CHAPTER 18

Representative and responsible bureaucracy: A longitudinal study over 40 years of Norwegian central government

Tom Christensen and Per Lægreid

ABSTRACT

This is a study of the demographic profile of civil servants in the Norwegian central government from 1976 to 2016. The relationship between structural features and demographic features is examined, based on theories of representative bureaucracy and responsible bureaucracy. A main result is that the civil service is not representative of the citizens and this pattern is stable over time. However, there has been a gender revolution and a large increase in the share of social scientists. Social background has a weak effect on how bureaucrats work in practice. This contrasts with the importance of organisational factors.

Keywords: governance, horizontal structures, organisation culture, organisation demography, organisation design, organisation locus, organisation structure, physical structure, policy design.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of representative bureaucracy has a long history in public administration research (Kingsley 1944). The main argument was that the civil service should reflect the social composition of the citizens it is supposed to serve, and it focused mainly on passive representation (Pitkin 1967). During the New Public Management reforms the values of representative bureaucracy and social equity gave way to an efficiency- and performance-based human resource management approach. At the same time, demands for greater inclusiveness in the composition of the public-sector workforce expanded the meaning of representativeness in many countries. The diversity drive embraced religion, race, ethnicity, language, social class, age, gender, region, and education (Wise 2002, Lægreid and Wise 2015).

In recent years, there has been a revitalization of the interest in representative bureaucracy. There has been an increased focus on symbolic representation, on the relationship between passive and active representation and on the importance of diversity and contextual features (Riccucci and Van Ryzin 2016; Peters, von Maravic and Schröter 2012; Dolan and Rosenbloom 2016; Andrews et al. 2016; Murdoch, Trondal and Geys 2016). The findings are, however, mixed regarding the relevance of demographic background for bureaucratic decisions and public policy (Meier 2019). One reason for this is that the social traits are constrained by organisational features of the public bureaucracy, by recruitment based on merit, and by bureaucratic careers, as expected from a theory of responsible bureaucracy (Lægreid and Olsen 1978, Christensen and Lægreid 2009).

This chapter focuses on the case of Norway. The issue of representative and responsible bureaucracy was a core interest for the first Norwegian Power Study in the 1970s (Lægreid and Olsen 1978), and it was followed up by subsequent surveys of bureaucrats in central government that were conducted every ten years from 1976 to 2016. The chapter is based on these unique surveys, and it aims to synthesize the main findings and analyses from this rich longitudinal database.

The chapter addresses the following research questions:

- *What is the demographic profile of civil servants in the Norwegian central government?*
- *How has this profile changed over the last forty years and to what extent is it representative of the population?*
- *Based on the theories of representative and responsible bureaucracy, what are the impacts of demographic features on bureaucrats' perceptions, priorities and behaviour?*

The two first questions focus on passive representation, while the third question addresses active representation. Theories of representative and responsible bureaucracy are first presented, followed by an outline of the data base. Then empirical analyses of civil servants' demographic background are presented, focusing on change over time and differences between ministries and central agencies. The third section discusses (mainly based on a review of previous studies of the Norwegian central government) the importance of demographic and structural features on the bureaucrats' perceptions and actions in their daily work. Finally, some conclusions are drawn. A main finding is that their perceptions and behaviour can be better understood from a theory of responsible bureaucracy than from a representative bureaucracy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One can distinguish between four aspects of representation (Pitkin 1967, Lægreid and Olsen 1978): a *similarity aspect*, meaning that one group should mirror the demographic characteristics of another group (passive representation), a *content aspect*, meaning that one group acts in the interests of another group (active representation), a *selection or control aspect*, meaning that one group can decide the scope of action for another group and control its actions, and a *symbolic aspect,* meaning that one group can symbolize the identity or quality of another group.

Representative bureaucracy emphasises that the individual characteristics of the people who fill the positions in the bureaucracy will have a significant influence on how the bureaucracy works. The assumption is that in aggregate the bureaucracy should resemble those it serves (Meier 2019), because bureaucrats who share social characteristics with citizens will also share their values. Thus, representative bureaucracy combines passive and active representation. Their demographic backgrounds might play a role in bureaucratic thinking and behaviour and affect the content of policy and how output is distributed across social groups (Andrews et al. 2015). Thus, the representative bureaucracy might be an indirect control of the administrative apparatus (Jacobsen 1997).

The argument is that one cannot understand how a public organisation works without addressing the demography of the individuals who work in it (Pfeffer 1983). Through their early socialisation, people join a government bureaucracy with certain "social baggage" that affects their subsequent attitudes and behaviour as civil servants. It is not the organisation that acts but individual employees. A main recruitment criterion is various quota arrangements for different social groups, supplementing merit-based recruitment. This theory of representative bureaucracy concentrates on the relationship between the content aspect and the similarity aspect of representation.

In this theory, the focus is on from where bureaucrats come. The argument is that government officials should be representative of the citizens they are supposed to serve regarding social and geographical background, gender, and age, and that the social background of the individual bureaucrat affects his or her perceptions and actions (Lægreid and Olsen 1978). Central preconditions for such relationships concern stable and strong group identity, the saliency and prestige of the group, long-term relationship to the group, consistency with membership in other social groups, and a strong connection between the identity of the group and bureaucratic tasks and discretion (Thompson 1976). The argument is that group membership is a recruitment criterion and that there is a tight coupling between passive representation and active representation.

One problem with this theory is that it does not distinguish between different social categories that bureaucrats belong to, meaning that they might represent different groups under different contextual circumstances (Meier 2019). More generally, the mechanism by which social background becomes relevant for specific problems, solutions and policies is not always obvious.

The theory of *responsible bureaucracy* focuses on how the organisational structure affects civil servants' behaviour and strengthens or weakens the connection between public preferences and actual politics (Lægreid and Olsen 1978; Meier and O'Toole 2006). The civil servants' behaviour is constrained and enabled through hierarchy, specialisation, rules, and regulations. Organisational

socialisation can hinder the links between passive and active representation (Wilkins and Williams 2008). The substitution of one individual employee with another may not have a significant impact on how the bureaucracy works, because roles and positions are formal and defined and specified independently of the individual characteristics of the people who fill the positions (Egeberg 2012). The bureaucrat operates more in line with the demands of his or her position than according to individual preferences. This model concentrates on the relationship between the selection/control aspect and the content aspect of representation.

In this theory, the bureaucracy has a relatively strong ability to socialise the civil servants, a relatively strong potential to discipline bureaucrats in their actions and decision-making through gradual promotion and an incentive system, and a relatively strong ability to control individual bureaucrats' decisions (Lægreid and Olsen 1978). Where the bureaucrats are embedded in the formal structure matter, i.e., "where you stand depends on where you sit".

The merit principle, focusing on professional competence and qualifications, is the legitimate criterion for recruitment in this theory. All applicants are expected to compete on equal terms without taking social background into account. The idea of responsible bureaucracy has a strong footing in normative democracy theory and classical administrative theory, and it has had a dominant position in the constitutional narrative of the political-administrative system in Norway (Christensen 2003).

These two theories can also be combined. It is necessary to understand the coevolution of individual and organisational features, and a core question is to what degree it is possible to have both organisational involvement and representative bureaucracy (Romzek and Hendricks 1982). The importance of pre and post-recruitment factors such as geographical, social, epistemic, and departmental identity might vary according to the circumstances (Trondal, Murdoch and Geys 2018) and public managers might face different role expectations such as loyalty, autonomy, and advocacy (Jacobsen 1996). Features of the group that the bureaucrats are supposed to represent, of the civil servants themselves, of the relationship between civil servants and those they are expected to represent, and of the organisations in which they work all matter (Groenveld and Van de Walle 2010; Lægreid and Olsen 1978; Meier 2019; Meier and Stewart, 1992; Meier and Morton 2015).

There are many organisational barriers to representation. Individual background factors are supposed to have an impact on decision-making behaviour among bureaucrats, but the strength of such features might depend on the characteristics of the organisational structure and bureaucratic career. Public organisations might socialise their bureaucrats so that they adopt the values of the organisation, discipline them via various rewards and/or control them more directly

(Lægreid and Olsen 1978, Meier 2019; Selden 1997). Meier and Nigro (1976) and Selden et al. (1998) found that agency affiliation is a more likely predictor than social and geographical origin. It is therefore important to restore organisational diversity by focusing on variations in tasks and institutional factors (Schröter and von Maravic 2012). Also, in theories of representative bureaucracy, scholars are well aware of that loyalty and structural factors might prevent passive representation from morphing into active representation (Gravire 2013).

DATA BASE AND METHODS

This chapter is based on a set of internationally unique survey data. Every ten years from 1976 until 2016, civil servants in the Norwegian central government answered a comprehensive questionnaire. It covered the bureaucrats' social and geographical background, tasks, capacity and career; but it also covered their administrative behaviour such as contact and participation patterns, as well as perceptions regarding priorities, role understanding, power and influence, coordination, conflicts, identity, trust relations, administrative reforms and internationalisation. The self-perception data from the surveys do not allow us to say much about direct active representation and there are limitations regarding possibilities to differentiate between specific decisions and priorities. However, if one links background data to perceptions and decision-making behaviour, one can obtain some indications of this relationship. In this chapter, the descriptive analysis is mainly on the aggregate level, distinguishing between ministries and central agencies. Regarding the analysis of the relative importance of organisational features in relation to demographic features, this is mainly referring to several previous studies based on the same survey data set.

The series of surveys includes all civil servants from executive officer grade upwards with at least one year of tenure in all ministries. From 1986, central agencies were also included in the survey. Owing to the large number of employees in central agencies, one third of the employees at the same level were randomly included. The response rate was very high but decreased somewhat over time from 72% in 1976 to 60% in 2016. The problem of representativeness in our database is thus significantly lower than it normally is in similar international surveys.

DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES – BIASED RECRUITMENT

Main demographic factors are now described, going beyond the social and geographic background to include aspects of professional and bureaucratic

representation (Peters et al. 2015). The data in this section is mainly based on Christensen et al. (2018).

AN EDUCATIONAL ELITE AND PUBLIC SECTOR BIAS

Regarding the *family background* of the civil servants, the *educational level* of the parents of civil servants has increased significantly over time. In the ministries, the percentage of parents with a university education increased from 28% to 50% between 1976 and 2016 and in the central agencies from 17% in 1986 to 43% in 2016. This trend reflects the educational revolution that has taken place in Norway over the last forty years. The parents of civil servants represent an educational elite. In 1975, 9% of citizens had higher education while 28% of the parents of civil servants in ministries at that time did (Lægreid and Olsen 1978). In 2016 the corresponding numbers were 33% and 50%.

Regarding the *occupational background* of civil servants' parents, relatively few were farmers, fishermen, workers or craftsmen. Largely their parents worked in the public sector. In 1986, 33% of civil servants in ministries came from families whose parents worked in the public sector. By 2016, this had increased to 39%. In central agencies, the proportion was 29% in 1986 and 37% in 2016. In comparison, about 20% of the working population were employed in the public sector in 1976 and 32% in 2016, meaning that the difference has narrowed slightly. There seems to be a path-dependency regarding choice of occupation.

CAPITAL BIAS AND THE FEMALE REVOLUTION

There is a strong overrepresentation of civil servants who grew up in Oslo. In 1976, 34% of civil servants grew up in the capital, while only 12% of citizens lived in Oslo at that time. Over time, the relative size of the Oslo population has increased, reaching 13% in 2016, while the proportion of civil servants growing up in Oslo has decreased to 26%. In addition, a relatively large proportion come from neighbouring municipalities. 20% came from Southern and Western Norway, which accounted for 32% of the population in 2016 and had the strongest underrepresentation.

Regarding *gender*, there has been a revolution in the Norwegian central government over the past forty years. While in 1976, only 15 % of civil servants in ministries were women, this proportion had increased to 51% by 2016. In central agencies, the percentage of women among civil servants increased from 16% in 1986 to 50% in 2016. In 1976, there were no women among the top civil servants in the ministries, but by 2016, the share had increased to 27% (Christensen et al., 2018). For middle manager positions, the percentage rose

from 12% to 43% and for executive officers from 19% to 54%. In central agencies, 10% of top civil servants and middle managers were women in 1986. By 2016, this figure had increased to 50%. For executive officers it rose from 21% to 51%. Thus, the underrepresentation of women in top and middle manager positions is higher in ministries than in central agencies.

The general trend towards more women in the central bureaucracy reflects the increasing number of women in higher education in general and especially in those disciplines from which the central government increasingly recruits civil servants, such as the social sciences.

SOCIAL SCIENTISTS TAKE OVER

Professionalisation is a major source of values and identities for bureaucrats (Meier and Morton 2012). The Norwegian civil service is a professional, merit-based bureaucracy. According to the civil servants in the ministries in 2016, 80% reported that educational background, work experience and performance were important or very important in recruiting management officers, while 32% mentioned seniority, 42% gender equality, 22% ethnic equality and 3% affiliation to political party or political sympathies.

It is very rare to obtain a position in a ministry without higher education. The academic background of ministerial and central agency staff is, however, very different. While law, social science and economics dominate in the ministries, a science background is more common in the central agencies, mainly because many agencies perform more technical tasks.

There have been significant changes in the educational background over time, especially in the ministries. Law was the dominant profession in 1976 (38%) but had decreased to 21% by 2016. Forty years later social sciences had replaced law as the main educational background, up from 4% in 1976 to 30% in 2016. Most of the social scientists recruited are political scientists. One reason for this change is that the talent pool changed significantly by an increasing number of political science graduates. The share of economists has remained rather stable over time. In central agencies, too, social science has become more strongly represented over time, up from 4% in 1986 to 20% in 2016.

In 1976, 48% of the top civil servants and managers were lawyers, while this proportion was only 23% in 2016. In contrast, the proportion of social scientists rose from 3% in 1976 to 28% in 2016 among leaders at this level. This is a rather dramatic change. The proportion of economists/business administration graduates among top leaders has been rather stable over time, slightly less than 20% taken together.

In the central agencies, science is the major academic background for leading positions; nevertheless, the proportion of scientists among top civil servants and managers decreased from 47% in 1986 to 29% in 2016. The proportion of social scientists in these positions rose from 1% to 17%, the share of economists/business administration graduates rose from 10% to 16%, while the proportion of lawyers remained stable at between 10% and 14%.

A GOVERNMENTAL LABOUR MARKET AND LONG TENURE

In contrast to many other countries, there is no centralised civil service education in Norway, and no central entry exam for the civil service. The Norwegian recruitment system to central government is decentralised in the individual ministry and central agency. The main pattern is to be recruited directly from higher education or from other public jobs into lower positions in the hierarchy and to have a long career within the governmental apparatus, often in the same ministry or agency.

Recruitment directly from higher education has decreased from 32% in 1986 to 17% in 2016. Recruitment from other government bodies has increased over time. While 27% came from other ministries or subordinate central bodies in 1986, this proportion had increased to 36% by 2016. In central agencies, there is a different development. In 1986, 39% came from other central governmental bodies, while this had decreased to 28% by 2016.

There is a stable but low level of recruitment from municipalities and counties. Overall, there is a public sector labour market. In 1986, 49% of civil servants in ministries were recruited from other public bodies and by 2016 this had increased to 68%. In the central agencies, the proportion was 43% in 1986 and 51% in 2016. In the ministries, recruitment from the private sector has remained low and stable over the whole period. In the central agencies, recruitment from the private sector has been higher.

Overall, civil servants in ministries and central agencies have a long tenure in central government. In 2016, 51% of the civil servants had been in the ministries for ten years or more in contrast to 33% in 1986. In the central agencies, there was an opposite trend. While 46% had been in the agencies for more than ten years in 1986, this had decreased to 36% by 2016. One reason for this might be stronger growth in positions in central agencies than in ministries over time.

Only a minority of the civil servants had *plans to leave* their ministry or central agency. In 2016, 24% of civil servants in the ministries and 23% in the central agencies had plans to leave for a job in another organisation, and this proportion decreased significantly after 1986. In 2016, most of them had

plans to leave for other public sector jobs: 63% in the ministries and 61% in the central agencies.

ADMINISTRATIVE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR: STRONG STRUCTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PREDICTORS

We now turn to the question of active representation. A core question in the theory of representative bureaucracy is to what degree demographic features such as social and geographic background, gender, age, and education influence the actual behaviour of civil servants. Is the effect of social background constrained by socialisation, disciplining and control processes within the bureaucracy, meaning that bureaucratic career, tenure, position, organisational affiliation, and task portfolio are the main predictors of bureaucratic attitudes, perceptions and actions (Christensen and Lægreid 2009)? These questions are addressed referring to a wide selection of studies aiming at synthesizing these findings. Based on the same survey data as for passive representation, numerous studies have been done on a wide variety of dependent variables, where the same independent demographic and organisational variables are used.

Overall, early socialisation related to gender, age, geographic and family background does not explain much of the variation in civil servants' perceptions and behaviour, which weakens the explanatory power of the theory of representative bureaucracy (Christensen et al. 2018). Organisational features are the strongest predictors, but academic background and education also matter. This was a main conclusion from the seminal study by Lægreid and Olsen (1978) on the first survey of civil servants in the Norwegian ministries and it has been confirmed in several studies since then.

Analyses based on the data from the Norwegian administrative surveys from 1976 to 2016 show systematically that structural features are most important for understanding variations in civil servants' attitudes and decision-making behaviour (Christensen et al. 2018). Organisational boundaries and constraints matter for bureaucrats' perceptions and behaviour at work, meaning that organising implies a "mobilisation of bias" (cf. Schattschneider 1960).

The only demographic variable that has a significant and stable effect is educational background, while gender and age have shown some effects in some studies (Christensen et al. 2018). Educational background often shapes common identities, goals and opinions and is often directly related to civil servants' tasks. Lawyers, for example, pay more attention to rule-of-law, while economists are more concerned with efficiency. The importance of educational background is related to the traditional divide in the ministries between professional and

political arguments and concerns, and to the fact that academic background is a legitimate recruitment criterion.

Despite an increasing number of women in central government, gender does not seem to have a broad, systematic, or significant effect on attitudes and behaviour in the central civil service in Norway, even if gender affects some role perceptions and contact patterns (Christensen and Lægreid 2012). This is rather surprising given that other studies indicate that passive representation of women influences active representation (Wilkin and Keiser 2004, Park 2012). It is also surprising given the cluster argument that the proportion of specific background factors matters (Selden 1997), but the evidence of the critical mass argument (Moss Kanter 1993) is mixed in the literature on representative bureaucracy (Meier 2019). This might be linked to heterogeneity in goals, priorities, and identities among women, connected to loose coupling between identity, values, and standpoints, to multiple identities and the problem of intersectionality, to self-selection of women into positions in the bureaucracy, to a loose coupling between female civil servants' tasks and role behaviour and their identity as women; and to organisational constraints – or a combination of such links. There might be a loose coupling between representativeness on the one hand and responsiveness and performance on the other hand (Park 2012). There might also be an indirect effect, meaning that gender affects educational choices and experiences, and these educational choices might, in turn, affect their bureaucratic behaviour.

Interpretations of evidence about the relationship between gender and policy preferences differ internationally (Wise 2003). Some – mainly U.S. – studies that do not focus on central government institutions, find that gender influences bureaucratic behaviour (Riccucci and van Ryzin 2016, Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006). In the U.S., public administration ethnicity and race are also influencing factors (Selden 1997). Overall, however, scholars have found mixed support for the argument that passive representation does in fact lead to active representation (Meier and Capers 2012, Gravier 2013). Especially in central government where civil servants are rather remote from their parental background and primary processes of socialisation, they seem to be less influenced by their social and geographical origin than by the educational qualifications and organisational role models they adopted later (Schröter and von Maravic 2012).

Analyses of replicated surveys to civil servants in central government in 1986, 1996, 2006 and 2016 show a robust pattern. These studies have examined actual bureaucratic behaviour such as tasks, contact, participation and interaction patterns, information exchange, use of ICT, rule-based behaviour and role activity. In addition, the studies have included the perceptions of and attitudes

to administrative reforms, ethical guidelines, professional, political and user signals, competences, coordination, identity, mutual trust relations, accountability, conflict and crisis management capacity, and the balance between individual rights and societal security (Christensen and Lægreid 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2018; Christensen, Fimreite and Lægreid 2011; Christensen, Lægreid and Rykkja 2019).

The importance of structural factors relative to demographic factors has also been shown in publications synthesizing this research (Christensen et al. 2018, Egeberg 2012), as well as in deep analyses of specific policy areas, such as the petroleum sector, but also related to Europeanisation (Egeberg and Trondal 2018) and administrative reforms. Patterns of governance cannot be adequately understood without including organisational factors (Egeberg, Gornitzka and Trondal 2016). One reason for this might be that there is a loose coupling between early socialisation, experience, and policy disputes in the central government (cf. Selden 1997). Studying the interaction between politicians and administrators in Norwegian municipalities, Jacobsen (2006) found that the interaction between them is mainly a function of the position politicians and administrators have within the formal structure and that demographic factors are of less importance.

In the 2016 survey, the central civil servants were asked what factors they thought were most important for understanding their priorities and actions in their own work situation. This method of self-assessment confirmed previous findings of the relative importance of background factors in relation to organisational features for the bureaucrats' perceptions and actions regarding the rather limited importance of demographic factors and the strong importance of structural factors (Egeberg and Stigen 2018).

DISCUSSION

The Norwegian study reveals that the major factor for understanding the bureaucrats' decisions, actions and priorities is their own position or organisational location. Own previous work experience matters, and most civil servants have a long history within ministries and central agencies. Overall, there is a governmental labour market. This also means that civil servants' internal bureaucratic career counts when it comes to understanding their attitudes, role behaviours and standpoints (Christensen and Lægreid 2009). In addition, academic background matters and social background are not seen as very important.

Overall, the conclusion is first, that "where you stand depends on where you sit" more than on "where you come from". Second, early socialisation

(age, geography, gender) is less significant than late socialisation (academic background and work experience) (Christensen and Lægreid 2009). Central government institutions have a great potential to shape and influence civil servants. In general, civil servants are not advocates for the societal groups they come from (Egeberg 1995), but they tend to defend the organisations in which they work. They are "key players on different teams" (Lægreid and Olsen 1984).

Studies of representative bureaucracy tend to show that the type of bureaucracy matters. Active representation is rather at play among street-level bureaucrats that have direct contact to their clients (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003), while bureaucracy that are more remote from clients and deals with more technical issues such as central agencies and ministries are less prone to active representation due to their organisational characteristics. Thus, in this sense our findings confirm both approaches to bureaucracy.

Despite the extensive literature on representative bureaucracy, bureaucracies are not especially representative (Meier at al. 2018), as shown in this chapter. Regarding passive representation, the Norwegian central government apparatus is not a representative bureaucracy, except for gender. The parents of central civil servants generally belong to an educational elite with a strong bias towards the public sector. The capital area and people with university degrees are overrepresented. Overall, civil servants in central government are a distinctive group with certain features among the elites in Norwegian society.

Second, one sees both stability and change regarding the demographic profile over time. The social and geographical bias has remained rather stable. The most significant change has been related to gender and educational background. Over the past forty years, there has been a radical female change in the composition of the central government. Regarding educational qualifications, there has been a strong increase in the share of social scientists in the ministries at the expense of employees educated in law.

Third, when controlling for organisational features, social background has only minor effects on civil servants' perceptions, standpoints, and actions at work. Despite a major increase in women in central government, it is unusual to find strong systematic and significant differences between women and men in their daily work as central bureaucrats, including contacts and role perceptions. The only exception to this pattern is education. One finds significant variations between civil servants with different academic backgrounds regarding most dependent variables in the surveys.

Revisiting the theories of representative and responsible bureaucracy, representative bureaucracy is not supported to any great extent in the Norwegian case of central bureaucracy. It mainly belongs to the category of high political representation and low representative bureaucracy (Maravic and Peters 2012).

First, the civil service is not representative of the population, which is not surprising giving the skills and profiles that are needed in central government organisations. Passive representation is largely not fulfilled, and the social and geographical bias has remained stable over time. The only feature that has become more representative over time is gender composition, but the influx of women also represents an increase in elite features regarding educational background. This pattern shows a tendency to social reproduction, which raises the question of the openness of the Norwegian central bureaucracy to social groups with lower middle class and working-class backgrounds and with less education.

Second, the main principle of recruitment is not based on gender or on political affiliation or sympathy, even if there is some support for considering gender equality more. The dominant recruitment principle is merit-based, which does not necessarily promote greater representation within the civil service (Peters 2012). Advances in representativeness happen more because of the dynamics of society than as result of explicit changes in recruitment procedures. The implication of this is that bureaucratic representativeness is a question of equal access to education (von Maravic and Peters 2012). Thus, the social profile of bureaucrats tends to reflect the middle-class bias in higher education.

Third, there is little support for active representation, meaning a tight coupling between similarity aspects and substantial aspects of representation. Even if there are some indications that background factors such as gender might affect the attitudes and behaviour of bureaucrats in similar organisational settings, social background has relatively little systematic and significant effect on bureaucrats' perceptions and actions in their work situation (Christensen and Lægreid 2009).

Regarding the theory of responsible bureaucracy: merit, academic background, and work experience are the main recruitment principles in the central civil service. Second, bureaucrats have a long tenure and career within the central bureaucracy and move within a public sector labour market. Third, the most important factors for explaining variations in the civil servants' behaviour are their positions in the organisational structure, such as organisational affiliation, hierarchical position, and tasks. This pattern has remained robust over time (Christensen et al. 2018) and illustrates that all representation is channelled within formal structures (Meier and Morton 2012).

Summing up, the pattern observed leans more towards what could be expected from a responsible bureaucracy than from a representative bureaucracy. Organisational socialisation, discipline and control seem to be more important than pre-entry socialisation, except for educational background. However, it is also important to consider that the two models under certain

circumstances might supplement each other and that in practice one faces "organisations with people and people with organisations" (Lægreid and Olsen 1978). The relationship between passive and active representation might be interacting with other variables (Meier 2019), especially organisational features. Under specific conditions, bureaucracy can represent some groups on some issues, but generally, central government bureaucracies tend to squeeze out the representation of values that do not relate directly to tasks and organisational mission (Keiser et al. 2002, Meier et al. 2019).

CONCLUSION

This analysis adds to the literature of representative and responsible bureaucracy in five ways. First, it gives a comprehensive empirical description of the demographic changes and stability in a central government of a representative democracy based on a set of unique, substantial, longitudinal survey data over 40 years. Second, it shows a general stability over time of the derivation of civil servants from families with higher educated families in the capital area but change in the profile of their gender background and academic qualifications. Third, it shows that despite significant increase in the ratio of female civil servants over time, female civil servants do not differ significantly from men regarding their attitudes and behaviour as civil servants. Fourth, the perceptions and behaviour of civil servants in central government can be better understood from a theory of responsible bureaucracy than from a theory of representative bureaucracy. Fifth, rather than seeing representative and responsible theory as alternative approaches, we need to treat them as converging and showing similar properties of bureaucracy, implying the need to specify what kind of bureaucracies that are under examination. Finally, it shows that contextual features must be considered. The chapter mirrors the challenges of representative bureaucracy in central government systems in the Northern part of Europe with a professional merit-based system in a rather homogeneous society.

In the sector and institution-based recruitment system in Norwegian central government, changes in administrative behaviour through recruitment are related to choices between applicants with different academic backgrounds. People with different educational qualifications have different competences and skills and different views on what are appropriate problems and solutions (Christensen et al. 2018). The possibility to influence perceptions and behaviour among civil servants through recruitment of other groups is more limited. Compared with many other European countries, the civil service in Norway is not very politicised, in the sense of politically based recruitment to permanent positions (Greve, Rykkja and Lægreid 2016). Nor-

mally, political executives respect the professional expertise of bureaucrats in central government.

There are few tracks to positions in central government, in the sense of political affiliation or gender reducing the importance of academic background, qualifications and merit. Neither are there many detours, such as allowing work experience outside the public bureaucracy to replace formal education. The normal career for bureaucrats in central government is via higher education and a long internal career within the government apparatus based on merit-based recruitment. This might in fact enhance good government, since countries with merit-recruited civil servants tend to perform better than in bureaucracies where they owe their posts to political connections (Dahlstrøm and Lapuente 2017).

That said, it is also important to underline that even if the effect on perceptions and behaviours might be weak, there might be other reasons for having a recruitment pattern that mirrors the demographic profile of citizens. Symbolic representativeness and more open, inclusive, and diverse recruitment process might be a contribution to a general process of democratisation and to increasing the legitimacy, acceptance and trust of government and public policy in the population (Selden, Brudeny and Kellough 1998, Riccucci et al. 2018). Therefore, the symbolic aspect of representation is important and might be a sign of social equality, status and acceptance. Thus, a passive representative bureaucracy itself might improve outcomes by influencing the attitudes and behaviour of clients and users, regardless of bureaucratic actions (Riccucci and van Ryzin 2017) but it is also limits symbolic representation (Headley, Wright and Meier 2021).

A core lesson inspired by this chapter is that comparative research over time, across organisational settings, across demographic and structural features, but also across administrative levels and countries, is necessary to move the literature on representative bureaucracy forward. Contextual features, such as how homogenous the society is, national culture, administrative traditions and reforms, environmental features, type of bureaucracy, organisational structure and career are crucial for understanding the relationship between individual and structural factors and how civil servants act at work. Organisation-specific factors seem to be especially crucial for understanding the opportunities and constraints of representative bureaucracies. Representativeness works differently in different contexts (Andrew et al. 2015), which can both enable and curb active representation. A main challenge for future research is the need for further development of how theory and practice can tackle the context-specific areas.

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