

Project Management in the Danish Central Government

Poulsen, Birgitte; Löfgren, Karl

Published in:
Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration

Publication date:
2013

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Poulsen, B., & Löfgren, K. (2013). Project Management in the Danish Central Government. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 17(2), 61-78. <https://ojs.ub.gu.se/index.php/sjpa/article/view/2456/2204>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact rucforsk@kb.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Karl Löfgren,
Victoria University of
Wellington, School
of Government
karl.lofgren@vuw.ac.nz

Birgitte Poulsen
Department of Society and
Globalisation
Roskilde University
E-mail: bkrp@ruc.dk

Keywords: project manage-
ment, Denmark, civil service,
job advert, role analysis

Abstract

While project management (PM) has become an almost constituting element of modern public organisations, empirical research on PM in the civil service, let alone government offices, has been overlooked. In this article, we will on the basis of public organisation recruitment efforts illustrated through a textual analysis of job adverts for the Danish Civil Service, *analyse how the individual roles related to project management in civil service organisation from 1982 until 2011 has emerged* in terms of the following dimensions: a) the project managerial role, b) required competences for PM, c) whether the role of PM refer to internal or external projects, d) which stages of the policy cycle which are subject to PM, e) and whether we are talking about permanent project management organisations or just temporary projects. These questions are then applied on a minor empirical textual analysis of job adverts in a Danish professional journal in the period of 1982-2011 with the aim of generating a couple of hypotheses. The results of the study shows that project management has permeated throughout the central service, but also that the project management has become a term used inequitably for describing all forms of work-life in modern bureaucracies. Also, we identify a number of hypotheses for future works. First, project management in the Danish civil service is not a managerial role. Second, by requesting project management competence, the investigated ministries were looking for certain interpersonal skills, and not transferable PM competences. Finally, being a project manager in the Danish civil service means being ready for internal projects, not to work more cross-sectoral with other actors.

1. Project management in the government

Project management has since the 1980s disseminated as a modern, almost default, mode of organising government work (regardless of policy area, functions and levels) across the world. What is significant, at least from an academic public administration point of view, is that it has not been attached to a certain governance paradigm. Instead, this mode of organising government work has quite easily come to be associated with disparate governance paradigms. First, the flexibility, the delegation of tasks and accountability to lower levels of the organisation, and not at least the time-management of projects, correspond very well with the values of *New Public Management* (NPM); and project management is also associated with NPM reforms in parts of the literature (cf. Pinto, 1996; Sundin 2002; Clegg and Courpasson, 2004; Crawford et al. 2003, Hall, 2007).

* **Karl Löfgren**, PhD, Associate Professor at the School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington. He is currently involved in research on social surveillance, democratic audit and electronic government. 2007-2010 he was research leader for a Nordic network on local democratic governance with participants from the five Nordic countries. Recent publications include articles in *Public Policy and Administration*, *Planning Theory*, *Local Government Studies*, *NORDEUROPA Forum*, *International Journal of Public Administration*.

Birgitte Poulsen, PhD, Associate Professor in public administration at the Department of Society and Globalisation, Roskilde University and member of the Centre for Democratic Network Governance. Her research profile broadly covers public administration and public management with a particular emphasis on public sector organization, and the roles and identities of civil servants. Currently she is working within the research programme "Contested Administrations- Conflict Resolution and the Improvement of Democracy" that is funded by the Swedish Research Council and runs until 2015. The research programme aims to investigate public administration's capability to address and possibly resolve contested issues and conflicts in order to increase equality, strengthen processes of integration, and build social solidarity in democratic systems.

Delivering value for money to the tax payers requires an efficient and effective organisation which, in turn, requires flexibility and the ability to adapt to change. Project management constitutes in this respect a prescriptive model of planning and control; actually not too different from the classical programme theory of the 1960s, but with a decentralised approach to the implementation. By contrast, the post-NPM goals of consulting and involving citizens, stakeholders and communities through what some authors have called *Public Value Management* (as described by e.g. Osborne, 2006; Stoker, 2006) also calls for project management skills. The aptitude of consulting stakeholders, coordinating and implementing complex, cross-sectoral policy solutions, and to craft a more learning, reciprocal and collaborative policy environment gives primacy to project management (cf. Crawford & Helm, 2009). Consequently, the idea of project management in the civil service cannot be attached to certain governance modes as it fits well with most post-bureaucratic ideas of how to organise the public sector. Although there is all reason to believe that project management has been implemented world-wide in various government organisations, the literature on project management in the civil service is still meagre. The main focus of project management research has mainly been on its practical use in private companies, and in particular within industrial sectors such as construction, engineering and IT. A review of the first ten volumes of the *International Journal of Project Management* in 1995 revealed close to zero articles on project management in the public sector (one in the 'industrial sub-sector' of government¹) (Betts & Lansley, 1995). Even though we have come across some articles on project management in the public sector after 1995 (cf. Sundin, 1995; Crawford et al. 2003; Crawford & Helm, 2009), the focus on private sector organisations in the study of project management still prevails. Moreover, those articles we have identified dealing with the public sector have mainly discussed project management among local front-line staff dealing with certain client groups, or implementing certain policy programmes working with e.g. major construction programmes or implementation of government information systems (cf. Abrahamsson & Agevall, 2009). Consequently, this article is not a study of project management related to large public infrastructure projects.

We have not been able to identify any research on the employment of project management in the offices of central government where project management is a new mode of work organisation within governmental units with the ambition of integrating various actors within the government unit per se, as well across levels and sectors (private as well as public), and with the overarching aim of enhancing policy formation, implementation and control of government policy. In addition to the lack of project management literature in the public sector, the endeavour of buttressing a more theoretical framework of project management in public sector has all the time had lower priority than the prescriptive venture of producing inputs to the community of practitioners. Consequently, the main bulk of contemporary literature is management 'cooking-books' filled with recipes on how to control, manage and implement projects in the role of manager. Furthermore, they are usually based on single case-studies (i.e. the success stories) set in

a special context (for an example, see: Wirick, 2009). While the project management literature is suffering from lack of engaged with the public sector, the more public administration-inspired literature (the PA-literature) on the civil service and the internal public organisation (cf. Bekke et al. 1996) hardly touches upon project management. Although project management, at least potentially, holds the capacity of altering the division of labour, the role and identity of the individual civil servant, and thus the power structure within the organisation *per se*, few articles discuss the role of it (with some notable exceptions, cf. Hall, 2007).

We will in this article take a different approach to the study of project management in the civil service. Rather than seeking to understand the scope of project management in the public sector, or how to succeed to complete projects, we will on the basis of public organisation recruitment efforts illustrated through a textual analysis of job adverts for civil servants in the Danish central government, *analyse how the individual roles related to project management in central government organisations from 1982 until 2011 has emerged* in terms of the following dimensions: a) the project manager role, b) variety of competences, c) internal vs. external projects, d) policy cycle stages, e) permanent project management organisation or temporary projects. The ambition is to generate some hypotheses for future studies of the scope of project management in government organisations.

The remainder of this article is divided into four sections. The following section delineates those attributes of project management that we are analysing in our empirical analysis. These attributes are taken from the overall literature on project management. The third section discusses our analytical and methodological approach, while our empirical analysis is in section four. Some concluding remarks are found in section five.

2. Studying project management in public sector organisations

As stated by Engwall et al. (2003), most significant achievements of mankind (whether the reconstruction of Europe after the WWII or the American Space programme) can be regarded as 'projects'. While the concept covers many different organisational forms we can at least identify some baseline features of what constitutes project management in the literature whereas a project usually is defined as:

- A unique once-in-a-lifetime task
- with a predetermined date of delivery
- being subject to one or several performance goals
- consisting of a number of complex and/or interdependent activities (Packendorff, 1995:320)

Although not a completely novel phenomenon in modern organisations, it is at present probably the most prominent mode of modern organisations. The reason for this is manifold and Sahlin-Andersson & Söderholm (2002) mention some plausible explanations to this notorious status. First, project management

signals a temporality and a task-oriented organisation of work in which the whole organisation is decommissioned once the task is solved (although there may be a more stable collective organisation behind which secures continuity and stability) and thus represents a more rational approach to work organisation. Second, project management should not only be conceived as a distinct organisational mode, but should be seen in the light of an overall societal trend of envisaging collective action (whether public or private) as projects – a ‘*projectification*’ of society. Third, projects should also be perceived as a budget strategy. In times of financial cut-backs and restrained budgets, projects have become a strategy of implementing new policies, or to acquire funding from external sources (e.g. the EU structural funding mechanisms). These projects may initially be experimentally and small-scale, but can following an early phase expand and eventually become permanent.

That being said, the academic study of project management in general is far from a coherent and comprehensive research tradition, but rather a generic concept which encapsulates different theories and disciplines with the one thing in common; that they discuss different forms of corresponding and temporal activities as ‘projects’. As Packendorff points out:

The field [of project management] is obviously held together by certain conceptions on process rationality; differences in outcome and process are disregarded in favour of alleged similarities in the planning and implementing of projects. But is there really a single, consistent unambiguous empirical phenomenon that can be labelled ‘the project’? Packendorff (1995:324)

Clegg and Courpasson go further and argue that project management may well have become a beacon for ‘jaded organisation theory with a promise of a new projectified society of organizational projects’ (Clegg and Courpasson, 2004:526), as it by and large subscribes to the traditional managerial discourse of power and control (ibid).

Our modest theoretical ambition in this paper is to couple some of the debates within project management, organisational and political studies, for the purpose of finding tools to analyse a group of aspects related to the role of project management in the Danish civil service. Our analytical point of departure is, given our empirical material, the individual role of the civil servant who is supposed to function in a work environment where project management is alleged to be the organisational principle, or at least is an important method for organising the daily work processes.

One first imperative aspect of project management is the *management* element of organising task-solving, implementation and other public sector tasks in the shape of projects. The whole idea of project management rests on the simple, yet important underlying belief that an ‘agent’ using a combination of allocated resources, members of a team, and appropriate methods, can create ‘control over chaos’ (Barber & Warn, 2005:1033). In most of the project management literature the attributes of this agent is not far from different from the qualities usually

associated with individual 'leadership'. This does not inevitably mean that the project manager is appointed the formal leader of the team, or that project teams are organised as hierarchies with authorised leaders and subordinates. Quite the contrary, the project manager is usually a victim of what some have called an 'authority-gap' as they lack formal authority over the team and must seek alternative ways of increasing their authority (e.g. through knowledge) (Hodgetts, 1968). As described by Gaddis, the role of the project manager is to be a *jack-of-all-trades* between corporate management and project specialist (Gaddis, 1959, quoted in Packendorff, 1995:323). There is, as pointed out by Clegg and Courrpason, a tension between personalisation and hierarchy (Clegg and Courrpason, 2004). One important point of criticism against the project management literature is also that it ignores the role of the manager and leadership style as one crucial explaining factor in the success of projects (Turner & Müller, 2005). In this respect we would like to study, on the basis of our empirical material, how the balance of this versatile role is articulated. For example, to what extent is the role of project manager supposed to be an organisational middle-manager of a team, and to what extent does the project management role more reflect an anticipation of a general ability to be part of a team? In addition to the issue whether project management is an issue of leadership or not, there is the question of which competences that is attached to the occupational role of project manager in the civil service.

This leads us to the second of our variables, the question of *competences*. Following Ellerström (1997), we can generally identify three different views of occupational competence. To begin with, competence can be perceived as an attribute of the individual including both formal competence (e.g. credentials) and actual competence (the potential capacity of an individual to solve certain problems or completing certain tasks). As second form, occupational competences can be defined in terms of prescribed or actual job requirements, understood as either the official demand for competence, or the competence actually required by the job. Finally, we can take an interactive view in which competence is neither an individual attribute, nor an attribute of the job function, but an interactive relationship between individual and the job – 'competence-in-use'. For the purposes of this article, we are studying how the occupational competence of project managers are devised in the job adverts.

Our third variable refers to the question of *the employment form*. To begin with, in practice, project management indicate more than the way of organising task-solving; it also signifies the employment contract of the employee. Consequently, the term 'project workers' may indicate that the project member's contract is tied to the duration of the project; once the project terminates the contract employees' assignment with the employer expires (PMI, 2006). By contrast, there is equally common that the project team is staffed with the employees with permanent contracts from either one organisation, or in the case of cross-sectoral projects, with representatives of various organisations (see below). Hence, our question here refers to the employment contract.

Fourthly, the management of projects is applied in all *the stages of a policy cycle*. Projects are often portrayed in the shape of a project life cycle which includes four different stages: defining, planning, executing and delivering (Gray & Larson, 2008). As projects in the overall project management literature is perceived as ‘tools’ for attaining certain aims, there is no surprise that the executing stage has received more attention. If one should draw a parallel to the PA-literature, it is clear that this project life cycle is not that different from the idea of a policy cycle, including initiation, forecasting, agenda-setting, implementation, evaluation and termination (cf. Hogwood and Gunn, 1984; Hill, 2009). Herein lays naturally the essential question whether the project manager is supposed to play an overtly political role in articulating political aims and visions, or merely implement political decisions taken above his level. In terms of our study we are interested to identify at what stage of the policy cycle the prospective project manager is supposed to operate.

Finally, in much of the literatures on the role of the modern (Danish) civil service we have seen testimonies that the classic virtues of the civil servant as a neutral and loyal servant implementing policies made by the politicians to an increasing degree has been challenged. The modern civil servant does not only advise politicians strategically, but is also to a large extent expected to act as a policy-maker in modern public administrations (Knudsen, 2000: 356; Poulsen, 2009: 118). This gradual change in the role of the civil servant towards a more proactive and policy-making civil servant has also affected the organisational frames of the public administrations. The classic bureaucracy, with functionally separated units is, albeit not completely substituted, at least supplemented by new forms of network organisations, in which the civil servants work in changing teams and/or across existing units (Poulsen, 2007).

In terms of our analytical questions we are focusing on two different aspects of project management. First, *what is the actual political role of him/her?* And secondly, whether the ‘team’ set up to attain the overall goals is an internal group within the organisation, or an interorganisational group, or network, with the ambition of either formulating policies for cross-sectoral issues, or implementing policies which go beyond the own organisation (Sahlin, 1996). Regarding the first group – internal projects – is there a tendency to set up projects with the aim of solving internal organisational problems such as competence development, internal communication or organisational cohesion? Or are the projects formed on basis of interdependence between various political actors who need to interact (cooperate, collaborate or coordinate vis-à-vis a special policy problem or a special group of actors. The prime motives behind interorganisational cooperation are, according to Pinto & Nedovic-Budic (2002), risk sharing, economic, technical and strategic. To sum up, the literature on project management raises a number of questions regarding the kind of project management in real-life organisations. Consequently, a number of variables need to be identified and analysed in order to grasp the characteristics of project management. Based on our brief literature review, we point to the following analytical foci in the study of project management in public sector organisations.

Table 1: Analytical foci in the study of project management:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project manager as executive civil servant (leader) or common civil servant (employee)? • Is the position as project manager a position as (1) middle-manager in the organisation (for example head of office), (2) manager of a team, or (3) common member of a team? • Competences required for the post? • Do we see a prescribed job requirement, for example a request for a specific educational background and/or experience from a specific field of policy or do we see a request for skills related to the individual's personality and/or abilities to solve certain problems or completing certain tasks? • Project management of what – the role of the project manager in the organisation? • What is the role of the project manager in the organisation? Is it (1) internal organisational development, or (2) is the role associated to a specific policy task, and if so on what stages is the project manager going to operate (initiation, forecasting, agenda setting, implementation, evaluation or termination)? • Internal or external project management? • Is the project manager going to manage internal organisational network processes, or external network processes with participation of for example stakeholders, civil servant from other public sector organisations, or actors from the EU? • Permanent or ad hoc project management? • Is the position as project manager a fixed-term employment contract (temporary) or a permanent position in the organisation?

3. The methodological strategy

3.1 Roles

Our theoretical approach is based on a role perspective inspired by both sociological new-institutionalism (March and Olsen, 1989, 2005) and discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, Mouffe 1993, Burr 1995, and Watson 1997). The role perspective emphasises that modern public organisations are composed of roles and the expectations to these roles, whether it is the role of the politician, the civil servant or the professionals working in day care, schools, hospitals etc. The claim within the role perspective is that public sector organisations to a large extent are defined by these roles, and the people occupying the roles. Consequently, role studies in public administration provide a unique knowledge of a political system and its functions, including the characteristics of its public sector institutions and the mode(s) of governing. Although we use individual job adverts, our theoretical understanding of the concept of role means that we are studying project management as *a structural phenomenon* in public administration. The role as project manager as applied for in the job profiles transcends the

individual actor position in the organisation and reflects more generally the role as project manager in Danish public administration. The job adverts may be seen as part of a discursive praxis giving meaning to the discourse of project management (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 105). The job adverts do not only describe the role as project manager as an isolated, individually request for a single persons skills and abilities; it also prescribes the explicit self-understanding of the organisation in terms of organisational strategy and image. The job adverts, and the explicit as well as implicit descriptions of the role as project manager, are in this article analysed as representations of a subject position embedded in a more general discourse of project management in Danish public administration. The textual study of job adverts, thus, is a study of project management and its functions, its characteristics and dynamics in a public sector context.

Let us briefly elaborate on our conceptual understanding of the term 'role'. Roles are constructed through (1) discursive practices, (2) organisational interpretations and (3) the individual's interpretation of the role at hand (Poulsen, 2005). The discursive practises may overlap with the organisational interpretation of the role. However, whereas the organisational interpretation is limited to the specific organisation and its organisational culture, values and norms, the discursive practices are transgressing the organisational unit reflecting the discourse on project management in Danish public administration more generally.

Theoretically, we draw on discourse theory and its concept of subject position, which equalises the concept of role in this article. Subject positions are continuously constructed through the discursive praxis (Mouffe, 1993: 77). The study of job profiles in adverts draws a picture of the role of the civil servant as project manager, and thus project management more generally, regarding the job adverts as part of the discursive practices and organisational interpretation of the role. Naturally, it is beyond our ambitions with this analysis to discuss the way project management actually is implemented in the Danish ministries, or how these constructed roles are internalised by the individual public sector project manager. Still, and as pointed out in a study on local public managers in Sweden, the adverts do convey a very strong discursive understanding of what the organisation wants to be (Bergström, 1995). Through the study of job adverts we identify one central element of the organisation's interpretation of the role of project management on the one hand, and part of the discursive practices on the other.

3.2 Methods and Data

To address our research questions, job adverts from "DJØF-Bladet" (a fortnightly magazine published by the Union 'Danish Lawyers and Economists' (*Danmarks Jurist- og Økonom Forbund - DJØF*)) have been collected. This trade union organises the vast majority of graduates in law, economy and other social science university degrees and is often in the public debate presented as being a 'guild' for civil servants rather than functioning as a traditional trade union. This journal has been renowned for advertising most open positions in the Danish state administration / the Danish Ministries since 1980s. Our data material is

based on systematically collected sample from January 1982 until August 2011. From each year we have collected the adverts in the last issue of January (issue #2) and the last issue in August (issue #14), as these two issues usually include most advertisements throughout the year. The adverts collected derive from three policy remits of what originally were covered by three ministries, but which today are under the umbrella of four distinct ministries: a) Employment, b) Interior, c) Business Affairs, and d) Integration. Danish ministries adhere, by and large to the same model hierarchical and Weberian models of organisations with vertical lines of command between the different levels of the organisations, horizontal and functional division of tasks internally within the organisations, and with subordinate and not very autonomous agencies, beneath a parental ministerial department. However, cross-sectoral project management has increased over the past two decades and different forms of collaboration in, and between, the ministries have emerged. However, previous in-depth studies of the Danish state administration have showed some variation regarding the form of organisation and the organisational culture (Poulsen, 2007). On this background, we have selected three specific policy fields, and the ministries responsible for them, that represent three slightly different forms of organisation in the Danish state administration, as well as three distinct ideals for the role of the civil servant in order to get as broad a sample as possible in our investigation of project management. First, the Ministry for the Interior may be perceived as *the classical bureaucracy* and has been chosen as the exponent of a classic bureaucratic form of organisation with a strong hierarchy. The role of the civil servant is interpreted as the 'classic' bureaucrat. Second, the Ministry of Employment may also be regarded as *the classical bureaucracy although with 'floating' heads of division (afdelingschefer)*. This Ministry encapsulate many parallel role interpretations, e.g. the 'classic' bureaucrat, the budget manager, the consensus-maker, and the policy-maker. Finally, the Ministry of Business Affairs represents a completely new form of government organisation in which the traditional organisation was replaced by a network organisation between 1995 and 2001, which turned the ministry into one big project management machine. The typical role of the civil servant within this ministry is the creative and innovative policy-maker (see, Poulsen 2007 for further descriptions on the cases).

While employee recruitment as such is by now a well-developed academic area (cf. Breugh & Starke, 2000) less attention has been paid to using job adverts as an empirical source for studying organisational behaviour and structures. However, when used it is usually, like this paper, with the aim of studying changes in required qualifications and skills. For example, Todd et al. (1995) study through a content analysis of information system job adverts between 1970 and 1990 reflect changes in the required skills in the IT sector, or like in Bergström (1995) who uses job adverts to study the articulation of the public managers in the Swedish public sector.

Prior to presenting our findings, there are a couple of important methodological aspects that should be addressed. First, in some of the adverts the recruitment counts for more than one project manager. Our analytical focus is the con-

tent of each individual job advert and not the number of positions in the single advert (as some of the adverts include more than one job). Nevertheless, we do use some quantitative measures when we for example count the ratio between project managers as leaders compared to project managers as common civil servants, or count the number of adverts where the employer is looking for either project managers working with project management internally, or externally in the organisation. However, the aim of these quantitative indicators is primarily to investigate the qualitative dimensions of project management in public sector organisations. Second, we are not able to assess whether the successful candidates to the jobs actually had the ability to meet the skills required in the job adverts, let alone analyse the actual employment of project management in the four selected policy areas. While job adverts do not reflect any 'reality' concerning roles, they present a broader idealist picture of what the role should be.

Third, the analysis is limited to an analysis of the institutional and discursive production of the role as project manager through a textual analysis, whereas the individual production of the role through concrete identification in the specific organisation is omitted. Notwithstanding the relevance of such an analysis, it needs to be dealt with in another study of the role of the project manager and is beyond the scope of this article. Our modest contribution to the understanding of project management in public sector organisations, and the role as project manager is thus a confined analysis of one aspect of the role through the description provided in job adverts since 1982 until 2011.

Fourth, it is important to notice that the terms 'project manager' translates differently in Danish. In some adverts they are looking for a '*tovholder*' ('coordinator'), other want a '*teamleder*', and finally there are naturally requests for '*projektleder*' etc. We have chosen to include all these job descriptions, and similar ones, in the category project manager. As such, this is both an important methodological issue, but is also in its own rights, and finding itself (which we will return to). Furthermore, some adverts do not directly request a 'project manager' using the manager or leader terms, but use, for example, terms like 'team players' for interdisciplinary work, 'candidates with team spirit', 'coordinator', or 'someone with experience from teamwork'. These adverts have also been included in the analysis as adverts seeking for a project manager.

4. Project management in public sector organisation until 2011

4.1 General

The total number of job adverts collected in the period of 1982 until 2011 was 141. Out of the 141 adverts, 42 are explicitly seeking for candidates that fall under what we have labelled as project manager (or the terms mentioned above). However, we see a huge difference in the number of job adverts seeking for project managers over the years. In the first ten years we are only able to identify one advert in which a ministry is seeking for a project manager. In the next ten-year period we identify nine adverts seeking for project managers, whereas

the number is 32 when we study the period from 2002. It is difficult on the background of the analysed data material to unequivocally state that project management was not part of central government before 1998, since we lack other forms of empirical data. Still, there is reason to believe that project management as an organisational and discursive phenomenon in central government offices is a pretty recent phenomenon. In six adverts we cannot see any sign of project management skills or functions, in the sense that they are going to work collectively at all, in the advert. Instead there are ministries are seeking civil servant to functions such as 'inspections' (*føre tilsyn*) or 'complaint management' (DB, August 2003, Head of Office to the Danish Competition Authority), or as in the case of an advert for a Head of section to the Business Ministry "processing and sample check-up of the three-month regular accounts within the ministerial remit and the facilitation of customers' accounts reports (*'gennemgang af og stikprøve kontrol af den kvartalsvise regnskabsgodkendelse på ministerområdet og skal understøtte kundernes muligheder for at aflægge retvisende regnskaber'*). (DB, January 2007, Head of Section, Ministry of Business and Trade). This relatively high numbers of adverts which falls under our categories of project management may naturally reflect that the turnover of staff is higher in network projects organisations compared to more traditional bureaucratic forms of organisation. Or to put it differently, the classic bureaucrat has a got a safe permanent post (albeit the classical tenure system has vanished), whereas the 'project manager' is more likely to change job often. However, it is still difficult to conclude to what extent the vast number of adverts for project managers is caused by organisational changes, and to what extent the number of adverts reflects an increase in the use of project management, and a subsequent demand for project managers. If we just study the last ten years of the study (i.e. 2001-2011) we can see that it is difficult to see any radical changes in terms of the number of adverts which mention project management in their job descriptions.

Although it seems difficult to assess the actual scope of project management in the Danish state administration based on this collection of job adverts, it certainly appears that the classic bureaucratic job description is terminal, if not deceased, if we are to believe the skills and job functions presented in the job adverts. Only six adverts explicitly seek for staff to process and handle incoming cases (in Danish: *'sagsbehandling'*). Instead, the job adverts are presenting job profiles in which the successful candidate has to be someone who is able 'to show creativity through work', 'give political advices', 'fulfil many different roles', or 'someone to work as coordinator'. In the following we will examine the adverts for project managers along the points of foci presented in the theoretical section on project management.

4.2 The project manager as a manager?

In our collection of job adverts we have all in all identified 6 adverts explicitly searching for a (team) leader, thus filling the job profile of an executive public manager, seven looking for a project manager to lead a team but without the formal position and conditions of a public manager, and 29 adverts in which the

job profile have been ‘team members’ or similar. As already suggested in the theoretical part on project management above, it may be difficult to define the exact differences between the job descriptions of the project manager and the manager. In this study we have only included adverts for managers that specifically enhanced the project or team dimension in the job description. Having said that, we must admit that there have been border cases where for example phrases such as ‘experiences of controlling and managing projects’ (DB, January, 2000) can be read as a managerial role.

Consequently, we cannot exclude that there be many more senior and managerial positions which actually resemble the role of the project manager, and the whole issue whether modern public manager by default are anticipated to act in accordance with project management principles is something that needs a separate study.

However, we can at least conclude that the recruitment of staff for organisations which are employing project management staff concerns all the levels in the organisations and, thus, both the civil servants holding a formal position as executive, managerial posts as well as junior civil servants and project manager (either *‘tovholder’*; or *‘teamleder’* in Danish) without the formal public managerial appointment.

4.3 Requested competences

In most of our sample of job adverts we are witnessing a combination of formal job requirements such as specific educational backgrounds and/or work experiences from a specific policy field combined with the requirement of social and interpersonal skills related to the individual’s personality. None of the 42 adverts searching for project managers, however, define the required competences through prescribed or actual job descriptions alone. Most often we see a combination of the two (29 adverts) and in some cases only the individual’s personal skills are described (twelve adverts). Unsurprisingly, the requested educational backgrounds in the job profiles are usually (master) degrees from disciplines such as law, economics or political science. However, there are also examples of adverts in which the educational background is more vaguely defined as e.g. *‘a relevant master degree’* (for example DB, January 2004, 10). In cases where the required educational background is no more explicit than *‘a relevant master degree’* combined with a number of social and interpersonal skills, we have categorised these adverts as cases where social skills are more imperative than the formal background. For example, one advert contains a job profile which, among other things, describes the job functions as *‘project management, knowledge sharing and policy making’*, and where the required skills are *‘a desire to work in a politically governed organisation’*, and to be *‘creative and develop new thoughts’*. Only in a by-sentence is it mentioned that: *‘you probably hold a master degree in social sciences’* (DB, January 2008: 29).

If we specifically study the required social and interpersonal skills they often have to do with the ability to work in teams, possessing a certain team spirit, and more personal qualities such as being outgoing, having a sense of humour and/or

being able to come up with creative solutions. In the following we see some examples of the skills related to either the individual's personality or his or hers ability to work in teams:

- *You are open and outgoing and want to, and have the will, to work in teams* (DB, August 2002: 30)
- *We seek a generalist with a flair for policy-making/.../We emphasize that you have project management experience concerning the modernisation of the public sector.* (DB, January 2004: 10).
- *You are able to fulfil many different roles including the ones of communicator, adviser and negotiator* (DB, August 2004: 7).
- *You have the ability to cooperate and act as principle initiator. You are able to see new angles and produce creative solutions to complex matters. You are articulated both in speech and in writing. You have the courage to work in a frantic work environment* (DB, August 2004: 39).
- *We expect you to be enthusiastic about good teamwork* (DB, January 2009: 58).

The job adverts in general not only seek certain forms of skills and requirements; they also signal distinct self-images of the organisations in which project management is a principal mode of organisation. For example, we can witness how the organisations describe themselves, with phrases such as: *'our working method is cooperation and project management'* (DB, January 2004: 10), *'we work in teams'* (DB, January 2010: 28), or *'our tasks are primary solved through interdisciplinary teamwork'* (DB, August 2009: 23). These descriptions reflect the organisations' attempt to sell themselves as attractive workplaces to an audience beyond the active job-seekers. It seems to be as a common feature that the organisations use these kinds of positive self-descriptions. Yet, it is difficult to conclude if these self-descriptions reflect an equal amount of actual project management in the different organisations, or whether we are witnessing superficial statements based on wishful thinking far from reality. There is at least no doubt that project management is a dominant feature in Danish ministerial organisations (although the scope of project management may differ in-between the organisations). Some adverts even indicate that project management is so central that it is a part of the overall competence development strategy. However, this is not an easily transferable skill, but something you receive through experience where the competence profile is phrased as, for example, *'experience with project work'* (DB, January, 1999) or *'knowledge about project management'* (DB, August, 1999). In only one single advert are we able to see signs of codified project management training requirements. And that is also within an organisation which has got its own internal continuous training programme in project management (*'Vi har egen projektlederuddannelse og gode muligheder for kompetenceudvikling'*) (DB, August 2006: 37).

4.4 Project management of what? The role of the project manager in the organisation

In 24 of the collected job adverts project management was related to the task of *internal organisational development* in the shape of e.g. the development and implementation of information systems, the development of HRM policies, and internal re-organisation.

In 29 of the job adverts, project management was associated to a specific policy task, and thus specific stages in the policy process including all the stages of a policy process (agenda setting, forecasting, evaluation, and implementation. Participation in policy-development and agenda setting represented 10 of the 29 adverts, whereas forecasting (analyse) counted for eleven adverts. Implementation and evaluation counted for seven of the adverts, and only one had to do with 'decision-making'. We only identified one advert in which the job description transcended the distinction between project manager and a regular executive managerial role in the organisation (Deputy General Director in the Danish Maritime Authority. DB, January 2009: 25).

A more overall feature materialises once we begin to analyse what sort of authorities, as well as offices, that employ project management. Based on our material we are able to witness that project management seem to be employed in two different contexts. First, project management as organising principle is used in offices and authorities which are responsible for policy formulation and more communicative functions. That is, offices and authorities where the main functions are to support decision-makers with analyses and/or moulding of public opinion. Authorities and offices with pure regulatory functions seem to be less likely to employ project management as the chief guiding organisational principle. Second, we find job descriptions with project management experience as a required skill in contexts where the organisation is going to implement certain new systems (typically information systems) or new business process.

4.5 Internal or external project management?

In our collection of job adverts 24 of the jobs were looking for project managers responsible for internal organisational network processes. Only two the job profiles in the collection referred to pure external network processes, whereas 16 profiles included a combination of both internal and external network processes. It can be seen in adverts where the job includes *'the ability to work across different professional cultures and to work in a political environment'* (DB, August, 20006), or where the successful candidate can participate in *'changing teams with different actors'* (DB, August, 2000). Consequently, it seems that project management almost always is associated with internal network processes within the organisation, one way or another. Project management is in this respect tightly linked to the existing organisational structures of the Danish government and rarely linked to cross-sectoral policy problems.

4.6 Permanent or temporary projects

The collected job adverts are mainly looking for project managers on permanent contracts (38 adverts). Four of the jobs advertised are temporary positions, of which two are maternity leaves. Consequently, only two of the jobs advertised are for project managers to temporary positions related to specific and temporary projects. We are naturally aware that many temporary jobs are never advertised, and that the recruitment process for temporary substitutes usually takes place beyond the formal recruitment procedures. However, it is still a vital finding that our sample does not include more positions for temporary projects.

This finding indicates that project management is often associated with the form of organisation in the Danish ministries where teamwork seems to have become part of everyday life in the administration. Project management is, thus, not limited to certain task that eventually will come to an end. Rather, it seems that the project manager intakes a more permanent position in public sector organisations whether s/he works with tasks involving internal organisational developments or with temporary policy tasks. Thus, the temporary policy tasks do not imply that the position as project manager will end but rather that the project manager eventually will move on to new tasks.

5. Concluding remarks

One perhaps banal, albeit important, conclusion of our study is that the term 'project management' is not used in a consistent and unequivocal way in our empirical material. Although we can say that it is commonly used in the latter part of our study, and is alleged to be wide-spread, we cannot assign the term a special meaning. If we go further with our variables, we can with all the necessary precautions being said, and given our modest collection of documentary sources, generate some possible hypotheses for further empirical research. First, although project management does not seem to be the predominant organisation model for Danish government organisations, it seems to have gained some momentum, and is by the end of 00s perceived as a natural element in organising governmental work. Second, by emphasising project management skills in the job profile it means that the successful candidate should be a 'team player'. 'Managing projects' refers to a 'case officer' who is successful in interacting with other actors rather than a managerial executive role. The role of the modern Danish civil servant is the one of a member of a variety of teams, and our study shows how this has become institutionalised in the ministries throughout the 1990s and 00s. Third, the competencies of project management are considered to be interpersonal rather than codified knowledge that can be learnt; to hold 'project management skills' almost becomes synonymous with good social and interpersonal skills. This stands in contrast to some of the thoughts in modern project management literature where managing project is seen as transferable competencies which can be taught (cf. Mantel et al. 2004). Fourth, those government organisations that have regulatory functions are less likely to employ project management techniques, whereas we find project management in pure policy-shaping

offices or in contexts where certain systems are to be implemented. Finally, that project management, despite some of the post-NPM literature's claim, is nothing that is employed for cross-sectoral policy problems. Instead, it is mainly a way of organising the office internally.

References

- Abrahamsson A and Agevall L. (2009) Velfärdssektorns projektifiering – kort-siktiga lösningar av långsiktiga problem? *Kommunal ekonomi och politik*, 13(4), 35-60.
- Barber, Elizabeth and James Warn (2005) "Leadership in Project Management: From Fire-fighter to Firelighter", *Management Decision*, 43(7/8), 1032-1039.
- Bekke, Hans, A.G.M., James L. Perry and Theo, A.J. Toonen (eds.) (1996) *Civil Service Systems in Comparative Perspective*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Bergström, Tomas (1995) *Konsten att finna tulipanarosor. Om chefer och chefsrekrytering i en förändrad offentlig sektor*, KEFU Skriftserie 14, 1995:2.
- Betts, Martin & Peter Lansley (1995) "International Journal of Project Management: A Review of the First Ten Years", *International Journal of Project Management*, 13(4): 207-217.
- Breaugh, James A. and Mary Starke (2000) Research on Employee Recruitment: So Many Studies, So Many Remaining Questions, *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 405-434.
- Clegg, Stewart and David Courpasson (2004) Political Hybrids: Toquevillean Views on Project Organisations, *Journal of Management Studies*, 41(4), 525-547.
- Crawford, Lynn and Jane Helm (2009) "Government and Governance: The Value of Project Management in the Public Sector", *Project Management Journal*, 40(1), 73-87.
- Crawford, Lynn, Kerry Costello, Julien Pollack, and Lesley Bentley (2003) "Managing Soft Projects in the Public Sector", *International Journal of Project Management*, 21, 443-448.
- Ellström, Per-Erik (1997) The Many Meanings of Occupational Competence and Qualifications, *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 21(6/7), 266-273.
- Engwall, M., Steinthorsson, R. S. and Söderholm, A. (2003) "Temporary organizing - A Viking approach to project management research" In: Czarniawska, B. and Sevón, G. (eds) *The northern lights: Organization theory in Scandinavia*. Liber: Stockholm.
- Hall, Patrik (2007) Byråkratisering som konsekvens av företagisering inom offentlig förvaltning? *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* 109 (2): 143-149.
- Hodgetts, R.M. (1968) "Leadership Techniques in the Project Organisation", *The Academy of Management Journal*, 11(2), 211-219.

- Hogwood, B.W. & Gunn, L.A. (1984) *Policy Analysis for the Real World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Laclau, Ernesto & Chantal Mouffe (1985): *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, London: Verso.
- March, James G. & Johan P. Olsen (1989): *Rediscovering Institutions – The Organisational Basis of Politics*, New York: The Free Press.
- March, James G. & Johan P. Olsen (1995): *Democratic Governance*, New York: The Free Press.
- Mouffe, Chantal (1993). *The Return of the Political*, London: Verso.
- Osborne, Stephen (2006) “The New Public Governance?”, *Public Management Review*. 8(3): 377–88.
- Packendorff, Johann (1995) “Inquiring into the Temporary Organisation: New Directions for Project Management Research”, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 11(4), 319-333.
- Pinto, Jeffery .K. (1996) *Power and Politics in Project Management*, Sylva [NC]: Project Management Institute.
- Pinto, Jeffery K. & Zorica Nedovic-Budic (2002) Information Sharing among Partnering Project Organizations, In: Sahlin-Andersson, Kerstin and Anders Söderholm (eds.) *Beyond Project Management. New Perspectives on the Temporary-Permanent Dilemma*. Malmö: Liber.
- Poulsen, Birgitte (2005). *Nye tider, nye roller?*, København: Jurist- og Økonomiforbundets forlag.
- Poulsen, Birgitte (2007). “The question of Roles and Identities in Public Administration”. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30 (4), 469-490.
- Poulsen, Birgitte (2009). “Competing traditions of governance and dilemmas of administrative accountability. The case of Denmark”. *Public Administration*, 87(1), 117-131.
- S.J. Mantel Jr, J.R. Meredith, S.M. Shafer, M.M. Sutton (2004) *Core Concepts: Project Management in Practice (2nd edition)*, John Wiley and Sons, New York.
- Stoker, Gerry (2006) “Public Value Management: A New Narrative for Networked Governance?” *The American Review of Public Administration*, 36(1), 41-57.
- Sundin, E. (1995) *Teknik och organisation i teori och praktik*, Nerenius & Santerus: Stockholm
- Sundin, Elisabeth (2002) “Regenerated Professionalism: The Librarian who went out on her own”, In: Sahlin-Andersson, Kerstin and Anders Söderholm (eds.) *Beyond Project Management. New Perspectives on the Temporary-Permanent Dilemma*. Malmö: Liber.
- Todd, Peter A., James D. McKeen and R. Brent Gallupe, (1995) “The Evolution of IS Job Skills: A Content Analysis of IS Job Advertisements from 1970 to 1990s”, *MIS Quarterly*, 19(1), 1-27.

- Turner, I. R. & Ralf Müller (2005) “The Project Manager’s Leadership Style as a Success Factor on Project: A Literature Review”, *Project Management Journal*, 36(1), 49-61.
- Watson, Tony J. (1997): “The labour of division: the manager as ‘self’ and ‘other’”, pp. 139-152 i Kevin Hetherington & Rolland Munro (eds.), *Ideas of Difference*, Oxford:
- Wirick, D. W. (2009) *Public-Sector Project Management;: Meeting the Challenges and Achieving Results*, Hoboken [NJ]: John Wiley & Sons/Project Management Institute.

Note

¹ Some of the other articles referred to sectors (such as e.g. telecommunication and other public utility producers) which potentially can have been publicly owned (and managed) in the years of the review.