

CONTINGENT REPRESENTATIVITY:  
RIVAL VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACY AND THE CHALLENGES  
FOR NATIONBUILDING

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BUREAUCRACY AND THE CHALLENGES FOR NATIONBUILDING

**Abstract**

In this paper, we argue that representative bureaucracy is a changing concept, and that in the academic and policy debate on representative bureaucracy in fact three different debates are intermingled. While the debate on representative bureaucracy in Public Administration is generally situated within wider debates about tensions between bureaucracy and democracy, this is only part of the story. We argue that discussions and scholarship on representative bureaucracy in fact employ three different concepts of representative bureaucracy. The reasons for making the bureaucracy representative in these three rival concepts are quite divergent, and even the conception of what representativity means is totally different. These rival concepts reflect a particular view on the role of the state and the relation between states and citizens.

Keywords: *representative bureaucracy, equal opportunity, diversity, nation building*

**Introduction**

Representative bureaucracy is often denoted by a series of virtues; virtues that facilitate the building of a state and a nation. Representativity would bring legitimacy, implementation capacity, effectiveness, et cetera. Despite representative bureaucracy being one of the first fields in public administration to achieve integration and solid empirical grounding, many studies continue to focus on single (national) cases, and the Anglo-Saxon dominance is often quite strong. These approaches, models and concepts do not always translate easily to other national settings, especially when these settings are quite different from a Western or even US-American environment. Lim for instance showed the dangers of transferring the concept of active representation to developing countries, by highlighting its potential for clientelism and abuse of power (Lim 2006).

Our key argument in this paper is that representative bureaucracy is a changing concept, and that in the academic and policy debate on representative bureaucracy in fact three different debates are intermingled. While the debate on representative bureaucracy in Public Administration is generally situated within wider debates about tensions between bureaucracy and democracy, this is only part of the story. We argue that discussions and scholarship on representative bureaucracy in fact employ three different concepts of representative bureaucracy. The reasons for making the bureaucracy representative in these three rival concepts are quite divergent, and even the conception of what representativity means is totally different. These rival concepts reflect a particular view on the role of the state and the relation between states and citizens.

In this paper we analyse, using historical examples and recent developments in the literature, the three different approaches to 'representative bureaucracy' and the specific characteristics of these approaches to develop a contingent approach to representativity. The first is the political literature which highlights a certain conception of representativity of the civil service towards the ruling class, because it helps states to establish control and guarantee harmony and stability (Kingsley 1944; Tilly 1975). The second is the public administration literature, with its strong emphasis on reconciling bureaucracy with democracy and on equal opportunities, and its distinction between active and passive representation (Mosher 1968; Coleman Selden, Brudney et al. 1998; Dolan and Rosenbloom 2003). The growing body of diversity management literature that is applied to the administrative context is the third and most recent strand in literature. It focuses on the benefits of diversity for the performance of public sector organisations (Pitts, 2005; Wise & Tschirhart, 2000).

Governments' talk and action about representative bureaucracy can be situated within these three rival views. The approach we take in this paper is a contingency approach. By this we mean that changes in the use of the concept of 'representative bureaucracy' can be understood by looking at the environment within which the public administration operates. Note that this is a different use of 'contingency' as the one used in diversity and representative bureaucracy research looking at the effect of factors such as discretion, autonomy, or job structuration on active representation (see e.g. Meier and Bohte 2001). Through using a contingency approach we show how representative bureaucracy has been used as a political and administrative answer to quite different social, political and administrative problems and challenges. Not all types of representative bureaucracy suit all social, political and administrative settings. Through analysing these environments, we hope this paper contributes to nation builders' quest for a fitting type of representative bureaucracy in the contexts they are working in. National conditions make certain approaches more appropriate than others. In emerging nations, failed states, or states coping with political tensions, a power approach may be preferable. A diversity approach is then more appropriate in a national context where public services operate in a business-like way, and where the delivery of services is relatively a-political. Such a concept of contingent representativity should help nation builders to avoid implementing unsuitable representativeness policies.

In this paper, we first outline three approaches to representative bureaucracy and explain their emergence through elaborate referencing to social and political conditions, and to changing approaches in academic research. We then distil key characteristics and differences between these approaches. We end the paper by discussing some lessons learned for nation building and by discussing emerging trends.

### **Representative bureaucracy as power**

#### *Kingsley's representative bureaucracy and political harmony*

The phrase 'representative bureaucracy' is generally believed to have been coined by Donald Kingsley. His classic 1944 book '*Representative bureaucracy: An interpretation of the British civil service*' (Kingsley 1944) is remembered more for its title though than for its exact content. Rather than outlining topics we now generally associate with representative bureaucracy, Kingsley's main argument is one for political harmony (Subramaniam 1967: 1013). In his view, an administration that does not represent the dominant forces in society is bound to be ineffective. It follows that the bureaucracy has to be representative of the ruling class, and not so much of society at large.

This does not mean that the bureaucracy is a conservative, stable and unchanging body. Instead, it has to adapt itself constantly to changing circumstances. Social and political change requires changes in the recruitment into the administration. Without such adaptation, the administration is bound to become irrelevant in the political power-play because it will be overtaken by rival arrangements. By making the civil service representative of the new and emerging ruling classes, it could contribute to a harmonious society, and enjoy legitimacy among those who count. In Kingsley's view this required an end of the dominance of the old families and aristocracy and a shift of power to a newly emerged ruling class and to an ever strengthening middle class. This shift was required because the public administration had ceased to be representative of a political system that had changed. The rise of the middle class and the decline of the aristocracy took considerable time to be reflected in the composition of the top layers in public administration, and this slowly began to jeopardise its legitimacy.

The public administration is thus not so much only seen as a body for the efficient provision of public services, but also as an instrument to create political stability and harmony. Only when the administration is representative of the dominant classes can it be effective. Otherwise it will be ignored, and the power of the ruler weakened. Making an administration representative is thus a political strategy to establish, protect or share power.

#### *Representative bureaucracy and establishing control*

Kingsley's view is just one expression of behaviour and actions we can observe throughout the early days of modern public administration. It reflects a wider trend that had been going on in Europe for several decades and even centuries. It reflects the gradual evolution from a patriarchal power system to a merit-based one.

This 'representativeness as power' approach reflects an unstable and changing political system within which a central power attempts to establish its power. Having a loyal administration becomes a key concern. Such an administration can support the power structure and assist the established power against challengers. Creating stability and control are key issues. Creating such stability requires the neutralisation of internal challenges to power, and the creation of popular and regional attachment to the new state (Tilly 1992; Van de Walle and Scott 2009). We find these two processes in the reform of public administration and the recruitment into the administration.

Establishing power and neutralising challengers

Creating stability and control through neutralising dissent and resistance using the state's administrative system can be done in two different ways. One is to incorporate existing alternative power structures into the administration. The other is to disenfranchise powerful groups by closing off their access to the administration.

A first way to secure power is to align the interests of the central power and those of alternative power structures (Migdal 2001). By making the central administration representative of the interests of rivals its legitimacy and stability is increased. This can be done by reserving key positions in this administration for supporters, followers, and family members of these rival powers. In this way, public employment is used as an instrument to reward loyalty; as an instrument to create material dependence on the new state; but also as a way to keep challengers in close view. In the 'representativity as power' approach, representativeness does not extend to the general population, but only to powerful segments in this population. Non-powerful segments of the population are not regarded as potential challengers, and therefore do not have to be neutralised. It is important to note though that changing political circumstances make this a strategy that requires constant attention. In more recent approaches to representative bureaucracy we still see this strategy at work when the political-administrative system responds to underrepresented groups that become more vocal and organised.

Another strategy used to counter resistance has been to exclude and neutralise challengers. The increasing popularity of merit-based public recruitment came in very handy to this end. Merit-based recruitment changed the criteria for entrance to powerful positions. This in some way allowed for the exclusion of traditionally represented groups, such as the aristocracy (Jacoby 1973). The gradual replacement of the aristocracy by middle class bureaucrats should thus not only be seen as evidence of an evolution towards a merit-based administration, but also as evidence of a deliberate attempt to open up the administration to new groups in society. This is also reflected in Kingsley's analysis of changes in the British civil service and the first breaches in the old aristocracy-dominated system. These changes did not start as a result of middle class pressures or popular demand, but much earlier following conflicts between King and aristocracy (Kingsley 1944: 43), and an attempt by the King to reduce the power of this group. Weber himself gave the example of recruitment of officials from the propertyless strata as a means for rulers to increase their power, because they, contrary to the propertied strata, cannot permit themselves to lose their offices (Gerth and Wright Mills 1974: 235).

This opening up of traditional bureaucratic systems had two important consequences. One was the strengthening of the state vis-à-vis competing centres of power (traditional aristocracy); the other was the incorporation of rising groups in society (middle class) into the administration, partly as an attempt to professionalise the administration, partly as an attempt to secure their support for the state.

Rather than being a positive argument for making the administration more efficient, or for making it more democratic through including more members from the bourgeoisie, meritocracy came as a useful tool to break the dominance of traditional aristocracy in the administration. This 'Weberian' meritocratic turn in Western public administrations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on however also changed the debate on representative bureaucracy, because it gradually replaced power by efficiency and neutral competence as the principal *raison d'être* of a bureaucracy.

#### Representative bureaucracy and the creation of a sense of belonging

A second main challenge in the process of building new states was to create a degree of mental adherence to the state and to demonstrate national unity. Emerging states were still fragmented, with many peripheral regions, and consisted of regions that used to have their own political identity (Tilly 1975; Tilly 1992). Territorial dividing lines tended to coincide with political dividing lines. Popular identification thus had to be shifted from these units to the new central state. One way to change and strengthen this identification was to fully include elites and population of these regions into the new administrative system, thereby avoiding creating any impressions of submission or second rate citizenship.

Early expressions of representative bureaucracy reflect a need to establish central power, and to counter regionalist tendencies. Creating central power and creating harmony within the (often new) national territories were crucial considerations. The key issue in the 'representativity as power' discussion is the concern to create political stability, harmony and control. Public administration is one of the instruments to create such stability. Public administrations that do not in some way reflect existing power structures are bound to be ineffective. Public bureaucracies are not just service organisations, but powerful control instruments (Hummel 1977; Krislov and Rosenbloom 1981).

The fragility of the new political structures required a careful approach to filling administrative positions. Characteristic of this approach is that the bureaucracy was not seen as something detached from the political system. Political considerations guided the composition of the administration, because disregarding the political dimension would have severe consequences for the effectiveness of the administration.

Many of the early references to representative bureaucracy for this reason referred to a territorial dimension: A bureaucracy entirely composed of inhabitants of a single region of the country (e.g. that around the capital city) was seen as undesirable. Two early documents establishing modern administrations clearly reflect this desire to be territorially representative. The Pendleton Act in the US for instance provided for a representation of all States and territories in the central bureaucracy:

‘Third, appointments to the public service aforesaid in the departments at Washington shall be apportioned among the several States and Territories and the District of Columbia upon the basis of population as ascertained at the last preceding census. Every application for an examination shall contain, among other things, a statement, under oath, setting forth his or her actual bona fide residence at the time of making the application, as well as how long he or she has been a resident of such place’ (Pendleton Act, Sec. 2, USA, 1883)

Likewise, the Northcote-Trevelyan report on the organisation of the permanent civil service in the UK expressed concerns about the risk of having a bureaucracy whose entrance mechanism privileged inhabitants of certain areas over those of other areas. It felt such could have effects on the bureaucracy’s legitimacy:

‘In dealing with the lower class of appointments, it will be necessary to make provision against the difficulty that if the examinations were all held at one place, a large proportion of those who might reasonably become candidates would be deterred from presenting themselves by the expense of the journey. If the scheme of examinations were more favourable to one locality than another, there can be no doubt that it would soon be set aside as unjust. We propose, therefore, that an arrangement should be made for holding examinations in various parts of the United Kingdom.’ (Northcote-Trevelyan report, 1853, p. 15)

### *Representativeness as power in the wider academic literature*

While not popular or prominent nowadays in current literature on representative bureaucracy, we do see aspects of the ‘representativity as power’ approach in current thinking about

representative bureaucracy and related debates, and in the current organisation of public sectors (Meier and O'Toole 2006).

#### Spoils vs. representative bureaucracy

While not generally seen as part of the literature on representative bureaucracy, much of the literature on political-administrative relations actually also deals with issues of representative bureaucracy. When the political party in power changes it needs a sympathetic administration to work with – the administration has to be representative towards the political system and the party in power. This is crucial to make government effective. In his book, Kingsley argues for representative bureaucracy to make government effective. A new ruling party is likely to be overwhelmed by the administration if this administration is not representative and filled with officials with opposing political views. Bureaucratic representativeness is necessary because the ruling party needs to be able to work with sympathetic administrators. Especially after major political changes, this can be difficult. For this reason, Kingsley (1944) argued for a representative bureaucracy with many colours and creeds, because this guaranteed long-term stability and government effectiveness.

It is important to mention that these debates about representative bureaucracy are not framed as a discussion about spoils. Instead, the change in political power is first and foremost seen as a reflection of a change in society. The logic behind this argument is that the electoral process signals a change in society, and that a public administration that reflects the previous governing arrangement therefore no longer reflects the power and opinions in society. By including a variety of political opinions in the corps of administrators the risk of a major disconnection between the values and opinions of public officials and those of the population and their elected politicians is minimised.

Lustration processes can be seen in a similar way (Ellis 1996; David 2006). They reflect a desire to make the administration representative of changed norms in society, in this case after a major political change or upheaval with the intention of making the administration effective, or to bring it in line with the new accepted norms of the society within which it operates.

#### Administrative power-sharing and representative bureaucracy

We also see similarities between the 'representativeness as power' approach and the political science literature on power-sharing and accommodation. This set of literature, using concepts such as power-sharing, accommodation, or consociationalism, looks at public administration as an instrument to create stability in divided societies (Mcrae 1974; Lijphart 1977; Rokkan, Urwin et al. 1987; Esman 1999). Through using quota, proportionality, and reserved key positions, attempts are made to make public administration more representative of political

and cultural minorities and to counter dominance of the administration by a single group. The purpose of such arrangements is not so much to make the administration proportional to the population or the political constellation, but to come to a negotiated representation of groups in the administration and to create stability through doing this. These administrative arrangements are representative of society because they are ‘collections of standard operating procedures and structures that define and defend values, norms, interests, identities, and beliefs.’ (March and Olsen 1989: 17).

### *Implications*

As this review shows, the representativity as power approach is quite different from what is now generally seen as ‘representative bureaucracy’. Kingsley’s view that a representative bureaucracy is one that is representative to dominant forces in society clearly conflicts with what we would now consider to be representative. The result is that, paraphrasing Meier and Nigro, Kingsley’s representative bureaucracy (reflecting the dominant social class) would now generally be seen as highly unrepresentative (Meier and Nigro 1976: 459). A second implication of this view is that making a bureaucracy representative is not always a gradual process. Fast-moving changes in the political power structure may have immediate implications for the composition of the public administration. Whereas gradual change is at the core of newer models of representative bureaucracy, the ‘representativeness as power’ approach also allows us to explain abrupt short term changes in the composition of public administrations, especially at the top level.

### **Representative bureaucracy as equal opportunity**

Kingsley’s book also contains many arguments now generally associated with ‘traditional’ approaches to representative bureaucracy. Apart from his argument that an effective administration has to be representative of dominant classes in society, he also called for a stronger representation of the middle and working classes in the administration (Subramaniam 1967), because these groups had grown to become more powerful in society. It also followed a widespread observation that the administration did not function efficiently because it was captured by certain groups, esp. the traditional upper classes.

A second stream of thinking about representative bureaucracy followed discontent in European public administration about the continuing domination of upper-level administrative positions by a small ruling class, often educated in a small number of elite schools, and in American public administration about the serious underrepresentation or virtual absence of minority ethnic groups in (parts of) the bureaucracy (Subramaniam 1967). In the 1970s, debates on representative bureaucracy suddenly became heated and omnipresent (Krislov

1974). Different from but building on Kingsley's notion, representative bureaucracy now became a central concern for policymakers and public administration scholars: bureaucracies need to be representative of the population for them to have legitimacy and public credibility (Krislov 1974).

This second conception of representative bureaucracy extends the definition of representativity. Bureaucracies now had to be 'representative of the population', rather than just of a (dominant) section of this population. They had to provide equal opportunities. The implication of this shift in thinking is that the bureaucracy is no longer considered as a body that is situated below the legislative power, but as a parallel body – and even as a democratic and political body in its own right. Hence the representativeness requirements applying to parliaments were now extended to the public administration (see also the extract from the Pendleton act in the previous section for a similar reasoning). Just as parliaments represented the population, bureaucracies now have to represent the population. Bureaucracies are first and foremost accountable to the citizens and only in second place to the legislature.

#### *The discovery of administrative discretion*

This shift in thinking follows two wider developments, one in the public administration discipline, the other in politics and society. In public administration theory the decades after WWII period saw two major changes. One was a growing recognition that politics and administration couldn't really be separated, and that perhaps they shouldn't. Appleby saw in political interference a check on arbitrary bureaucratic power (Appleby 1945), and Waldo ended strict dichotomy thinking through his famous assertion that 'all administration is politics' (Waldo 1948). The other change was a logical consequence of the increasing importance of the behaviouralist method in public administration which made scholars look inside bureaucracies. Inside these bureaucracies they found that bureaucrats were not neutral and distant Weberians, but that they made policy. Policy bureaucrats were found to have political opinions and ambitions (Meier and Nigro 1976), and street-level bureaucrats made policy through more or less consequent decisions and choices at the interface between public administration and citizens (Katz and Eisenstadt 1960; Blau 1963; Katz and Danet 1973; Lipsky 1980).

From these two observations followed the quite logical conclusion that it did matter a lot who was filling administrative positions (Meier and Bohte 2001). Continuing to pretend that bureaucrats were neutral and merely implementing policy has become an untenable position. This shift in thinking about bureaucracies paralleled changes in political science at that time. Research into political systems in fragmented societies revealed a wealth of political power-

sharing and consociationalist arrangements (Krislov 1974; Mcrae 1974; Lijphart 1977), moving the discipline away from its narrow conception of political representation as something that was the direct and inevitable result of elections only.

*Social turbulence and New Public Administration*

Around the same time in the late 1960s and the 1970s social and political changes (in the US) challenged traditional patterns of public administration. Rising social contestation following the Vietnam War disaster, inner city riots following defective race relations, and the spectre of social fragmentation and poverty transformed the outlook on the role of the bureaucracy and the individual civil servant. Citizens wanted more influence, and the 1970s saw an increase in bottom-up participation, neighbourhood councils etc.

The emergence of the New Public Administration movement meant a strong and vocal (but also relatively short) break with the past (Marini 1971; Waldo 1971; Frederickson 1980). Civil servants had to become policy entrepreneurs and actively work for the poor and the disadvantaged in society through exercising their discretion. Inside public organisations organisational participation and behaviour became the new catchphrases, thereby sowing the seeds of the later diversity movement (cf. infra).

*Equal opportunities and affirmative action (EO/AA)*

One of the main ways proposed by the NPA movement to make the administration more responsive to popular wishes and concerns was to make it more representative. Exemplary of this shift is Samuel Krislov's 1967 book 'The Negro in Federal employment: The quest for equal opportunity', which helped set the agenda for the civil rights movement. The book not only compiled facts about the underrepresentation of an entire group in the administration but also made a wider social justice argument for equal opportunities. This required abandoning the idea of the faceless and anonymous bureaucrat and the idea of a strict separation between policy and implementation. Traditional models putting the legislative power at the top of a democratic hierarchy, delegating implementation to the administration were discarded for their insufficiently democratic content. In his 'Democracy and the public service' Frederick Mosher considered the public service to be 'thrice removed from democracy' (Mosher 1968), because of the distance between citizen and bureaucrat and the absence of participatory democracy in public administration. Because bureaucracies are filled with appointed officials, all highly specialised, elected politicians have very little impact on these officials. With such a distance between the citizens, who elect politicians, and career officials, assuring that these

officers act in the interest of the people becomes an important challenge. A similar concern is expressed in a book not generally considered as part of the representative bureaucracy canon, despite its title. William Niskanen's 'Bureaucracy and representative government' (Niskanen 1971) develops an argument for controlling self-interested bureaucrats. While not proposing the same solutions as the more traditional representative bureaucracy scholars, Niskanen's argument is based on similar concerns about the power of bureaucracies, and the need to control them.

The renewed attention for representative bureaucracy did not only come from a concern to see the interests of (disadvantaged) groups better represented, and to make the public sector more responsive. It also reflects a concern about equal opportunities in the administration. Access to public sector jobs was seen as a basic democratic right, and as a tool for social promotion. To promote equal opportunities, efforts had to be made to increase the proportion of underrepresented groups in the administration. Equal opportunities policies and affirmative action (EO/AA) became tools to address this democratic deficit. Attention in the 'representativity as equal opportunity' approach shifted to ethnicity and gender as key criteria to determine whether or not a bureaucracy was representative, downplaying the political and territorial characteristics that were at the core of the 'representativity as power' approach.

#### *Passive and active representation*

In this new way of thinking about representative bureaucracy, Mosher's concept of active representation became very popular (Mosher 1968). Active representation goes beyond a mere passive or sociological representation. It calls upon officials from disadvantaged groups to actively use their position to promote the interests of the group they emanate from. Soon, however, it also became apparent that such active representation was only possible in jobs that allowed for the exercise of discretion (Meier and Bohte 2001), and that not all minority officials used the opportunity to actively represent the segment of the population they came from. Furthermore, researchers started to look at the potential trade-off between loyalty to one's organisation and colleagues and active representation (Romzek and Hendricks 1982; Wilkins and Williams 2009).

The emergence of the doctrine of representative bureaucracy as an essentially democratic concern thus follows new insights into how bureaucracies really work, social contestation, and growing worries about the power of bureaucracies. The emergence of New Public Administration was the ultimate reaction against the dysfunctions and excesses of the Weberian model, especially the illusion of a separation of implementation from policy and the

risk off 'Beamtenherrschaft'. It resulted in the overthrow of most of the key Weberian characteristics in order to safeguard the public interest in a totally different way.

### **Representative bureaucracy as Diversity management**

The equal opportunities approach to representative bureaucracy described above emphasizes that for democratic reasons government bureaucracies should represent groups in the same proportion as their share in the population. In other words, government bureaucracies should reflect the *diversity* of the general population, albeit the term diversity was seldom used by representative bureaucracy scholars. In the 90s however diversity becomes a key concept in discussions about representative bureaucracy. The focus now shifts from providing equal opportunities and representing disadvantaged groups to managing diversity in organisations.

The diversity management approach to representative bureaucracy continues in the tradition of earlier approaches, but adds a strong focus on performance. Diversity management initiatives and academic diversity management research and literature emphasize a *business case for diversity* through focusing on the benefits of diversity for the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector organisations (Meier, Wrinkle et al. 1999; Wise and Tschirhart 2000; Pitts 2005). The earlier political, moral and democratic considerations for making bureaucracies representative made way for an economic logic for diversity. Originating in the US in a private sector context, this managing diversity approach was gradually adopted by Anglo-Saxon and Western European scholars focusing on public sector organisations.

As was the case with the previous two approaches to representative bureaucracy, this one also had its roots in changes in society, such as the emergence of the New Public Management, and an increasing diversification of countries' workforces. Because of the changing composition of the public sector workforce, effectively managing diverse workplaces became a key concern (Coleman Selden and Selden 2001).

#### *The rise of New Public Management*

The shift in focus towards managing diversity can be understood against the background of developments in the administrative and socio-demographic context of Western countries in recent decades. New Public Management-style reforms in the US, Anglo-saxon countries and Europe aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public sector organisations. NPM relied heavily on the importation of private sector management techniques into the public sector. Through making public organisations more business-like, it was thought, their performance would be improved.

One effect of NPM–style reforms was the abandonment of traditional bureaucratic models of personnel management, and their replacement by Human Resource Management (HRM). HRM models and instruments, mostly developed in the mid-80s in a private sector context, were introduced in public sector organisations (Boyne, Poole et al. 1999). HRM differs from the more traditional models of personnel management by conceiving employees as resources that should be developed in correspondence to the organisation’s (economic) goals (Legge 2005).

In the HRM literature human resources are generally only differentiated by their educational levels and competencies, as these are seen to contribute directly to job and organisational performance. Diversity with respect to for example gender and ethnic-cultural background is not central to the HRM literature, or most of the time even completely absent. HRM is said to be focused on the development of the individual worker, but this ideal worker has no body, gender, race or age.

#### *Increasing diversity of the workforce*

The increasing diversity of the population due to immigration and increasing female labour market participation substantially changed the composition of the workforce in Western countries in the last decades. In a context where a diverse workforce is simply a fact, effective management of diversity becomes more and more a (managerial) issue. It is questioned whether managers would be able to realize the full potential of their diverse workforce when their management techniques are based on general HRM models.

In response to the growing diversity of the US workforce Roosevelt Thomas coined the term ‘Managing diversity’ in 1990. In his often cited article in Harvard Business Review Roosevelt Thomas (1990) argues to move beyond Affirmative Action policies, because these are unable to develop the full potential of a diverse workforce. As he (1990: 109) puts it:

“Affirmative action gets the new fuel into the tank, the new people through the front door. Something else has to get them to the driver’s seat. That something else consists of enabling people, in this case minorities and women, to perform to their potential. This is what we now call managing diversity. [...] Just managing diversity in such a way as to get from a heterogeneous work force the same productivity, commitment, quality, and profit that we got from the old homogeneous work force.”

Like Human Resource Management approaches, diversity management focuses on the development of the individual, but moves beyond the abstract ideal worker on which HRM theories are often based. At the same time, however, diversity is not defined in terms of socio-

demographic characteristics such as gender and race as is the case in the equal opportunity approaches, but includes all kinds of ways that individuals can differ from one another (Roosevelt Thomas 1990; Kellough and Naff 2004). In practice however, most managing diversity initiatives in organisations explicitly define the organisational workforce along gender and/or ethnic-cultural lines as do many scholars in the field.

In short, the adoption of management models from the private sector aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public sector organisations coincided with the increasing diversity of the public sector workforce. As a follow-up of the more general HRM models diversity management was introduced in public sector organisations.

#### *Differences between EO/AA approaches and Diversity management*

The diversity management approach differs from the equal opportunity and affirmative action (EO/AA) approaches described in the previous section that were introduced in the 60s and 70s in several respects. EO/AA assumes that women and minorities are assimilated to the dominant organisational (mono)culture. Diversity management, on the other hand, implies that the organisation itself ('the engine') must be changed. Within managing diversity approaches diversity is valued in itself. If managed adequately, it improves work group and organisational performance (Thomas and Ely 1996; Wilson and Iles 1999). This also implies that adjusting recruitment and selection procedures is not enough. All Human Resource policies should be evaluated against their usefulness for managing a diverse workforce.

In addition, within EO/AA diversity is pursued for reasons of equity and fairness, whereas diversity management is motivated by the contribution of diversity to the organisation's efficiency and effectiveness. In other words, EO/AA approaches are based on moral and legal arguments formulated more or less independent of the organisation's economic goals. In this respect, however, public and private sector organisations may differ. In fact, the moral arguments underlying EO/AA approaches refer to the legitimacy of a public sector organisation and in turn also to its efficacy, yet not in economic terms. Success of these kinds of programmes is determined accordingly: it is measured by the number of women and ethnic minorities within the organisation. As such, it is focused on descriptive (or sociological or symbolic) representation improving public sector's legitimacy.

Following the managing diversity line of reasoning however, these policies are internally and economically driven instead of imposed externally by legislation or moral claims. In other words, managing diversity rests on a *business case* argument, the hypothesis that a diverse

work force contributes to the organisation's economic goals (Roosevelt Thomas 1990; Henderson 1994; Thomas and Ely 1996; Wilson and Iles 1999).

### *Managing diversity and the business case argument*

The business case argument is fundamental to managing diversity theory and practice. This assertion refers to the *strategic* function of diversity management as well as its contribution to the efficacy of the *internal* organisation.

#### The strategic function of managing diversity

Through the employment of a diverse workforce new business opportunities are created. A diverse workforce appeals to a wider customer base and in that way contributes to the performance of the organisation (Thomas and Ely 1996; Ely and Thomas 2001). In the public administration context this (external) effect of diversity can be conceived as closing the gap between the organisation and the clients (citizens) it serves. This argument has some similarities with the rationale of the theory of representative bureaucracy described in the previous section. There it was argued that a bureaucracy will be more responsive to the public interest when its personnel reflects the population that is served, in characteristics like race and gender. Whereas in this approach to representative bureaucracy the central motivation is better serving democratic principles, in the managing diversity approach this is framed as better serving the citizen as a client.

In addition, the argument in the managing diversity approach is based on the *integration* of the contributions of diverse employees and not on *differentiation* (Milliken and Martins 1996; Ely and Thomas 2001). As Coleman Selden & Selden (2001: 324) explain:

“It is about satisfying constituent demands and meeting the needs of all citizens without making employees from nondominant cultures or groups feel like their primary role in the agency is to serve constituents with apparently similar backgrounds. It is about changing work processes to reflect the diversity and creativity of unique perspectives that exist within an organization and creating a culture that encourages diverse workers to stay and contribute over time.”

Diversity management is concerned with changing the *composition* of the organisational workforce to better reflect trends in the population. In that way it escapes from the politicization of public service related to active representation. After all, active representation

assumes that minority employees will safeguard or pursue the interests of the minority group to which they belong.

### Managing a diverse workforce effectively

Apart from the strategic function of diversity management, a second aspect in the business case for diversity is the increased need to effectively manage a diverse workforce. Diversity management is helpful in recruitment, selection and retention of the diverse resources available in the labour market (Ng and Burke 2005). This argument appeals to the public sector as due to the demographic composition of its workforce the decrease of labour supply in western countries will affect public sector organisations even more than private sector organisations.

Moreover, managing diversity aims at maximizing the human resources *within* the organisation. Following the HRM line of reasoning, diversity management literature conceives diversity as a resource to be developed. Diversity is valued, because the integration of the different contributions of different employees would improve the internal processes of a work group and/or organisation (Ely and Thomas 2001). If managed well, diversity will thus contribute to the performance of the individual and the workgroup to which he or she belongs. Milliken & Martins (1996) distinguish four consequences of diversity, which in turn affect individual, group and organisational outcomes. Their classification is based on a meta-study of thirty-four empirical studies on diversity and identifies both positive and negative consequences of diversity. Cognitive consequences of diversity refer to the ability of a workgroup to process information, perceive and interpret stimuli and make decisions. The increase of creativity and innovation often claimed by managing diversity advocates is confirmed by Milliken and Martins' meta-study. However, some cognitive effects may also be negative, as the meta-study shows. In addition to the cognitive effects, Milliken & Martins (1996) discern affective consequences (the social performance of a workgroup, e.g. in terms of satisfaction, commitment, motivation and identification), communication-oriented consequences (effects on the processes and patterns of communication within and outside the group) and symbolic consequences (the meaning the composition of the workgroup has for internal and external stakeholders).

These four consequences of diversity are omnipresent in diversity management literature, albeit they are not systematically examined nor the conditions under which they occur. Note again that these effects of diversity are substantially different from the effects of passive and active representation that are distinguished in scholarly literature. Whereas in the literature on passive and active representation effects are defined in terms of the representation or even

pursuing the interests of different groups in society, in the managing diversity literature the focus is upon organisational performance in terms of organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

*An a-political claim for representativity*

The business case argument for managing diversity has stimulated research into the effects of diversity on efficiency and performance, first in private sector organisations by scholars in the fields of personnel psychology and Human Resource Management, and later on also by public administration scholars (e.g. Kochan, Bezrukova et al. 2003; Pitts 2005; Kalev, Kelly et al. 2006). However, the evidence is not ample yet, and sometimes even contradictory (Wise and Tschirhart 2000; Foster Curtis and Dreachslin 2008). Effects of diversity on performance seem to be mixed, and depend on organisational and job characteristics as well as on the type of performance that is measured (Wise and Tschirhart 2000; Ely and Thomas 2001; Kochan, Bezrukova et al. 2003; Pitts 2006). E.g. when collaboration or coordination is required, diversity appears to have a negative effect (Pitts and Jarry 2005). Drawing conclusions about the impact of managing diversity is further complicated because programs and instruments are varied. In addition, managing diversity in public sector organisations are often a repackaging of the old EO/AA programs (Kellough and Naff 2004). It can be concluded that effectiveness of diversity and diversity policies is seriously under researched, whereas management practices are more and more motivated by the business case of managing diversity.

The attractiveness of the business case argument for diversity is a result of the dominance of New Public Management thinking with its strong focus on performance and its technocratic and a-political approach to the management of public sector organisations (Lynn Jr 1998). However, by neglecting the democratic, moral and political arguments for diversity, this business case overlooks important motives for diversity that are of special importance in the public sector context (compare Wrench 2005). Diversity management presents itself as an a-moral and a-political approach to representative bureaucracy, and can therefore be seen as insufficient to guarantee equity, fairness, and representativity in public sector organisations. Despite the use of quite similar concepts and policy instruments, diversity management should be seen as fundamentally different from the equal opportunities approach presented in the previous section.

**Three rival concepts of representative bureaucracy**

The three concepts of representative bureaucracy described above have two common characteristics. Making the argument that an administration has to be representative is

recognizing that administrators do not just neutrally implement policy. They have considerable discretion and therefore it matters *who* fills a specific position (Coleman Selden, Brudney et al. 1998). Academic debates on representative bureaucracy therefore mainly emerged after WWII, when beliefs in scientific administration were waning.

Another common characteristic of the three strands of representative bureaucracy is that of value congruence, or the realization that public administrators should hold values similar to those they represent (Meier and Nigro 1976). Bureaucracies do not just deliver services, but, through delivering services, also allocate values (Meier 1993). All three approaches recognise that public services have a function beyond just delivering services albeit this argument is fading in the third – diversity management – approach.

Together, these two arguments show the distance between theories of representative bureaucracy and the Weberian bureaucracy ideal type. A model of neutral bureaucratic competence and a strict separation between policy and implementation has no need whatsoever for representativity.

Apart from these common grounds, there are substantial differences between the three approaches to representative bureaucracy. We distinguish between four dimensions, as also shown in table 1. It follows from our analysis that different objectives reflect different visions on the role of the state and citizens, call for different representativity criteria and for different policy instruments. A mismatch will likely result in failure. At the same time, there are also many similarities between the movements and they are therefore not always easy to distinguish. Despite the differences in the time period within which these approaches emerged, actual policies and acts to make bureaucracies representative have always reflected a combination of approaches. A good example is Western governments' reaction to the social contestation in the 1970s which was not only a democratic one, but also a power-political one. Active recruitment among disadvantaged groups (such as minorities) not only served a higher democratic concern, but it also facilitated the incorporation of rising elites into the administration, thereby deflecting criticism and restoring social harmony.

In what follows, we first summarise how the three approaches differ according to the motivation they develop to make the bureaucracy representative. In other words, the question is answered why bureaucracies should be representative according to the three approaches. We then show how representativity is constructed by looking at the scope and focus of representativity, and the criteria used to define representativity. In a third section, we show what the analysis of these approaches can tell us about the preferred or actual role of the state

and of the citizen in this state. In the final section, we show how representativity is created by focusing on the policy instruments used.

*Why should bureaucracies be representative?*

The first dimension looks at why politicians, governments or citizens want bureaucracies to be representative. Behind the three approaches we have discussed in this article there are clear objectives and motivations. The representativeness as power approach wants representative bureaucracy to control the population and rivals, and to create stability in the political system. The equal opportunities approach is a moral approach and sees representative bureaucracy as a means to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the state. In contrast to the first approach, it uses democratic and moral arguments to argue for equal opportunities for all. The diversity management approach sees in representative bureaucracy a means to improve the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of public services. Representation is not central to this approach, but the diversity within the organisation that emanates from it.

*Who is representative to whom?*

The second dimension looks at who the bureaucracy should be representative to. The spontaneous association with the concept 'representative bureaucracy' is that of a bureaucracy that mirrors the country's or area's population in general. Yet, a representative bureaucracy can also mirror the ruling elite, or the specific group of clients that is being served by an agency. In most of the representative bureaucracy literature, the focus is on the representation of 'socially and politically meaningful groups' (Greene, Selden et al. 2001: 379), yet the definition of who those groups are is subject to frequent and rapid change. In the equal opportunities approach, the bureaucracy is supposed to be representative of the general population, while in the diversity management approach, the focus is on being representative towards either the specific clients served by a public service, or towards the workforce in a specific sector.

The criteria used to determine whether or not a bureaucracy is representative are also different across the three approaches. While the representativeness as power approach still mainly focus on territorial or social class criteria to measure representativeness, the equal opportunities approach added race and gender as key criteria, and downplayed the role of the older criteria. The diversity management approach broadens this set of criteria used to assess representativity by adding the importance of looking at factors such as sexuality, disability and age.

The scope of representativeness dimension refers to which parts of the administration are subject to representativeness considerations. This can be the bureaucracy in general, policy

functions in the administration, or the street level. The diversity conception of representative bureaucracy for example narrows the scope of representativity and either focuses on the street level bureaucrats and/or on inner workings of public organisations.

*What are the roles of citizens and the state?*

The three approaches to representative bureaucracy outlined in this article do not just reflect changes in academic debates or in government policies. They each reflect a quite different idea of the role of the state in society, and of the role of citizens in these states and societies.

The representativity as power approach reflects an idea of the state as something that exists to create stability and to control a territory. Citizens, in this approach, are seen as subjects with few political or democratic rights. The considerations and interests of the state and the ruling classes determine the criteria and procedures used for filling public posts. In the equal opportunities approach, citizens are seen as political participants who co-create democratic society. The state reflects the overall population and society, and is as such, unlike the first approach, not different from society. For this reason, the state needs to reflect the values of society, and everything the state does needs to contribute to the creation of a harmonious society. The diversity management approach is again quite different, because it reduces the public sector to a series of service delivery bodies. Concepts such as 'the state' have no place in this approach, and government and service delivery are reduced to a-political entities and processes. Public employment is not at all different from private employment, and representativity is only worthwhile for the performance benefits it brings. Citizens, in this approach, are clients of public services, and not democratic actors.

*How can bureaucracies improve representativeness?*

Each of the three approaches has also used, or is using, specific policy instruments to make bureaucracy more (or less) representative. In the power approach, political appointments, patronage and spoils systems are typical instruments, but we have also demonstrated that meritocratic arrangements were used to shift the power balance in bureaucracies. Policy instruments typically associated with equal opportunities approaches include quotas for the employment of certain groups, recruitment targets, and the formal announcement of equal opportunities policies and equal opportunity pledges. Diversity management approaches are more focused on the inner workings of organisations and on behavioural change. Policy instruments used are diversity training aimed at countering stereotyping and increasing awareness of cultural biases, networking programs and mentoring programs. The policy instruments developed within the equal opportunities approach have proved to be very popular, and it is not uncommon to see attempts to promote other types of representativity

through the use of equal opportunity instruments. Affirmative action for example is often an important part of diversity management policies in organisations.

**Table 1: Three rival concepts of representative bureaucracy**

	<b>WHY</b>		<b>WHO</b>		<b>ROLE OF STATE AND CITIZEN</b>		<b>HOW</b>
	Objective & motivation	Focus	Criteria	Scope	Role of the state	View of citizens	Policy instruments
<b>Representative bureaucracy as power</b>	Control, stability, penetration, accommodation	Ruling elite	Territory, social class	State apparatus or workforce in general; top positions	Political stability and control	Citizens as subjects	Civil service exams, meritocracy, Political appointments, spoils, patronage
<b>Representative bureaucracy as equal opportunity</b>	Morality, legitimacy, exemplary role of the state, democracy	Population	Race, gender, role of upward mobility	Policy functions; street-level bureaucrats	Authoritative distribution of values Create community	Citizens as political participants	Quotas, targets, equal opportunities policies and pledges. targeted recruitment
<b>Representative bureaucracy as diversity management</b>	Performance, effectiveness, efficiency	Clients and workforce	Gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality, disability	Street-level (strategic function) Internal organisation (effective management of a diverse workforce)	Effective and efficient service delivery; government as a business and service provider	Citizens as clients	Diversity training, networking programs, mentoring programs

### **Implications for nation-building**

In this paper, we developed a contingency approach to representative bureaucracy. We argued that there are three main approaches to representative bureaucracy, and that each of these three approaches has its own characteristics. The emergence and successfulness of these approaches largely depends on social and political circumstances. This means that certain approaches to representative bureaucracy will be much more useful to nation-builders than others.

Diversity management is currently *en vogue* politically and academically. However, as we have shown, diversity management is an a-political approach to representative bureaucracy, and mainly serves public sector organisations themselves, their employees, and citizens as clients. Nation-building on the other hand is a highly political activity. The implication of this observation is that a diversity management approach in fragile or emerging states will contribute little to nothing to nation building. Diversity management is not concerned with political power, democratic equality, equal opportunities, or social justice. Diversity management does not build a state and does not create a nation.

Another observation in our contingent approach to representative bureaucracy is that the specific view of representative bureaucracy follows political changes and debates. The third approach in this paper is therefore unlikely to be the last, and new approaches to representative bureaucracy will emerge. One possible such evolution might then originate from the growing concerns in Western European countries about the underrepresentation of the lower educated in the political arena. Such underrepresentation yields inequality of political voice. As a consequence, it is argued, the lower educated feel excluded from the established political parties and turn to new populist parties which threatens the political stability and unity of the nation (Bovens and Wille 2009).

The argument can be extended to government bureaucracies, where unskilled jobs have been outsourced and where low grades have made way for positions requiring a university education. When the lower educated are underrepresented, there is a risk that government policies will insufficiently reflect the interests and preferences of this group, which will in turn affect the legitimacy of government. A similar argument has already been made by Michael Young in 1958, when he coined the term 'meritocracy' in his book 'The rise of the meritocracy' (Young 1958) where he warns against monopolisation by the higher educated. Despite the pejorative connotation of the word in Young's book, meritocracy has nowadays become an extremely powerful and positive argument to recruit the best possible (and thus higher educated) to public employment. Combined with often exclusive attention for efficiency, such meritocracy may lead to a government bureaucracy that is efficient, yet not

representative towards large parts of the population. Such an approach would reintroduce political arguments into the representative bureaucracy discussion, and would use stability and legitimacy of the state as key motivations for representativity. Citizens, in this approach, are not only seen as political participants, but also as stakeholders in government bureaucracies. For that reason instruments would have to be developed to enhance the participation of the lower educated in bureaucracy and in policy making, which would mean a departure from expert-based approaches. In fact, these developments are already observable, but have not yet been linked to the concept of representative bureaucracy (e.g. participative and interactive policy making).

To conclude, when designing policies to develop representative bureaucracies, it is essential to reflect on the objectives of this policy. The instruments used to make the bureaucracy representative need to be aligned with dominant conceptions of the state, politics, and citizens. A policy or rhetoric that was useful to emancipate Afro-Americans in the US in the 1960s and 1970s may be quite useless or even counterproductive in other settings. Different situations require a different approach to representative bureaucracy.

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