over a long period of time. The knowledge and experience that the Prime Minister has gained from his electorate since entering parliament is re-counted.
5. The advantages of Centrelink are described: a human face, more efficient service, less public dissatisfaction, more career opportunities for staff. The reach of the organization is also referred to.
6. The visions of mutual obligation and the responsible community are described. These are visions in which fraud is to be sanctioned and hard work rewarded.
7. The size of the reform is once again illustrated and congratulations for the reform again expressed. The desires to

take away the notion of dependency and give incentives for work are also made reference to.

8. Centrelink is described in contrast to a past in which administrative duplication was the norm. It is referred to as consolidating in an efficient, modern fashion the major service delivery activities of the Federal government.
9. Pride and congratulations for the achievement of Centrelink are declared together with the opening of Centrelink.

#### *D.1.2 Problematization in the text and word searches*

*Terminology:* The language is simple and direct, with frequent reference to the terms opportunities, Australian, honest and decent. There is an intimate story telling style with personal experience featuring in the speech, as well as frequent reference to *we*.

*The problems and solutions:* The reform of social security arrangements are presented as being desired for a long time. This is because of the prevalence of fraud in the system and because of the dissatisfaction among customers with having to go to different government offices to arrange their benefits. Centrelink is presented as desirable because it is compatible with a passion for a private enterprise government and will ensure efficient service delivery, with career opportunities for staff.

*Characteristic questions and/or statements:* Mine is a proudly private enterprise government. But this does not gainsay the fact that we regard a strong public sector providing necessary services for people as an integral part of modern government and as something that delivers necessary support to those in the community who need it. From the moment I entered parliament in 1974 and began talking to constituents about the number of agencies you had to visit. And what focused my mind at the time was that so many people felt that if only they could go to one place and have all their business done in that one spot it would be a lot more efficient, it would be a lot more human and it would make a great deal more sense. And it's a demonstration that there is an Australian way, a unique Australian way, of delivering service support to those in the community who deserve and need our help and assistance. We need as far as possible to take away the notion of dependency from the delivery of services. Centrelink consolidates in an efficient, modern fashion the major service delivery activities of the federal government.

*Word searches and counts:* opportunities, efficient, horizon, challenge, renewal, human face, incentive, unique, private enterprise/sector,

business, dependence, taxpayers, staff, customers/clients, Australian community, new, horizon.

## **D.2. Description of Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop – Challenges at each stage**

The speech describes the motivations for creating Centrelink and its distinction from other types of government organizations. It gives an account of the arrangements that have already been taken in Centrelink or will be taken to promote its business and customer service orientation.

### *D.2.1 Structure of the speech*

1. The uniqueness of Centrelink is presented and it is distinguished from both public sector organizations in general and the way that social security was organized in the past. A before and after list of distinctions are presented.
2. The size and scale of Centrelinks *business* operations are described in a range of figures.
3. Stage one, the creation of Centrelink is recounted with reference to initial surveys and value creation workshops that were used to inform the transition towards a more personalized service. The recognition of staff opinions and needs are also identified.
4. Stage two and the consolidation of Centrelink is described. This includes introducing a one person contact and using information technologies to ensure a seamless service. The use of a range of electronic applications to advance Centrelink as a business are described, as well as other means for ensuring customer loyalty from departments. Training possibilities for staff are identified.
5. Stage three of implementing a new service delivery model wherein products can be tailored to the customer is described. It relies upon a life event model, in which uses information technology to identify the different needs of customers.

### *D.2.2 Problematization in the text and word searches*

*Terminology:* Centrelink is consistently presented as a business throughout the text. This occurs through direct references to it as a business with brands and outlets and to its customers. It is also apparent from references to competition, contestable environment, contracts, major key drivers, business re-engineering, har-

vesting best practice, benchmarking, personalized and tailored services.

*The problems and solutions:* The focus upon improving customer service would suggest that it has been unsatisfactory in the past. Similarly a contrast is being made between a more traditional bureaucratic past characterized by paper shuffling is being replaced by an innovative business like approach that is near paperless. This suggests that information technology and customer service are the necessary solutions to existing problems/arrangements. The desires of customers are presented as equivalent to the desires of citizens.

*Characteristic questions and/or statements:* The purpose in establishing Centrelink was to make it easier for citizens to do business with the federal government. The departmental secretaries reserve the right to find the right to find alternative providers if Centrelink cannot deliver to agreed levels. Stage 1 in the development of Centrelink involved setting up the organization, defining and moving towards personalized service and establishing business opportunities. If every part of the organization adopts the best innovations already demonstrated by its best performers, Centrelink would be operating at the levels required by its plan in three years. The process will be a move towards electronic gathering of customer data using new technologies and industry best practices, and trialing methods which allow customers to have entry into Centrelink payment systems with 'near paperless – one only' contact with the service centres. The need to give staff portable skills against established private and public sector standards.

*Word counts and searches:* business, customer, efficient, personalized, tailored, competition, benchmarking, staff, unique, challenge, Australian community, outlets, brands, seamless, on the road, leading the way, drivers, paper/paperless, bureaucracy, harvesting, seamless, flexible.

### **D.3 Descriptions of Connecting Government**

The document examines the many different ways that whole of government activities are performed and the kinds of features that contribute to their success. It does this on the basis of 10 case studies and a literature review. It identifies both Centrelink and executive agencies as means to connect government activities and thus promote whole of government projects.

### *D.3.1 Structure of the document*

#### *Chapter 1: The whole of government challenge*

The priority of whole of government is explained, it is part of achieving more effective implementation, obtaining the responsiveness of the administration to government and tailoring services to individual needs. Whole of government is defined and its use in other countries referred to. The external and internal motivations are listed including world complexity and recent tendencies towards fragmentation, as a result of devolution. A history and tradition of whole of government is also documented by means of example. Situations in which whole of government approaches are suitable are briefly discussed, it is not suitable for all situations and should not be taken lightly. The elements of best practice whole of government approaches are listed. These include developing a supportive culture and skills base, governance budget and accountability frameworks, maximizing information and communications infrastructure, improving engagement with individuals and communities, building the capacity to respond quickly and effectively to emerging issues. Each of these facts are then described more thoroughly.

#### *Chapter 2: Structures and processes*

The need for coordination is described and the kinds of issues that require whole of government methods of coordination are listed. Cabinet is identified as the key actor in ensuring and commanding policy coordination. The horizontal and vertical features of cabinet decision making are listed. The creation of the cabinet policy unit responsible for whole of government coordination is listed. Inter-departmental coordination at the top of departments, committees and taskforces are first described. Cross departmental partnerships in agencies such as Centrelink are then described. Key features of this arrangement are listed, as well as situations when such arrangements are appropriate. A best practice check list is provided for this situation and includes clearly defined requirements, a service level agreement, information feedback and appropriate training. Special purpose agencies or rather frontier agencies are then also described. Examples of such agencies are given and both the conditions and best practice checklist that is appropriate to this arrangement is presented.

#### *Chapter five: Budget and accountability framework*

The introduction of accrual accounting in 1999 is first discussed. Outputs, outcomes and administered items as defined in the

budget are briefly discussed. The possibility for variation in the way that whole of measure arrangements can be appropriated is discussed but concern is raised about the need to balance whole of government resource needs together with the bigger picture of parliamentary accountability and accountability to stakeholders. Problems around the (financial) assessment of the performance of whole of government projects are described, in particular the definition of outcomes is said to have presented a barrier. The progressive refinement of the budget system is described and its capacity to manage whole of government projects with broad outcomes is claimed. Other approaches to appropriation are noted particularly with examples from state government experience, but also UK experience. Different appropriation models and their possibility within the Australian system are then listed and briefly described. These include single outcome, purchaser provider agreements, having a lead agency and multi-agency package. Further case study examples are then described.

### *D.3.2 Problematization in the text and word searches*

*Terminology:* Doing business, customers, responsiveness, best practice checklists, good practice guides, being on the ground, external and internal drivers are terms used throughout the text. Cabinet is identified as the centre of government and there are various references to its functioning and to different instruments for coordination across ministerial portfolios. This begins with possibilities/structures for coordination at the top. There are some references to budgetary terms/ideas but these are presented in simplified ways.

*The problems and solutions:* A central problem is the complexity of policy making and the complexity of the world through such changes as globalization or environmental problems. There is concern about the individual focus of agencies. Greater collaboration and coordination, or rather whole of government, is the central solution.

*Characteristic questions and/or statements:* There is a need to achieve more effective policy coordination and more timely and effective implementation of government policy decisions, in line with the statutory requirement for the APS to be responsive to the elected government. The Australian public increasingly expects services to individuals, businesses and communities to be tailored to their particular needs. Recognizing this imperative, the Management Advi-



sory Commission (MAC) initiated a review of relevant experience to identify better, practical ways of working across organizational boundaries. The report is supplemented by Good Practice Guides to assist those involved on the ground in whole of government activities. Integration of government services was at the heart of Centrelink development. In some ways their (executive agencies) creation outside the normal departmental structure is intended to symbolize their whole of government status. National Oceans Office (executive agency)...this is a quintessential whole of government idea.

*Word counts and searches:* imperative, challenge, bridge, freedom, efficiency, flexibility, incentives, competition, responsiveness, business, citizen, customer, staff, managers, leaders, strong, purchaser/provider, seamless, tailored, balance, vertical, horizontal, coordination, integration, collaboration, balance, connect, sharpen, big picture, whole (of government), governance, Australian, more/less.

## Samenvatting

In dit onderzoek is de retoriek rondom de vorming van agentschappen in nationale, officiële verhandelingen onderzocht. De studie richt zich niet op de praktijk van de vorming van agentschappen, maar probeert een verklaring te vinden binnen de cultureel-politieke en bestuurlijke context voor de argumenten die de opkomst, en tot op zekere hoogte, de ondergang van agentschappen in gang hebben gezet. De vorming van agentschappen wordt gezien als een internationaal modeverschijnsel in publiek management, met arrangementen en programma's voor agentschappen die verschenen in diverse landen zoals Engeland, Japan en Tanzania (O'Toole and Jordan, 1995; Oliver, 2000; Talbot and Caulfield, 2002). Het ging daarbij om het vestigen van overheidseenheden binnen handbereik van ministeries en het reguleren ervan door middel van prestatie contracten (Pollitt, et al., 2004).

In het wetenschappelijke debat heeft het internationaal ontstaan van het verschijnsel agentschap de vraag opgeroepen of er sprake is van convergentie van hervorming van publiek management binnen verschillende cultureel-politieke en bestuurlijke contexten. De meningen hierover lopen uiteen. Internationale organisaties en adviseurs hebben de neiging gehad de overeenkomsten in hervormingspraktijken en de toepasbaarheid van gelijksoortige hervormingen in verschillende contexten te benadrukken (zie Pollitt, 2001a, 2001b). Een aantal bestuurskundigen hebben daarnaast gewezen op de verschillen in de nationale hervormingspraktijken en hun relaties met de te onderscheiden nationale hervormingstrajecten die bestaan in verschillend culturele, politieke en bestuurlijke contexten (Premfors, 1998; Kickert, 1997; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). Het is ook geopperd dat er eerder sprake is van convergentie in nationale hervormingspraat dan in de daadwerkelijke praktijk (Pollitt, 2001a). De veronderstelling is dan dat bepaalde verhalen of *manieren van spreken* over management hervormingen zich los van politiek-bestuurlijke contexten hebben verplaatst. Vergelijking van nationale, officiële beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen maakt het mogelijk onderzoek te doen naar de mate waarin er werkelijk sprake is geweest van convergerende hervormingspraat ten aanzien van publiek management. De rol van een internationaal gedeeld verhaal, of van de cultureel-politieke en bestuurlijke

context, zoals die wordt weerspiegeld in te onderscheiden *nationale stijlen van spreken* over de hervorming van agentschappen, wordt ook onderzocht. Tegen de achtergrond van het convergentie debat kan de volgende centrale vraagstelling van dit onderzoek worden geponeerd:

*Hoe is de hervorming van agentschappen geconstrueerd in officiële verhandelingen zoals deze in verschillende culturele en politiek-bestuurlijke contexten zijn gepresenteerd en waarom zijn er overeenkomsten en verschillen opgetreden in de verhandelingen?*

De empirische focus van het onderzoek was een internationale vergelijking van nationale, officiële beleidsdocumenten over de hervorming van agentschappen in Nederland, Zweden en Australië.

#### *De theorieën en het onderzoeksdesign*

Om te komen tot een onderzoek van overeenkomsten en verschillen in nationale, officiële verhandelingen over de vorming van agentschappen is in dit onderzoek een sociaal-constructivistische benadering gekozen. Centraal in deze benadering is het idee dat objecten zoals agentschappen niet worden begrepen als een verschijnsel in de praktijk maar eerder als tot stand gekomen door wat er over hen wordt gezegd in een bepaalde context. Om het onderzoek te ondersteunen werden twee theorieën gekozen, de New Rhetoric en de Grid Group Cultural Theory (GGCT). Deze theorieën passen in het sociaal constructivisme en maken het mogelijk te komen tot een beschouwing van de cultureel-politieke en bestuurlijke context en de eigenschappen van de verhalen die karakteristiek zijn voor officiële hervormingspraat. Ten eerste is de New Rhetoric van Perleman en Olbrechts-Tyteca (2003) gekozen om officiële beleidsdocumenten over vorming van agentschappen te analyseren. Deze theorie bood het gereedschap om retorische eigenschappen ofwel *regels van het spreken* over vorming van agentschappen te beschouwen. De retorische eigenschappen zijn onderscheiden door middel van het karakter van die spreken ofwel *ethos* in de verschillende politiek-bestuurlijke contexten, en hun manieren om agentschappen te construeren (*pathos, logos*). Dit gaf de mogelijkheid om verhalen die werden gebruikt voor de promotie van vorming van agentschappen te categoriseren en vergelijken. Zulke

concepten omvatten het idee van een universeel publiek, de manier waarop kwalitatieve en kwantitatieve loci werden gebruikt om het publiek in vervoering te brengen en de mate waarin argumentatie berustte op mathematische deductie, overtuiging of metafoor. Bij de beschouwing van ethos, ofwel de manier waarop de spreker het publiek construeert, was het gebruik van de New Rhetoric toepasselijk aangezien het onderscheid maakt tussen een universeel en een bepaald publiek. Dit gaf de mogelijkheid onderscheid te maken tussen een *nationale stijlen van spreken* zoals die in verband staat met een politiek-bestuurlijke context en de manieren van spreken gericht tot een beperktere groep professionals of een beleidsnetwerk. Het idee van een nationale stijl van spreken gaf een verbinding met de categorieën van GGCT omdat deze naar verwachting overeenkwam met de meer algemene cultureel-politieke en bestuurlijke context.

GGCT werd op twee manieren in dit onderzoek toegepast. Het werd gebruikt om de politiek-bestuurlijke contexten alsmede de culturele kleur van de officiële beleidsdocumenten te karakteriseren. GGCT onderscheidt culturen op basis van de twee dimensies van het sociale, te weten raster (*grid*) en groep (*group*). Raster verwijst naar de mate waarin het leven van mensen wordt bepaald door regels en conventies in de maatschappij, terwijl groep verwijst naar de mate waarin mensen verbonden zijn met elkaar als leden van een collectief. Samen genomen zijn deze dimensies gebruikt om vier ideaaltypen van sociale omgeving te maken die corresponderen met de verschillende maten waarin raster (hoog of laag) en groep (hoog of laag) voorkomen. Deze vier manieren van leven hebben de volgende namen gekregen: hiërarchie (hoge groep, hoog raster), egalitarisme (hoge groep, laag raster), individualisme (lage groep, laag raster) en fatalisme (lage groep, hoog raster). Zij vertegenwoordigen zowel structuur als cultuur, die elkaar bovendien ook versterken volgens deze theorie. Elk van de manieren van leven en mogelijke combinaties ervan worden in verband gebracht met algemene eigenschappen die kunnen worden vergeleken met het functioneren van verschillende politiek-bestuurlijke systemen. Mamadouh (1997:23) heeft bijvoorbeeld gesteld dat sociale democratie of meer specifiek de moralistische politieke cultuur die karakteristiek is voor meerpartijensystemen, gerichtheid op consensus en een gulle welvaartsstaat kunnen worden begrepen als een combinatie van egalitarisme en hiërarchie. Aan de andere kant kunnen

een ondernemende politieke cultuur karakteristiek voor twee partijen stelsels, competitie en een beperkte overheid worden begrepen als een combinatie van individualisme en hiërarchie. Hood et al. (2004: 11) hebben gepoogd om GGCT categorieën ook toe te passen om bestuurlijke systemen. Er is enige onduidelijkheid over de schaal en de mate waarop de karakterisering van politieke culturen ook toepasbaar zijn op bestuurlijke culturen binnen een en hetzelfde politiek-bestuurlijke systeem (Thompson, 1998). In dit onderzoek heb ik de mogelijkheid open gehouden of van culturele mengvormen kan worden verwacht dat ze zich repliceren in de verschillende lagen van het systeem zoals het politieke en het bestuurlijke.

Naast de toepassing van GGCT op de context waarin de officiële beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen werden vormgegeven, is het ook gebruikt om, net als de New Rhetoric, de officiële beleidsdocumenten zelf te beschouwen. Hood (2003) heeft thema's en argumenten in publiek management met gebruikmaking van de vier manier van leven gecategoriseerd. Dit geeft de mogelijkheid de verschillende culturele kleuren van verhalen die in de nationale beleidsdocumenten zijn opgenomen te identificeren. Hood heeft zelfs voorgesteld dat ethos, pathos en logos waarschijnlijk elk van de vier manier van leven karakteriseren. Door GGCT samen met de New Rhetoric toe te passen op nationale, officiële beleidsdocumenten werd het mogelijk om de daadwerkelijke retorische eigenschappen van cultureel verschillend gekleurde verhalen te identificeren en deze met Hood's voorspellingen te vergelijken. GGCT gaf ook een contextuele verklaring voor de culturele kleuren van nationale, officiële beleidsdocumenten omdat het idee van elkaar versterkende werking van sociale relaties en houdingen een overeenstemming veronderstelt tussen het culturele karakter van de politiek-bestuurlijke context en de culturele kleur van de nationale beleidsdocumenten en nationale stijlen van spreken zoals toegepast. De redenering, dat van landen met een hoge groep kan worden verwacht dat ze hoge groep verhalen in hun beleidsdocumenten over de hervorming van agentschappen waarderen terwijl van lage groep landen kan worden verwacht dat ze lage groep verhalen waarderen, werd in dit onderzoek onder de loep genomen. Daarnaast boden deze theorieën de mogelijkheid om achter de mate te komen waarin cultureel gelijke gekleurde verhalen en gelijksoortige *regels van het spreken* in verschillende landen kunnen worden waar-

genomen. Dit zou aangeven dat bepaalde in de mode zijnde verhalen, meer dan de context, in staat zijn geweest de nationale, officiële beleidsdocumenten vorm te geven.

De casus en data selectie voor het onderzoek werden ingegeven door de genoemde theorieën, door empirische relevantie, en advies van nationale experts. Ten eerste werd een brede definitie van *agentschap* vastgesteld die de ruimte liet voor niet alleen de algemene inhoud van hervormingsvoorstellen, maar ook voor hun symbolische herkenning in een bredere internationale discours met betrekking tot agentschappen. Ten tweede werd de selectie van landen ingegeven door de overeenkomsten en verschillen tussen de cultureel-politiek context. In navolging van bestaande studies in GGCT en de politieke wetenschappen werden aan de ene kant twee gelijkende hoge groep - consensus contexten gekozen: Zweden en Nederland (voornamelijk egalitair waarna hiërarchisch). Aan de andere kant werd een context met lage groep - conflictmodel gekozen: Australië (voornamelijk individualistisch). Empirisch waren deze landen ook interessant omdat de beleidsdocumenten over hun agentschappen minder wetenschappelijke belangstelling in de Engelse taal hebben genoten dan vormingen van agentschappen in landen als het Verenigd Koninkrijk of Nieuw Zeeland. Daar komt bij dat de analyse van documenten uit deze landen speciale aandacht mogelijk maakt voor de manier waarop schijnbaar gelijkende hervormingsideeën, vaak in het Engels verwoord in de internationale gemeenschap, worden vertaald en besproken in de verschillende talen. Ten derde werd de selectie van officiële documenten in elk van de landen ingegeven door uitgebreid documentenonderzoek alsmede vragenlijsten die werden voorgelegd aan nationale experts of het gebied van management hervormingen. Dit leidde tot het kiezen van drie officiële beleidsdocumenten die de nationale beleidsdocumenten over de vormingen van agentschappen in elk land over perioden van 7 tot 14 jaar weerspiegelden.

#### *Bevindingen*

Uit het onderzoek bleek dat, hoewel er enige convergentie was in de nationale, officiële beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen in de verschillende landen, de overeenkomsten beperkt waren. De verschillen in nationale beleidsdocumenten daarentegen waren duurzaam en van betekenis. Zowel de mate waarin gelijkende verhalen worden omarmd in de verschillende contexten als de natio-

nale stijlen van spreken die werden waargenomen kunnen voornamelijk worden verklaard door het culturele karakter van de bestudeerde politiek-bestuurlijke contexten. De rol van een gelijklopend internationaal verhaal dat zich onafhankelijk van context verplaatst gaf een slechts zeer gedeeltelijke verklaring voor nationale, officiële beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen. Hoewel de waargenomen convergentie sprekend was, werd deze altijd beperkt door een breder nationale politieke cultuur en de instituties en sprekers die gerechtigd waren binnen deze contexten te spreken.

Patronen van overeenkomsten en verschillen in de nationale beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen geven aan dat er bepaalde nationale stijlen van spreken zou kunnen zijn die hoort bij hoge groep consensus culturen dan wel bij lage groep - conflictmodel culturen. Dit ondersteunt contextgebonden verklaringen voor nationale, officiële beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen. In de hoge groep – consensus culturen, Zweden en Nederland, was het aanvoeren van wetenschappelijk bewijs belangrijk om geloofwaardig te worden in de ogen van het publiek, net als het gebruik van politieke idealen. Quasi-logische argumentatie of formele redeneringen waren een duurzame eigenschap van de argumentatieve technieken die werden gebruikt, evenals controle metaforen zoals *sturen* en *greep* krijgen. Beleidsdocumenten in de hoge groep – consensus culturen werden typisch naar voren gebracht door groepen van gespecialiseerde sprekers die op afstand stonden van de politieke macht. In tegenstelling, werd in het lage groep – conflictmodel van Australië geloofwaardigheid verkregen door het publiek op een meer informele, ongecompliceerde manier aan te spreken en persoonsgerichte waarden zoals klantenservice waren prominenter door de tijd heen. Argumenten gebaseerd op overtuiging, eerder dan quasi-logische argumenten, waren een duurzame eigenschap van de hervormingsteksten en zakelijke metaforen werden met regelmaat toegepast. Beleidsdocumenten in de lage groep – conflictmodel cultuur werden typisch naar voren gebracht door individuele sprekers die zich dicht bij de macht bevonden.

Zoals werd verwacht waren egalitaire en hiërarchische thema's prominenter aanwezig in de hoge groep landen, terwijl individualistische thema's prominenter aanwezig waren in het lage groep land. Hiërarchische thema's waren prominenter aanwezig in dan de egalitaire thema's in de Nederlandse en Zweedse beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen. Dit was verrassend aangezien beide politieke

contexten meestal als egalitair worden beschouwd. Dit geeft aan dat de retorische situatie waarbinnen de beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen werden geproduceerd kon worden onderscheiden van de karaktertrekken van de bredere politieke cultuur. Het kon ook worden toegeschreven aan de grotere afstand tussen de sprekers en de politiek. Er werd daarentegen een grote overeenkomst gevonden tussen de voornamelijk individualistische politieke cultuur in Australië en de culturele kleur van verhalen over agentschappen zoals weergegeven in officiële beleidsdocumenten. Dit werd toegeschreven aan de grotere nabijheid van de Australische sprekers tot de politiek.

Er waren ook belangrijke verschillen in de culturele kleur van nationale beleidsdocumenten in de hoge groep landen Zweden en Nederland. Dit werd verklaard door verschillen in de cultureel-politieke en bestuurlijke context omdat meer individualistische thema's en argumenten in Nederland kunnen worden toegeschreven aan een hogere mate van individualisme in vergelijking met Zweden. Het kan ook worden toegeschreven aan de grotere mogelijkheden voor financiële experts om in de Nederlandse situatie het vertellen over hervormingen van agentschappen te domineren. Zowel in Nederland als in Zweden waren individualistische verhalen het prominentst aanwezig wanneer financiële actoren een belangrijke rol hadden gespeeld in de voorbereiding van officiële documenten over agentschappen. Deze actoren brachten gelijkende individualistische verhalen naar deze contexten. Omdat financiële dominantie vaker voorkwam in de Nederlandse politiek-bestuurlijke context, bevatten zij door de tijd heen ook meer individualistische thema's.

Convergentie in de nationale beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen tussen zowel hoge als lage groep landen werden vooral waargenomen in de individualistische verhalen die in de verscheidene landen werden opgenomen. Deze verhalen weerspiegelden gelijkende *regels voor het spreken* onafhankelijk van de context waarin zij weergegeven, wat aangeeft dat sommige verhalen de eigenschappen van nationale, officiële beleidsdocumenten kunnen verklaren. De individualistische verhalen werden constant gekarakteriseerd door het argument van ongelimiteerde ontwikkeling, waarmee initiatieven van agentschappen werden weergegeven als continu verbeterbaar door de tijd, en door reis metaforen en metaforen van flexibiliteit. In Nederland en Australië werden beleidsdocu-



menten gekarakteriseerd door de constructie van een publiek van adviseurs. Er was ook enige convergentie in de typen van pendule verschuivingen die in officiële beleidsdocumenten in hoge groep en lage groep culturen door de tijd plaatsvonden. In Zweden en Australië was bijvoorbeeld een beweging van individualistische verhalen naar meer groep verhalen waar te nemen samen met een grotere nadruk op het probleem van complexiteit en een toegenomen gebruik van de metafoor van het *geheel*. Deze nationale verschuivingen in verhalen waren consistent met de veranderingen in het internationale verhaal van NPM naar governance. De mate waarin gelijklopende verhalen werden omarmd blijkt te worden beperkt door het culturele karakter van de cultureel-politieke en bestuurlijke context. Individualistische verhalen werden in een grotere mate omarmd in de lage groep – conflictmodel context, terwijl hiërarchische verhalen in een grotere mate werden omarmd in de hoge groep - consensus contexten. Het blijkt ook dat de verschuivingen in verhalen sneller plaatsvonden in de lage groep – conflictmodel cultuur dan in de hoge groep consensus culturen.

Er konden ook enige meer algemene conclusies die uit het onderzoek van nationale beleidsdocumenten over de vorming van agentschappen in de landen worden getrokken. De waargenomen retoriek gaf bijvoorbeeld aanwijzingen over hoe hervormers van de publieke sector op een succesvolle wijze het publiek in de Nederlandse, Zweedse en Australische politiek-bestuurlijke contexten kunnen overtuigen. Het bleek bijvoorbeeld dat quasi-logische argumentatie het meest werd gewaardeerd in Nederland en Zweden, terwijl argumenten gebaseerd op de structuur van de werkelijkheid eerder tot acceptatie zouden leiden in Australië. Op een vergelijkbare manier is de pathos van de onzekerheid (de bedreiging van de democratie) in Zweden, het unieke in Nederland en het moeilijke (de uitdaging) in Australië prominent in hun beleidsdocumenten. Dit doet vermoeden dat deze pathos en loci waarschijnlijk een grotere geloofwaardigheid aan hervormingsinitiatieven geven in deze landen. Er werden ook grenzen van officiële verhalen geïdentificeerd, zoals het wijdverbreide vertrouwen in de mogelijkheid die de autoriteiten hebben om hervormingen te doen slagen (regels, politici en ministers) en het geloof dat prestatiebesturing het juiste gedrag teweeg zouden brengen. Het werd duidelijk dat burgers en managers grotendeels het zwijgen wordt opgelegd in officiële beleidsdocumenten of alleen een stem worden gegeven ter legitimatie

van het officiële verhaal. Dit weerspreekt claims ten aanzien van het democratische karakter van hervormingen. Hoewel niet onderwerp van gerichte studie in dit proefschrift zou het beperkte begrip van publieke managers en hun werk in de officiële beleidsdocumenten over agentschappen erop kunnen wijzen dat er een beduidende kloof is tussen het officiële verhaal over vorming van agentschappen en de praktijk ervan.

De theoretische bijdragen van dit onderzoek tenslotte omvatten de verfijning van de GGCT typologie in de studie van publiek management en het constateren van enige beperkingen daarvan. De empirische bevindingen hebben aanwijzingen gegeven over de typen ethos, pathos en logos die waarschijnlijk met de beleidsdocumenten over hervormingen samenvallen. Daarnaast zijn argumenten die nog niet door GGCT zijn gecategoriseerd aangestipt voor toekomstig debat. Deze omvatten argumenten over feedback verbanden tussen uitvoering en beleid en over de toewijzing van gezamenlijke budgetten. Het is aangetoond dat sommige retorische thema's zoals democratie en ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid niet passen in de strikte toewijzing aan een van de vier typen. Het was eerder hun culturele ambiguïteit die ze aantrekkelijk maakte. Op eenzelfde manier waren ook de meer gefragmenteerde politiek-bestuurlijke contexten van Nederland moeilijk een duidelijke plaats te geven in de GGCT matrix. Verder werden claims ten aanzien van de overname van dezelfde culturele mixen op verschillende schaalniveaus, zoals in de bestuurlijke en de politieke laag, in dit onderzoek niet bevestigd. Inzicht in verbanden tussen bestuurlijke en politieke culturen vereist vervolgonderzoek. Daarnaast gaf het concept *universeel publiek* uit de New Rhetoric de mogelijkheid van een meer genuanceerd begrip van cultuur. Zowel de nationale stijlen van spreken als de theoretische bevindingen betreffende beperkte culturele manieren van spreken hebben aangegeven dat het onmogelijk is willekeurig welk hervormingsidee in elke context in te brengen. Voor zo'n kunststukje zou een Hercules van de retoriek nodig zijn. Dat type spreker is in dit onderzoek niet voorgekomen.

## Curriculum Vitae

Amanda Smullen was born on the 6th of November 1972 in Shepparton, Australia. She studied political science at the University of Melbourne, Australia, where she completed her Honors thesis *Political representation and the general status of women: the case of Norway*. She received a scholarship during this period to conduct her research in the Department of Comparative Science at the University of Bergen, Norway. After her university studies she worked in housing policy for the Victorian State Government.

In 2000 she moved to The Netherlands and began her doctoral research at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. As part of her PhD training she contributed to a four country international comparative research into performance management in agencies. This resulted in the publication of a book for which she is also one of the co-authors.