

Representative Bureaucracy and Public Service Performance: Where, Why and How Does Representativeness Work?

Pre-conference workshop
PMRA Public Management Research Conference
Aarhus University, Denmark
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Organizers

- * Rhys Andrews, Cardiff School of Business; Cardiff University; UK
- * Sandra Groeneveld, Institute of Public Administration; Leiden University; The Netherlands
- * Kenneth J. Meier, Department of Political Science; Texas A&M University; USA and Cardiff School of Business; Cardiff University; UK
- * Eckhard Schröter, Department of Public Management & Governance; Zeppelin University; Germany

Objectives

As issues of social equity and inclusiveness have become increasingly salient to political discourses, they are also more strongly emphasized as dimensions of effective public service delivery. Hence, representative bureaucracy has become more significant to the study of public management. The theory of representative bureaucracy assumes that several positive effects of representation in public organizations, such as perceptions of accessibility to power for groups in society and reflection of group preferences in bureaucratic decision making, will boost organizational performance.

Previous empirical studies have examined this performance claim of representative bureaucracy theory. So far, however, empirical evidence on where, why and how representativeness works is diffuse and mixed. Recent studies suggest that to gain a full understanding of representative bureaucracy more attention should be devoted to the role of context. One review of the literature shows that *over time and across national contexts* representative bureaucracy has been used as an answer to very different social, political and administrative problems (Groeneveld and Van de Walle 2010). Similarly, Meier and Morton (2015) bring a *cross-national perspective* to the study of representative bureaucracy arguing that the identities that are salient and how representativeness unfolds institutionally varies significantly across countries. Because empirical studies have primarily – but not exclusively –

focused on street level service organizations, such as education and police, Schröter and Von Maravic (2015) called for extension of both theory and empirical work to *different kinds of organizational settings*. Since different settings may imply different meanings of representation and different conceptualizations of performance, the relationship between representation and performance might also be affected.

This workshop seeks to advance a contextualized understanding of representative bureaucracy. It therefore has the following aims:

1. Bring together scholars who study representative bureaucracy in different contexts and spur collaborative research efforts

Individual country studies can illustrate why and how representativeness matters in public management in a specific country context and can serve as a starting point for international comparison and theoretical generalization. In addition to national and institutional contexts, the impact of representative bureaucracy is also contingent on the specific aspect of administrative performance and the type of public sector organization under investigation. While representative bureaucracy has been most frequently studied in service-delivery organizations that allow professional street-level bureaucrats high degrees of discretion, the workshop also aims at broadening the empirical base of findings from different types of public bodies, e.g. state or central government departments, planning and/or regulatory agencies, policy-making institutions.

2. Synthesize results and integrate theoretical frameworks

In addition to the large body of knowledge developed within the field of representative bureaucracy studies, we aim to connect to at least two other strands of the literature. First, the literature on diversity management contributes to the understanding of representative bureaucracy with its focus on how diverse work groups affect attitudinal and behavioral work outcomes within the organization (Groeneveld 2015; Selden and Selden 2001). Second, the public management and performance literature should be explicitly linked to issues of representativeness (Andrews et al. 2005).

3. Identify avenues for future research and develop an international comparative research agenda

By reviewing and synthesizing the findings from previous studies and by mapping current research projects we will identify blind spots and promising avenues for future research. We will work on a research agenda by comparing findings and theorizing on how context conditions the impact of bureaucratic representation on public policy and performance. Our position paper *Representative Bureaucracy and Public Service Performance: Where, Why and How Does*

Representativeness Work? (Andrews et al. 2015) will be used to structure the discussion and will be distributed to all participants in advance.

Format of the workshop

The workshop consists of two parts:

- * **Mini-conference:** three parallel sessions of four papers each
- * **Roundtable** to synthesize results and to draft a research agenda

Submission

We are especially looking for papers which have a focus on how context affects the study of representative bureaucracy and which address one of the following issues:

- * Theoretical perspectives on representative bureaucracy
- * Views on representative bureaucracy across national contexts
- * Empirical analyses of the representativeness-performance link on a collective level based on statistical analyses of aggregated quantitative data
- * Empirical analyses of the causal mechanisms that lead administrators to adopt a minority representative role and/or that explain how representation affects organizational behavior and worker-client interactions.

Paper proposals should not exceed 400 words in length. Deadline for submission of proposals is **1 March 2016**. Paper proposals must be submitted via e-mail to:

s.m.groeneveld@cdh.leidenuniv.nl. Please note that if your proposal is accepted you also need to register for the conference at the PMRC website: <http://ps.au.dk/en/research/conferences-and-lectures/pmrc-2016/>.

Deadline for submission of paper proposals: 1 March 2016

Notification of proposal acceptance: 15 March 2016

Deadline for submission of papers: 1 June 2016

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