

5. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN AN INSTITUTIONAL-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of this and the following chapter is to arrive at a theoretical understanding of technology and information as phenomena that are shaped in communication and that are used as resources of influence. As was shown in the last chapter, information and technology are not “innocent” aids. With this starting point, the effort in this chapter is first to formulate the problem in relation to the traditional perception of administration. Next, focus will be directed at three theoretical directions, each of which offers an alternative to the traditional understanding. In section 5.1, the criticism of the traditional approach to administration as described in chapter three is first formulated. This is followed in section 5.2 by three different perspectives on administration, all of which are based on public organizations considered in an institutional-political perspective. These are an economic neo-institutional direction,¹⁴² a sociological neo-institutional direction represented by March and Olsen and finally a historical-institutional direction.¹⁴³ Section 5.3 summarizes the three perspectives.

1.1 CRITICISM OF THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF ADMINISTRATION

Both in a descriptive and normative sense, the traditional concept of administration has been subjected to sharp criticism within political science: “Observation of politics and administration is largely

¹⁴² Williamson, 1987.

¹⁴³ Thelen & Steinmo, 1992.

extent has come to the realization that politics and administration are difficult to separate."¹⁴⁴

The criticism is directed at positions that derive the political organization in the political-administrative system from concepts that refer to economic, social and political conditions in society as a whole:¹⁴⁵

"Political organization appears as an almost spontaneous product ... The bulk of political theory has been more concerned with how to limit social governance through politics, rather than discussing the conditions for such governance to have the desired effects."¹⁴⁶

According to Johan P. Olsen, the understanding of administration from the last century is being used, which does not take into account the increasing complexity that the administration faces today:

"The structure and working method are essentially the same as in the last century - characterized by the rule of law's requirements for accuracy and certainty in decisions. They seem little affected by political, social and economic changes"¹⁴⁷

In the traditional model, it is possible to see which social conditions are being addressed. The concepts of power and influence are used as phenomena related only to decisions made at the parliamentary level.

One of the problems in the traditional understanding of administration is an inadequate understanding of the implementation of decisions. There is a lack of conceptualization of how political and economic conditions in administration intervene in both the formulation of problems and the formulation of solutions. Bogason has formulated this in the following four points:

- "The administration contributes to creating the political agenda, i.e. defining which problems should be addressed political consideration.
- The administration helps to design possible solutions to problems, and often has solutions ready in advance (based on experience and tradition).
- The administration often has, for example, by virtue of discretionary powers, the opportunity to choose between different solutions
- The administration plays an active role in the actual implementation of a solution."¹⁴⁸

In Olsen's work, the problem is formulated in relation to neoclassical decision-making theory.

"It is important to gain insight into how organizational conditions affect which problem, alternative course of action, consequences, and which consequences, and which information about the effects of measures is taken into account and which is ignored. The opportunities to influence these aspects will in some cases be more important than the opportunities to influence the choice between the two or three alternatives the dispute may be about in the formal adoption phase"¹⁴⁹

There is no rational choice between alternatives, but instead the key is to influence which problems, alternatives and consequences are identified and which information is included in this process. A more radical formulation has been formulated by Lennart Lundqvist. Starting from a finding that the distinction between politics and administration has become blurred, he says:

"Själfallet är förvaltningen's *politik* antigen, with the term "politik" one means public politik, the authoritative distribution of values, or the exercise of power. This statement represents something so fundamental that it deserves to be repeated time and time again:

¹⁴⁴ Bogason, 1988, p. 8.

¹⁴⁵ "Within conservative as well as liberal and Marxist political thinking, there is a well-established tradition that attributes little independent explanatory power to society's political organization when it comes to understanding social development. The driving forces lie in economic, technological and social processes" Olsen, 1978, p. 18.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁴⁷ Olsen, 1978, p.21.

¹⁴⁸ Bogason, 1988, p. 9

¹⁴⁹ Olsen, 1978, p. 34.

the förvaltningsverksamheten is politics - an introduction to, a preparation for or continuation of the politicians' business"¹⁵⁰

With this starting point, Lundqvist formulates the task of public administration research as a study of political organization corresponding to all other forms of political organization: "A theory of public administration means in our time a theory of politics also".¹⁵¹ Thus, concepts such as power, legitimacy, ethics, etc. should also be used in public administration research according to Lundqvist. Before analyzing political science positions in relation to public administration, I will clarify the concept of politics as it will be used in the following.

When considering the concept of politics, a distinction can be made between David Easton's view, where politics is the authoritative distribution of goods with validity for the whole of society, and a view based on Max Weber, where politics ultimately depends on the possibility of legitimate use of physical violence.¹⁵² Easton draws the line between the political and the non-political with a focus on organizations that ensure an authoritative distribution of goods. Weber draws the line between the political and the non-political to a greater extent with a focus on political activity.¹⁵³ The analysis of the distribution of goods focuses on how legitimate authority relations are formed, and thus what impact this has on the distribution of goods.

In continuation of Weber's view with an emphasis on legitimation, Olsen defines politics as "formulating problems, trying to have these accepted as binding and organizing continuous problem-solving activities around them".¹⁵⁴ This definition will be used in this thesis. However, the emphasis will be on communication as opinion and meaning formation.¹⁵⁵ If the political is considered with an emphasis on communication as a meaning-making outcome of political struggle, the boundary between the political and the non-political cannot be drawn a priori. With this broad definition, politics becomes something that takes place throughout public administration and is thus not limited to the parliamentary level.

1.2 THREE POLITICAL-INSTITUTIONAL POSITIONS

This section presents three different perspectives on administration, all of which are based on public organizations viewed from a political-institutional perspective. These are an economic neo-institutional direction¹⁵⁶, a sociological neo-institutional direction represented by March and Olsen, and finally a historical-institutional direction.¹⁵⁷ Despite differences in terms of conceptual definitions, all positions are based on a critique of "rationalist" and "functionalist" assumptions that apply to the traditional view of administration as rational-actor assumptions and efficiency assumptions deduced from a simple systems-theoretical perspective, respectively. DiMaggio and Powell state:

"What we observe in the world is inconsistent with the ways in which contemporary theories ask us to talk. Studies of organizational and political change routinely point to findings that are hard to square with either rational-actor or functionalist accounts"¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁰ Lundqvist, 1993, p. 359.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 359.

¹⁵² Bogason, 1987

¹⁵³ Bogason, 1987, p. 289.

¹⁵⁴ Olsen, 1978, p. 33.

¹⁵⁵ "In communication about a problem and its solution, we also create a meaningful context, a reality in which the problem and its solution are relevant and legitimate". Haldén and Kjær, 1994, p. 9.

¹⁵⁶ Williamson, 1987.

¹⁵⁷ Thelen & Steinmo, 1992.

¹⁵⁸ DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 3.

This quote emphasizes that the social sciences, based on a number of case studies, have operated with tools for both understanding and explanation that are out of step with reality.

The purpose of this section is to examine how an institutional perspective on public organizations will be a better framework for developing a comprehensive theoretical analysis framework for the CVR case.

In an initial definition of the concept of institution, a distinction can be made between a micro and a macro perspective.¹⁵⁹ The micro perspective has its roots in organizational theory, where the focus is on institutional rules of action as the organizational environment for the decision-making process. The macro perspective defines an institution as a system of governance, where a distinction is traditionally made between market, state and civil society institutions. The institutional rules can be both formally defined and informal rules developed more or less unintentionally in social interaction. The rules determine which actions are required, permitted or prohibited in certain social situations. In this way, rules are prescriptive and governing for individual action. Against this background, the following general definition of institutions is used: An institution is a “social framework” with a historically determined set of rules that structure social interaction. In this way, institutions give society its systematic social order by determining the social practice of the individual.¹⁶⁰ In this general definition, an institution can be a social system, a political party, a law, etc.

Economic neo-institutionalism as a perspective on administration.

The starting point for economic neo-institutionalism is primarily an “economic” view of individual action, which has its origins in Adam Smith’s classical political economy. Smith, as is well known, put forward the theory of the invisible hand, where the pursuit of individual self-interest would lead to collective welfare.

In what follows, I will primarily base myself on Oliver Williamson’s theoretical contribution described in *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism*.¹⁶¹ Williamson operates with a concept of rationality taken from Herbert Simon. Herbert Simon’s concept of rationality is given the following definition in economic neo-institutionalism: “Bounded rationality is the assumption on which transaction cost economics relies. This is a semistrong form of rationality in which economic actors are assumed to be intendedly rational, but only limitedly so.”¹⁶²

Herbert Simon and partly Williamson emphasize that “rational” actions are not fully rational as assumed in neoclassical microeconomics, since a number of the assumptions in the ideal model with full information, preferences, etc. are not present here.

In neoclassical economics, criticism of the formation of monopolies and oligopolies is directed as problematic in relation to transaction costs. Williamson instead operates with transaction costs in the organization of work. He explains these costs based on utility-maximizing behavior. He emphasizes opportunism as the characteristic that predominantly contributes to transaction costs. He defines this concept as utility maximization through fraud or deceit: “Self-interest seeking with guile. This includes but is scarcely limited to more blatant forms, such as lying, stealing and cheating”

163

¹⁵⁹ Bogason, 1989, p. 212; see also Frey, 1990, p. 444.

¹⁶⁰ Giddens, 1984, p.17.

¹⁶¹ Williamson, 1987.

¹⁶² Williamson, 1987, p. 45.

¹⁶³ Williamson, 1987, p. 47.

The utility-maximizing actor will not hesitate to cheat others if the risk of being discovered is limited. In relation to the decision-making process, informational advantages are exploited. The utility-maximizing actor looks after his interests when there is an imbalance in the possession of information in relation to the counterparty, and such an imbalance will usually be the case.

The aforementioned limitations have primarily been analyzed at the individual level. In an institutional understanding of decisions, institutions can be said to function as a social framework with a number of rules for action. Furthermore, the assumption is that institutions can be chosen. With the choice of institution, a number of rules for behavior are chosen. The market institution thus has supply and demand as a means of control, whereas the bureaucracy has power. Regarding the utility-maximizing actor in the organization, the following applies: "He/she must come to terms with himself/herself, whether it is possible to violate the rules of the game in the current situation. The decisive factor is whether the risk of detection and negative sanctions is too great to be worth running".¹⁶⁴

Economic neo-institutionalism can be considered a normative theory that can be used for the purpose of choosing the form of institution when designing public organizations.¹⁶⁵ Institutions can be said to have four functions in relation to public organizations. Firstly, institutions constitute "rules of the game" understood as a social framework. Whether these are followed is based on an assessment of the risk of being discovered. Secondly, institutions also constitute behavioral guidelines that make it possible for the decisions of many individual actors to be combined into one decision in practice and respected, contrary to what theories in the field claim. Thirdly, institutions are assigned the role of ensuring the distribution of expenses and costs

Fourth, the institution functions as rules that ensure that preferences can be aggregated into collective decisions.

In a utility maximization perspective, transaction costs are explained with reference to withholding or disclosing incorrect knowledge. In the Danish interpretation of Williamson within management research, withholding information is emphasized in relation to overall levels:

"Relevant forms of opportunistic behavior in relation to the administration are deliberate evasion in the form of sub-optimization and other forms of reduced productivity, withholding information in relation to higher levels - or in relation to the Folketing and other political institutions."¹⁶⁶

I agree with Grønnegård's interpretation of Williamson, which will supplement this one. In relation to Grønnegård's interpretation, I would argue that Williamson places greater emphasis on the "productive aspects" of information and communication. It is not so much a question of withholding information but rather that information is used in communication with strategic goals in mind: "More generally, opportunism refers to the incomplete or distorted disclosure of information, especially to calculated efforts to mislead, distort, disguise, obfuscate, or otherwise confuse."¹⁶⁷

In public organizations, knowledge and information, and not least in this context, retention, become central as a political element in economic neo-institutionalism. However, the issue of information and knowledge is not pursued much further. Thus, the theoretical framework cannot be used to design a general theoretical framework that links the functioning of public organizations with information and knowledge.

¹⁶⁴ Grønnegård Cristensen, 1994, p. 98.

¹⁶⁵ "With the support of institutional theory and the research that builds on it, can one design institutions that limit the risk of opportunistic evasion among employees at all levels" Grønnegård Christensen, 1994, p. 98.

¹⁶⁶ Grønnegård Cristensen, 1994, p. 97.

¹⁶⁷ Williamson, 1987, p. 47.

Influence in relation to resources as structural properties is also remarkably little represented in economic neo-institutionalism. The basis for this is a pluralistic view of the exercise of power, where power is differentiated and can vary from case to case.¹⁶⁸ Different groups will have access to the decision-making process limited by a legitimate hierarchical structure. It is therefore fundamentally the case that no single group is able to dominate the decision-making process. To shed light on the issue of power, Grønnegård Christensen has introduced the concept of institutional interests:

“The often strong involvement of civil servants in administrative structural problems that affect them and the organization in which they are placed is related to the fact that a given structure is assumed to provide a certain power structure in the organization or at least have an influence on the power structure. Similarly, there are strong expectations that changes in the organizational structure will have consequences for the power structure in the organization, and any consideration of this will therefore activate institutional interests of various units in the organization.... their aim is to protect or expand established positions of power”¹⁶⁹

In continuation of the above, technology is considered a central resource of influence that competing groups use in the decision-making process: “the allocation of computing resources will depend upon the behavior and competition among groups mobilized in the decision process, and will result from (...) the ability to use their power and influence in the decision process. (...) many groups are likely to enjoy at least some benefit from the use of computer technology”¹⁷⁰

In an overall assessment of economic neo-institutionalism, it can be concluded that it provides insight that relates to the individual use of knowledge and information in administration.

However, the theory cannot be used as a basis for developing a theoretical framework and in the analysis of communication as collective opinion formation. Explanations of the introduction of information systems are reduced to utility maximization explanations based on a methodological individualism. These concepts lack consideration of the context. With regard to power and influence, this position generally lacks concepts for the explanation of these phenomena.

Criticism of this position has included pointing out the discrepancy between what can be observed “from the outside” and what actions are actually taken.¹⁷¹ If we consider formal communication, it is a ceremonial fulfillment of expectations in the environment.

This points in the direction of the next section, where a sociologically based concept of institutions can to a greater extent problematize communication and opinion formation internally in organizations.

Sociological neo-institutionalism as a perspective on administration.

First, sociological neo-institutionalism is presented in general, then the focus is on decision-making process models, and finally how organizations adapt to symbolic institutional environments is addressed.

In sociological neo-institutionalism, a sociological understanding of institutions is recommended. Here, rational-actor assumptions in traditional theory are questioned. In contrast to the position above, conflicts and differences of interest are downplayed. March and Olsen instead set themselves the task of analyzing organizations with a focus on norms, routines, etc. They thus distance themselves from analyses that basically operate with a Hobbesian state where everyone fights against everyone. As a central element in March and Olsen, a shift in perspective in action orientation is argued. Instead of actions based on an instrumental-

¹⁶⁸ Dahl, 1961.

¹⁶⁹ Christensen, 1980, p. 200.

¹⁷⁰ Danziger, Dutton, Kling, Kraemer, 1982, p. 17.

¹⁷¹ Meyer and Rowan, 1977.

strategic logic ("logic of instrumentality") argues for an action orientation based on an interpretation of the given social and political rules ("logic of appropriateness").¹⁷²

In contrast to the rational decision-making process, where choices are made between alternatives that provide the greatest goal fulfillment, decisions in sociological neo-institutionalism are viewed based on a questioning approach: What situation am I in? What would a civil servant in my position do about a problem like this? In other words, in this position it is central to consider the civil servant's role, previous problem-solving practices, etc.

As a social framework for action, March and Olsen first consider political institutions as a set of rules of action that determine behavior. These rules of action do not have a formal character as something that can be chosen as in economic neo-institutionalism.

The rules of action reflect the experiences that the political institution has accumulated over time: "By rules we mean the routines, procedures, conventions, roles, strategies, organizational forms, and technologies around which political activity is constructed."¹⁷³ The rules of action thus broadly regulate the political phenomena surrounding the decision-making process. They regulate power and responsibility, here understood as social frameworks and expectations for action. This understanding of action will be referred to in the course of this assignment as the "logic of appropriateness" or the logic of leniency.

Secondly, political institutions provide the framework for meaning construction: "...institutions constrain and shape politics through the construction and elaboration of meaning ... Expectations, preferences, experience, and interpretation of the actions of others are all constructed within political institutions".¹⁷⁴ In relation to meaning formation and institutional change, the concept of "path-dependent" is used, indicating that institutional frameworks are essential as explanations for change:

"Actors may be driven at least as much by concerns for doing what is institutionally possible or culturally appropriate than by some kind of cost-benefit calculus. According to this view, decision making and institutional change is often less an efficiency driven process than a path dependent on which previous decisions and institutional arrangements constrain and facilitate the emergence of new ones."¹⁷⁵

The key point is that decision-making is less an efficiency-driven process and instead depends on previous solutions. The concept of "path-dependence" states that previous decisions and institutional conditions constrain and enable the emergence of new decisions.

The concepts of "path-dependent" and "logic of appropriateness" are hereby indicated as the two elements that can be said to be the most central in sociological neo-institutionalism. Before relating this position to my problem, I will present two models that have theoretically presented interpretations of the decision-making process that can be understood as alternatives to economic neo-institutionalism. Both models can be said to focus on how a dynamic shaping of problems and solutions occurs in policy implementation.

"Anarchic" decision-making processes

I have chosen to group these models together here, in contrast to traditional distinctions where "muddling through" is considered an individual model and the trash can model is considered a collective model. I have done this because both models emphasize the context in which the decision is made.

¹⁷² March and Olsen, 1989, p. 23.

¹⁷³ March and Olsen, 1989, p. 22.

¹⁷⁴ March and Olsen, 1989, p. 39.

¹⁷⁵ Campbell, 1995, p. 5.

Inspired by Herbert Simon's criticism of the rational decision-making model, a number of other approaches to the problem of decision-making emerged in the 1950s. The central figure is the political scientist Charles Lindbloom, who challenged the rational-actor model more fundamentally than Simon with his article "Science of muddling through"¹⁷⁶. The article begins with a discussion of two different approaches to the analysis of complicated political-administrative problems. On the one hand, the rational decision-making model and on the other hand, a "muddling-through" model. In the "muddling-through" model, the model focuses on problem solving as successive incremental small steps towards a solution. Lindbloom emphasizes that the rational model as an abstract quantity cannot be practiced when dealing with complicated problems. Regarding the rational model, he says:

"Although such an approach can be described, it cannot be practiced except for relatively simple problems and even then only in a somewhat modified form. It assumes intellectual capacities and sources of information that men simply do not possess, and it is even more absurd as an approach to policy, when the time and money that can be allocated to a policy problem is limited, as is always the case."¹⁷⁷

He recommends a less ambitious model "successive limited comparison", which can be translated into incrementalism, which is the common political science term. Considering the rational model with the points below, Lindbloom's criticism is as follows:

1. Identify goals
2. Identify possible solutions for achieving goals
3. Predict and assess consequences for each solution
4. Choose the solution that best meets your goals

Political and technically neutral goals cannot be separated. The goal that is set is a combination of political and technically neutral goals, where the goals set, for example as they are expressed in legislation in a given area, will predominantly be close to existing practice.

If possible solutions are considered, these are not independent of the goal. The goal is often adjusted to the means available. Consequences are rarely assessed according to Lindbloom. A test of a "good" policy should be determined by whether the parties involved have agreed. This does not in any way need to include that the chosen policy is actually the one that provides the greatest goal fulfillment.

In general, the focus is on how previous solutions dominate. With the use of incremental changes, serious mistakes are avoided and uncertainty is reduced. The wise decision-maker is not characterized, as in economic neo-institutionalism, by limited rationality.

Lindbloom's model is more of a description of how previous problem-solving practices are central to the incremental solution of new problems.

Another contribution with a sociological perspective has come from Cohen, Cyert and March. This model is called the garbage can model.¹⁷⁸ The model is based on the assumption that decisions are complex processes. The decision-making process is not a compact process that should be analyzed based on a decision-maker's rationality considerations or previous problem-solving practices, which was the assumption of Simon and Lindbloom, respectively.

The starting point here is that decision-making processes are "disorganized" and characterized by anarchy.

According to the garbage can model, decisions are first made on the basis of unclear preferences: "The organization operates on the basis of a variety of inconsistent and ill-defined preferences (...) it discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of

¹⁷⁶ Lindbloom, 1959.

¹⁷⁷ Lindbloom, 1959, p. 80.

¹⁷⁸ Cohen, 1972.

preferences".¹⁷⁹ The key point is that preferences are constantly changing. They emerge in interaction and depend on personal circumstances, educational backgrounds, experience etc.

The second characteristic is unclear understanding of technology as part of the decision-making environment:

"Although the organization manages to survive and even produce, its own processes are not understood by its members. It operates on the basis of simple trial-and-error procedures, the residue of learning from the accidents of past experience, and pragmatic inventions of necessity"¹⁸⁰

The third characteristic concerns the group of participants in the decision-making process. This often varies both in terms of number and the time and energy that each participant contributes: "Participants vary in the amount of time and effort they devote to different domains; involvement varies from time to another".¹⁸¹

In relation to Simon and Lindblom, the decision-making problem is reversed. With the garbage can model, the focus is on the characteristics of the decision-making process itself, located in social settings, and to a lesser extent on the actors.

The decision-making process can be defined as decision-making, understood as a contingent composition of participants, decision options, problem and problem solution.

Decision-making opportunities. These are characterized partly by time and partly by a decision structure defined as "a list of participants eligible to participate in making that choice".¹⁸² Here, there is thus a connection between problem solving and the selection of a number of participants who are considered desirable to make a decision. This element in the model is the so-called "trash can". Decision-making opportunities or decision-making opportunities 'circulate in the organization.

Problem solutions. These are characterized for each problem solution by linking the problem and decision option.

Problems are characterized at a point in time when the problem has become visible, which problem solutions can the problem be linked to, which resources are required in the form of participant time and energy, etc.

Participants are characterized by the time and energy they can devote to decision-making.

If the influence problem is considered, participants will gain influence on the solution of the problem by preparing proposals and providing decision-making options, and thereby influencing the other participants in the process. Influence is thus explained in the model with reference to the participants' time and energy.

These models have formulated a useful alternative to economic neo-institutionalism, as these models are able to focus on how the decision-making process itself shapes problems, solutions, etc. However, there is a lack of a concept of how these processes proceed across administrative units.

Communication as symbolic adaptation to surroundings

In 1997, John Meyer and Brian Rowan published the article "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony." This article, which is now considered a classic within sociological neo-institutionalism, focuses on communication and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁸² Ibid. p. 3.

More precisely, the focus is on the discrepancy between how the organization acts externally and concrete actions within the organization. This contribution can be seen as a reaction against traditional models that do not operate with this distinction.

With the concept of institutionalized environments understood as expectations of rational and efficient task solving:

"Formal organizations are generally understood to be systems of coordinated and controlled activities that arise when work is embedded in complex networks of technical relations and boundary-spanning exchanges. But in modern societies, formal organizational structures arise in highly institutionalized contexts. Professions, policies and programs are created along with the products and services that they are understood to produce rationally."¹⁸³

The formal structure reflects notions of rationality that are linked to the dominant myths in the organization's environment. Modern society is characterized by a number of institutionalized myths about effective organization. Furthermore, myths about an efficient, impersonal and formalized structuring of social processes based on assumptions of end-means rationality appear.

Meyer and Rowan's argument is that organizations must relate to institutionalized myths in order to achieve legitimacy in their environment. First and foremost, to survive and ensure a stable supply of resources. Organizations must therefore signal efficiency to their environment through the formal structure. Meyer and Rowan thus argue that the source of understanding the formal structuring of organizational activities must be sought in the tension between rational institutional myths and organizations' striving for survival.

In other words, the formal structure can be understood as a ceremonial fulfillment of the environment's demands for legitimate organizations. Organizations thereby adapt to the structure symbolically as opposed to an actual adaptation of the entire organization.

The consequence for organizations of incorporating the institutional elements from the environment is:

- The organization becomes legitimate and improves its chances of being provided with resources because the organization, through symbolic action, lives up to rational myths in the environment.
- The organization becomes stable, because the institutionalized myths in the environment stabilize both internal and external organizational relations. •

The organization is characterized by inconsistencies and conflicts between the ceremonial formal organizational structure and the instrumental demands for efficiency of the work process.

Meyer and Rowan emphasize that the organizational "response" to this inconsistency is a loose coupling between the organizational structure and the work process. This allows for the simultaneous maintenance of the ceremonial structure and an efficient work process, as the actual activities are shielded from the formal structure. This relationship is illustrated in the figure below.

The figure is slightly adapted from Meyer and Rowan.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 41.

¹⁸⁴ Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 53.

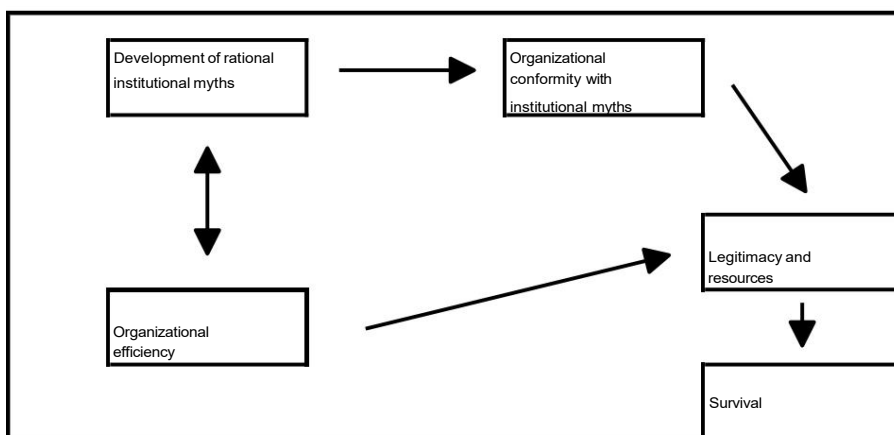


Figure 5-Error! Unknown argument for parameter. Figure adapted from Meyer and Rowan. (1977, p. 53)

In relation to my problem, Meyer and Rowan's perspective is central. As will become clear later, legitimation will play a central role.

If the above is considered in relation to the problem, it can be seen that this position provides a conceptual framework where there is a focus on meaning formation. This was done, among other things, with the concept of "logic of appropriateness" and a general focus on meaning construction anchored in existing practice. In the two decision models, emphasis was placed on the role of existing solution practices. This was illustrated with the concept of "path-dependence".

With regard to the analysis of power and influence phenomena, there is a general lack of conceptualization. If organizations are generally considered as linguistic communities with terms such as everyday knowledge, culture, and so on, the organization is identified with the concept of one "language" to which everyone in principle has equal access.¹⁸⁵ In my view, this is an unfulfilled prerequisite. Access to the "language" in organizations does not have such a character. Against this background, I see a general problem in using a hermeneutic perspective exclusively. Habermas criticizes hermeneutics as follows: "A *verstehende* sociology, that allows society to be wholly absorbed into the lifeworld ... screens out everything that in conspicuously affect a sociocultural lifeworld, from the outside"¹⁸⁶

However, a contribution was made by Meyer and Rowan, where structural conditions in the form of an expectation of rational efficient behavior were seen as central to the analysis of communication.

In the following chapter I will first bring historical institutionalism to the fore. This will make it possible to reformulate the problem of power. This will be done by looking back to where organizations in their current form saw the light of day. This historical "look" is especially aimed at March and Olsen's narrow focus on norms and everyday knowledge, but also at economic neo-institutionalism, where the utility-maximizing *a priori* was designated as the effective cause.

A historical-institutional perspective on administration.

In contrast to the traditional interpretation of Weber's theory presented in Chapter 3, the focus here is on social action as an element of bureaucratic practice. After this historical excursion, a more analytical presentation of the historical-institutional view of administration in relation to communication and influence follows. Weber defined bureaucratic administration in

¹⁸⁵ Such a conceptual framework with a focus on language was developed by Winograd and Flores, 1985. Based on a critique of the rational decision-making model, a hermeneutic-linguistic theoretical framework is developed, among other things with inspiration from Heidegger and Austin, but also with the inclusion of theoretical elements from the theory of autopoietic systems.

¹⁸⁶ Habermas, 1987, p. 148.

In contrast to earlier patriarchal and patrimonial forms of administration, traditional rule is replaced by legal rule. Whereas traditional rule was legitimized through personal authority relationships, legal rule is legitimized through the law.

As I have mentioned earlier, rational bureaucratic administration can be characterized by 1. control based on specialized knowledge, 2. clearly defined areas of competence, 3. the work is carried out on the basis of a clearly defined rule base. This system of "rational rules" is considered "generally binding norms". The system of rational rules thus legitimizes the power of the authorities, as long as it is in accordance with these rules. The rational exercise of power occurs on a formal basis and based on objective decisions. Personal considerations are not to be found in such a system, and the work is carried out without personal considerations according to the principle "sine ira et studio" (without anger and personal desire).

But how has this consistently impersonal form of organization been possible? is the immediate reaction? In this connection, I would like to bring up Weber's view of rationalization in Western culture. Weber saw rationalization at the beginning of industrialization manifested in society in two ways: 1. as institutional changes from traditional to modern forms. The bureaucracy as rational administration as described above is an example of the development from traditional to rational legal rule. These institutional changes in society are matched by 2. a shift in social action from being rooted in tradition to being

determined purpose- and value-rational.¹⁸⁷ Purpose-rational action is understood as the use of effective strategies (means) to achieve a given goal. Value-rational action is an orientation towards "value" without regard to practical consequences. Weber's view is that purpose-rational action is lucratively dominant in relation to value-rational. Weber located the origin of purpose-rational action in Calvinist sects, where purpose-rational methodical conduct of life was dominant.¹⁸⁸

In contrast to the traditional application of Weber's theory as described in the traditional view of administration, I therefore consider Weber's object to be the desire to explain the meaning of the way of life and to a lesser extent the rationalization process. Seen in this light, I see Foucault's works as central to the analysis of this way of life. Foucault has been interested in the emergence of the modern subject in all his books. His genealogical analyses are carried out by examining how power and knowledge have been joined. Thus, there is no focus on the individual, but instead on which techniques were used in the shaping of a historical context. The problem of registration in connection with the state is thus not new.

The manual archive has been known since technologies for registering population etc. came into being.¹⁸⁹ Foucault has paid particular attention to this practice:

¹⁸⁷ Weber's starting point is that when social actions - e.g. decisions - are to be explained and justified, reference to some form of rationality is required. According to Max Weber, reference is made to efficiency, values, emotions or tradition. Max Weber defines the four forms of rationality as: **Error! Bookmark is not defined.** (1)

Instrumentally rational (zweckrational), that is, determined by expectations as to the behavior of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as "conditions" or "means" for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends; (2) Value-rational (werrational), that is, determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other forms of behaviour, independently of its' prospects of success; (3) Affectual (especially emotional), that is, determined by the actor's specific affects and feeling states; (4) Traditional, that is, determined by ingrained habituation, Weber 1978, p. 24-25.

¹⁸⁸

This origin is described in detail in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber 1972, pp. 59 ff.

¹⁸⁹ Harold Innis describes, among other things, how the transition from stone tablets to papyrus radically changed the balance of power in antiquity. Thus, papyrus technology is assigned a significant role in Greece, where democracy first saw the light of day (Innis, 1951, p. 21ff).

"To observe, control, and regulate the circulation of goods and pastures, and through this to create an overview of the economy that could serve as a basis for how a state increases its wealth; to inspect the people, to ascertain whether they were away or present, to create a general archive of the armed forces; to give the sick specific places, to separate them from each other (...) It was about acquiring techniques to get an overview"¹⁹⁰

The instrumental methodical way of life thus formed the background for the "modern" capitalist economy and state administration. In Foucault's later works, he focuses specifically on how power and knowledge are historically joined as elements of modern state formation.

The concept of "governability" is introduced. This concept is considered to be the way in which the methodical conduct of life can be seen historically in connection with the emergence of the modern state:

"... "the art of government" in the early modern period is accompanied by a consciously notion of the inner connectedness of the government of oneself, the conduct of individual existence, on the one hand, and the government of other, the regulation of the lives of many, on the other"¹⁹¹

Against this background, I will interpret Weber with a focus on life-style as an immanent instrumental rationalization. This view plays a central role as a premise for historical institutionalism as a theoretical perspective on administration.

If historical institutionalism is considered in relation to the problem, the focus is on power and influence via the law. The law is considered as an expression of a historical institutionalization of instrumental action.¹⁹² The concept of institution in historical neo-institutionalism is thus defined as "Objective, formal rules and procedures, such as those codified in the law and deployed by bureaucratic organizations, such as the states and business enterprises"¹⁹³

In contrast to economic neo-institutionalism, interests and thus power and influence in historical institutionalism are not deduced from utility-maximizing actors.

"Rather than taking interests for granted and focusing on how institutions shape strategies for achieving them, historical institutionalists argue that the process of formulating goals and interests per se should be studied as an endogenous part of policy formulation and institution building. In other words, it is important to understand how institutions provide incentives that shape the goals to which actors aspire."¹⁹⁴

In historical institutionalism, the concept of institutional capacity is used to characterize the means that actors use in pursuing their goals: "These capacities are determined generally by the formal institutional positions in which actors find themselves and the material resources at their disposal".¹⁹⁵ The legitimation of actors' realization of goals will further occur with reference to formal hierarchical authority relations. According to this position, actors attempt to gain maximum influence in order to maintain existing institutional positions. Securing the institutional position is expressed in various ways.

Seen in relation to technology and information, technology is considered a resource that maintains personnel: "Most political impacts to date have resulted from ownership and control of computing resource per se. That is, those who have controlled computing have been able to

¹⁹⁰ Foucault, 1977, p. 137.

¹⁹¹ Gordon, 1989, p. 296.

¹⁹² In this position, there is no clear distinction between organization and institution. As will become clear later, I will distinguish between institutionalization, institution and organization. The aim is to view institutionalization as a process that results in both formal organization expressed in law and rules of action and norms.

¹⁹³ Thelen & Steinmo, 1992, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ Campbell, 1995, p. 10.

¹⁹⁵ Campbell, 1995, p. 11.

obtain other resources (staff, space, equipment) needed to apply it, as well as status and prestige". 196

Furthermore, institutional positions are secured through the control of information that is stored but also what processing is applied to it, and what access is to be granted to information. As an institutional historical phenomenon, information asymmetry is a central aspect of governance: "Barriers are not necessarily designed to block the diffusion of information as such, but simply to make it controllable by designated individuals".197

These circumstances mean that information and access to information cannot be considered a neutral resource that is solely intended to make administration more efficient. It is a resource of power and influence in line with other resources that are included as elements of institutional positions.

With regard to communication as collective opinion formation, this lacks a provision.

According to Habermas, this can be attributed to the fact that Weber's theory of action is to be found within the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness with a monological subject-object model. The monological aspect of the model consists in the fact that cognizing and acting subjects are perceived as isolated.

Meaning formation is reduced to the dominance of instrumental action, and communication as meaning formation is thus disregarded.

In contrast to sociological neo-institutionalism, this position emphasizes resources and influence. Power and interests are viewed here as historical phenomena.

Institutions defined, among other things, by the use of institutional capacity provided a historical contextual determination of how power and influence emerge. With regard to communication as collective opinion formation, this was lacking in historical institutionalism.

1.3 COLLECTION ON INSTITUTIONAL THEORIES

This chapter first discusses an economic neo-institutionalism, then a sociological-neo-institutional framework and finally a historical-institutional framework as political perspectives on administration. It is shown how, within economic neo-institutionalism, phenomena in administration are interpreted and explained for utility maximization. As a consequence of this theoretical interpretation, communication in administration will logically lead to opportunism becoming a theme in the theory. What is communicated is made conditional on what is opportunistic. With regard to the distribution of information and technology design, this is also made conditional on how acting actors find it opportune to choose. Furthermore, technical design was interpreted exclusively as a question of whether technology is used as a resource of influence.

In sociological neo-institutionalism, institutions were defined as rules of action, and could thus provide a conceptual framework that focuses on meaning formation. This was done, among other things, with the concept of "logic of appropriateness" and a general focus on meaning construction. In the trash can and "muddling through" model, emphasis was placed on the role of existing solution practices. This was illuminated with the concept of "path-dependence". With regard to the analysis of power and influence phenomena, there is generally a lack of conceptualization. However, a contribution was made by Meyer and Rowan, where structural conditions in the form of an expectation of rational, effective behavior were seen as central to the analysis of communication. Legitimization of solutions as rational in relation to the environment by a symbolic

¹⁹⁶ Danziger, 1982, p. 133.

¹⁹⁷ Boisot, 1995, p. 245.

adaptation to a rational structure emerged as a central element. In relation to communication as collective meaning formation, the problem is that the concept of meaning used is anchored in a hermeneutic framework, where meaning is analyzed via norms, culture, etc. In relation to formal communication, which is the object of analysis in this task, this concept of meaning is too broad, as all forms of meaning phenomena are encompassed.

By including Weber, the sociologically focused position took a back seat in favor of a general focus on the problem of power and influence. With the concept of institutional capacity, it was introduced that material conditions and institutional positions of power are central as resources of influence. With the interpretation of Weber's object of analysis as conduct of life, the problem of opportunism was touched upon. According to historical institutionalism, the problem is not the correct choice of institution type but instead a historical problem. Weber saw these problems as inevitable for Western culture.

The three positions as theoretical proposals for administration viewed from a political perspective all focus on issues that I find central. The aim in this context is to aim for the establishment of a broader conceptual framework for understanding communication and the issues of influence in administration.

The overall problem in the three approaches is that the concept of institution is not defined as a dependent variable. Leaving aside economic neo-institutionalism, institutions are considered "as a consequence" of actions. Thus, there is no focus on how institutions have been historically shaped or, in other words, how certain problems and problem solutions have been institutionalized prior to the institution. Furthermore, there is a lack of conceptualization of power and influence phenomena. It cannot be elucidated how actors act in roles, and thus how the actor conditions the role in a historical process.