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Public Sector Reforms: Changing Contours on an NPM Landscape

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Abstract: Previous studies suggest that public sector accounting has moved from Public Administration (PA) to New Public Management (NPM) ideas and, more recently, towards a New Public Governance (NPG) approach. These systems are presented as mutually exclusive and competing. Focusing on accounting changes in the UK central government, this paper explores whether movements towards NPG ideas can be identified at the level of political debate. No evidence is found that NPM is a transitory state. Rather, the findings demonstrate that political debate continues to utilise predominantly NPM arguments, with the three systems viewed as containing complementary, rather than competing, schemes.

Keywords: accounting reforms, New Public Management, New Public Governance, Central Government

Running title: Public Sector Reforms: Changing Contours

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INTRODUCTION

Public administration has the propensity to experience 'identity crises' (Waldo, 1968). Previous studies suggest that over the decades there has been a continuous movement in public administration systems from traditional Public Administration (PA) ideas to managerial ones, later labelled as New Public Management (NPM) reforms, and more recently, towards a more participative approach utilising partnerships and networks, referred to as New Public Governance (NPG). Each of these systems is associated with its own accounting, budgeting and performance measurement tools and techniques. The three systems are often presented as mutually exclusive and competing (Rhodes, 1997; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011; and Prestoff et al., 2012). However, the claim that there has been a progressive movement along a continuum from PA to NPM, and ultimately to NPG, has also been contested (Pollitt, 2007; and Lapsley, 2008). While there have been a number of studies looking at the implementation of accounting reforms associated with these systems (Christensen and Lægreid, 2007; and Connolly and Hyndman, 2006), little is known about the political debate preceding these reforms and on whether this follows the direction some of the literature would suggest.

The objective of this study is to explore whether a convincing movement towards NPG ideas can be identified at the level of political debate; and to what extent the ideas embedded within PA, NPM and NPG systems show themselves in the political discussions regarding public sector accounting and budgeting reforms. Has the emphasis of political debate on these three systems changed over the last eighteen years? To what extent does this suggest a movement along a continuum from PA towards NPG, with NPM merely a transitory state on the journey? Has a movement along a continuum (if any) led to a replacement of previous ideas? The paper focuses on the accounting, budgeting and performance measurement changes that took place in the United Kingdom (UK) central government from the 1990s and, through a document analysis, explores the extent to which the language used in the documents mirrors any of the old

and new public administration reform vocabularies. In particular, we investigate, over time, the relative use, and change in use, of the language related to PA, NPM and NPG.

The paper aims to contribute to the on-going discussion on public sector reforms and their evolution towards an increasingly NPG-like approach (Osborne, 2006 and 2010; Pollitt, 2007; and Lapsley, 2008). The findings suggest that the political debate regarding accounting reforms in official UK political documents has predominantly, but not exclusively, utilised NPM arguments, with little evidence of a 'NPG-era' even in the later periods. In particular, while PA, NPM and NPG are often, although not always (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011), presented in the literature as mutually exclusive, competing schemes, the results of this research suggest that in political debate they are viewed as complementary, with decisions taken that result in layering, rather than replacement, of systems. On the basis of the analysis, there is very limited evidence to support the claim that NPM is a transitory state in the evolution from a regime of traditional PA to NPG. The paper is organised as follows: the following section reviews existing literature on the three public administration systems (namely PA, NPM and NPG); then the methods and the document analysis are presented; finally, after a section discussing the emerging results, the conclusions present final remarks and identify further research avenues.

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS AND IDEAS OVER THE LAST EIGHTEEN YEARS

Since the 1970s many governments have engaged in reform processes aimed at bringing business concepts, techniques and values into the public sector (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). This movement has been termed NPM and often resulted in major shifts in accounting, budgeting and performance measurement systems as a basis for better management and more appropriate accountability (Connolly and Hyndman, 2006). As a consequence, it is argued that there has been (Hood, 1995), and indeed should be (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), a significant and progressive movement away from traditional bureaucratic PA systems, in favour of NPM-type management and accounting tools and ideas inspired by the private sector. International comparisons of

NPM-style reforms across a number of countries indicate that these reforms are being implemented at a quicker pace and more enthusiastically in some countries compared to others (Hood, 1995; and Flynn and Strehl, 1996). For example, Hood (1995) produced an analysis outlining the degree of NPM intensity in various countries and their national governments' political orientation at that time. He argued that political orientation (and right-wing governments) could not explain the degree of implementation of NPM ideas. An alternative view, indicated by Flynn and Strehl (1996), suggests that NPM ideas require an ideological commitment that is likely to be stronger among conservatives than socialists or social democrats. However, there are exceptions to this, as Bach and Bordogna (2011) also showed that in a group of core 'NPM enthusiasts' (Anglophone countries characterised by a majoritarian political system, an individualist pro-market culture and strong governance systems), NPM-inspired reforms have been more consistently pursued, regardless of the political hue of the government. The UK has been proposed as one of these 'enthusiasts'.

More recently, an increasing body of literature has identified, under the banner of NPG, a new focus on governance systems to steer public services and actors (Osborne, 2010; and Prestoff et al., 2012). In what could be viewed as a reaction to the fragmentation of the public sector through the adoption of NPM ideas, NPG focuses on the need for networks, rather than hierarchies and markets, as a means of making governments more effective and legitimate (Osborne, 2010; and Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). According to these studies, NPM is dead (Dunleavy at al., 2006) and we have now entered an era of 'governance without government', as a mode of de-bureaucratised, hybrid societal steering (Klijn, 2008; and Lynn, 2010).

Traditional Public Administration

PA systems, the ideas of which have dominated public service delivery regimes since the late nineteenth century to the early 1980s, have at their heart the rule of law. Here, politics and administration are clearly separated (with the former prevailing on the latter) and the hegemony

of professionals is dominant with respect to public service delivery (Hood, 1991). From a historical perspective, traditional PA could itself be regarded as a major reform movement. Instead of public administration being carried out by amateurs often appointed on the basis of connection, the task of administering public organisations was professionalised, and efficiency and appointment on merit became key. PA is most commonly linked with the ideas of Weber (1947) and is characterised by: an administration under the formal control of the political leadership, fixed spheres of competence, defined hierarchies, full-time, permanent and neutral officials, specialisation and expertise as the basis for action, clear distinction between the public and private roles of officials, and management by the application of developed rules (Politt and Bouckaert, 2011).

With respect to accounting, the budget often plays a central role as a basis for the political negotiation and the (generally incremental) allocation of resources among different political programmes and purposes, with the budget seen as a political act which translates political goals into appropriations of financial resources (Wildavsky, 1964; and Liguori et al., 2012). Attention is focused on the legitimacy of the budget process and, ex-post, on the comparison between actual and authorised expenditure (ter Bogt, 2003), with accounting primarily intended to ensure compliance and curtail spending. Strict rules, standardised procedures and a focus on cash are at the heart of the accounting system.

New Public Management reforms

While there was a massive expansion in the role of the state between 1945 and the early 1970s, driven in the main by rising expectations and the demand for greater equality, from the 1970s onwards serious questioning of such expansion began to emerge. Possible reasons for this are financial distress, social changes, globalisation, increased competition, and changing perceptions of the state (for a discussion of these see Hyndman and McGeough, 2008). Such questioning forced governments to consider the role of the state, the manner in which public services were

delivered to citizens and the accountability of the public sector. Consequently, the management of public sectors in a number of western countries has changed with, collectively, these changes being referred to as NPM.

Hood (1991) suggested that NPM is a convenient, though a rather loose, term that is a shorthand for a set of broadly similar administrative doctrines that dominated the reform agenda in the public sector in many OECD countries. NPM reforms typically have evolved around six dimensions: privatisation, marketisation, decentralisation, output orientation, quality systems and intensity of implementation (Pollitt and Summa, 1997). This is evidenced in the UK public sector by, among other things, the increasing adoption of private-sector managerial techniques, the development of market mechanisms and the break-up of large units of government into smaller quasi-autonomous units. These adjustments have been viewed as ways of improving accountability by public sector bodies, and decision making within public sector bodies, and have drawn heavily on new accounting, budgeting and performance measurement systems (Hyndman et al., 2007; and Lapsley, 2008). In the field of accounting, many governments that have embraced NPM ideas have also adopted the accruals basis of accounting (as opposed to a cash basis), private sector style financial statements (vs. budget out-turn reports relating to cash spent), decentralised budgets (vs. strong central control of budgets), flexibility in budget carry forward (in place of strict annuality) and a focus on performance reporting relating spend to outputs and achievements (in place of a focus on the control of inputs). Objectives, targets and identification of the cost of individual services to permit rational choice also tend to feature prominently in accounting systems supporting NPM reforms.

A number of authors have suggested that in many reform experiences, these new ideas and tools, rather than replace existing systems with better systems, have a tendency to perpetrate old logics and behaviours, often making public organisations more formalised and bureaucratic than previously (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; and Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). It has been argued that the initial enthusiasm relating to NPM reforms has declined over time, so that NPM is now

in its middle age. This is as a consequence of reformers ignoring or downplaying its paradoxes and side effects, and being overconfident in the general efficacy of the remedies they initially advocated (Hood and Peters, 2004). Some authors have even claimed that NPM is dead, although others contest this (Dunleavy at al., 2006; Pollitt, 2007; Lapsley, 2008; and Osborne, 2010).

New Public Governance reforms

In the last two decades a plethora of ideas relating to 'governance' have gradually emerged to challenge both traditional PA and NPM reforms (Rhodes, 1997; and Osborne, 2006 and 2010). Governance is argued to entail the steering of society through networks and partnerships between governments, businesses and other forms of civil society (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). Osborne (2010) opines that NPM, rather than being the final destination of a reform process, has (p.1) 'been a transitory state in the evolution' from a regime of traditional PA to NPG. He contends that both traditional PA and NPM reforms fail (p.5) 'to capture the complex reality of the design, delivery and management of public services in the twenty-first century' and calls for a more sophisticated understanding of public policy adoption, implementation and public service delivery.

It is argued (Osborne, 2006) that NPG reforms (as compared with NPM systems): have their theoretical roots in sociology and network theory (rather than rational management and public choice); assume a plural and pluralist state (rather than a disaggregated state); focus on inter-organisational governance (rather than intra-organisational management); emphasise service processes and outcomes (rather than service inputs and outputs); relate to external non-public organisational partners with ongoing preferred-supplier relationships (rather than market relationships); use trust and relational contracts as governance mechanisms (rather than market mechanisms); and place their faith in neo-corporatist values (rather than the efficacy of competition and the market place). These ideas, however, have also been accompanied by a

partial rediscovery of rule and legal principles, where the state, with its own rules, methods and culture, fundamentally remains the key actor (Hupe et al., 2000).

The concept of governance, as part of the NPG changes, is not an alternative to government, but represents a wider and more inclusive system of ideas, based on partnerships among government, business and citizens' associations. The emphasis is shifted towards networks, partnerships and negotiated voluntary cooperation, rather than competition or hierarchies. NPG reforms move away from an emphasis on traditional hierarchical forms of organisation and focus on more devolved and participative (task-specific) controls (Rhodes, 1997). They build on ideas relating to more efficient and flexible service delivery procedures (concepts first highlighted in the NPM approach) to answer the needs of an increasingly diverse citizenry and acknowledge an increased complexity of public sector accountability mechanisms as a response to increasing numbers of stakeholders and ambiguous objectives (Rhodes, 1997; and Christensen and Lægreid, 2011). With such reforms, the focus of accounting techniques moves more and more towards the reassurance of social efficacy and effectiveness (highlighting the ensuring of citizens' satisfaction and attention to outcomes), as well as external accountability and transparency (European Commission, 2001). According to Ackerman (2012), accountability is meant to stimulate citizens' participation, favouring ex-ante, proactive and horizontal systems. In such systems transparency and participative endeavours come to the fore.

METHOD

This paper investigates the language and the change in the vocabularies used in relation to the three main public sector reforms identified by the literature (i.e. PA, NPM and NPG), with a particular focus on accounting, budgeting and performance measurement systems. In particular, we aim to explore, over time, whether NPG ideas and vocabularies defined a change of scene in the political debate, as recent literature would predict (Osborne, 2006 and 2010; and Ackerman, 2012). This is interpreted in the context of the changes decided in the UK central government

during the 1990s and 2000s (here split into four consecutive periods to identify changes, if any, over time). The history of the changes was reconstructed on the basis of the relevant official reform documents, archival materials (such as published articles) and interviews with central government managers (see Table 1). The analysis of documents was facilitated using a textual analysis approach. The discursive dynamics were reconstructed on the basis of specific text genres that were included in documents that accompanied the legislative process[1]. These comprised a total of 45 documents (2,440 pages) including: (i) text of an enacted law in parliament's national archives; (ii) explanatory notes to the Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB) bill (the only relevant bill issued over the analysed period), accounting for the background and rationale of the law and its amendments; (iii) administrative reports which explored areas with some significant focus on accounting and budgeting reform (such as reports discussing how accountability might be discharged or performance measured) issued by governmental and parliamentary committees[2]; and (iv) transcripts of the first and the final bill discussions in both chambers of parliament (House of Commons and House of Lords) and parliamentary committee reports examining modifications to the law or existing administrative regulation.

PA, NPM and NPG have characteristic standard narratives, vocabularies, ideas, concepts and instruments (Mills, 1940) that signify adherence to its major thrusts. In order to identify the systems and reforms that the texts invoked, we developed a dictionary of such 'signature elements' or 'cues' (verbal expressions that suggest one of the core concepts that the literature proposes for each system) (Hyndman et al., 2014). The dictionary of cues used is reported in Appendix 1. For example: references to *efficiency*, *contract, agencification* or *competition* were used to identify commitment to the NPM reform agenda; NPG was associated with words/phrases such as *networks, citizen participation, transparency* or external *accountability*; PA was identified in relation to such cues as *rule*, *compliance* or *procedure*. With some of these cues, there is a degree of overlap, and it could be debated as to whether they should be related to one particular system or another. For instance, *accountability* and *consolidation* represent cues utilised by both NPM and NPG reforms. In

these cases, previous research was reviewed to identify the extent to which the literature expressed the cue as being central to a specific system, or firstly introduced under a certain reform (see concepts such as *citizen* for PA or *contracting-out*, *PPP* and *PFI* for NPM – Hood, 1991; and Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000 and 2011). The cue was located in the system where the strongest case was made. In addition, it should be noted that our analysis exceeds an automatic search or quantitative counting of words: the dictionary greatly aided the coding, but all documents were read by the coders in detail and it was left to the coders' interpretation whether a keyword was used to cue a particular commitment to a system or not. Data coding and analysis were supported by the software ATLAS.ti.6.

A statement can draw on a specific cue to either endorse or criticise a particular system or reform agenda. To identify this, we distinguished between 'positive/neutral' (i.e. supporting codes – PA1, NPM1 and NPG1 codes) versus 'negative' (i.e. criticising or challenging codes – PA2, NPM2 and PG2) usage of the cue words within each vocabulary. In order to increase internal validity and reliability, the codebook was applied to each of the documents independently by two researchers, with all cases of disagreement reviewed and resolved by discussion. The unit of analysis was the paragraph. The weighted number of occurrences, and occurrences per page, related to the three systems (distinguishing between positive and negative cues) is shown in Tables 2 and 3.

For the analysis of the relative prevalence of each system (PA, NPM or NPG), we counted the number of occurrences of different signature cues within each paragraph[3]. For example, when four different NPM1 codes, supporting NPM arguments, occurred in a single paragraph, the paragraph was 'weighted' as NPM1 multiplied by four. In addition, in order to explore the extent to which cues relating to different (arguably competing) systems existed together, we explored their co-occurrence by assigning binary codes to each paragraph, indicating whether specific reform discourses were present or not. For instance: when an NPM1 code occurred four times in a paragraph together with two PA1 codes, the paragraph was

counted once as a PA1/NPM1 co-occurrence; whereas when a PA1 code appeared in a paragraph three times with no other code, it was counted once as a PA1 alone. Finally, to identify the main specific cues in each system being used, the main keywords (i.e. words accounting for over 5% of the hits in one system in any of the four periods) were collected and analysed. The co-occurrence counts for various combinations of codes are presented in Table 4, with a snapshot of commonly used system-related keywords outlined in Table 5.

CHANGES IN ACCOUNTING, BUDGETING AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS: A UK PERSPECTIVE

At the beginning of the 1990s, accounting, budgeting and performance measurement in the UK central government featured cash budgeting with strict annuality requirements, cash accounting, and limited performance measurement and performance management. During the two following decades (the 1990s and the 2000s), major changes associated with a modernisation agenda were introduced. Key features of these are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

In the 1990s, as far as accounting is concerned, a major change pertained to the announcement relating to the introduction of accrual-based accounting. The arguments for using the accrual model, in place of cash accounting, gained prominence and acceptance, and a move from the cash basis was agreed for central government. This was eventually implemented in the early 2000s under the title of Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB). Resource accounting, which extends beyond the cash-based accounting used previously by applying accrual principles to central government department accounting, also sought to integrate objectives and targets into the accounting system (implemented in full by 2001). In addition, on the management accounting side, a subsequent move to resource budgeting, in order to make the management

accounts align with the external accounts in central government, was made (implemented in full by 2003). The position of accrual accounting was further embedded by the decision in 1998 to produce Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) (a consolidated set of accrual financial statements for the UK public sector, consolidating around 1,500 bodies), although the first set of WGA was not produced until 2011[4].

With respect to performance measurement and management, in the 1980s there had already been calls for a greater focus on such issues, which could be seen clearly in the *Financial Management Initiative* (HM Government, 1982). Since the 1990s, performance measurement and reporting became integral parts of the development of RAB and came again to the fore in the introduction of Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) in 1998. In these, central government departments were held accountable for service delivery through the targets set out in their PSAs and SDAs.

Finally, in the realm of budgeting, major changes also occurred. As alluded to above (and shown in Table 1), the move from cash budgeting to resource (accrual) budgeting was announced in the mid 1990s and was 'live' by 2003. In addition, annuality (the requirement for budget allocations to be spent by the financial year-end or be surrendered to the centre) was abolished in 1997 at central government departmental level with end-year flexibility (EYF) being permitted (allowing the carry forward of unspent resources from one year to the next). Moreover, in 1998, Treasury-led *Spending Reviews* were initiated to set firm and fixed spending budgets over several years for each government department rather than rely on single-period budgeting.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS: CHANGES IN A SHADE OF … NPM

PA, NPM and NPG in the UK political debate

A synopsis of the cues linked to the three main reform waves (PA, NPM and NPG) over an eighteen-year period (1991-2008) is provided in Table 2. This shows, in absolute and percentage

terms, the 'weighted' number of occurrences of different signature cues within each paragraph, categorised in each of the six possible codes (a negative and a positive code for each of the three systems). Table 3 shows the same counts normalised by the total number of pages in the documents for each of the periods.

Both tables give us a clear picture, where ideas supporting NPM systems, techniques and logics (identified by NPM1 codes) prevail overall with an average of 63.5% (see Table 2) and 3.5 cues per page of document (Table 3). NPM is clearly the most represented and discussed reform system in the political debate throughout the whole period and is almost always presented in positive terms (NPM2 cues only occurring in 1.1% of cases in eighteen years). NPM surpasses the traditional PA system, which showed an average of 24.9% positive (PA1) cues over the period (1.37 cues per page of document). However, cues relating to PA clearly persisted in the UK discussions, notwithstanding the multiple waves of managerial and accounting modernisation. The utilisation of traditional PA cues, supportive of PA ideas (PA1), increased proportionately in the 1990s before reducing in the 2000s.

In terms of occurrence, NPM1 arguments remained high in each of the four periods (well over 50% in each period), being at their highest in the first period (70.2%), before decreasing in the second period to 54.3% and increasing again to over 65% in each of the last two periods. A similar oscillating pattern, at a much lower level, occurred with PA1 cues, with peaks and troughs occurring almost as mirror images of NPM1 (understandably so, as these two codes dominated the analysis over the four periods, accounting for over 85% of cues in each period).

Although the use of NPG1 cues remained relatively low throughout the entire period (averaging only 7.6% of total cues and 0.42 cues per page), it grew consistently from a minimal level in the first period (5.5%) to a significantly higher level in the fourth period (13.2%). It is interesting to note that there was very limited use of negative cues (PA2, NPM2 or NPG2) in the documents. Indeed, looking at each of the systems (PA, NPM and NPG), on average, over the

four periods, these accounted for only 2.8% (PA2), 1.1% (NPM2) and 0.1% (NPG2) of the total cues and were never more than 4% in any one period (Table 2).

Insert Table 2 and Table 3 here

The co-occurrence counts for the main combinations of codes (e.g. PA1/NPM1, PA1/NPG1, PA1 alone, etc.) are highlighted in Table 4 together with the percentage of the total number of paragraphs in each period (a detailed overview is presented for each of the three systems separately – PA, NPM and NPG). The less occurring combinations of codes are collapsed into the 'Other' column. Considering the PA system first (the upper third of Table 4), it can be seen that PA arguments (which were present in 2,767 paragraphs in the eighteen-year period) were mostly presented together with NPM ones, and overwhelmingly in a positive manner. The most usual code combinations were PA1/NPM1 (48.4% over the entire eighteen-year period) and PA1 alone (38.9% of paragraphs), although the prevalence of one of these over the other fluctuated between periods. In the period 1991-1995, 53.1% of paragraphs were PA1/NPM1 compared with 37.3% PA1 alone; in the subsequent period, PA1 alone was more widespread. No other code combinations using PA arguments were particularly frequently identified (averaging less than 5% over the eighteen-year period) in any of the four periods.

This picture is reversed for NPM arguments (the middle third of Table 4), where it is seen that NPM arguments (which surfaced in 5,425 paragraphs in total in the entire period under consideration) most commonly appeared in positive terms and by themselves (NPM1 alone) within a paragraph, rather than being associated with any other reform system. This is true in each of the four periods. For example, in the period 1991-1995 65.7% of paragraphs were NPM1 alone (59.2% for the entire eighteen-year period). The next most frequent code combination was NPM1/PA1 (24.7% of the NPM paragraphs over the eighteen years). .

With respect to NPG arguments (the lower third of Table 4), these were present in a total of only 936 paragraphs over the eighteen-year period. On average, they appeared more frequently in a positive hue (NPG1) in combination with positive NPM1 arguments (NPG1/NPM1 accounting for 41.6% of all NPG paragraphs during the eighteen-year period), although this was not consistent through the four periods. The other most prevalent code combinations were NPG1 alone (29.7% of paragraphs) and NPG1/PA1/NPM1 (14.5% of paragraphs). NPG1 alone, in particular, was the most frequently occurring code during the periods 1996-1999 (31%) and 2004-2008 (40.3%); although, in the latter case, it was the result of an analysis of the only 67 paragraphs available for the period.

Insert Table 4 here

To explore the use of particular, system-related (PA, NPM or NPG) words in the political debate regarding accounting, budgeting and performance measurement, an analysis of the prevalence of the specific cues used (see Appendix 1) was also undertaken. This is reflected in Table 5, which focuses on the weighted counts of the main keywords and shows an example of the extent to which the relative use of common system-related words ebbs and flows over the period considered. For presentation purposes, we define a keyword as any one of the Appendix 1 original cues that accounts for over 5% of the hits in any one system (PA, NPM or NPG) in any one of the four periods. Given this, the total percentages of the keywords in any one system shown in Table 5 are less than 100% in any period, and the individual system-related counts are greater than the sum of the total for the keywords. In line with the previous analysis contained in Table 2, the total overall counts for PA, NPM and NPG were very different (9,973 PA cues, 18,367 NPM cues and 2,525 NPG cues), and therefore care must be taken in interpreting the percentage information. Similarly, the much higher number of words analysed in the middle two periods (1996-1999 and 2000-2003) reflects the higher numbers of documents in these periods.

With respect to PA, *cash/commitment*, *expenditure* and *spending* were by far the most prevalent words, particularly in the first three periods, where together, in each of the periods, they accounted for over 60% of all PA cues (Table 5). This fell to 56.3% in the last period (2004-2008), as *citizen*, a PA cue hardly used in other periods, emerged more strongly. In the case of NPM, the keywords *resources*, *audit/auditing* and *cost* were the most prevalent, together accounting for over 50% of the NPM words in the entire period (although this was much lower in the 2004-2008 period at 19.7%). NPM performance-related cues (such as *objective*, *performance* and *target*) together accounted for only 6.9% of the NPM cues in the entire period, but a much higher proportion in the later periods (10.9% of NPM words in period three – 2000-2003, and 19.9% in period four – 2004-2008). With NPG, by far the most common cues used over the entire period were *accountability* and *consolidation/consolidated* (words that are also borderline with NPM ideas) that together accounted for 52.1% of the overall NPG words (Table 5). Of note is the fact that *integration/integrated*, *network* and *governance* emerged as keywords in period four (2004-2008), although they were hardly present at all in earlier periods. *Governance*, in particular, emerged strongly, accounting for 34.8% of NPG hits in the last period.

Insert Table 5 here

The following subsections explore the four periods under analysis in more detail, paying particular attention to the parallel between the proposed changes and the ideas and arguments actually being discussed in each period.

The early RAB years: 1991-1995

The domination of NPM-related topics in the political debate regarding accounting, budgeting and performance measurement particularly coincided in the mid-1990s with the discussions around the Green (HM Treasury, 1994) and the White (HM Treasury, 1995) papers (both finally

converging into the RAB bill in 2000). As a consequence of these RAB-related proposals, and the discussion surrounding them, in the first period under consideration (1991-1995), over 70% of the cues in the documents relating to accounting utilised the language associated with NPM in a positive manner (NPM1) (Table 2). When we look at Table 5 and the way specific keywords appear, in this period NPM cues such as *cost* (16.7% of the NPM keywords) and especially *resources* in accrual terms (30.9% of NPM keywords) came to the fore. This is unsurprising given the widespread discussion of RAB in the political debate. At this time, language positively associated with PA ideas (PA1) was present, but much more muted (20.2% of the total cues, Table 2), while positive NPG cues (NPG1) were almost absent (5.5% of the total cues).

If we look at the co-occurrences across the different reform vocabularies during this period, arguments in favour of PA were mostly presented together with NPM ones (Table 4). Between 1991 and 1995, 53.1% of the times it was present, PA1 co-occurred together with positive NPM arguments, and only 37.3% of the times by itself. This picture is reversed for NPM, which largely appeared by itself, rather than associated with any of the other systems. This co-occurrence of PA1/NPM1 is particularly reflected in the concurrent use of *cost* and *expense* cues (used in an NPM1 sense) with the PA1 cues of *cash* and *expenditure* in discussions and debates on RAB (Table 5). This suggests a complementarity of arguments, rather than a competition between system-related arguments. Furthermore, between 1991 and 1995, although in 33% of the paragraphs where it was present NPG appeared by itself in a positive mode (NPG1), it was more often accompanied by arguments supporting NPM-type changes (NPG1/NPM1 – 50.5%). Ideas related to all three systems (PA, NPM and NPG) were rarely present together.

The emergence of PSAs, SDAs, EYF and WGA: 1996-1999

The second half of the 1990s saw an increase in all the system codes (Table 2), consistent with the increased number of documents and pages of accounting-related political debate in the

period (Table 3). While positive NPM cues (NPM1) continued to be most pervasive, and increased in numbers, they accounted for a lower proportion of total cues than in the earlier period (54.3% compared with 70.2% in 1991-1995, see Table 2), suggesting no movement from PA to NPM ideas at this time in the political debate. The number and proportion of both PA and NPG codes rose.

In this period, performance measurement and reporting continued to be identified and discussed as integral parts of the development of RAB. Additionally, it was further embedded by the development of PSAs and SDAs in 1998 (Table 1). In 1997, annuality was abolished at central government departmental level with EYF being permitted (see Table 1)[5]. The use of accrual accounting was further embedded by the decision in 1998 to undertake a scoping study with the objective of producing WGA. In the same year, the Treasury introduced a more structured *Spending Review* process.

These changes covered old and new areas of central government accounting and thus led to an increase in the use of terms supporting all the three systems (Table 5): the old PA, reinvigorated by the focus on *expenditure* and *cash*, never forgotten, and again emphasised in the *Spending Review*; the newly introduced NPM (with performance-related cues like *objective*, *performance* and *target* increasing in use, as well as *cost*, *audit* and *resources*); and the incubating NPG (with growing use of *accountability*, *transparency* and, related to WGA, *consolidation* cues). This is also the period where the most was written in relation to accounting, budgeting and performance measurement reforms (1,083 pages, see Table 3), surpassing even the years 2000-2003 when the RAB bill was approved and published.

In this period PA, NPM and NPG were presented mainly independently (i.e. as standalones) in each paragraph (Table 4). The three systems of ideas only co-occurred marginally, with the exception of when the NPG cues were examined. NPG1 appeared together with positive NPM and PA cues in 19.7% of the NPG paragraphs, the highest proportion over the four periods (and much higher than any three way co-occurrence when considering NPM

and PA cues). This might suggest the rise of a new set of ideas (which would be identified later in the literature as NPG reforms). These ideas were grafted into the political debate, but could not, at this point, be recognised as a self-standing paradigm.

The RAB era: 2000-2003

The move from cash budgeting to resource (accrual) budgeting announced in the mid-1990s went 'live' in 2003 (Table 1). Previously, in 2001, resource (accrual) accounting had become operational in all central government departments with performance-related *Statements of Resources by Departmental Aims and Objective*s as part of this RAB change. In the 2000-2003 period, the NPM and NPG occurrences increased (in terms of counts and percentage of hits). For example, positive NPM (NPM1) hits increased from 2,677 (2.47 per page; 54.3% of all hits) in 1996-1999 to 4,226 hits (4.74 per page; 68.7% of all hits) in 2000-2003. A similar pattern was observed with positive NPG (NPG1) cues, but at much lower levels (Tables 2 and 3). At the same time, there was a clear decrease in the relative presence of PA-supporting arguments (Table 2): this is highlighted by the co-occurrences, where positive PA cues in a standalone mode (PA1 alone) were much less frequently found (26.9% of paragraphs compared with 46% in the immediately preceding period – see Table 4). The decline of this traditional set of ideas might echo the coming into play of the managerial RAB-related reforms, a few years after them being announced. What had been seeded is now becoming more and more visible. For example, given the introduction of RAB during this period, the fact that keywords such as *auditing* (accounting for 18.7% of the NPM cues) and *resources* (27.7% of the NPM cues) were pervasive in the political debate was perhaps not unexpected (Table 5).

A more definite split across the old (PA) and the new (NPM and NPG) systems is also visible in the lower co-occurrence rate of PA1, NPM1 and NPG1 together (12.8% of NPG paragraphs in this period, down from 19.7% in the previous period – Table 4) and in the substantial stability of the main terms (such as *cash*, *expenditure* and *spending*) used to support PA

systems (Table 5). While the old PA world crystallises, and, being already embedded in the culture, perhaps does not require further emphasis or slogans for it to be embraced, in the new NPG realm things keep moving and the related terminology develops as the new ideas are introduced, discussed and become engrained. This is shown by its rapidly evolving vocabulary, which sees, in this period, a reduction in the use of NPG keywords such as *transparency* and *consolidation*, and the increase in use of the term *accountability* (Table 5).

A journey towards governance? 2004-2008

Over the last period under analysis there were fewer documents, fewer pages and fewer system-related hits (Tables 2 and 3). Key themes of the period were particularly embedded in the *Governance in Britain* Green Paper of 2007. It contained a number of proposals relating to constitutional reform, and had an overarching aim of increasing citizens' inclusion and participation in the managing of public services. The demand for enhanced forms of external accountability was also strongly addressed (Table 1). At the same time, preparation was ongoing for WGA (with the first set of WGA eventually produced in 2011).

Due to the governance issues being discussed, the preparation for the consolidated WGA to be published in the future and the ongoing debate regarding the alignment of the key RAB documents, NPM ideas remained at the fore and discussions of NPG ideas accelerated strongly in these last four years (2004-2008). For example, 65.2% of all hits related to positive NPM (NPM1) cues (slightly down from the 68.7% in the previous period, see Table 2). While NPM words previously emphasised, such as *resources* and *audit*, showed a decrease, other words such as *responsibility* and *process* became more important (Table 5). This was possibly as a consequence of the stronger search for legitimation in the context of citizens and external stakeholders, something particularly emphasised in *Governance in Britain*. With respect to positive NPG cues (NPG1), these increased strongly as a percentage of total system-related hits (from 8.5% to 13.2%, Table 2), and showed the highest percentage of cues in any of the four periods.

Further evidence of NPG's rapidly developing vocabulary is seen in Table 5, with a major expansion of the use of the NPG keywords *governance*, *participation* and *integration*. Moreover, the use of *accountability* and *transparency*, which had emerged strongly in previous periods, remained solid. Similar to the previous period, PA-supporting arguments (PA1) remained relatively low at 21.3% of hits (Table 2), below the average for the four periods, with the PA keyword *citizen*, which was almost unused in previous periods, accounting for 39.8% of PA hits (Table 5).

In terms of co-occurrence, we see a change in how NPG arguments were presented. As indicated in Table 4, the highest percentage (in total) of NPG paragraphs represented standalones (40.3%), possibly indicating an emerging strength of the NPG ideas. However, care should be taken in interpreting this as: this was the period with the lowest number of documents and total hits, and positive NPG cues (NPG1) were still more likely to co-occur within paragraphs with positive NPM or PA cues (Table 4).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS: LOOKING BACK AT THE PAST EIGHTEEN YEARS

Looking at the four periods as a whole (1991-2008), we see a move from cash accounting, cash budgeting and strict annuality (PA ideas) to accrual accounting (live by 2001), accrual budgeting (live by 2003) and EYF (from 1997). Similarly, the expansion and focus on performance measurement and management, and the introduction of PSAs and SDAs in 1998, are indicative of NPM themes being embedded. These adjustments were features of a rolling programme of accounting reforms associated with NPM ideas between 1991 and 2008. However, the three sets of ideas, PA, NPM and NPG, associated with different reform packages, always co-existed (although to differing extents) over the eighteen years. The contention that an autonomous NPG paradigm has emerged in the UK in the last decade, as theorised by some authors (Osborne, 2006 and 2010; Ackerman, 2012; and Prestoff et al., 2012), is not supported by the research that forms the basis of this paper. Differently, we find that in the UK, as PA has weakened (although not disappeared), NPM ideas have been consistently strong and have been augmented as NPG

ideas have been interwoven. NPG, rather than replacing NPM, complements and is an essential part of it.

Among the three waves of reform, NPG represents the weakest and most recent. From a low commencement base in the early 1990s, it emerged more forcefully in the 2000s but, even then, the overall average occurrence of positive cues (NPG1) for the entire period (1991-2008) was by far the lowest of the three systems. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the most recurrent NPG terms in the UK central government scene actually cover aspects that previous literature has identified as borderline with NPM (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). For instance, both NPG and NPM reforms can be associated with the keyword *consolidation*, the most recurrent NPG cue over the last eighteen years (30.2% on average – see Table 5), and *accountability* (the second in terms of frequency, 21.9% on average). As indicated earlier in the paper, for analysis purposes, both *consolidation* and *accountability* were each viewed as NPG cues. Even doing this (which should 'strengthen' the NPG case), and reflecting on the consequent results, it is arguable as to whether NPG can be considered a new system of ideas in itself. The results seem to support the view that NPG is largely an adjustment of NPM reforms (Lapsley, 2008 and 2009; and Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011).

Some writers have argued that NPM ideas are more likely to be accepted by right-leaning governments (in a UK context, a Conservative government). However, there is very little evidence to support this in the data. At the initial stage of the period covered in this study, the Conservative party was in government (up to 1997). This was followed by a more centrist (or left-leaning) New Labour government (from 1997 to 2010). Ideas supporting NPM (NPM1), however, appear just as strongly in political debates in the later periods of this study (when a New Labour government was in power) as in the earlier periods (with a Conservative government – Tables 1 and 2). Moreover, many of the NPM-related accounting changes announced in the Conservative era were pushed through vigorously in the New Labour era

(Table 1). As Cutler (2007) and Lapsley and Midwinter (2010) argue in relation to the UK, there is clear evidence that NPM ideas were embraced enthusiastically by all governments.

Interestingly, the study also highlights the substantial co-existence of multiple (supposedly alternative) public administration approaches and ideas. A possible explanation for this finding is that the process of reform in accounting, budgeting and performance measurement techniques has been generally characterised by a layering of the different ideas that complement, rather than supplant, each other over time. This reflects a pattern where new emerging structures and ideas are super-imposed (or layered) on pre-existing ones (Liguori, 2012). This interpretation is consistent with what Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011, p.8) find during reform implementation, where 'the detail of public sector reform often turns out to be more like geological sedimentation, where new layers overlie but do not replace or completely wash away the previous layer'. Our case shows that, at the level of political debate, changes appear to build on each other and suggest the grafting of new ideas onto existing systems. Adopting such a philosophy negates the need for negative arguments and explains the very limited presence of negative codes (i.e. arguments criticising any of the three reform streams). This highlights a general trend, where reforms are discussed in positive terms and introduced identifying their strengths, rather than the previous systems' weaknesses. This would also explain the observed coexistence of accounting, budgeting and performance measurement systems relating to different reform waves, where both 'old' and 'new' system cues are present together.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Utilising extensive document analysis, and focusing on changes in accounting, budgeting and performance measurement in the UK central government over an eighteen-year period, this paper explores the use of reform vocabularies and the degree to which a movement towards NPG ideas can be identified in the political discussions regarding public sector accounting reforms. Besides the actual content of the reform decisions, the paper examines: the extent to

which the vocabularies used to debate possible changes are related to the vocabularies of the three public administration systems; whether the systems are seen as mutually exclusive and/or competing in political discussions; and whether there is evidence of a movement over time from PA to NPM and then to NPG.

Our research highlights very limited evidence to support Osborne's (2010) argument that NPM is a transitory state in the evolution from a regime of traditional PA to NPG. The fact that the usage of the NPG vocabulary is weak (although increasing) places doubt over whether it can yet rightly be described as a self-standing, autonomous paradigm at all. Indeed, when one considers the main NPG keywords found in the research (Table 5), by far the most widely used were *accountability* and *consolidation*. Such words, arguably, could have been located in the NPM dictionary. Moreover, when the co-occurrence of PA, NPM and NPG is considered, the code 'NPG1 alone' occurs only 29.7% of the times NPG cues are present (much lower than any other standalone code). In comparison, the combined code NPG1/NPM1 accounts for 41.6% of the times NPG occurs (Table 4), suggesting that NPG is more often associated with NPM ideas.

In contrast, the analysis provides evidence that the rhetoric regarding accounting, budgeting and performance measurement reforms has predominantly used managerial arguments, irrespective of the political stances of the government in office. Considering the occurrence of the system-related cues for each of the three systems (PA, NPM and NPG), NPM is by far the most widely used in each of the four periods (Table 2), despite different governments being in power at different times. Moreover, when this is considered in tandem with the decided changes (Table 1), it largely shows a consistency between the tendency to use NPM cues and the decisions to introduce NPM-related changes. However, some care must be exercised in interpreting the results, because truly taken-for-granted topics require no justification and therefore do not easily surface in official discourses (Green, 2004). Therefore long-standing ideas (probably emanating from the time-honoured tradition of a PA system) may not need to be included in the arguments, tending to result in an understatement of adherence to

PA principles. This is consistent with the modest level of identification of PA occurrences, as discussed in the results.

PA, NPM and NPG are often presented in the literature as mutually exclusive, competing systems. The evidence in this study suggests that this is not the case. If it were the case, one would expect, in political debate and discussion, arguments made against one system as support for change to another system. For example, arguments in favour of an NPM change (NPM1) would be made together with an argument against PA (PA2); the argument being that NPM changes are necessary replacements for outdated PA systems. This tendency occurs very infrequently. Instead, we often find arguments in favour of one system (for example, NPM) presented in the same paragraph as arguments in support of another system (for example, PA). This implies that NPM changes are often seen as supporting established PA systems and suggests that changes are not necessarily replacements of, but rather complements to, existing systems. This reflects a pattern of new emerging ideas super-imposed (layered or sedimented) on pre-existing ones rather than new emerging ideas replacing pre-existing ones (Liguori, 2012). As Streeck and Thelen (2005) suggest, the changes that are observed today are not merely minor adaptations of what has been before, but rather, through their accumulating impacts, resulting in a major recasting of systems.

This paper contributes to the on-going debate on public sector reforms and the possible evolution towards an increasingly NPG-like approach. First, on the basis of the evidence from this research, we dispute the claim that NPM is a transitory state in the evolution from a regime of traditional PA to NPG. Instead, we concur with Lynn's (2010) view, expressed when discussing the nature of NPG as a new paradigm of public administration, opining that any paradigm which does not require changes in political institutions and systems is doomed to be just another academic fashion. In our research, we find that political debates are still strongly framed within the 'old' NPM, rather than the 'new' NPG. Why NPM ideas have been so pervasive in discussions and debates surrounding public administration is still unclear, and

beyond the objective of this paper. After the Second World War there was a massive expansion in the role of the state across OECD countries. This was driven by rising expectations and demand for greater equality (Sanderson, 1996). However, in the last thirty years major changes have taken place in relation to the role, function and management of the public sector. From the 1970s serious doubts began to be raised about the continued expansion of the state (Bovaird and Loffler, 2009; and Flynn and Strehl, 1996). These prompted the push for public sector reforms, with some seeing them in terms of improving the performance, transparency and accountability of the public sector (Flynn and Strehl, 1996), while others in terms of a fundamental questioning of the role of the state (Sanderson, 1996).

Second, unlike the majority of studies on the topic, which focus on reform implementation and their unintended consequences, this research examines the political debate surrounding accounting-change decisions at the moment they are taken. The analysis suggests that the adoption of PA, NPM and NPG ideas is not as clear cut as some implementation studies have claimed. What we see in the UK political discussion of the past eighteen years is largely an NPM landscape, contoured with different aspects of NPM coming to the fore at different times (as particular changes are debated in the political arena) and the acknowledgement throughout that traditional PA and emerging NPG ideas also have validity. Rather than NPM ideas and tools completely replacing PA ones, we see NPM (and some NPG concepts) supplementing and complementing traditional systems. As Lynn (2012, p.119) has suggested, 'whatever may be new will be rooted in soil that is very old indeed'.

As in all studies, this research has limitations and can be augmented by further research. Firstly, our empirical focus is purely on the UK, an early and strong reform initiator. Other studies comparing across different countries, possibly with differing administrative cultures and traditions, would enrich the findings and help identify if a more or less linear trajectory exists in the move (if any) from PA to NPM and NPG systems. Secondly, the research relies almost totally on document analysis. Interviews with key actors in and around the decisions that are

taken regarding changes to accounting systems would provide additional insights. Finally, the research has looked at what the debate was, not why the debate occurred in the way it did and what the particular influencing factors were. Additional research could broaden the scope of analysis to periods before the 1990s in order to explore the existence and interplay of NPM and NPG ideas. Moreover, further research could investigate the level of 'action' (Brunsson, 1989) and actual implementation of the discussed changes, and the role played by organisational conditions in different countries.

NOTES

[1]This does not deny the relevance of other communication arenas, such as the media (Meyer and Höllerer, 2010). However, as the area of financial and budgetary accounting reforms can be assumed to be 'expert talk', we expect these documents to be representative of the relevant arguments.

[2]In the UK most accounting and budgeting changes do not pass through law, but rather are introduced through administrative acts.

[3]The total number of hits for the three systems (PA, NPM and NPG) over the four periods was 13,447.

[4]Although the initial 1998 timetable targeted 2006 as the first year where such accounts were to be produced, this was delayed until 2011. It has been argued that a combination of competing priorities, limited resources, the UK public sector moving to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), and political and fiscal changes were largely responsible (Heald and Georgiou, 2011).

[5]In the face of financial pressure, the government more recently argued that the end-year flexibility (EYF) system led to accumulated surpluses that would further increase the deficit if they were spent. As a consequence, the EYF system was discontinued from 2011-2012 (House of Commons, 2011).

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TABLES

Table 1: Main features of the UK accounting, budgeting and performance measurement reforms

1991-1995
1994-95 • Announced that resource (accrual) accounting and budgeting to be introduced in all government departments as part of the Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB) changes (late 1990s – 1994 with the Green Paper, 1995 with the White Paper - dry-run and transitional exercises to bed system down). • Announced that *Statements of Resources by Departmental Aims and Objectives* to be introduced in all government departments as part of the RAB changes – late 1990s dry-run and transitional exercises to bed system down.
1996-1999
1997 • End-year flexibility (EYF) introduced with respect to budget carry forward. 1998 • Treasury first published a scoping study for Whole of Government Accounts (WGA). • Performance-focused Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) introduced as a key-aspect of a quasi-contract between the Treasury and government departments. • Treasury-led *Spending Reviews* initiated to set firm and fixed spending budgets over several years for each government department.
2000-2003
2001 • Resource (accrual) accounting 'live' in all central government departments. • *Statements of Resources by Departmental Aims and Objectives* required to be produced as part of the RAB changes in all central government departments. 2003 • Resource (accrual) budgeting 'live' in all central government departments
2004-2008
2007 • Government discussion paper published with the objective of facilitating better accountability of public bodies to parliament and to the public. • Announced that financial accounting of government departments to be based on IFRS. • *Clear Line of Sight* (CLOS) project commenced aimed at getting better alignment of accounting and budgeting information.

Table 2: Reform cues in the UK political debate - a time comparison

91-95	**PA1***	**PA2**	**NPM1**	**NPM2**	**NPG1**	**NPG2**	**Total**
	360**	52	1,253	15	98	7	1,785
	20.2%	2.9%	70.2%	0.8%	5.5%	0.4%	100%
96-99	**PA1**	**PA2**	**NPM1**	**NPM2**	**NPG1**	**NPG2**	**Total**
	1,763	116	2,677	37	330	4	4,927
	35.8%	2.4%	54.3%	0.8%	6.7%	0.1%	100%
00-03	**PA1**	**PA2**	**NPM1**	**NPM2**	**NPG1**	**NPG2**	**Total**
	1,103	203	4,226	95	521	4	6,152
	17.9%	3.3%	68.7%	1.5%	8.5%	0.1%	100%
04-08	**PA1**	**PA2**	**NPM1**	**NPM2**	**NPG1**	**NPG2**	**Total**
	124	2	380	0	77	0	583
	21.3%	0.3%	65.2%	0.0%	13.2%	0.0%	100%
Total (all periods)	**PA1**	**PA2**	**NPM1**	**NPM2**	**NPG1**	**NPG2**	**Total**
	3,350	373	8,536	147	1,026	15	13,447
	24.9%	2.8%	63.5%	1.1%	7.6%	0.1%	100%

*supporting codes – PA1, NPM1 and NPG1 codes vs. criticising or challenging codes – PA2, NPM2 and PG2

**number of absolute counts

Table 3: Reform cues in the UK political debate - average per page

		Counts			Average per page		
	Total Pages	**PA1***	**NPM1**	**NPG1**	**PA1 norm**	**NPM1 norm**	**NPG1 norm**
91-95	345	360	1,253	98	1.04	3.63	0.28
96-99	1,083	1,763	2,677	330	1.63	2.47	0.30
00-03	891	1,103	4,226	521	1.24	4.74	0.58
04-08	121	124	380	77	1.02	3.14	0.64
Total (all periods)	2,440	3,350	8,536	1,026	1.37	3.50	0.42

* supporting codes – PA1, NPM1 and NPG1 codes

Table 4: Reform cues and co-occurrences in the UK political debate - a time comparison

PA						
	91-95					
		PA1/ NPM1*	**PA1/ NPG1**	**PA1 alone**	**PA1/NPM1 /NPG1**	**Other**
	292 paragraphs	155**	3	109	9	16
	% of code combinations	53.1%	1.0%	37.3%	3.1%	5.5%
	96-99					
	1,421 paragraphs	593	57	654	61	56
	% of code combinations	41.7%	4.0%	46.0%	4.3%	3.9%
	00-03					
	942 paragraphs	557	28	253	60	44
	% of code combinations	59.1%	3.0%	26.9%	6.4%	4.7%
	04-08					
	112 paragraphs	35	11	60	6	0
	% of code combinations	31.3%	9.8%	53.6%	5.4%	0.0%
Total counts	**2,767 paragraphs**	**1,340**	**99**	**1,076**	**136**	**116**
Period average	**% of code combinations**	**48.4%**	**3.6%**	**38.9%**	**4.9%**	**4.2%**
NPM						
	91-95					
		NPM1/ PA1	**NPM1/ NPG1**	**NPM1 alone**	**NPM1/ PA1/NPG1**	**NPM1/ PA2**	**Other**
	740 paragraphs	155*	46	486	9	37	7
	% of code combinations	20.9%	6.2%	65.7%	1.2%	5%	0.9%
	96-99						
	1,758 paragraphs	593	87	902	61	95	20
	% of code combinations	33.7%	4.9%	51.3%	3.5%	5.4%	1.1%

	00-03						
	2,702 paragraphs	557	233	1666	60	147	39
	% of code combinations	20.6%	8.6%	61.7%	2.2%	5.4%	1.4%
	04-08						
	225paragraphs	35	23	160	6	1	0
	% of code combinations	15.6%	10.2%	71.1%	2.7%	0.4%	0.0%
Total counts	**5,425 paragraphs**	**1,340**	**389**	**3,214**	**136**	**280**	**66**
Period average	**% of code combinations**	**24.7%**	**7.2%**	**59.2%**	**2.5%**	**5.2%**	**1.2%**
NPG							
	91-95						
		NPG1/ NPM1	**NPG1/ PA1**	**NPG1 alone**	**NPG1/ PA1/NPM1**	**Other**	
	91 paragraphs	46*	3	30	9	3	
	% of code combinations	50.5%	3.3%	33.0%	9.9%	3.3%	
	96-99						
	310 paragraphs	87	57	96	61	9	
	% of code combinations	28.1%	18.4%	31.0%	19.7%	2.9%	
	00-03						
	468 paragraphs	233	28	125	60	22	
	% of code combinations	49.8%	6.0%	26.7%	12.8%	4.7%	
	04-08						
	67 paragraphs	23	11	37	6	0	
	% of code combinations	34.3%	16.4%	40.3%	9.0%	0.0%	
Total counts	**936 paragraphs**	**389**	**99**	**278**	**136**	**34**	
Period average	**% of code combinations**	**41.6%**	**10.6%**	**29.7%**	**14.5%**	**3.6%**	

* supporting codes – PA1, NPM1 and NPG1 codes vs. criticising or challenging codes – PA2, NPM2 and PG2

**number of absolute counts

Table 5: Main accounting-related keywords used in the UK political debate, 1991-2008

PA	**1991-1995**		**1996-1999**		**2000-2003**		**2004-2008**		**Entire period**
Keyword	**Counts**	**%**	**Counts**	**%**	**Counts**	**%**	**Counts**	**%**	**%**
Cash/commitment	307	26.8%	1,042	18.1%	583	21.2%	2	0.6%	19.4%
Citizen	4	0.3%	10	0.2%	14	0.5%	125	39.8%	1.5%
Expenditure	306	26.7%	1,725	29.9%	694	25.2%	41	13.1%	27.7%
Procedures	48	4.2%	1,023	17.8%	164	6.0%	15	4.8%	12.5%
Requirement	135	11.8%	374	6.5%	281	10.2%	12	3.8%	8.0%
Rules	31	2.7%	313	5.4%	135	4.9%	17	5.4%	5.0%
Spending	125	10.9%	809	14.0%	445	16.2%	50	15.9%	14.3%
Overall PA word counts	**1,147**		**5,762**		**2,750**		**314**		**9,973**
NPM	**1991-1995**		**1996-1999**		**2000-03**		**2004-2008**		**Entire period**
Keyword	**Counts**	**%**	**Counts**	**%**	**Counts**	**%**	**Counts**	**%**	**%**
Audit/Auditing	170	6.8%	510	7.1%	1,485	18.7%	15	1.9%	11.9%
Cost	418	16.7%	1090	15.3%	428	5.4%	42	5.4%	10.8%
Independence/independent/autonomous	24	1.0%	159	2.2%	508	6.4%	24	3.1%	3.9%
Objective	166	6.6%	426	6.0%	186	2.3%	52	6.6%	3.4%
Performance	120	4.8%	225	3.2%	482	6.1%	70	9.0%	4.9%
Process	91	3.6%	296	4.1%	374	4.7%	78	10.0%	4.6%
Resources (in RAB terms)	774	30.9%	2,552	35.8%	2,204	27.7%	97	12.4%	30.6%
Managerial responsibility/ responsibility centre	100	4.0%	251	3.5%	286	3.6%	55	7.0%	3.8%
Target	37	1.5%	134	1.9%	198	2.5%	34	4.3%	2.2%
Overall NPM word counts	**2,503**		**7,133**		**7,949**		**782**		**18,367**
NPG	**1991-1995**		**1996-1999**		**2000-2003**		**2004-2008**		**Entire period**
Keyword	**Counts**	**%**	**Counts**	**%**	**Counts**	**%**	**Counts**	**%**	**%**
External accountability	30	12.1%	122	16.6%	351	26.1%	50	25.3%	21.9%
Consolidation/consolidated	120	48.4%	375	51.0%	263	19.6%	4	2.0%	30.2%

Governance	0	0.0%	2	0.3%	25	1.9%	69	34.8%	3.8%
Integration/integrated	6	2.4%	10	1.4%	6	0.4%	13	6.6%	1.4%
Negotiation/ consultation (with external stakeholders)	83	33.5%	5	0.7%	185	13.8%	5	2.5%	11.0%
Network	1	0.4%	11	1.5%	5	0.4%	11	5.6%	1.1%
Participation/participative	1	0.4%	24	3.3%	35	2.6%	15	7.6%	3.0%
Transparency/transparent	3	1.2%	123	16.7%	116	8.6%	18	9.1%	10.3%
Overall NPG word counts	**248**		**736**		**1,343**		**198**		**2,525**

Appendix 1
Keywords identification

Traditional PA System	NPM System	NPG System
• bureaucratic/ bureaucracy • citizen • rules/norms/ requirement • compliance • cash/ commitments • administrator/ bureaucrat • execute/ executor • hierarchy/ hierarchical • neutral • objectivity/ objective/ impartial • expenditure/ spending • procedures • central(ised) • function • independence	• NPM/managerialisation • efficiency • effectiveness • output/results/outcomes • satisfaction • customers/client • managers/managerial • strategy • performance/performance measures/indicator/target/objective • accruals/resources/value for money • contract/PPP/PFI • quality/appropriateness • expenses • audit/auditing • cost/amortisation • process • flexibility • decentralised/devolved • independence/independent/autonomous • managerial responsibility/responsibility centre • 'public business' • market • corporatisation/agencies/agencification • competition/tendering/ benchmarking • privatisation • deregulation	• governance • transparency/transparent • external accountability • stakeholder • network • partnership/partners • sustainability/sustainable • ethic • equity/social fairness • participation/participative • integration/integrated • consolidation/ consolidated • negotiation/consultation (with external stakeholders) • civil society/non-profit/third sector