Abstract

New participatory, interactive, and less direct forms of governing seem currently to be unfolding in many liberal democracies. Some scholars have tried to conceptualize these forms of governing by using the notion of new public governance (NPG). While promising, the notion remains conceptually underdeveloped. This article first aims to develop NPG from an empirical to an analytical concept that enables categorization and evaluation of new forms of governing. In order to gauge the full scope of the current transformations we draw on David Easton’s system theoretical model to identify the constitutive elements of NPG and show how they differ from those elements underpinning classical public administration and new public management. The second aim of the article is to delineate the main challenges that NPG poses for public management and policymaking in a complex and fragmented world. We conclude by reflecting on the need for metagovernance in order to handle the challenges and bring out the positive impact of NPG on normative performance goals such as efficiency, democracy, and innovation.

Keywords: governance reforms, analytical framework, political systems model.
INTRODUCTION

Interactive, interorganizational, and indirect forms of governing seem to be currently unfolding with varying degrees of strength in many Western democracies, perhaps most strongly in those northwestern European countries characterized by strong states and well-organized civil societies (Torfing et al. 2012). These more or less new forms of governing evolve around participatory and networked processes based on interdependency, collaboration, and trust, and they focus on improving processes and outcomes in public policymaking and public service delivery in the light of increasing expectation and demands, and growing complexity and fragmentation. Stephen Osborne has tried to grasp these emerging and increasingly significant forms of governing with the notion of new public governance (NPG) (Osborne 2006, 2010).

While promising, this notion remains conceptually underdeveloped and is more an empirical than an analytical concept (see also Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). So far, there is little agreement as to the significance, scope, and impact of the current reforms. While some scholars seem to dismiss the reforms as little more than minute disturbances to existing forms of public policymaking and public service delivery (Marinetto 2003; Goldfinch and Wallis 2010; Lodge and Gill 2011), others seem to envisage more or less radical transformations of our political-administrative system towards more interactive forms of governing (Bevir 2010; Koppenjan 2012).

It is exactly because of this lack of agreement that we find it timely to develop a conceptual framework that may assist us in grasping and ultimately gauging the extent of such changes, or the lack thereof. Accordingly, the primary aim of this article is to suggest a conceptual and analytical framework that may help us in grasping the scope of the current governance changes and their impact on the political and administrative system. To clarify, our aim is not to show the extent to which NPG-style reforms have actually developed, though this
The article will provide indications of such developments. Instead this study ventures to develop a conceptual framework that will allow for the systematization of (ongoing and future) data collection that, in turn, will make way for comparative assessments of whether ongoing political-administrative reforms in liberal democracies may be characterized as NPG.

The second aim of this article is to delineate the challenges of the current changes to public management. The debate over participatory, networked, and more indirect forms of governance is not merely a matter of adequately conceiving and describing the ongoing changes, it is also a normative issue. In the wake of three decades of new public management (NPM) style reforms that have been heavily inspired by market principles of competition, efficiency, and customer satisfaction and have led to the import of private sector management techniques into the public sector, we have seen a growing frustration with their outcomes. New public management may have brought a number of benefits in terms of greater emphasis on public leadership, goal steering, and results, but the evidence demonstrating the unfulfilled promises and the numerous unintended negative effects of introducing market-like dynamics in the public sector is substantial (Christensen and Lægreid 2008). We agree with a number of policymakers and scholars who see potential for improving public policymaking and public service delivery by adopting more participatory and collaborative forms of governing (Agranoff and McGuire 2003; Koppenjan 2012). While it is possible to identify several case studies that seem to confirm such potential (Mandell 2001), we need to take a sober view of this potential and balance it with the challenges and limitations linked to these forms of governing.

In order to meet these two objectives, David Easton’s classical model of the political-administrative system is applied. This allows us to focus on NPG, not in the narrow sense of a rule-governed managerial system that produces public services and regulations, but rather in the broader sense of an administrative system that is imbedded in a larger political system that
constantly interacts with its external environment. In other words, we will take a political science rather than a public management approach to the study of the key elements of NPG. This broader view of the transformation of the entire system of public governance will help us to gauge more fully the challenges implied by NPG.

The remainder of the article is structured in the following way. First, we outline an analytical framework for describing and conceptualizing new and emerging trends in public governance. The analytical framework both draws and elaborates upon David Easton’s political systems model. Second, we outline the challenges that NPG reforms pose to public management. Third, we discuss the need for metagoverning NPG in order to tackle the emerging problems and challenges, and to realize its potential for governing of a complex and fragmented society. Finally, we conclude by summing up the features of the analytical model and reflecting on future research on NPG.

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE AND HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF NPG

During most of the twentieth century, public governance in liberal democracies was characterized by a mixture of classic Weberian-style bureaucracy emphasizing legality, impartiality, and Sachlichkeit on the one hand, and representative democracy characterized by regular, competitive elections on the other. While there has always been substantial variation in institutional design and specific instruments across countries and policy areas, the strong family resemblance between the predominant modes of governing in the Western countries means that it makes sense to broadly characterize them as classical public administration (CPA), referring to the pivotal role of the public administration in carrying out the decisions made by democratically elected governments.

However, from around the 1980s, new forms of governing, including, for example, privatization, contracting out, voucher schemes, internal contracts, systematic performance
measurement, benchmarking, and the rise of a specialized corps of public managers responsible for the strategic development of the public sector, not only supplemented, but also to a certain extent supplanted and transformed key aspects of CPA. As a result, what was increasingly referred to as new public management became the predominant mode of political governing vis-à-vis CPA, which continued to play an important role in certain areas and in relation to certain tasks (Hood 1991). Despite the celebration of market dynamics that gives it a certain affinity with neoliberalism, the governing practices associated with NPM did not unfold on the basis of a blueprint reform package. Accordingly, NPM spread to most Western countries in the shape of a series of diverse problematizations of CPA on the one hand, and a wide range of nationally specific reform programs and governing techniques on the other (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011).

As with NPM reforms, we do not find a consistent theoretical or ideological framework supporting NPG. Yet we do find a cluster of principles, such as process and outcome focus, coordination, participation, and co-production, which are almost the inverse of those informing NPM. Policy formulation and public service delivery are to be improved, not by increasing agentification, competition, and choice, but by more cooperation, negotiation, and the active participation of relevant stakeholders, who are envisaged to chip in with their knowledge, ideas, and resources. Such principles are informed more or less consistently by sociological theories on organizations and networks, and political theories on active citizenship, empowerment, and participation (see Sørensen and Torfing 2007). In addition, while NPM perceived public employees as rational individual utility maximizers, NPG adopts a mixed-motives view of public employees as both selfish and altruistic (Le Grand 2003). Finally, NPG regards participatory inclusion in public governance as a driver of democratization (Warren 2009).

Stephen Osborne uses the term NPG to designate a new orchestration of public policy implementation and public service delivery (Osborne 2010: 7). He goes on to argue that NPG
implies changes not only in public management and organization, but also in the very functioning of the state. Osborne thus locates the new mode of governance within a state characterized by a double pluralism, i.e., a plurality of interdependent actors engaged in policy delivery and a plurality of policymaking processes cutting across politico-administrative levels (Osborne 2010: 9). In order to capture the “fundamentals” of NPG, Osborne proposes a systemic perspective (Osborne 2010: 415–416). This implies paying attention to the institutional and external environment within which policy formulation and public service delivery take place.

In order to further develop the notion of NPG, we take up Osborne’s suggestion and adopt a slightly modified version of David Easton’s model of the political system as an analytical device for describing and gauging the transformation of public governance (Easton, 1965a: 32). Instead of viewing the political system as a black box that receives inputs and produces outputs, we use Easton’s notion of withinput to open the black box (Easton 1965a: 55; Easton 1965b: 114–115). This results in the following four constitutive elements of the political administrative system, illustrated in Figure 1.
1) The provision and processing of *input* in terms of demands, support, and mobilization of resources.

2) The organization and generation of *withinput* in terms of an institutional shaping of the decision-making processes emanating from the roles, values, norms, and routines that are found in public decision-making processes.

3) The design and implementation of *output* in terms of policy, regulations, and public services.

4) The provision of *feedback* in terms of evaluation of outcomes on the basis of normative standards.

We regard the four defining functions in the political-administrative system as generic in the sense that all political-administrative systems must find a way of organizing and carrying them out. The different ways in which these functions are conducted under CPA, NPM, and NPG are illustrated in abbreviated form in Figure 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classical Public Administration</th>
<th>Voting plus pressure groups</th>
<th>Bureaucracy: public, based on professional standards</th>
<th>Authoritative rule-based regulation and supply-driven services aiming to ensure equity</th>
<th>Periodic elections and constitutional accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Public Management</td>
<td>Voting plus user satisfaction and choice</td>
<td>Strategic performance management and quasi-markets: public vs. private</td>
<td>Deregulation and demand-driven services aiming to ensure efficiency and user satisfaction</td>
<td>Performance measurement and sanctions through competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Public Governance</td>
<td>Voting plus arenas for <em>empowered participation</em> bringing together public and private actors in continued dialogue</td>
<td><em>Collaboration</em> between different levels, sectors, and actors: public plus private</td>
<td><em>New tools</em> empowering and engaging stakeholders in public problem-solving and service production</td>
<td><em>Multiple forms of accountability</em> based on a variety of standards attuned to organizational learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2. The political systems of CPA, NPM, and NPG**

Under CPA, the demands of and supports to the political system were characterized by regular parliamentary elections supplemented by the influence of more or less illegitimate pressure groups seeking to favor their particular interests. The political-administrative process was characterized by a Weberian-style bureaucracy, where civil servants are expected to obediently comply with rules and commands from their superiors (politicians and/or public managers) and base their work on the best available professional expertise (*Sachlichkeit*). Output in the form of public regulation and service delivery was above all structured by detailed rules and social rights and based on a politically determined supply that has been growing along with rising economic wealth in Western societies. The feedback from citizens and other private actors
to the political system took place through regular elections and procedures of constitutional accountability in order to prevent the abuse of executive power.

While NPM has not replaced CPA, it did introduce a whole new set of principles and mechanisms of governing that supplemented and in the process created several tensions with CPA. On the input side, this included above all the introduction of mechanisms gauging consumer satisfaction and enabling a customer’s “free” choice between various public and private providers. In order to enhance cost-efficiency, administrative service production was subjected to competitive pressures through the creation of quasi-markets based on internal and external contracts, as well as to an elaborate system of performance management. On the output side, many policies were deregulated and then re-regulated around measurable goals and targets and public services are—at least ideally—driven by the informed demand of the targeted citizens. Feedback has taken the form of systematic performance measurement and benchmarking supplemented with the sanctions produced through competition. In other words, if the quality of a public service is not deemed satisfactory by the citizen-customer, then the provider—be it public or private—will lose his business.

When applied to the political systems model, the input under NPG may be understood as the expansion of arenas for empowered participation bringing together public and private actors in continued dialogue. Again, while strong elements of CPA and NPM are retained, such as regular voting for legislative assemblies and systematic user surveys, we suggest using the term NPG when the input to a political-administrative system is more or less systematically supplemented with more direct forms of civic engagement that, ideally, go beyond the narrow interests promoted by elite interest groups. Signs indicating the expansion of arenas for empowered participation bringing together public and private actors in continued dialogue have been documented in more or less all OECD countries (e.g., OECD 2009, 2011a). The objective
of citizen participation is not only to facilitate the self-government of citizens in civil society (Arnstein 1969), but also to mobilize private resources, energy, and ideas in the co-production of public governance in order to enhance its input and output legitimacy (Skelcher and Torfing 2010). At the bottom of this new participatory trend we have the notion of active citizenship, which emphasizes the concurrence of rights and obligations bestowed on citizens by the community to which they belong, and, thus, tends to replace the liberal notion of citizenship that conceives the citizen as a passive, individual bearer of legal rights.

Under NPG, the administrative governing process (withinput) is characterized by collaboration, rather than competition, in order to tackle complex and crosscutting policy problems and overcome policy deadlocks (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). Whereas NPM aimed to create effective, competing silos, NPG seeks to drill holes in the silos, enhance negotiation between public authorities at multiple levels, and foster interaction between public and private stakeholders through the formation of networks, partnerships, and relational contracts. The immediate goal of such crosscutting collaboration is to exchange and pool public and private ideas and resources through negotiated interactions in order to enhance effective and democratic governance, while a further goal is to facilitate mutual learning and build joint ownership of new and innovative solutions. Again, we find indications of reforms across a number of OECD countries seeking to promote collaboration rather than competition between public agencies, suggesting that the decision-making processes (withinput) may be changed in the direction of NPG as well (OECD 2009; Torfing et al. 2012).

The output under NPG not only includes the provision of public services, prohibitions, permissions, and authoritative rulings, but also involves the deployment of new tools of governance (Salamon 2002) aiming to enhance the problem-solving capacity of private stakeholders who are engaged either in some kind of “regulated self-regulation” or in the “co-
production of public solutions.” While policymakers no doubt still are very concerned with providing forms of output in the shape of consumable public services, we find solid indications of the deployment of new tools of governing aiming to enhance the problem-solving capacity of private stakeholders (Salamon 2002; OECD 2011b). Finally, we apply the term NPG when so-called technologies of agency are used to empower social and economic actors, and construct them as capable, diligent, and responsible, and technologies of performance are deployed in order to ensure that the actors act and interact in accordance with a normative framework of standards, norms, and kinds of soft guidance (Dean 1999).

Last but not least, the feedback mechanism of NPG involves not only constitutional and political accountability, but also a variety of accountability procedures allowing for multiple standards and forms of account-giving upwards, downwards, and horizontally (Mashaw 2006; Koliba et al. 2011). Across OECD countries, we find more or less developed reform experiments with developing accountability methods seeking to spur the internal motivation of public employees and the capacity for organizational learning and innovation (OECD 2005: chapter 3). When using the term NPG, we include those performance management systems that measure not only according to standards set by central political authorities, but also per mutually negotiated objectives that make sense and motivate local public sector staff. NPG also includes those top-down accountability systems that are more or less systematically linked to horizontal peer review systems and public account-giving to citizens and stakeholders (Moynihan 2008).

The elaborated model of the political-administrative system has enabled us to identify and describe the constitutive elements of NPG in terms of empowered participation, multi-actor collaboration, new tools of government, and multiple forms of accountability. We argue that rather than constituting a set of disparate building blocks, the core elements of NPG are linked and mutually reinforcing so as to constitute a more or less coherent governing model. Thus,
empowered participation of citizens and private stakeholders provides the condition of possibility for public governance to be based on collaborative interaction, and the prospect of having real influence encourages participation (Smith 2009). Problems are solved and services provided through different kinds of collaborative governance that involve public and private actors in the constructive management of differences aiming to define problems and formulate and implement joint solutions (Gray 1989).

It is of course impossible to predict just how far the constitutive elements of NPG will penetrate the political-administrative systems of liberal democracies. What we can say is that these systems are already characterized by a mixture of CPA, NPM, and NPG. Moreover, it seems fair to assume that whatever the balance between the three forms of governing, the very fact that they coexist is likely to produce different hybrids and multiple tensions (Christensen and Lægreid 2010a, 2010b). In terms of our generic model, the likely persistence of hybrid forms of governing implies that we should not expect to find an administrative political system now or in the future that will fully correspond to the pure NPG species outlined in Figure 2. However, by analyzing actual public governance reforms and institutions in terms of their impact on the functioning of input, withinput, output, and feedback, we are provided with a rough, but nevertheless quite concise instrument to gauge the significance of such reforms to the political administrative system.

THE CHALLENGES OF NPG

Notwithstanding the potential of NPG in terms of improving policymaking and service production, it is no panacea and is likely to pose a number of critical challenges to public management. In this section we shall discuss some of the main questions and problems inherent to NPG. At this point in time the discussion must necessarily remain somewhat speculative
because NPG is still in its infancy. We focus on the main challenges facing the four key functions of the political system that will be influenced by NPG.

As we saw with regard to the input to the political system, NPG entails an expansion of arenas for empowered participation, bringing together public and private actors in sustained interaction through which knowledge, resources, and ideas are exchanged and jointly owned new solutions are created (Sørensen and Torfing 2005). NPG essentially rests upon the assumption that public administrators, citizens, and private stakeholders will participate actively in policymaking and service delivery if they are given the right opportunities. This raises at least two types of challenges. The first challenge is how to tackle the situation in which citizens or organized group stakeholders are either unable or unwilling to enter processes of participation and collaboration. If we want to activate such groups we need more knowledge about how to mobilize and activate young people, busy parents with small kids, and private stakeholders with a strong anti-system identity (for an overview of participatory techniques, see Smith 2009). Similarly, many civil servants will prefer to retain their legal-bureaucratic roles or their roles as efficient service producers, rather than acting as stewards of empowered participation. Hence, the question is whether formal training or the propagation of a new set of professional norms and identities is enough to change the institutionalized practices of civil servants. There seems to be no clear answer to this question. Studies of local interventions and experiments are needed.

The second challenge is how to handle unequal participation. While CPA is based, at least ideally, on citizens’ equal influence through their right to vote, NPG implies that this ideal is, if not abandoned, then at least supplemented with more selective participation ideally based on affectedness. Such selected inclusion may easily reinforce existing differences in the resources and social capital of the citizens. Consequently, politicians and top public managers need to make sustained efforts to ensure that participatory policy processes are not captured by local
power elites. In other words, NPG depends upon retaining legal authority granted to elected politicians, one of the defining features of CPA. Accordingly, certain aspects of CPA seem to provide a necessary, though insufficient, precondition for successful input under NGP.

Withinput under NPG entails collaborative interaction between different levels and organizations within the public sector and increased collaboration with private sector actors (Radin 2006). With regard to the increased collaboration between different levels and organizations of the public administration, two challenges seem particularly significant. First, it is important that the process not be completely dominated and determined by the more resourceful and powerful public bodies. Under the influence of NPM, the Treasury (or Ministry of Finance) in many OECD countries has tended to establish more or less rigid performance standards pertaining to everything, including budgeting procedures, operational procedures, and, in the worst cases, even in terms of substantial outputs. Now, while nobody would dispute the benefits of a certain level of central policy coordination and central control of overall public expenditure, the centralized imposition of often very detailed performance standards for different public agencies operating at the lower levels is not conducive to collaboration across policy areas. Accordingly, policymakers and public managers from the dominant ministry or ministries may do better by urging other public agencies at the national, regional, and local levels to develop both their own and some shared targets and performance standards that facilitate collaboration, defined as the constructive management of differences in order to find new and innovative solutions to mutual problems (Gray 1989).

Second, collaboration between different administrative levels within a particular policy area faces the challenge of the hierarchical lines of command upon which the principle of ministerial or administrative responsibility rests. This principle has the important merit of ensuring that a minister cannot push the blame for cases of political abuse within his ministry on
to his subordinates. Yet the downside of this system is that it may make the minister act in a risk-aversive manner and reject new ideas and methods proposed by subordinates. The solution here is not simply to delegate formal responsibility from the minister to lower levels, which would only make subordinates more risk-averse. Rather, policymakers and public managers should urge subordinate civil servants and frontline workers to make suggestions on how to improve collaboration, and on the basis of these suggestions allow for experiments, the effects of which should be evaluated according to their ability to meet politically decided outputs.

NPG changes the output of the political system by using tools that aim to empower and change the behavior of stakeholders with a view to increase their problem-solving capacity and deploy them in either self-regulated activities or partnership with public authorities. When the output no longer exclusively consists of consumable public services, but rather of tools to enhance the problem-solving capacity and risk-reducing behavior of stakeholders, two challenges immediately arise. Firstly who should determine the problems and desirable behavior, and how should they do so? While policymakers running for election are expected to have a fairly solid notion of what the key societal problems are and what kind of behavior is expected of citizens and other private groups, it is neither possible nor desirable that elected policymakers develop detailed action programs all by themselves. Citizens and other private actors have their own understanding of the problems and may also have important experience, ideas, resources, and energy that can contribute to solving the problems, although they may need other public expertise and professional assistance to formulate effective and workable solutions. The challenge then is to develop institutions and procedures of collaboration whereby the often quite general and vague problem identifications and goals formulated by policymakers are exchanged and debated along with those problems and goals held by diverse private groups.
Secondly, once the problems and the desirable forms of behavior are determined, then how do we enhance problem-solving capacities and effect behavioral change? Here public managers should rely on a combination of existing evidence of the behavioral effects of given policy interventions, stakeholder evaluations of regulations and services, and local tests and experiments that are subjected to demands of accountability, in order to ensure the application of proper methods and sound ethical standards and prevent excessive resource consumption.

Feedback under NPG is no longer only exclusively about regular elections, constitutional account-giving, and rigid performance monitoring. With NPG reforms these feedback mechanisms are supplemented by new forms of accountability attuned not only to purposes of legal control and performance output, but also to various forms of organizational learning and innovation, and to the ambition of enhancing the internal motivation of public employees (Frederickson and Frederickson 2006). Two challenges stand out here. Firstly, policymakers and public managers need to agree on certain criteria or standards of account-giving that must be met by those engaged in organizational learning. Such standards could be of a procedural character (emphasizing the ways in which such account-giving should be conducted) and/or of a more substantive character (emphasizing the goals or outcomes that must be accounted for). The challenge then is to find a suitable level of specificity of such standards.

Secondly, there is a risk that such multiple forms of accountability may lead to government overload. If policy formulation and public service delivery are to be accounted for not only in terms of their legality, popular support, efficiency, and effectiveness, but also in terms of their quality and democratic and innovative character, there is a risk that we produce endless accounts that are either not used at all or only used selectively for special interest purposes. While such multiple forms of accountability may display important benefits (Schillemans and Bovens 2011), the mere costs of making these diverse accounts, compiling and analyzing them, and ensuring
that they are disseminated and debated may be very high (Lewis and Triantafillou 2012). In short, the challenge again is for some kind of selection of accounting requirements on a need-to-know basis and informed by cost-effectiveness considerations.

**METAGOVERNING NEW PUBLIC GOVERNANCE**

Even the most ardent proponents of NPG will agree that it is by no means easy to enhance citizen participation, improve interorganizational collaboration, develop and deploy new tools of governing, and design a new system of accountability. Many things can go wrong and hamper the potential achievements of NPG. Accordingly, some kind of proactive steering at a distance is called for in order to design and ensure the functioning of the new NPG-inspired processes and institutions. The concept of metagovernance seems to offer an important addition to the above description of NPG (Torfing et al. 2012).

In order to get closer to the role that metagovernance may play, we may start by observing that CPA mainly approaches public governance as a *first order* activity that aims to provide rule-governed regulation of society and the economy and deliver adequate public service. In other words, it is a direct form of rule. By contrast, NPM tends to see governance as a *second order* activity. Governance is redefined as “management” that involves the creation of institutional designs that encourage self-regulating public organizations and private contractors to deliver high-quality services and efficient regulation (Hood 1991; Sørensen and Triantafillou 2009). NPM claims that the institutional designs are in need of constant revision in order to improve their functioning and effects, but it does not offer any reflection on how to govern the self-regulating institutional arenas. NPG shares NPM’s assumption that governance involves the regulation of self-regulation, but insists that collaboration is more important than competition for solving the growing number of wicked problems and producing effective, democratic, and innovative solutions. Governance of collaborative governance arenas through institutional
design, discursive framing, process management, and direct participation becomes a key ambition of NPG, because it helps us to maintain the primacy of politics by linking interactive governance arenas to elected politicians and their executive public managers. It follows that governance in the context of NPG is increasingly defined as a third order activity involving the governance of governance arenas that are producing concrete acts of government. Such third order governance is precisely what Jessop (2002) and Kooiman (2003) define as “metagovernance.”

Metagovernance is a reflexive, strategic, and inherently political mode of governance that aims to sponsor and frame interactive policy processes, bring actors together, facilitate collaboration, mediate conflict, support decision making, and ensure implementation of negotiated solutions. The challenge is to shape and influence interactive governance without reverting to traditional forms of command and control. Yet metagovernance is not only a question of facilitating, managing, and giving direction to governance networks, partnerships, and other collaborative arenas. It also involves pragmatic and context-dependent choices for how to solve public problems and tasks through a specific combination of hierarchy, market, and crosscutting governance networks (Meuleman 2008, 2011). As such, metagovernance can be defined broadly as the attempt to combine and manage different institutional forms of self-governance that contribute to the production of public value.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in metagovernance (Torfing et al. 2012), there has been scant attention paid to how it might enhance empowered participation and multi-actor collaboration, shape the new tools of governing, and give direction to the multiple mechanisms for ensuring accountability. All these issues require careful analysis in order to further develop the understanding of NPG. We also need more studies of how metagovernance can enhance
different normative objectives and a better understanding of the efficiency of different metagovernance tools and the trade-offs they produce.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this article was to suggest a conceptual and analytical framework that may help us in grasping the scope of the current governance changes and their impact on the political and administrative systems of liberal democracies. In particular, it may assist us in assessing whether such governance reforms may be characterized as new public governance. We have shown that David Easton's political systems model provides a valuable framework for identifying the constitutive elements of NPG and gauging how they differ from the defining traits of classical public administration and new public management. While this article has not provided any systematic empirical evidence, we have referred to existing studies indicating that many contemporary political-administrative reforms fall under our political systems–inspired conception of NPG. Also we have argued that NPG is likely to coexist with both CPA and NPM and that such coexistence may be quite productive if it is guided by pragmatic concerns regarding how best to solve the task at hand. However, political struggles over influence and resources will of course not disappear. Thus, we have assessed some of the challenges that are likely to accompany the increasing reliance on new public governance and introduced the concept of metagovernance, which points to the need to govern the participatory and collaborative arenas and the new tools of government inherent to NPG.

Our article demonstrates the need for more empirical research in order to fully understand the nature of the current political-administrative reforms in liberal democracies. First, we need to examine the societal, political, and administrative forces supporting and driving NPG reforms. Second, the cross-national variability of NPG reforms should be mapped and attempts should be made to explain such variations in terms of institutional and structural path-dependencies. Third,
we need to evaluate the tensions and synergies between CPA, NPM, and NPG and explore the impact of political power strategies and pragmatic concerns on the choice between different modes of governing. Last but not least, we must critically evaluate whether NPG contributes to the production of effective, democratic, and innovative solutions to wicked problems and how different metagovernance tools can enable decision makers to tackle the problems and challenges that will eventually accompany the future deepening of NPG reforms.

References


Even in the case of privatization, NPM would accept a certain level of regulation (by public authorities) in order to ensure the free competition between private service providing actors on a market.