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The Political Rationale of Administrative Reforms: Parliamentary Support of Output Control in Switzerland

Kuno Schedler and Lukas Schmucki
University of St. Gallen

Sufficient political support is a sine qua non of comprehensive administrative reforms. However, while the pros and cons of administrative reform measures have been extensively discussed in theory and research, only little is known about the political process which determines whether or not administrative reforms are implemented at all. Against this background, the article aims at throwing light on the politicians' backgrounds and mindsets which account for their attitude towards administrative reforms. Referring to the theories of voting behaviour, socio-structural, socio-psychological, and rational choice factors by Swiss members of parliament are tested for their impact on the attitude towards new output control policies as part of wider administrative reforms. Findings help us understand the different fates of administrative reforms in the legislative process, and they make it possible to draw some essential conclusions for the design and implementation of future administrative reforms. In consequence of this, the article's findings are a significant contribution for the study of the political rationale of administrative reforms as well as the characteristics of political rationale in general.

Keywords: Political Rationale • Administrative Reform • Parliamentary Support • Voting Behaviour

Introduction

The introduction of output control policies has been a major concern in the public administrations of many developed countries (Darwin, Duberley, et al. 2000; Larbi 2001; Bryntse and Greve 2002). In the term "output control" we include different processes of political control of outputs and outcomes, such as performance contracts, service level agreements, perform-

ance agreements, and so on.[1] Although there is still much dispute about whether to introduce certain tools of administrative reforms and how to apply them properly, it is widely agreed that public administrations should become more efficient and respond to altering societal and economic demands and requirements. Output control is considered to be an essential instrument of these ambitions (Wescott 2004; Brown and Potowski 2005). Nonetheless, there may be considerable opposition to output control as part of wider administrative reforms on the part of the administration, since public servants are the group of people most directly affected by the implemented measures (Mosimann 1995; Moon and Ingraham 1998; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004).

In certain cases, output control may only affect the administrative level of control. Yet, as is the case in Switzerland (Brun and Siegel 2006) such as in the United States (Carroll 1995), output control measures have frequently been designed to have a deliberate impact on the way politicians are supposed to exercise their control over the administration, with the objective of a shift away from mere input control towards more output and outcome focused control.[2] As Schedler (2000) points out, performance contracts in Switzerland are a core element of a wider new system of outcome-based management in public institutions. Thus, for the adoption of a new control policy it is imperative to have sufficient political support not only for the model to be established, but also for the process towards its final implementation.

It has been argued that the actual implementation of reform policies are driven by political and cultural considerations rather than technical or rational ones (De Lancer Julnes and Holzer 2002). Yet, whereas the pros and cons of quite every administrative reform measure have been discussed extensively in theory and research, there has hardly been any focus on the legislative process which effectively determines whether or not such measures are implemented at all. This is an even more significant gap as administrative reform in general and output control in particular represent

[1] As a matter of fact, administrative activity is supposed to be directed at outcomes rather than outputs. Yet, the difficulty is to measure outcomes and to ascribe them to clear-cut causes. Hence, from a conceptual point of view output control is merely an intermediate step on the way towards genuine outcome control (Schedler and Proeller 2003).

[2] Whether or not the postulated shift away from input control complies with certain political peculiarities is subject to controversial debate. In particular, it is the ability of politics to define clear-cut and unambiguous goals which is being doubted (Bogumil 2003; Bouckaert and van Dooren 2003).

a very specific policy field. When debating output control, parliaments set policies for their very own realm, as output control policies have a direct impact on the ways and means the state is governed. Hence, whereas other policy fields strongly urge members of parliament to take their voters' preferences into prominent account, their stance towards output control is more ambivalent as it is of little interest to the voters, but a crucial issue for themselves. This makes the study of parliamentary support of output control a very auspicious enterprise.

Theoretical Contributions

The article's research topic is well suited to be embedded in the theoretical setting of the political science literature on voters' decisionmaking. As a matter of fact, individual decisionmaking is an extremely multifaceted process, affected by a potentially infinite amount of motives and a true crossfire of outside influences. Of course, this holds also true for the political field, where politicians develop political convictions or take voting decisions for example. Scanning the vast political science literature, Linder (1999) depicts three basic approaches explaining the motivational structure of the actors in the political domain: the socio-structural approach, the socio-psychological approach, and the rational choice approach. These three approaches provide the functional theoretical framework of the article.

The *socio-structural approach* states that voting decisions taken by individuals are predominantly influenced by their respective societal environment, i.e. voters are mainly formed by the social milieu in which they have been brought up. This so-called Columbia School approach is intrinsically tied to Lazarsfeld's seminal study "The People's Choice", in which Lazarsfeld outlined the conclusions of his research during the 1940 presidential campaign in Erie County, Ohio. Lazarsfeld observed that the features which made a Republican distinguishable from a Democrat were fivefold: economic status, profession, religion, place of domicile, and age (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, et al. 1968). As it focuses on such socio-structural features, the Columbia School approach conceives people as tending to exhibit constant political behaviour during their lifetime, at all times conforming to their original societal milieu. As a result, social groups with common socio-structural attributes possess equal political predispositions and behave similarly in the political field (Vatter and Nabholz 1995).

As people are perceived to be bound socially, the predominant concept of man is the "homo sociologicus" (Dahrendorf 1977; Linder 1999). This concept not only predicts constant patterns of political behaviour within people's lifetime, but these patterns will even be reiterated by future generations. However, as each individual belongs to several social groups at the same time – a rich Catholic physician born and raised in a Protestant city for example –, conflictual situations may occur (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, et al. 1968). Thus, to really predict people's voting decisions will often be difficult even if one is well informed about somebody's socio-structural background. In such situations, it might be helpful first to take a look at the specific topic in question and then to decide which specific societal ties are most closely linked to the topic. Despite the limitations, referring to socio-structural factors is still widespread when analysing voting decisions (e.g., VOX analyses on referenda and popular initiatives in Switzerland).

Besides the socio-structural approach, there is yet another sociologically-driven theory of voting behaviour: the *socio-psychological approach* (or Michigan School approach). According to this approach, the main drivers behind voting decisions are party identification, social values, and ideological convictions. These drivers are in fact much individualised features; they form very distinct individual political identities. These identities are supposed to emerge primarily from pre-adult experiences such as family customs and other non-political influences (Campbell, Converse, et al. 1960). Although the societal milieu of the afore-mentioned socio-structural approach still plays a role in the process of political socialisation, the key to understand political behaviour is the individual pre-adult perception of the world which persists in people's minds. This is the psychological element of the approach.

Once such a perception of the world has been built up, it is not easily changed anymore and it mostly remains very steadfast during people's adult lives even long after the original sources of the perception have fallen into oblivion. This results in strong party affiliations and tight ideological convictions, which prevent political actors from the tedious task of frequent partisan re-evaluation. However, truly far-reaching changes in somebody's environment can still be expected to have repercussions on the perception of the world, thus allowing for particular situations when even long-lasting political beliefs may be reconsidered. In summary, the socio-psychological approach conceives political actors both as "homines psychologici", focusing on the persisting pre-adult perception of the world, and as "homines

politici", emphasising steadfast party identifications and the crucial role of ideology (Linder 1999; Söderbaum 1999).

The *rational choice approach* is the third approach in Linder's categorisation. It had its hour of birth with Anthony Downs' influential work *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, where the American economist transferred the model of the "homo oeconomicus" from economic theory to political theory (Downs 1957). This economics-driven approach is seen by many authors as a direct counterpart to the two afore-mentioned sociological approaches (Vatter and Nabholz 1995; Mayntz 2002).[3] The basic assumption of the rational choice approach is that people behave "rationally", i.e. they behave egoistically as well as utility maximising, and they do so not only in the economic field, but also in the social and political arena (Mueller 1997). In order to behave truly rationally, each individual is supposed to be fully informed about his or her own preferences (the "interior world") as well as about the external environment, i.e. about "how things work, about the preferences of others, about random events" (Shepsle and Bonchek 1997).[4]

The decisive task of the rational choice approach is the modelling of individual utility. Mostly, the utility functions applied focus on economic benefits and/or on clear-cut political goals such as gains in personal political power or broader political support by the electorate. Other factors like prestige or individual sense of well-being are much more difficult to operationalise. Moreover, the specification that people not only maximise their utility but also act egoistically is important, as some authors tend to include even altruistic motives in their modelling of the utility function. From a scientific point of view, this would be problematic since embracing quite every possible driver for political decision-taking can lead to tautological results (Vatter 1994; Steiner 1996). In summary, the rational choice approach assigns political decisions to the independent individual who evaluates the utilities of different alternatives. This leads to much more pragmatic behaviour than the two afore-mentioned sociological approaches would envisage.

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[3] Some authors have also tried to merge the two concepts and to develop a kind of "homo socio-oeconomicus" (e.g., Lindenberg 1990).

[4] In general, individuals will hardly be equipped with perfect information about alternatives and consequences (March and Olsen 1982). This is why uncertainty needs to be added to the scientific modelling of rational choice (Shepsle and Bonchek 1997).

The three theories of voting behaviour are of particular explanatory value for the article's research topic as they provide a well-founded and widely used theoretical framework which directly addresses the crucial linkage between people's individual characteristics and their political opinions. Clearly, there are differences between the theories of voting behaviour and our research question which need to be taken into account beforehand. Two of them may be highlighted. Firstly, the research question addresses motivational factors of MPs, whereas the theories of voting behaviour have been originally designed to explore the decision-making process of the electorate. Secondly, the survey does not cover the actual voting behaviour of MPs, but their self-declared attitudes towards output control. When laws pass parliaments in open ballots, an analysis of actual voting behaviour would have to take into account additional factors such as parliamentary party cohesion and reputational aspects of voting in addition to an MP's individual background and mindset.[5]

Even so, we still believe that the theories of voting behaviour offer an adequate theoretical framework for the examination of motivational factors in the political field, thereby including the issues raised by the article. Beyond that, we must bear in mind that before laws finally pass the decisive parliamentary vote, they run through a myriad of less visible but not in the least less influential steps within the legislative process (Sciarini 2007). Precisely because such preliminary decisions are not taken in an open arena, they lead to plenty of opportunities for MPs to let their individual backgrounds and mindsets encroach upon legislation without any need to care much about party cohesion or reputational aspects of voting (Parker and Parker 1998).

Research Design

In the article, we aim at presenting determinant factors of members of parliament which have a noteworthy impact on their attitude towards output

[5] In Switzerland, party cohesion is generally rather low compared to other countries (Lehner 1985; Jeitzinger and Hohl 1997). Yet, party cohesion still exerts considerable influence on voting behaviour of MPs (Lüthi, Meyer, et al. 1991). Reputational aspects of voting originate both in the wish to avoid social sanctions by adhering to social customs of the MP's constituency as well as in the need of MPs to demonstrate steadfast political convictions. To distinguish between the two reputation motives may prove to be quite difficult (Boockmann 2003).

control as part of wider administrative reforms. In short, the research question is: What drives MPs to support or oppose new output control policies? Hence, the research objective is to detect the underlying stimuli which decide upon a politician's proneness to support output control. Prima facie, such stimuli might originate from his or her personal attributes, ideological predispositions, individual experience, scientific-technical considerations, or else. Once we know more about the significance of such potential stimuli, we gain a much closer understanding of the so far dissimilar fates of administrative reforms in the legislative process and this will enable us to draw essential conclusions for the design and implementation of future reforms targeting the political control of the administration.

As the research question has not been explicitly addressed so far by theory and research, hypotheses derived from the three afore-mentioned theories of voting behaviour are being explored. Consequently, twelve socio-structural, socio-psychological, and rational choice factors of Swiss members of parliament are tested for their impact on the MPs' attitude towards new output control policies. Table 1 shows the theoretical perspective of each independent variable.

The socio-structural variables are being derived from the Lazarsfeld list, although the original list of five variables has been slightly adjusted according to the circumstances. Whereas the educational background, the occupational position and the cantonal domicile are clearly in line with Lazarsfeld, religion and age will be omitted and replaced by gender. We do not expect the individual denomination to have a significant impact on the attitude towards output control. The same holds true for age, even though the tenure of office variable – depicted in the article as a socio-psychological variable – may also allow for some wary statements about age.

As the socio-psychological approach emphasises the individual perception on the world, expressing itself in ideological conviction and party identification, we focus on variables which provide insights into the MPs' individual mindsets. Besides the straightforward variable of party affiliation we will explore whether the MPs' specific political fields of interest as well as their general attitude towards administrative reform are connected with their attitude towards output control. Last but not least, it will be tested whether the respective tenure of office has an effect on the MPs' individual perception in such a way that their attitude towards output control is changing with the time they had belonged to parliament.

Our rational choice school of thought hypotheses address two crucial factors of decisions made by "homines oeconomici": utility evaluation

Table 1: The Independent Variables in Theoretical Perspective

No.	Independent Variable	Theoretical Perspective
1	Educational background	Socio-structural variable
2	Cantonal domicile	Socio-structural variable
3	Occupational position	Socio-structural variable
4	Gender	Socio-structural variable
5	General attitude towards administrative reform	Socio-psychological variable
6	Tenure of office of the MP	Socio-psychological variable
7	Political fields of interest	Socio-psychological variable
8	Party affiliation	Socio-psychological variable
9	New parliamentary control opportunities	Rational choice variable
10	Power shifts in favour of the legislative branch	Rational choice variable
11	Experience with output control	Rational choice variable
12	Committee memberships	Rational choice variable

and information gathering, i.e. personal experience. As MPs can hardly hope for any pecuniary benefits in the case of output control, we focus on the question of power, as it is widely regarded as the major driving force within the political domain (e.g., Parsons 1971; Luhmann 1984). We will explore if the notion of power shifts between administration and parliament exerts an influence on the attitude towards output control and if this is the case depending on whether MPs hope for new control opportunities by means of output control. The role of personal experience will be examined by having a look at whether the MPs have been satisfied with the existing output control practice and whether the MPs are members of a parliamentary committee which bears responsibility for the introduction and/or the running of output control.

The empirical data derive from one of our institute's research projects. It was funded by the Swiss government and it surveyed all MPs in those cantons which had implemented output control policies before 2002 (Brun 2003).[6] The study was designed as an anonymous nonrecurring quantitative survey. The procedure resulted in n = 395, the rate of return equalling 22%. Data analyses have been pursued using bivariate statistical methods

[6] As a result, 13 out of 26 Swiss cantons (and demicantons) are covered by the survey: Aargau (AG), Berne (BE), Basel-Town (BS), Basel-Country (BL), Fribourg (FR), Grisons (GR), Schaffhausen (SH), Solothurn (SO), Schwyz (SZ), Thurgau (TG), Vaud (VD), Valais (VS), and Zurich (ZH).

of analysis. When grouping data, we kept an eye on the group size in order to avoid groups which were too small to fulfil the assumptions of the chosen statistical methods of analysis.

Our question of reference (dependent variable) is the level of support the interviewed MPs granted to output control and its instrumental associate, performance agreements. The interviewees could rank their answers on a scale from 1 ("not supportive at all") to 6 ("very supportive"). The questionnaires did not specify any particular definition of output control. Thus, it was left to the interviewees' cognition to endow the expression with meaningful content. However, it is unlikely that the interviewees were entirely unfamiliar with the term, since the introduction of new output control policies used to be intensely discussed at the time.

The Case of Switzerland

Switzerland is a good case in point as it carries vast and widely recognised experience with administrative reforms (Rieder and Lehmann 2002). Since the early 1990s, under the umbrella term of *wirkungsorientierte Verwaltungsführung*, i.e. outcome-based public management, NPM-style reforms have been introduced autonomously on all three federal levels (federal state, cantons, and municipalities) and they are still being actively implemented and further developed today. The efforts towards administrative reform were widespread and they have caused considerable factual and cultural change in many public administrations, although these efforts were neither uniform nor did they embrace all political entities (Lienhard, Ritz, et al. 2005). In the field of output control, the main instrument for parliament to set performance targets for the public administration are performance contracts (Rieder and Lehmann 2002; Proeller 2007). Performance contracts in Switzerland are usually combined with one-line budgets (Schedler 2000).

The article focuses on cantonal parliaments in Switzerland. In historical perspective, the Swiss cantons were states in their own right and until today federalist, i.e. decentralised, structures are a very cornerstone of the Swiss confederation (Church and Dardanelli 2004). As in many other political fields, Switzerland's twenty-six cantons possess vast autonomy in administrative affairs. Consequently, their parliaments are relatively free to design their own administrative reform agendas or even to abstain from such legislative undertakings. In fact, compared with the international ad-

Table 2: Bivariate Correlations (Ordinal Measurement)

No.	Independent Variable	N	Std. Deviation	Spearman's Rho
5	General attitude towards administrative reform	367	1.212	$r_S = .355^{**}$
6	Tenure of office of the MP	369	1.196	$r_S = .060$ (n.s.)
9	New parliamentary control opportunities	375	1.217	$r_S = .300^{**}$
10	Power shifts in favour of the legislative branch	309	1.108	$r_S = .186^{**}$
11	Experience with output control	355	1.175	$r_S = .097$ (n.s.)

ministrative reform agenda, reform efforts by Swiss cantons have been very much in line with the core elements as prominently depicted by Dunleavy and Hood (1994) (Ritz 2005), even though Switzerland – as any other NPM country – created its own culturally valid interpretations of NPM (Schedler and Proeller 2002).

Indeed, as a consequence of her political system and political culture, Switzerland is considered being a rather fertile ground for NPM-style reforms (Schedler 2008b). The Swiss sense of pragmatism, the unique level of direct democracy, the high esteem for federalism and the tradition of non-professionalism in politics have resulted in a public sector marked by responsive public administrations, civic mentality, decentralised structures and financial canniness. NPM is well in tune with these features of the public sector, even if the rigid Anglo-American NPM model has also been sporadically adjusted to cope with the Swiss preference for socially balanced solutions. Output control – the focus of our article – lays at the very heart of the NPM reform efforts in Switzerland. Again, this lies rooted in the Swiss political system, which is marked by a strong division of power between parliament and government resulting from a strong constitutional separation of powers and the individual electoral legitimisation on the cantonal level of both the legislative and the executive branch (Schedler and Mastronardi 2005).

Empirical Results

A summary of the empirical findings can be found in Tables 2 and 3, while the results for each independent variable are discussed subsequently. The choice of the statistical methods depends on the measurement level of the

Table 3: Bivariate Correlations (Nominal Measurement)

No.	Independent Variable	N	Std. Deviation	F-value
1	Educational background	362	1.167	$F_{(2.359)} = 4.034$*
2	Cantonal domicile	372	1.198	$F_{(12.359)} = 3.760$**
3	Occupational position	366	1.205	$F_{(5.360)} = 1.403$ (n.s.)
4	Gender	369	1.200	$F_{(1.367)} = 0.113$ (n.s.)
7	Political fields of interest	375	1.195	$F_{(1.373)} = 6.288$*
8	Party affiliation	338	1.192	$F_{(4.333)} = 2.704$*
12	Committee memberships	375	1.195	$F_{(1.373)} = 2.189$*

data.[7] As a result, the bivariate statistical assessment is chiefly based on two key figures: Spearman's rho (r_S)[8] and the F-value[9].

(1) Educational background. ——We find considerable evidence that the educational background exerts remarkable influence on the MPs' attitudes towards output control. Interestingly, it is mainly a question of whether or not people have a university master's degree, as the means of the other categories, "apprenticeship" (4.71) and "college of higher education" (4.70), are nearly equal. Compared to these figures and the overall mean of 4.88, it is the category of those MPs with a university degree which with a mean of 5.05 makes for the significant difference. Hence, data suggest that university graduates feel considerably more sympathetic to output control and, in general, that the educational background of MPs plays a significant role when deciding about the prospects of success of output control in the legislative process. The assumption that the higher the MPs' educational background, the higher their support level of output control, is not admissible though, as it would misconceive that there is no conclusive evidence

[7] With regard to the p-value (level of significance), we define $p > .05$ as "not significant" (n.s.) and $p < .05$ as "significant". Furthermore, we differentiate between $p < .05$ (*) and $p < .01$ (**).

[8] Spearman's rho is a rank-order correlation coefficient which measures association at the ordinal level. The values of the correlation coefficient range from -1 to 1. The sign of the correlation coefficient indicates the direction of the relationship (positive or negative). The absolute value of the correlation coefficient indicates the strength, with larger absolute values indicating stronger relationships.

[9] The F-value results from the One-Way ANOVA procedure, which produces a one-way analysis of variance for a quantitative dependent variable by a single factor (independent) variable. Analysis of variance is used to test the hypothesis that several means are equal. A significant F-value indicates that there is a significant difference between groups.

Table 4: Categories and Means per Independent Variable

No.	Independent Variable	Categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Educational background	apprenticeship	97	4.71	1.199
		college of higher education	86	4.70	1.208
		university	179	5.05	1.108
		total	362	4.88	1.167
2	Cantonal domicile	AG	50	4.94	1.114
		BE	43	4.93	1.223
		BL	23	4.83	0.984
		BS	34	5.15	1.048
		FR	14	4.07	1.385
		GR	31	5.19	0.792
		SH	16	5.19	1.109
		SO	43	5.44	0.666
		SZ	18	5.00	0.767
		TG	27	4.22	1.502
		VD	17	4.35	1.455
		VS	16	4.69	1.195
		ZH	40	4.33	1.492
		total	372	4.85	1.198
3	Occupational position	not gainfully employed	30	4.93	1.202
		staffer	25	4.28	1.458
		lower and middle mgmt	80	4.83	1.261
		top management	80	4.84	1.107
		self-employed	63	4.92	1.248
		entrepreneurs	88	4.98	1.114
		total	366	4.85	1.205
4	Gender	female	78	4.81	1.207
		male	291	4.86	1.199
		total	369	4.85	1.200

Table 4 (continued)

No.	Independent Variable	Categories	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
6	Tenure of office of the MP	0-3 years	127	4.87	1.115
		4-6 years	90	4.88	1.130
		7-9 years	65	4.51	1.371
		10-12 years	49	4.90	1.388
		more than 12 years	38	5.29	0.867
		total	369	4.85	1.196
7	Political fields of interest	related policies	61	5.20	1.152
		non-related policies	314	4.78	1.193
		total	375	4.85	1.195
8	Party affiliation	CVP	68	5.03	0.992
		FDP	89	5.16	1.127
		GPS	18	4.44	1.464
		SPS	85	4.82	1.217
		SVP	78	4.68	1.274
		total	338	4.90	1.192
12	Committee memberships	relevant committees	142	4.96	1.169
		irrelevant committees	233	4.78	1.208
		total	375	4.85	1.195

for a continuous rise of the support level of output control along with the educational level. Rather, data suggest a certain dichotomy between university graduates and non-academics.

(2) Cantonal domicile.——Analysis of variance provides evidence that there are significant differences in the MPs' support level of output control depending on their cantonal domicile. Indeed, the means of the support level range from as low as 4.07 (FR) to as high as 5.44 (SO). Within a ±0.2 range of the overall mean of 4.85 are five cantons: VS, BL, BE, AG, and SZ. A significantly lower support level of output control (< 4.35) is observed for FR, TG, ZH, and VD, whereas MPs from BS, GR, SH, and SO display a particularly positive attitude towards output control (> 5.15). Yet, with regard to these results it proves to be quite challenging to detect some meaningful pattern. For example, if we take language as an indicator, we find that the three cantons having a stake in the French-speaking

part of Switzerland (FR, VD, and VS) show a significantly lower average support of output control (4.38) than the German-speaking cantons (4.92). Yet, on the one hand two of the three afore-mentioned cantons (FR and VS) are actually far from being exclusively French-speaking but distinctly bilingual cantons. On the other hand, there are cantons (e.g., TG and ZH) with very low means which are in no way associated with the Romance cultural area. However, even if we acknowledge that the overall picture is quite complex, there is little doubt that output control faces a distinctively more difficult stand among MPs in French-speaking cantons.[10]

Other possible explanations of the cantonal ranking could not be corroborated by data. Neither can we say that those cantons in which NPM projects are well-advanced have a significantly more positive (or more negative) attitude towards output control (r_S = -.032 (n.s.)) nor that this is the case for cantons in which any particular political party is prevalent in parliament and/or in government ($F_{(3.368)}$ = 2.313 (n.s.)). However, these results do not preclude that the MPs' support levels of output control have indeed been affected by the most diverse fates and storylines of the administrative reforms under consideration. For instance, MPs within a particular canton may well be frustrated by inadequate involvement of parliament to the introduction of administrative reforms, or – on the contrary – some cantons might perceive themselves as exemplary forerunners in the field of administrative reform, rendering MPs particularly kind to such reform measures. Yet, such specific circumstances are hard to operationalise in a quantitative study, avoiding getting other than tautological results.

(3) Occupational position.——The assumption that the support level of output control depends on the individual occupational position could not be corroborated statistically. Of the six categories, five categories have got means close to the overall mean of 4.85 (4.83 to 4.98), only the "staffer" category's mean is considerably lower (4.28). If we left away the somewhat delicate category of "not gainfully employed" – consisting of such diverse groups of people as retirees, unemployed persons and housewives –, we may get the impression that the higher the MP's occupational position, the higher his or her support level of output control, since the means of the categories would be ranked as following: "staffer", "lower and middle management", "top management", "self-employed", and "entrepreneurs".

[10] Rieder and Widmer (2007) come to a similar conclusion. Their study on NPM in Swiss cantons detects that French-speaking cantons are much more sceptical about output and outcome goals than German-speaking cantons.

Yet, the differences between the means are mostly simply too small – being just 0.01 between some categories – to be reliable, even if we abstain from the fact that in any case comparing means from ordinal data is not unproblematic. Furthermore, with $r_S = .097$ (n.s.) there is neither a significant rank-order correlation for this case. Hence, the occupational background of MPs does not seem to account for the differences in the support level of output control.

(4) Gender.——There are no significant differences with regard to the support level of output control depending on gender. Female MPs come up with an average support level of 4.81, the equivalent of the male MPs being 4.86. Thus, data suggest that gender does not serve as an explaining factor for parliamentary attitude towards output control.

(5) General attitude towards administrative reform.——The correlation between the support level of output control and the attitude towards administrative reform in general is remarkably strong and highly significant. Hence, data suggest that output control might be perceived as one measure amongst others within wider administrative reform efforts. As a consequence of this, opinions about general reform efforts are supposed to have repercussions on the perception of output control. Yet, it is remarkable that the average support level of output control (4.85 within a scale from 1 to 6) is significantly higher than the average support level of administrative reforms in general (3.68). Apparently, the broader term of "administrative reform" faces a somewhat worse reputation than the more specific term of "output control". Thus, the slightly disapproving attitude towards administrative reforms which quite some MPs display cannot have their roots in the introduction of output control. There must be other aspects of administrative reforms which are seen as more problematic than output control. As output control in Switzerland is usually linked with one-line budgeting, MPs may conceive output control as a positive aspect of administrative reforms while being much less fond of one-line budgets.

(6) Tenure of office of the MP.——With the average support level oscillating between 4.51 ("7–9 years") and 5.29 ("more than 12 years"), there is no statistical evidence of a continuous unidirectional development along the number of years an MP has been in office. If we abstain from building categories and take year by year, the picture becomes even more distorted. Hence, the tenure of office does not seem to serve as an explaining factor for parliamentary attitude towards output control, so that a kind of "fraternisation with bureaucracy" theory cannot be corroborated by the data.

(7) Political fields of interest.——Analysis of variance clearly indicates that MPs with a strong interest in policy fields related to output control (e.g., administrative policy or financial policy) exhibit a higher support level of output control. Their average support level is as high as 5.20 compared to 4.78 of those MPs not mentioning any policy fields inherently connected to output control. Apparently, it is harder to convince people of the usefulness of output control if they are not particularly interested in the subject. It may be assumed that in those cases where politicians do not exhibit a genuine interest in certain topics, they are hardly willing to spend much time balancing the pros and cons of such propositions. Alternatively, they may refer to engrained political ideologies in such cases. This may even hold true with regard to matters of more technical nature such as output control.

(8) Party affiliation.——Party affiliation plays a significant role in explaining an MP's opinion about output control. On average, MPs from the two centrist parties, the liberal FDP (5.16) and the Christian democratic CVP (5.03), utter a remarkably higher support level of output control than MPs from the ecologist GPS (4.44), the right-wing SVP (4.68), and the social democratic SPS (4.82). These differences, though, cannot be easily explained within the frameworks of analysis common to Swiss politics. Neither is there any continuous development based on the left-right scale of the Swiss parties[11] ($r_S = .017$ (n.s.)) nor do data suggests a pattern following the traditional bipolar differentiation between left parties (SPS and GPS) and so-called "bourgeois" parties (FDP, CVP, and SVP) ($F_{(1.336)} = 2.114$ (n.s.)).[12] Hence, there must be other explanations accounting for the differences in the support levels of output control between FDP and CVP on one side and SPS, GPS, and SVP on the other.

Part of such an explanation might be found in the parties' own self-conception and – as a result of the self-conception – in the self-image of the individual members of the respective parliamentary groups. Generally speaking, the two centrist parties (FDP and CVP) perceive themselves as representatives of the current political order. The two parties look back on a long history in government, they stand for fairly moderate reform

[11] From left to right: SPS-GPS-CVP-FDP-SVP (Brändle 1999; Jeitzinger and Hohl 2002).

[12] Though there are still considerable differences between the party systems of the 26 cantons, a gradual convergence of the party systems can be observed (Ladner 2001). The partisan landscape reflects various historical cleavages within the Swiss society: Protestants vs. Catholics, workpeople vs. bourgeoisie, urban vs. rural regions, German-speaking vs. French- or Italian-speaking etc. (Hug and Trechsel 2002).

agendas and they usually try to push their ideas by using their weight in parliament and government on all federal levels. In general, FDP and CVP show great loyalty with regard to governmental decisions, the two parties account for "the governmental core support" (Kriesi 2001). On the other hand, the parties at the poles of the Swiss party system (GPS and SPS on the left, SVP on the right) pursue more far-reaching reform agendas and often behave as parliamentary and popular opposition, even in cases where they are represented in government.[13] This is also reflected in the fact that the latter three parties make much more use of the direct-democratic instruments (popular initiatives and referenda) which are so characteristic for Swiss political system. As a result of these diverse party self-conceptions, it might be argued that by supporting output control the two centrist parties CVP and FDP simply back government policies in the way they usually do, since in most cases it is the executive branch which has originally drafted the administrative reform agendas. On the other hand, GPS, SPS, and SVP are more sceptical towards output control as part of a more general line of opposition.

(9) New parliamentary control opportunities.—The test on whether the parliamentary support level of output control depends on the MPs' anticipation of new control opportunities by the use of output control exhibits a strong and highly significant correlation. In most countries, controlling the public administration is not only one of the principal duties of the legislative branch but also a crucial feature of power assigned to parliaments. In the NPM literature, performance contracting is seen as a very cornerstone of the postulated paradigm shift from input control to output control (Heinrich 2004; Verhoest 2005). Yet, a closer look at the data reveals that less than half of the respondents (44.1%) did at all associate any considerable new control opportunities for the legislative branch with the introduction of output control, yet leaving a majority of the interviewees being quite pessimistic about output control as a potentially powerful means of control in the hand of parliament. Nonetheless, the fact that those who are more confident about new control opportunities also display a higher support level of output control remains unchallenged. This finding might provide

[13] There are also exceptions to the general rule. For example, for historical reasons the SVP's self-image in the Canton of Berne is very much the one of the ruling party. The same applies for the SPS in the Canton of Basel-Town. Characteristic for the Swiss political system on all three federal levels is the so-called concordance regime which means that all the major parties of the respective entity are represented in government (Lane 2001).

a useful hint of what to take care of when introducing a bill to parliament and how to argue in favour of it.

(10) Power shifts in favour of the legislative branch.——The correlation between the support level of output control and the MPs' notion of power shifts triggered by output control is not particularly strong, yet still well noticeable and highly significant. This result backs a theoretical conception which locates the striving for enhanced personal power at the very heart of the functioning of the political system. According to that, output control will be supported if and when it is believed to be favourable to the legislative branch, so that the individual MPs benefit from the improved status of the institution they belong to. Of course, this only holds true if MPs are not at the same time members of government. Indeed, the Swiss political system is not only marked by legal interdiction for MPs to sit in government but also by a remarkably vivid independency of the legislative and the executive branch. Despite the marked independency, Schedler and Mastronardi (2005) found that open communication and good interaction between the legislative and the executive branch were key to success of reforms in the context of the new public management. The statistical mean of the power shift analysis is as low as 2.56. In fact, 78.9% of the responding MPs are of the opinion that the executive branch has gained more power from administrative reforms than parliaments have. Thus, regardless of the significant correlation the – in absolute terms – relatively positive attitude towards output control cannot really be explained by parliamentary strive for more power.

(11) Experience with output control.——A rather astonishing finding is that data do not indicate any significant correlation between the support level of output control and the level of satisfaction with existing performance contracts. In fact, MPs' judgments of output control do not seem to be based on their previous – positive or negative – experience with the very same. Since on average the level of satisfaction is as low as 3.42, which doubtlessly is not a very exultant assessment of parliamentary experience with output control, it is quite remarkable that this low level of satisfaction has no considerable negative repercussions on the appraisal of output control in general, as the latter comes up with an average support level of 4.85. Apparently, at least with regard to output control, politicians seem to deduce their standpoints not from their actual experience with the matter in question, but from other stimuli.

(12) Committee memberships.——Analysis of variance indicates that MPs who are members in those parliamentary committees which are relat-

ed to the introduction and/or running of output control (e.g., reform committees, control committees, or financial committees) display a higher support level of output control. Their average support level is 4.96 compared to 4.78 of those MPs who do not belong to such committees. One explanation might be that members of relevant committees are expected to dispose of more information about output control. Apparently, those MPs who are well informed about output control also tend to support it more fervently. Yet, this implies that output control would be supported if people were just prepared to look into the subject. Taking a slightly less technical stance, we might also reckon that members of relevant committees simply tend to back their committees' decisions more resolutely than other MPs. This way, members of those committees which participated in drafting bills become the very protagonists of the subject in question. Indeed, overlooking the present coverage of parliamentary affairs, this does not seem entirely implausible.

Discussion

The statistical evaluation exhibits that each theory of voting behaviour is apt to contribute certain relevant factors which account for the MPs' attitudes towards output control. Apparently, a complex social process such as political opinion-making is hardly suited to be interpreted by using single-perspective theoretical frameworks. Rather, the empirical data suggest that a politician's opinion on output control is a function of socio-structural factors, socio-psychological factors, and rational choice factors altogether:

$$OOC = F(SSF, SPF, RCF)^{14}$$

This finding is important, as it allows for detailed insights into the possibilities and limitations of promoting output control in the political process. Generally speaking, socio-structural factors are nearly impossible to manipulate and socio-psychological factors are still very stable, yet rational choice factors strongly depend on the distinct design of the proposed measures. Hence, if we know about the composition of a legislative body and – as a result – about the socio-structural and socio-psychological predispositions therein, we are able to make some a priori statements with

[14] OOC = opinion on output control; SSF = socio-structural factors; SPF = socio-psychological factors; RCF = rational choice factors.

regard to the prospects of success of output control. Referring to our empirical findings, we may say – for example – that the chance of introducing output control is – ceteris paribus – relatively high in a German-speaking cantonal parliament with strong centrist parties and many MPs with an interest in financial and/or administrative policy. On the other hand, data also suggest that rational choice accounts for a part of the parliamentary opinion-making. As a consequence, the design of the reform efforts also needs to comfort the individual MPs' preferences. This is what makes the search for political support of output control much less deterministic than the socio-structural and the socio-psychological approach would ever have envisaged.

In summary, we can draw the following factor-specific conclusions:

Output control is more popular than administrative reforms in general. Hence, output control instruments may even be introduced in cases where large-scale administrative reforms will not obtain a parliamentary majority. This is in line with latest findings by Schmidt (2008) and Ritz (2005) who point out that cantons which officially opted against the introduction of NPM (such as St. gallen, Basel, Geneva) nevertheless introduced performance contracting for certain agencies in their area of responsibility. One possible reason for members of parliament to be sceptical about large-scale reforms is the insisting warnings of some researchers that outcome-based public management would lead to a loss of power for parliaments (Knoepfel 1995; Finger 2002).

If MPs are convinced, however, that by introducing output control parliament will gain new control opportunities, the introduction of output control is likely to be more successful. This does hardly come as a surprise. Our data suggest that if MPs believe that output control brings about a power shift from the executive branch to the legislature, the prospects of success for introducing output control will rise. Yet, MPs are still very sceptical in this respect and hardly believe to gain from such reforms. This finding is somehow at odds with the opinion of many NPM scholars: Given some preconditions, they are quite optimistic that the legislative branch might benefit from NPM efforts such as output control (e.g., Finger 2002; Ritz 2003). Apparently, there is a huge gap between the conceptually delivered opportunities of political (output) control and its practical use by MPs, which leads to sceptical reactions of the latter. This is in line with the argument of Ritz (2007) who emphasises that the actual use of output control does not exploit the full potential benefit for parliaments and their members.

MPs with an interest in political fields related to output control (e.g., financial policy or administrative policy) are likely to act as promoters of output control. In an analysis of in-depth interviews with executive politicians who had acted as so-called "champions" in reform cantons, Schedler (2008a) found that they had relied heavily on a small number of MPs and members of the public administration, forming and sustaining a kind of "reform elite". This finding is in line with the research on so-called "policy entrepreneurs" by Roberts and King (1991; similar Barzelay and Füchtner 2003).

Our data suggest that the higher the share of academics in parliament, the greater the support for the introduction of output control. One possible explanation is the relatively complex reform model associated with output control ("outcome-based public management"). The model is a challenge for the abstraction abilities of MPs. This is often linked to a specialised terminology of the reforms, a fact which in Switzerland even inspired a specific publication for interpreters, helping them translating official documents into German, French, and Italian (Pulitano 2001). This is a valuable hint for reform champions that easily accessible and understandable information about the reforms will greatly support the introduction of output control in parliaments.

With regard to the cantonal domicile, we may say that in general the German-speaking cantons are more benevolent towards output control than French-speaking cantons. Yet, in any case it is still the hard-to-define political momentum which is crucial for sufficient parliamentary support of output control.

Lastly, parliaments with a strong centrist partisanship are more accessible for output control than left-winged, right-winged, or polarised legislative bodies, hence parliaments with strong opposition forces. In the Swiss concordance regime, reforms are usually driven by the leading majorities in government, be it centre-right or centre-left. To have a sound centrist majority could thus mean that it is easier for government to find majorities in parliament for the reform.

Even though parliamentary motivation structures prove to be quite complex and multifaceted, we may deduce some noteworthy implications for the study of political opinion-making, administrative reform, and – of course – output control. Firstly, the underlying stimuli of political behaviour are multidimensional, they embrace aspects from all three theories of voting behaviour and they may differ depending on the topic in question. Hence, when talking about political opinion-making, we should avoid ap-

plying mono-causal theoretical perspectives. Secondly, MPs form opinions not only about truly hot issues but also about peripheral political questions such as output control. They do so by referring to more or less predetermined mindsets, yet they also want to know about the individual and institutional advantages and disadvantages of the implemented measure. Hence, the close involvement of the legislative branch when designing administrative reform agendas is imperative; it is an indispensable factor of success. Thirdly, for many MPs administrative reforms have forfeited some of their original attractiveness. This might also have an effect on specific administrative reform measures such as output control, even though in general output control is more appreciated than the umbrella term of "administrative reform". As a result, specific administrative reform measures might be introduced and implemented more easily than large-scale reform attempts.

Research Agenda

Our findings deliver a multitude of empirically substantiated insights into the political rationale of administrative reform. Yet, as answered questions always raise new questions, there is still an open reform agenda.
Firstly, there is a need to throw light on the relationships and causalities between the three theories of voting behaviour. In our empirical research, we found eight attributes which account for an MP's attitude towards output control. This number might also be a hint to a potential problem of the analysis: At least some of the attributes may be interlinked. For example, it seems to be fairly straightforward that MPs with an interest in financial and administrative policy try to get a seat in a related parliamentary committee, or that those pressing for administrative reforms do so because they attempt to empower parliament. Moreover, in certain cases it may be quite difficult to clearly assign the independent variables to one of the three theories of voting behaviour. Does somebody's support of administrative reform respond to socio-psychologically founded ideological convictions, to self-interest as rational choice suggests, or to an altruistic ideal of common well-being? Does a certain party affiliation reflect somebody's pre-adult perception of the world, historical socio-structural cleavages, or a rational decision of how to climb the political ladder as fast as possible? Thus, we should rather not be too deterministic when setting the boundaries of one approach in relation to the two others.

Secondly, our findings on the parliamentary opinion-making should be complemented by research on parliamentary decision-taking. In this respect, it is especially important to illuminate the obscure steps from opinion to decision. Acknowledging that in the end the fate of any reform effort depends on the final parliamentary vote, i.e. an overt decision taken by MPs, we still are convinced that research on opinion-making is absolutely crucial for both scholars and reform practitioners. Decisions always reflect underlying mindsets, opinions, and incentives. If there is no clear intention on the part of every major political actor to carry out a certain reform process, it might be preferable to abstain from even setting off such an experiment (Graber 2003). And even if the legislative process has been initiated already, it is not enough – although being indispensable – just to convince the members of the respective reform committee of the usefulness of the administrative reform, but attempts must be made to bring as many MPs as possible on board (Schedler 2003).

Thirdly, it is essential to gain more knowledge about change processes within political bodies. Political bodies such as parliaments are social systems, and social systems are dynamic entities. Opinion-making is by no means a static condition, but a dynamic process. Not only does the composition of parliaments change over time, it is also the MPs themselves and the relationships between them which change. As political bodies as conflictual, non-hierarchical, and strongly institutionalised organisations have got their own peculiarities, it is important to develop specific models of change for political bodies. Such models could help to overcome the ephemeral perspective of the survey's results in order to come to a truly dynamic view of such social phenomena.

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Die politische Rationalität von Verwaltungsreformen: Parlamentarische Unterstützung von Leistungssteuerung in der Schweiz

Ausreichende politische Unterstützung ist eine unabdingbare Voraussetzung für umfassende Verwaltungsreformen. Doch während das Für und Wider der verschiedenen Verwaltungsreformmassnahmen in Theorie und Praxis breit diskutiert wurde, ist nur wenig bekannt über die politischen Prozesse, die darüber entscheiden, ob Verwaltungsreformen überhaupt eingeführt werden. Vor diesem Hintergrund bezweckt der Artikel, Licht auf diejenigen Hintergründe und Denkweisen von Politikerinnen und Politikern zu werfen, die bestimmend für ihre Haltung zum Thema Leistungssteuerung sind. Unter Berufung auf die Wählertheorien werden soziostrukturelle, soziopsychologische

und Rational-Choice-Faktoren von Schweizer Parlamentarierinnen und Parlamentariern (n = 395) auf ihren Einfluss auf die Haltung zum Thema Leistungssteuerung als Teil weitergehender Verwaltungsreformen getestet. Die statistisch ausgewerteten Ergebnisse helfen mit, die bis anhin sehr unterschiedlichen Schicksale von Verwaltungsreformen im legislativen Prozess zu verstehen, und sie ermöglichen es, essenzielle Schlussfolgerungen für die Gestaltung und Einführung von künftigen Verwaltungsreformen zu ziehen. Die Ergebnisse des Artikels liefern einen wichtigen Beitrag zum Studium von politischer Rationalität von Verwaltungsreformen als auch vom Wesen politischer Rationalität im Allgemeinen.

La rationalité politique des réformes administratives: le soutien parlementaire au pilotage par les résultats en Suisse

Un soutien politique suffisant est une condition indispensable pour des réformes administratives globales. Tandis que les avantages et les inconvénients des mesures des réformes administratives ont été largement discutés en théorie et en recherche, seulement peu est connu au sujet du processus politique qui détermine si une implémentation des réformes administratives aura lieu ou pas. Sur cette trame, l'article vise un éclaircissement des propriétés et des raisons des politiciens. Ces facteurs sont déterminants pour l'attitude des parlementaires face aux réformes administratives. En se référant aux théories du comportement électoral, des facteurs socioculturels, des facteurs socio-psychologiques et des facteurs "Rational Choice" des parlementaires suisses (n = 395) sont mis à l'épreuve concernant leur effet sur l'attitude face à la nouvelle politique du pilotage par les résultats comme partie intégrante des réformes administratives plus globales. Les résultats sont statistiquement évalués et nous aident à mieux comprendre les différents destins des réformes administratives antérieures dans le processus législatif. Les résultats de l'article permettent ainsi de tirer des conclusions essentielles pour la conception et l'implémentation des futures réformes administratives et constituent une contribution significative à l'étude de la rationalité politique des réformes administratives tout autant qu'à la compréhension de la nature de la rationalité politique en général.

Kuno Schedler is Professor for Business Economics and Director of the Public Management Department at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. His main areas of research are politics and strategy, comparative public management and public management reform. As a researcher he has been profiled by international and national publications and as an editor of the *International Public Management Journal* and the *International Public Management Review*.

Address for correspondence: Institute for Public Services and Tourism, University of St. Gallen, Dufourstrasse 40a, CH-9000 St. Gallen, Switzerland. Phone: +41 (0)71 224 25 25; Email: kuno.schedler@unisg.ch.

Lukas Schmucki is a research assistant and doctoral candidate at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. His main area of research is the relationship between politics and public administrations. He writes a dissertation on change processes of parliaments in the course of comprehensive administrative reforms.

Address for correspondence: Institute for Public Services and Tourism, University of St. Gallen, Dufourstrasse 40a, CH-9000 St. Gallen, Switzerland. Phone: +41 (0)71 224 25 25; Email: lukas.schmucki@unisg.ch.