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Ordering Things: Classifying Agencies to Understand the Changing Structure of the Central State

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1. Introduction

In a famous passage from Borges' story 'The Analytical Language of John Wilkins' the author describes a Chinese encyclopedia in which the classification of animals divides them as follows:

1. those that belong to the Emperor,
2. embalmed ones,
3. those that are trained,
4. suckling pigs,
5. mermaids,
6. fabulous ones,
7. stray dogs,
8. those included in the present classification,
9. those that tremble as if they were mad,
10. innumerable ones,
11. those drawn with a very fine camelhair brush,
12. others,
13. those that have just broken a flower vase,
14. those that from a long way off look like flies.

Michel Foucault explains in the preface to *The Order of Things* that this literary 'how not to do it' guide to classification from Borges evoked much laughter but also inspired his own study of the centrality and changing significance of classifications for understanding the world (Foucault 1970: pp. xv). Foucault suggests that 'there is nothing more tentative, nothing more empirical (superficially, at least) than the process of establishing an order among things; nothing that demands a sharper eye or a surer, better articulated language; nothing that more insistently requires that one allow oneself to be carried along by the proliferation of qualities and forms.' (Foucault 1970: pp. xix-xx).

The problem of classification of central state agencies begs similar questions of relevance and utility. We need a genuinely comparative classification system if we want to compare not only the current structure of the central state across countries, but also how the trajectory of change within individual countries compares with that of other countries. Yet comparative studies of state structures and public administration systems are bedeviled by problems of comparability.

This paper poses the question as to how best we might balance nation-specific complexity against the parsimony required for comparative work to make progress. It outlines the thinking behind a particular national classification schema developed for Ireland, placing it in the context of the proliferating literature on country-specific schemata. Classification systems, even when theoretically guided, generally have a strong element of inductive logic to them, as they need to be adequate to the national specificities of unique national configurations. However, we find that the thrust of comparative study in public administration is increasingly to align its methods with those of political science, to move beyond description and classification alone. If we to seek to develop general explanations that are robust across national jurisdictions, we need much greater comparability in the classification schemata we adopt (Nassmacher 2008). This challenge has long been overcome in, for example, comparative analysis of party systems. National party organizations often have strongly idiosyncratic features, and national histories are by definition unique, yet robust comparative classification systems are now widely acceptable, facilitating a rich comparative research agenda (Karvonen and Kuhnle 2001; Mair and Mudde 1998; Stoll 2008).

This paper therefore explores the possibility of working toward a greater degree of consonance in classifying national public administration systems – particularly in the way we think about state agencies. Many broad analyses of public administration are concerned with changes in the ways in which governments deliver on specific policy objectives, which are then taken to indicate general trends. One of the themes that has been much discussed in recent years concerns the 'rise of the regulatory state' (Braithwaite 2000; Glaeser and Shleifer 2001; Jayasuriya 2000; Majone 1994; Moran 2002). Recent research on the regulatory state looks for more systematic explanation of the institutional variety in arrangements for regulating both public and private sectors (Binderkrantz and Christensen; Gilardi 2008; Hall 2007; Levi-Faur 2005; Thatcher 2007). Comparison is vital for understanding not only the variety of ways in which government tasks get done, but also the means by which they are legitimated. Mechanisms of implementing new regulatory regimes on the one hand, and creating new lines of accountability on the other, form an important part of a broader trend toward

what is now known as regulatory governance (Binderkrantz and Christensen; Christensen and Laegreid 2007; Hood and Dunsire 1981: chapter 2). But central to making progress on this is agreement on the characterization and typologies of regulatory agencies themselves (Levi-Faur 2006; Scott 2004). Indeed, the statutory basis of regulation as a principal distinguishing feature has itself been questioned in recent literature. Increasingly, we find an interest developing in the emergence of the contracting state (Edgeworth 2003; Freeman 2000; Harden 1992; La Porta et al. 1999); and new classificatory challenges are also emerging to capture the changing role of the state in relation to such functions as the delivery of public services and taxation of citizens and businesses. But is it possible to go beyond a focus on particular modes of state action, or policy domains, or legal forms of action, and to make progress with the 'anatomy of state structures' overall? We believe it is.

2. Theoretical puzzles and practical problems

Our reflections on classification of public administration in general, and state agencies in particular, as a sub-set of the administrative apparatus, developed as part of our work on a project to construct a database of central state agencies showing their creation, change and death since the establishment of the State in 1922 (Mapping the Irish State, http://geary.ucd.ie/mapping). The project requires the development of classifications that enable time-series analysis of the variety of modes in which the state does its business and the institutional apparatus through which this is discharged, and that is capable of contributing to cross-national comparative work.

A common shortcoming of attempts to provide general criteria for identifying distinctions between government departments or ministries on the one hand, and state agencies on the other, is an over-specification of criteria drawn from nationally distinctive experiences. The approach proposed by Pollitt and his colleagues, to count as an 'agency' only those bodies that are defined by public law, functionally distinct from and independent of the ministry, and so on, is a demanding test (Pollitt et al. 2004). Too demanding for many commentators: it would exclude many of the so-called 'quangos' that proliferated in the English-speaking world from the 1970s on. An influential theoretical approach to classifying and explaining change in public administration is to think both hierarchically,

where the vertical dimension captures the degree of centralization or autonomy of particular bodies, and laterally, where the horizontal dimension represents the allocation of tasks at the same level of hierarchy (Roness 2007, p. 65). This intuition informs the work of Hood and Dunsire, also more recently Flinders, for the British state (Flinders 2008; Hood and Dunsire 1981). Flinders' 'Russian doll' metaphor for Whitehall, which has departments at the centre and finds ever more peripheral bodies beyond it, the further out from the centre we go, is valuable for indicating the distinction between core and periphery, and, indeed, for highlighting the increasing degree of autonomy and policy dispersion, the further agencies are located from the core (Flinders 2008). However, this relational grid does not provide any real purchase on changes either in the policy areas in which the state is involved, or in the mode of action through which it operates.

Another theoretical approach that seeks to capture the inner dynamic of state organizations is the schema proposed by Dunleavy, informed by his bureau-shaping theory of bureaucracy. The logic behind this is that civil servants who influence organizational change will be content to devolve more routinized functions outwards and downwards, resulting in more agency creation, the better to keep greater control over core budget functions (Dunleavy 1989a; b). The merit of this approach is that the findings are not preordained; the approach is capable of generating empirically testable hypotheses. A further merit of the classification system he comes up with is that it provides a template for ordering the changing shape and distribution of policy activity by different branches of the state. Hence his recourse to a functional classification system, with an eightfold set of distinctions apart from government ministries or departments, and identifying regulation, transfer, contracts, control, taxing, trading, and servicing (Dunleavy 1989a, pp. 254-5).

Notwithstanding these action-based distinctions, Dunleavy's functional classification, based as it is on budget-centred analysis, is not primarily designed to analyse changes in the mode of state activity. Bouckaert and Peters press the functional classification further, and come up with these items: implementation (distinguishing between direct service delivery and transfer of funds), regulation, advice and policy development, information,

research, Tribunal and public enquiries, and representation. We find this classification schema useful and stimulating, but we also think it is both overly specific (why Tribunals and public enquiries, when the role and significance of such bodies varies so greatly across countries?), and less than comprehensive (what about taxation?).

Many approaches to classification centre on identification by by what we refer to as policy domain (but for others is referred to as function, notably the UN Classification of Functions of Government, referred to later in this paper). However, we have found that coding of organizations by reference to only one or two parameters is inadequate. Classification by policy domain, most importantly, offers no way of distinguishing public from private agencies. This is especially evident in the domains of education, welfare, and commercial activity, which are frequently characterized by the presence of a mixture of state and non-state bodies. Without going as far as the Chinese dictionary in thinking of every classification which might have relevance to someone at some point, we propose a classification of state agencies that incorporates information about four dimensions of state organization:

1. functions
2. ownership
3. funding
4. accountability structures

Of these, the challenge of functional classification is certainly the most difficult; but the combination of features strengthens the classification. Setting the Irish schema against some of the other major national classification systems, it is possible to create a meta-ordering that is primarily based on functions. This we do in Section 3 below.

Our conception of central state agencies includes ministries or departments as special kinds of 'agencies'. It includes statutory bodies; but it also includes a range of non-statutory bodies. These bodies may take a range of legal and organizational forms and may include ordinary companies with a significant element of public ownership or funding (Christensen et al. 2007: 66-68). Thus our usage of the term agency refers to a more extensive range of bodies than recent analyses of executive agencies animated by

'new public management' concerns, that is, which confine their attention to independent bodies that have strong links to ministries (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004) . The use of a broad conception of agency, aimed at capturing a considerable variety of ways in which the state acts, necessitates an exercise in classification aimed at grouping and distinguishing agencies across a range of parameters.

Testing available typologies in the context of an exhaustive analysis of the functions of central state agencies in Ireland, in the light of our interest in the continuum between public and private as well as the variety of functions, we have found it necessary to modify and extend existing classifications. In two cases, for example, Dunleavy identifies fundamentally similar functions but distinguishes them from each other by reference to whether they relate to other parts of the public sector or to non-state actors. Thus 'control' agencies are involved in both funding and regulating other public sector bodies. We classify such bodies as transfer agencies where they are chiefly involved in funding, and regulatory bodies where they are chiefly involved in oversight (though clearly the two overlap a good deal). Similarly, 'servicing' agencies are those providing services to other parts of the public sector. Where such services are charged for (as is increasingly the case), we classify the agencies in question as trading bodies. Where they do not charge we classify them as delivery bodies. In this way we have stripped out the 'control' and 'servicing' categories from Dunleavy's analysis, in favour of categories that are simpler, action-based, and potentially easier to apply unambiguously in a comparative context.

A number of organizations in Ireland do not fit within Dunleavy's typology. Most obviously, Dunleavy's theoretical interest in bureau-shaping led him to distinguish ministries from agencies, and to deliberately exclude ministerial government departments. We think this is unduly restrictive, and may exclude study of important aspects of relationships between state bodies – especially the differentiation and reintegration of entities over time – which are part of the motivation of our schema. We have given this group their own category, which we term 'ministries (policy making and execution)'. Second, Dunleavy left out agencies charged with adjudication and grievance

handling, while Bouckaert and Peters specify them more narrowly with reference to Tribunals of inquiry. Whilst the most visible forms for such agencies are the Ombudsman offices of various kinds, this class may also include courts, tribunals and related adjudicatory offices. And one of the emergent themes of our analysis of the Irish state is the importance of new adjudicatory bodies set up to meet new designations of rights and grievances among citizens, which fall outside conventionally justiciable claims (Hardiman and Scott 2009).

A futher lacuna in Dunleavy's typology is the variety of agencies involved in gathering or representing information or views. There is a large number of bodies exercising forms of 'soft power' through advice, consultation, representation and advocacy which appear to lack a home in Dunleavy's typology. We use the simple term representation to refer to the functions of this group. Distinct from these are the bodies charged with investigation and with gathering information and broader research functions. The functions omitted in the Dunleavy classification are found in other more recent analyses, such as those of Bouckaert and Peters (2004) (Roness 2007, p.68). If anything their list has too much bias towards the soft power functions – with separate categories for advice and policy development; information; research; and representation. Their list recognizes tribunals and public inquiries as a category, but neglects contracting and taxing agencies.

The functional classification schema for the Irish state therefore distinguishes the following functions: ministries, information gathering, representation, adjudication, regulation, taxation, transfer, contracting, delivery, trading.

However, we find that a functional classification alone is not sufficient to enable us to distinguish between public agencies and other organizations. How then to capture the public or state dimension?

In Ireland a three-way classification is conventionally used for official purposes by reference to ownership, appointment and funding :

An Irish public sector organisation is defined as any employing body which: (a) directly derives the majority of its share capital from Irish public funds, or (b) has the majority of its Board/Executive members appointed by an Irish Minister, or (c) directly derives the majority of its revenue from Irish public sources (Clancy and Murphy 2006).

This definition, while superficially plausible, turns out on reflection to be deeply unsatisfactory. For example, the first criterion certainly captures ministries and agencies, boards, and state-owned enterprises. Yet it is clear that a number of European banks, previously considered the epitome of private sector enterprise, are now to receive a majority of their capital from public funds over the short to medium term, and will join the ranks of public agencies. The appointment criterion captures certain entities which are legally (private) companies limited by guarantee, but where their national importance has resulted in an ongoing governmental role in appointing directors. Various cultural organizations in Ireland, such as the National Concert Hall, would fall into this category. Such organizations might or might not also be captured by the third indicator – that a majority of their funding comes from public sources. The Universities would meet this criterion; so too, arguably, would the large number of non-governmental providers of educational and health care facilities and services which are substantially state-funded within the Irish system of 'voluntary' provision (Cousins 2005). To accept these organizations, owned and managed by a complex range of charities, religious denominations, and other NGOs, as unambiguously part of the state, would entail a seriously misleading representation of the policy capabilities of the Irish state, in our view. While the religious and charitable sector of service provision is perhaps unusually large in Ireland, it is a familiar feature of many other European states too, particularly where the Catholic Church has historically had a strong presence. In building our database of Irish state institutions, we have therefore chosen to use only the criterion of 'ownership' or legal status, rather than those of appointment or funding. And indeed, the right to appoint is typically linked to provision of funds. Following the money trail turns out to be far too inclusive as a sole criterion, independent of legal form or function.

In addition to the functional classification, noted above, and the legal distinctions just noted, we also include a classification of state agencies in our database by reference to

policy domain, drawing on the United Nations' Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG). What the UN calls functions we refer to as policy domains. COFOG is not concerned with functions in the sense of scope of state activity or mode of state action. It is specifically intended to make it possible to trace budgetary change independent of structural change – it is designed to flatten out changes in state structures. We find it useful to be able to sort state agencies by reference to policy domains to answer such questions as how many agencies are involved in regulating or transfer in the health or education sectors. However the COFOG classification says nothing about how agencies conduct their business. As this is our principal interest, we have found it necessary to develop our own functional categorization.

The classification system elaborated thus far leaves out a small number of organizations that appear to be no less public in their functions than schools and hospitals, but which do not receive public funding, nor do they fall within the other official criteria. The vast majority of public agencies in Ireland have statutory powers, but a limited number, public on other criteria such as ownership and/or funding, are able to operate without special statutory powers. The Law Society of Ireland, which exercises delegated statutory power, is clearly exercising public powers and, on this analysis, might be classified as a state agency. The feature that distinguishes the Law Society from other (private) professional bodies is that it has delegated statutory authority to authorize and discipline solicitors. The possession of authority generally is not a monopoly of the state. But the capacity to delegate through legislation is something unique to the state and the statutory delegation of power appears to us to bestow a public character to the delegate, which is not captured in other mechanisms of classification.

Whilst explicit delegations of statutory authority are clear and documented, a more difficult case is that of what we may refer to as implicit delegation. By its nature an implicit delegation is not capable of precise definition. It comprises a governmental act in which an actor is encouraged or permitted to engage in some action through representations of various kinds as to what may or may not happen if the actor does not take on the projected activities. A recent example in Ireland concerns the establishment of the Press Council of Ireland and Press Ombudsman by the media industry in the face of
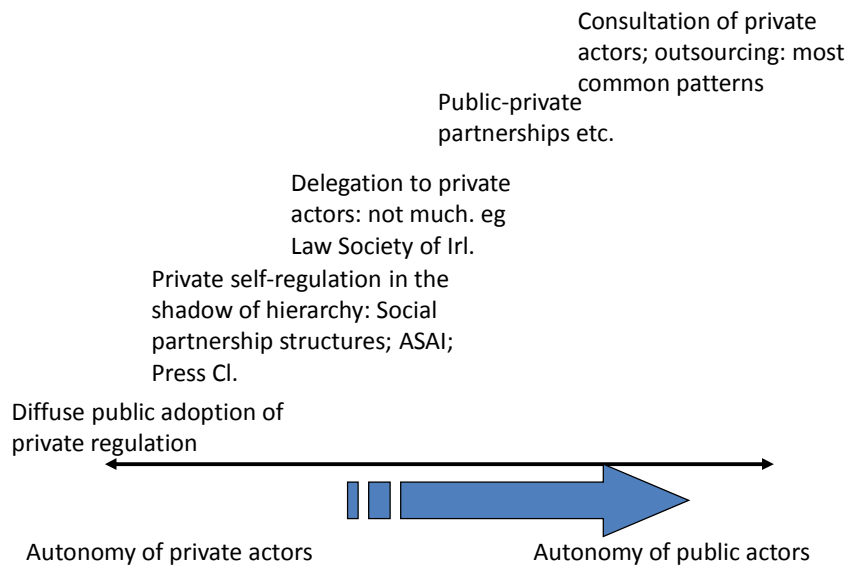
indications from government that recommendations to establish a statutory press complaints body would be accepted were no effective self-regulatory regime to emerge.

Both statutory and implicit delegation may occur *post hoc*, as where legislation adopts a standard put forward by a non-state body such as the International Standards Organisation, or where government gives implicit approval to a self-regulatory regime such as that of the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland. The 'publicness' of regimes of implicit delegation may be demonstrated by the observation that the UK counterpart to the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland has routinely been subjected to judicial review on the basis that a statutory agency would have to be established to undertake its functions should it not exist (Black 1996). It is unclear whether an Irish court would follow this logic.

Discussion of judicial review is suggestive of a further basis for distinguishing public agencies based on the mechanisms through which they are held to account. It is not that non-public bodies have no accountability mechanisms, but rather that they are different. The core accountability mechanisms that are distinctive to public bodies are the requirements to make account to parliament, the potential subjection to judicial review, public sector audit, application of freedom of information rules and the potential for complaint to the public sector ombudsman. Intriguingly, not all Irish central state agencies are currently subject to all these accountability mechanisms and, in any case, only public sector audit is systematic in the manner in which it is applied. Gaps in the provision of accountability mechanisms for particular organizations appear to be more matters of political expediency than an index of whether particular organizations are more or less public. We are taking the opportunity to classify each of our agencies by reference to the extent of its accountability obligations. But the purpose of doing so has more to do with our related interest in parliamentary oversight, the accountability and legitimacy of the exercise of public power, and the relations between state and citizens, than it has with classification of state agencies as such.

In sum, classifying state agencies is relatively straightforward where these have a statutory base. But there are other less obvious instances where we find no clear and unambiguous distinction between public and private, and where a real difficulty may arise in drawing boundaries between what counts as 'stateness' and what falls outside the definition of the state, to be definitively situated as a market phenomenon or as part of civil society. Rather, we recognize that the extent of 'publicness' of agencies and of the exercise of public authority through organizations, has to be understood as constituting a spectrum . How long the spectrum is, and how problematic the boundary line, is likely to be different across countries. An analysis of the Irish experience suggests that a spectrum is outlined in Figure 1. Drawn from the work of Tanja Börzel, this approach to conceptualization may be more helpful than a rigid dichotomization (Boerzel 2007). At one end of the scale, we note that statutory instruments may well adopt private standards without modification. For example, the Irish Statute Book often incorporates ISO standards into mandatory requirements, eg the Product Safety Regulations (SI199/2004), regs 5(2), (3).

Figure 1. Public and private in the boundaries of state activity: Ireland

Consultation of private
actors; outsourcing: most
common patterns

Public-private
partnerships etc.

Delegation to private
actors: not much. eg
Law Society of Irl.

Private self-regulation in the
shadow of hierarchy: Social
partnership structures; ASAI;
Press Cl.

Diffuse public adoption of
private regulation

Autonomy of private actors   Autonomy of public actors

3. Toward a meta-classification schema

Our list of agency functions is generated from our analysis of the Irish state. Is it therefore merely one more scheme to put alongside all the others considered by Roness in his analysis of four countries' very different classification systems (Roness 2007)? Roness notes not only that the most persuasive national classification systems devised for Britain, Sweden, New Zealand, and Australia, originated in rather different theoretical preoccupations with budgets, efficiency, and accountability, but also that the different legal traditions underpinning them give rise to very different ways of organizing authority relationships.

The Irish schema provides what we think is a comprehensive classification for one country. We also believe our work may contribute to building a more generally useful classificatory system. Firstly, we have drawn on underlying principles to sort state functions that we think can be applied to other public administration systems. Secondly, we argue that functional classification needs to be complemented by classification according to dimensions of public and private in ownership and decision-making. We therefore believe it is possible to design a meta-level of comparative classification to

which a range of national classification systems might be assimilable. We envisage a re-classification of existing national schemata along the principles we have followed for Ireland, to provide the basis for making the classification systems themselves more genuinely comparable. By considering the underlying principles used to sort and classify state agencies, we can make progress toward providing a schema that may create greater potential for comparison than existing schemata. We suggest that this might be done by further aggregating the functions of agencies with reference to Christopher Hood's analysis of the 'tools of government'.

In his 1984 study Christopher Hood proposed an analysis of the *Tools of Government* which suggested that the government toolbox contains for basic types of tool based in Nodality, Authority, Treasure and Organisation, or NATO (Hood 1984; Hood and Margetts 2007).

- Nodality refers to the location of government at the centre of key networks and the potential for learning through gathering information and for shaping behaviour by handing out information.

- Authority concerns government in deploying the distinctive capacity of the state for requiring citizens, associations and firms to do things, backed by the possibility of legal sanctions.

- Treasure engages the wealth of the state, largely collected from tax revenue, in pursuing its objectives.

- Organisation involves the use by government of its directly controlled resources – staff, buildings, equipment, etc, in fulfilling public tasks.

Each of these tool types can be deployed both for the gathering of information, or 'detecting', and for shaping behaviour, or 'effecting' (Hood and Margetts 2007: 5-7).

Most government agencies are liable to use most of these tools periodically – they comprise the basic ways in which to get things done. Nevertheless, the tools of government provide a framework within which the functions identified for agencies can

be organised in families. Thus advisory functions operate chiefly through the positioning of the agency at the centre of key networks. Regulation operates mainly through the deployment of authority. Transfer agencies operate principally through the deployment of money (and conditions associated with its grant) and delivery agencies work largely through the deployment of their own organisational resources.

The NATO schema claims to be exhaustive in the sense that all the ways that government can do things are captured by reference to one or more of nodality, authority, organisation and treasure. Typically agencies are likely to use more than one and frequently each of the tools for various aspects of their work. For our purposes we think it possible and necessary to identify a primary agency function. Some examples drawn from the contemporary Irish central state are shown in Figure 1 below.

Table 1. NATO Tools and Functions of State Agencies

Tool	Functions	Examples of Agencies in Ireland with Primary Function
Nodality	Information Gathering	Central Statistical Office Law Reform Commission
	Representation	Combat Poverty Agency
	Ministries	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Authority	Adjudication	Ombudsman
	Regulation	The Communications Regulator (COMREG)
	Taxation	Revenue Commissioners
Treasure	Transfer	Higher Education Authority
	Contracting	Railway Procurement Agency

Organisation	Delivery	Health Service Executive
	Trading	CIE

Two of the central claims made by Hood, and by Hood and Margetts, for the NATO approach are that it offers a comprehensive analysis of the tools available to government and that such tools are distinctive for only being available to the state. Our analysis of agency functions in Ireland supports the first claim. The second proposition is more contestable. Classically the state is said to possess a monopoly over the legitimate use of force (Weber 1978), and that proposition is often deployed uncritically to support the idea that government has a monopoly over the use of tools based in authority. However, in practice governments delegate the power to use legal authority, or support the assumption of such power through structures for the enforcement of contractual authority. In Ireland, the former phenomenon is exemplified by the statutory delegation of authority to regulate the solicitors' profession to the Law Society of Ireland, a form of professional self-regulation familiar in many jurisdictions, as noted above. Contractual authority provides the binding element over members of self-regulatory or associational regimes of regulation. This is the kind of authority associated with trade associations and indeed with private firms' use of contracts to require compliance with and third party certification of standards. Thus, even in the case of the most state-like of the tools of government, the space is shared with self-regulatory bodies, firms and others with delegated statutory or assumed contractual authority.

In the case of the other tools it is more obvious that there is no state monopoly. Thus any person or organization with money can use their money to steer behaviour, illicitly, as with corrupt payments to government officials, or lawfully, as with donations to political campaign funds or the use of purchasing power to achieve particular social or political objectives (for example the promotion of higher payments to coffee growers within fair trade regimes). Though states have substantial organizational capacity so do firms and non-governmental organizations.

This shared capacity between state and non-state actors is found also with nodality. Participation in networks and the gathering and handing out of information are the main tools used to further interests of clients within the lobbying and PR industries, and many organizations use such tools to steer behaviour of governmental and other actors. Thus the NATO analysis offers a comprehensive analysis of how to get things done, but not of the distinctive properties of state organizations.

The question of what is or not a state agency is important to building a comparative classification system for state agencies, as we need robust criteria for determining who is in and who is out. We therefore need other systems for classifying what is or is not a state body, alongside analysis of functions and a concern with policy domains. We believe the NATO characterization of 'tools of government' can help provide a meta-classification schema that will have real comparative analytical purchase. But in addition to the classification of functions, we need to add in the dimensions of public-private ownership, and the public-private continuum in the exercise of power, whether statutory, delegated, or implicit.

Conclusion

Over the last two decades, varying theoretical preoccupations to do with the changing role of the state, and the organizational consequences of giving this effect, have resulted in a variety of classification schemata. But most of these are inductively based, created out of nation-specific concerns. For those committed to a conception of the social sciences as theoretically grounded and inherently comparative in orientation, the result may seem dispiritingly limited, inductive, and descriptive. However, we take a more optimistic view, for two reasons. Firstly, the state of comparative research in state structures may resemble that of an earlier phase of research into other aspects of political life. Developments in the comparative study of political parties, or social movements, or constitutions, or legislatures, were often made possible by the accumulation of specific expertise across many different national settings. Secondly, we propose that despite the difficulties of doing justice to such fundamentally different typologies of public

administration as those belonging to the common law and administrative law traditions respectively, it may be possible to create a useful analytical schema at a higher level of aggregation, that nevertheless makes it possible to capture the real texture of nationally specific experiences.

In this paper we have offered classification that we believe may be useful for constructing a database to facilitate both longitudinal, cross-sectoral and, we hope, cross-country comparison of the organisation of the central state for the pursuit of its tasks. We have argued that whilst the analysis of agency functions risks too great a specificity, Hood's NATO analysis offers a level of aggregation onto which may be mapped a variety of more detailed functional distinctions. We have also proposed a re-evaluation of the way state agencies are classified in national contexts, in two ways. Firstly, we have proposed a new classification of state functions that is simpler, more comprehensive, and more generalizable than any others to date. Secondly, we have argues that no single dimension of classification will capture the real variation in state activity. Functional analysis takes us only so far; it needs to be complemented by a classification that adequately distinguishes between state and non-state structures and activities, and that makes it possible to capture the spectrum between public and private modes of action. Further classificatory distinctions based on legal form and ownership illuminate important dimensions of the central state form and capacity.

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