Political Control or Bureaucratic Autonomy?

A Comparison of Public Appointments in Denmark, Iceland and Norway

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Introduction
Established theories on government and public administration often link the phenomenon of ‘patronage’ – or ‘political appointments’ more generally – to various aspects of state institutions in contemporary democracies. The more established the state’s institutional arrangements and the stronger the bureaucracy and meritocratic systems, the less are party organizations, cabinets and individual politicians able to reach into the state and make politically slanted appointments. Put differently, systems generally mirroring the Weberian ideal of a permanent impartial bureaucracy are widely believed to be relatively free of political appointments in the state administration despite the existence of potent party organizations; a strong political executive, and political-administrative hierarchy (see Kopecky et al., forthcoming, for a review).

A typical example of such political systems are often thought to be the Nordic countries (Kopecky and Scherlitz 2008; Rothstein and Stolle 2003, Scott 1990), and bureaucratic impartiality, professionalized recruitment systems and meritocratic public appointments are undoubtedly part of the Nordic self-image. According to Müller’s (2006: 189) “judgemental” classification there is no or virtually no ‘patronage’ in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, yet medium in Iceland (see also Strøm et. al 2006: 661). However, this claim is not based on much empirical research, which may partly reflect the inherent difficulty of doing research in this area.

In what follows, we challenge the conventional wisdom in two ways. First, we develop a new conceptual map and indicators of political appointments, arguing that the distinction between ‘patronage’ and 'no patronage' is too crude if we aim to measure politization of public appointments in all its guises. A more refined analytical framework – beyond the simple spoils of power approach – may be based partly on the insights of classical
bureaucratic theory and partly on more recent theorizing which is perhaps best epitomized in principal-agent theory. Second, we use this analytical tool to explore and compare appointments to the state administration in Denmark, Iceland and Norway. Based on the Constitution, relevant laws and regulations and as well as on numerous original expert interviews we demonstrate that the alleged over-all degree of politicization of public appointments is modest but stronger – and more diverging – than traditionally expected in these ‘less likely cases’ of political appointments.

The article proceeds as follows. Having laid the conceptual and theoretical groundwork we present the three country cases under examination in light of what are often seen as the major structural and institutional determinants of political appointments. Following a presentation of data and methods we explore, in the empirical part, the formal powers and constraints on appointments before mapping the actual appointment practices across countries. In conclusion, we summarize and briefly discuss what might explain the level of politicization and variation revealed.

**Political Appointments, Bureaucracy and Control**

A wide definition of ‘political appointments’ would simply imply public appointments made by politicians, but the notion often also implies appointments made for political purposes, based on political affiliations. Political appointments lie at the core of an issue which has long been of interest to political science and public administration, namely the relationship between politics and administration. Early thinkers on the subject (Wilson 1887; Weber 1968) tended to present politics and bureaucracy as two separate worlds which would not blend easily and only at a cost to both. Such early theorizing, often referred to as the “politics-administration dichotomy”, saw bureaucratic autonomy, based on hierarchical management and clearly defined career paths, as an essential part of an impartial and technically well functioning bureaucracy. Political involvement, on the other hand, might lead to the kind of
spoils system well known from politics in the United States and many other parts of the world which would undermine bureaucratic autonomy and competence (Silberman 1993).

In an influential modern version, Shefter (1994) argues that weak bureaucratic autonomy enables party organizations to use political appointments, primarily to strengthen the motivation of their members. The subordination of the administration following the introduction of parliamentary government was in many Western political systems combined with the principle of separation of administrative careers from party-political influences (Rouban 2007: 202). Universal bureaucracy, Weberian style, was seen as superior: crucial ingredients in effective state bureaucracies are “competitive salaries, internal promotion and career stability, and meritocratic recruitment” (Rauch and Evans 2000:65). Consequently, the basic model of hierarchy has traditionally not been seen as providing leeway for politicization of appointments: meritocratic systems of advancement in many cases have become a legal and uncontested norm (Kopécky et al., forthcoming). Partisan appointments may jeopardize both government efficiency and electoral support. Support for bureaucratic autonomy according to Shefter refers to a political coalition formed by guardians of bureaucratic autonomy on the eve of democratization to ward off the threat of patronage. Where such coalitions emerged, as in Germany and Britain, political parties were denied access to administrative values such as jobs, while failure to form such coalitions, as in Italy, led to the development of patronage politics (Shefter 1994).

A different perspective on political appointments may be derived from principal-agent theory. While it has long been recognized that an autonomous bureaucracy invites the danger of insufficient accountability and public control (e.g. Page 1992), principal-agent theory introduces the notion of maximizing and self-seeking bureaucrats, adapted from economic approaches to bureaucracy (e.g. Downs 1967; Niskanen 1971). If bureaucrats have incentives for “shirking”, i.e. attending to their own interests rather than those of their political masters
(principals), the latter have to consider methods of control. Political use of appointment powers is a power-seeking tool and one of the mechanisms that may contain ‘agency losses’ from the cabinet’s point of view. In the role of the principal, however, an appointing politician has to balance the potential costs and benefits involved in different strategies. Political appointments may not be in the principal’s best interest if they substantially reduce the overall efficiency of the administration, both through short term loss of talent and long term accumulation of knowledge. Thus, the cost of political appointments may be loss of competence, while the cost of bureaucratic appointments may be loss of responsiveness. Ideally there should be some middle ground, what B. Guy Peters (2001, p. 87) calls ‘responsive competence’, - alas the exact formula for which is unknown.

It need not be the case, however, that the choice with regard to political appointments is between non-responsiveness and incompetence. Such a conclusion results from a choice which is too simple, between political and non-political appointments. Before going further we need to flesh out the concept of political appointments itself.

**The Concept of Political Appointments**

As indicated above, the concept of political appointments is multifaceted, and the extent to which public appointments to the state administration (beyond cabinet members) are political – politicized – may vary, depending on several factors. First, we need to find out whether political actors (parties, the parliament, the cabinet, or individual ministers) *de jure* and/or *de facto* make any appointments to public administration or whether this competence has been formally and/or actually delegated to non-political actors (i.e. bureaucrats). Next, the question is to what extent government turnover and turnover of administrative personnel is linked. In some cases, appointments are automatically terminated when a government leaves office and the new government appoint (parts of) its own administration – or the change is expected to occur soon after the new government is sworn in even if contracts do not give a pre-defined
date of expiry. But how many deputy ministers/secretaries and personal advisors (‘political staff’) are usually appointed, and how deep into the public administration does the government turnover reach across sectors? Such appointments are by definition made by political actors. When there is no such change (or reshuffling) after elections, it is possible to view the administration as politically independent. However, other positions might also be filled by the government when falling vacant. The question is to what extent this happens: whereas the scope of such appointments made by politicians refers to whether political actors actually appoint to all, most, or only a few institutions within various policy sectors, the reach of such appointments indicates how deeply within the institutions in question political actors may interfere: at top, middle and/or low level (cf. Kopecký et al., forthcoming).

Thereafter, we need to examine the motivating goals and selection criteria applied by the politician(s) who appoints. A politician, presumably, is prone to pursue political goals and use political criteria in appointment decisions, but this cannot be taken for granted and what it means may vary. In the scholarly literature, a basic distinction is sometimes made between appointments pursuing the aims of reward and control (Kopecký and Scherlitz 2008). Whereas ‘control’ refers to attempts to ensure that the administration follows the various aims and the instructions of the government and its ministers, reward denotes appointments used to ‘pay’ loyal party members, activists and other supporters. In both cases, political affiliation – partisanship or the like – is assumed to play a part when appointees are selected (Kopecký et al., forthcoming). However, it is important to acknowledge that the government and its members – in theory – can appoint purely as administrative heads of the civil service in systems where ministers are at once politicians and senior civil servants: they can exclusively apply bureaucratic or professional criteria of the kind found in human capital management (cf. Ingraham et. al. 2000).
By combining the variables of *who actually appoints* and *dependence on government change* with *the motives* as well as *the selection criteria of appointments*, we can distinguish between two major types and five subtypes of political appointments within the state administration. These – and the chain of constituting elements – are presented in Figure 1.

‘Overtly political appointments’ generally denotes appointments by politicians following a change of government, but as indicated by the map they can be used for different political purposes. However, as there are relatively few overtly political appointments in the Nordic region, and for the sake of simplicity, we do not comment on these sub-types in what follows. Instead we concentrate on the covert ‘patronage appointments’, ‘control appointments’ and ‘quasi-bureaucratic appointments’: sub-types of appointments by politicians when administrative and executing positions fall vacant independent of government turnover. They represent varying degrees of politicization and are described in detail below.¹

Less overt political appointments used to reward political supporters are – in line with the traditional terminology in this field – named *covert patronage appointments* (hereafter simply *patronage appointments*). Such appointments are often thought of as an instance of clientelism (Piattoni 2001). While some authors use patronage and clientelism interchangeably (e.g. Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007), we think it makes sense to reserve ‘patronage’ for reward-oriented appointments, which may – or may not – be part of political machinery geared towards the maintenance of mass clientelist networks (which also make use of other values controlled by the administration for rewarding support). They are based on political affiliation – party membership or other political links – often with a dash of cronyism, nepotism and related phenomena involved as well.

¹ *Bureaucratic appointments* may be used for appointments made by bureaucrats and the various combinations of particular administrative motives that guide them. These are, however, not the main concerns of this paper.
Figure 1 Conceptual map of political appointment practices: elements and types of political appointments to the state administration.
Covert control appointments (hereafter simply control appointments), in contrast, are primarily aimed at monitoring the development and implementation of public policy (Kopecký et al., forthcoming). They reflect the inherent principal-agent problems of multi-level public administration; the fear that despite hierarchical frameworks, bureaucrats may pursue their own political or professional agenda at the expense of the party/government/minister’s policy preferences. Even if it may be disloyal to give politicians advice based on other grounds than impartial expertise, the political role of being a constructive co-player for the minister and the administrative role of being politically neutral may conflict (e.g. Eckhoff and Smith 2006: 103–104). Thus, appointments used to control policy are strongly associated with selection based on partisanship or policy views: the principal selects on political convictions of the agent to ensure that a particular policy is carried out in both the short and long term. However, due to the undeniable need for expert knowledge in modern public administration, using partisan appointments as an organizational resource is risky: it may damage policy control if it leads to incompetence and corruption. So control appointments might well include appointees with basic or even very good professional qualifications for the job. The point is that, ultimately, archetypal control appointments are based on political affiliation/policy views.

The third type of covert political appointment is perhaps the most complicated one and represents an option that has received scant attention in the literature so far. Quasi-bureaucratic appointments involve instances where politicians pursue administrative purposes of control and management – like provision of legal and efficient administration – by only using professional selection criteria when appointing. Selection based on political views may conflict with the broader concerns of good administration with long term recruitment patterns, career paths, cost efficiency, and confidence in impartiality to name a few. In order to achieve an efficient public administration, the criteria relevant are primarily related to formal
education, merit and performance. Thus, the interests that the agent is appointed to promote are defined in broader institutional – non-political – terms.

Empirically, however, it can be difficult to distinguish between quasi-bureaucratic and control appointments as the politician is likely to appoint a person with at least basic professional qualifications for the job in both cases. Both control appointments and quasi-bureaucratic appointments are opposed to patronage appointment since the subsequent job performance of the appointee is of primary concern to the political principal in both cases. Moreover, in systems characterized by the Weberian norm of an impartial bureaucracy, politicians are likely to deny the control motive because the public is likely to consider it illegitimate except for specially designated political positions, such as ministerial assistants. Hence, distinguishing control appointments from quasi-bureaucratic ones often calls for evaluation on behalf of the investigator or the experts which are consulted. This said, the emphasis on professional qualifications is much stronger in the latter case, so when information on the background of persons appointed to public positions is available, overrepresentation of those with similar political background is a good indicator of control-oriented appointments.

**The Institutional Constraints and the Instrumental Logic of Appointments**

Political involvement in appointments is a way for democratic governments to control a potentially manipulative bureaucracy and political-administrative hierarchy may facilitate politically slanted appointments to the state administration in general. However, according to scholarly literature, well-established state institutions and a strong norm of permanent, impartial administration make political appointments less likely. Appointments to regular administrative positions based on partisanship may jeopardize government efficiency, electoral support as well as popular trust in the state institutions. Moreover, in systems with few overtly political appointments, ‘future political leaderships, potentially originating from a
competing political party, have to inherit the existing personnel’ (Egeberg 1998: 5). Then, given that more than one party has regular access to government, it seems at least rational to largely avoid partisan appointments, be it for reward or control. However, also other factors might impinge on the relationship.

It is not difficult to see that bureaucratic theory and principal-agent theory are concerned with political appointments of different types. Bureaucratic theory makes no clear distinction between patronage and control appointments and tends (e.g. Shefter) to see a basic choice between bureaucratic autonomy and reward-oriented appointments where a more differentiated conceptual toolkit might point towards additional alternatives. Patronage appointments – as defined here – are primarily a tool designed to hold on to power, especially when the competition for votes is not based on extensive policy platforms (Shefter 1994).

Likewise, principal-agent theory tends to view appointments in terms of delegation, where the problems of moral hazard and adverse selection justify the need for control, but the problems which may accompany excessive political control are less in focus. Such problems may include the temptation to use patronage (e.g. Piattoni 2001) and various credibility problems which may make blocking political control – as in bureaucratic appointments – both acceptable and attractive (e.g. Majone 2001). However, when viewed through our conceptual lenses, principal-agent theory puts into focus the relative usefulness of control appointments vis-à-vis quasi-bureaucratic ones. As long as administrators remain sufficiently responsive to satisfy the policy- and administrative needs of politicians, and there is a complicated web of norms, rules and procedures which raises the cost of making full-blown control appointments, politicians are likely approach the quasi-bureaucratic type instead – if

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2 When politicians fail to make credible policy commitments on account of the sensitivity of the policy area (e.g. monetary policy) or an excessively responsive administration they may revert to formally independent administrative structures and appointments. However, as already noted, since our material deals with appointments made by politicians only, this subject is not dealt with in the paper.
getting involved in public appointments at all – to respect the principle of some bureaucratic autonomy.

A trend in the literature, however, has been to regard control appointments as a way of dealing with an increasingly unresponsive bureaucracy and reasserting political control (e.g. Peters and Pierre 2004). So when the basic hierarchical model is threatened, politicians may switch over to control appointments. Formal exemption of an agency head from full political supervision by the departmental minister (Christensen 1999) following the establishment of more independent agencies, privatization of former state companies etc. have nearly moved institutions out of the reach of politicians, but their directors and (parts of the) boards might still be de jure and/or de facto appointed by the government. Such ‘paradoxical’ control appointments can be seen as a political strategy to solve the problem of being held accountable for policy outcomes beyond the government’s sphere of influence (Kopecký and Mair 2006: 9–10). Moreover, if external factors like increased media pressure lead to more teamwork between political and administrative leaders, as suggested by Christensen and Lægreid (2002: 109) in the Norwegian case, politicians may come to feel a greater need to interfere in appointments, on a political basis, to top-level positions in the ministries as well.

In the present paper we attempt to map the extent of political involvement in public appointments and the use of, above all, different sub-types covert political appointments in Denmark, Iceland and Norway. We also aim to search for signs that they fit our major theoretical expectations as regards covert political appointments in particular:

- **Patronage appointments**, according to bureaucratic theory, are more likely to occur in systems where the bureaucratic institutions are less well-established and electoral competition based on policy commitments is relatively weak. If the defences of bureaucratic autonomy are broken we should expect a rise in patronage appointments, even if political appointments are motivated to begin with by the need to reassert political control. Patronage appointments
should generally reach further down the bureaucratic hierarchy than control appointments because of the large number of people expecting rewards.

- **Control appointments** should, in light of principal-agent theory, occur primarily at top levels of the bureaucracy in strategically important sectors. Lack of administrative responsiveness is likely to lead to control appointments. As they can be seen as an attempt to regain political control after years of expansion and administrative reform in the public sector, we should expect to see more control appointments in systems with a relatively large share of independent executive agencies, administrative boards and government corporations and extra hierarchical channels of administrative appeal.

- **Quasi-bureaucratic appointments**: in systems where the bureaucracy is well-established, fairly responsive and permanent normative and legal constraints make patronage and control appointments particularly costly, but where politicians still have access to appointment processes, we can expect the government to mainly use quasi-bureaucratic appointments as a tool for administrative control over key public institutions. This indicates a balance of power between politicians with an exit option (reverting to control appointments) and a bureaucracy which has an incentive to comply but can also raise the cost to politicians of ignoring bureaucratic criteria.

**Case Selection, Data and Methods**
A study of Denmark, Iceland and Norway provides the opportunity to examine three cases within a region where the level of political appointments is generally expected to be low, yet not least likely to exist (George and Bennet 2005: 121). Comparisons may be based on shared political history, common cultural heritage and fairly similar political systems and party systems (Lindblad et. al. 1984; Bergman and Strøm 2011: 35), but as will become clear below, the three countries are not akin along all relevant background variables. Hence, even if our comparison is theoretically informed and includes measures of within-case investigation,

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1 In fact, Iceland and Norway were part of the Danish kingdom until 1814, when Norway – after a failed attempt at independence – established a union with Sweden. Norway became sovereign in 1905 and Iceland in 1918 (but remained in a personal union under the Danish Crown until 1944).
our primary goal is to explore the fruitfulness of a more nuanced conceptual map of political appointments in a North-European setting.

Denmark, Iceland and Norway are all relatively small unitary, parliamentary, and multiparty states. The position of parties in government is weak in constitutional terms, but in electoral terms the parties are dominant and the parliamentary and cabinet levels are dominated by cohesive party groups in all three countries (Jensen 2000). Administrative autonomy is limited by a ministerial model of government (ref DK; Kristinsson 2009; Pedersen and Lægreid 1999: 353). Although the Norwegian cabinet enjoys extensive powers under the Constitution and ministers are expected not to sabotage consensus-oriented cabinet decisions (see Allern, forthcoming, for details), Norway has also moved closer towards ministerial government over time as more authority has been delegated to the individual ministers (Statskonsult 2003: 58). The degree of hierarchy varies, however, across countries: Norwegian Civil Service has been described as an organizational hybrid; between a smaller set of hierarchical ministries under strong political control, as in Denmark, and a larger set of more autonomous and professional agencies, as in Sweden. Iceland’s ministerial structure resembles Denmark’s, but a large and complicated agency structure effectively tends to undermine ministerial control.

The ministerial model implies that the minister is expected to lead in a dual capacity, as part of the political executive and as head of the administration, in all three cases. In general, the cabinet and its ministers enjoy relatively few ex post institutional enforcement mechanisms over civil servants after delegation from ministers (ref DK; see Strøm and Narud 2006: 545; Kristinsson 2006). The subordination of the administration following the introduction of parliamentary government was, as in many Western political systems, combined with the principle of separation of administrative careers from party-political influences (Rouban 2007: 202). The civil service should balance between representing a
stable, politically neutral and impartial expertise on the one hand, and, on the other hand, serving as a loyal secretariat for whatever parties are in office, in addition to protecting legal norms like equality before the law (see e.g. Christensen and Lægreid 2002: 98–9). Therefore, the basic hierarchical model has not been seen as providing leeway for patronage in the Nordic countries in general (Müller 2006: 189; Strøm et al. 2002: 661). Instead, with the partial exception of Iceland (see below), meritocratic appointments have allegedly been used to provide some bureaucratic autonomy. In what follows, we shall examine this conventional wisdom empirically.

Doing that, we draw on a range of primary and secondary sources – including a study of the Constitutions and other laws – to give a comparative account of the formal framework of appointments in the three countries. Moreover, we rely on original research conducted in connection with a larger comparative study of political appointments in Europe. Here, a total of about 45 sector experts covering nine policy areas in each country, were carefully identified based on a variety of sources and interviewed based on a common semi-structured questionnaire (for details see Kopecky et al., forthcoming). The experts include key bureaucrats familiar with appointments procedures, politicians with government experience, NGO (mostly trade unions) sector experts, academics and a few journalists. The expert interviews partly provided qualitative data and partly coded results. The interviews dealt with appointments in the relevant sectors, the motivations/selection criteria of politicians making the appointments and developments over time. All respondents were asked to focus on the actions of the current period of government (at the time of the interview), but often found it

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4 In what follows, however, we content ourselves to eight policy sectors by excluding ‘local and regional administration’: Economy, Finance, Media, Culture and Education, Foreign Service, Judiciary, Military and Police and Healthcare. For the sake of simplicity, the analysis distinguishes between appointments to the following three categories of administrative units: ministries, non-departmental agencies and commissions, and finally, executing institutions. The content of these will be explained in due course.

reasonable to apply a wider time perspective as vacancies do not open up for all kinds of positions during one single government period. What follows is based on the qualitative accounts given by respondents of political appointments, but we also present some figures of coded answers to specify the frequencies of key responses.\(^6\)

We consider the quality of the survey/interviews to be high, but elite statements cannot be taken at face value and, therefore, the results must obviously be interpreted with caution. Ideally, one should also have studied specific appointments – and the background of individual appointees – to validate the results. However, there was in practice a trade-off between this strategy and interviewing a range of elite groups on public appointments across sectors and institution categories.

**Political Appointments in Denmark, Iceland and Norway Compared**\(^7\)

Our comparative description is divided into two main sections. The first is concerned with the appointments that change *de jure* or *de facto* with government turnover (political staff of ministers and others). The second and main section deals with vacancies that do not depend on a change of government (permanent but also temporary positions). Here we first describe the formal framework of appointments, which includes the role of the cabinet and ministers and the legal or similar restraints on their appointment powers. Next, the extent of actual involvement of politicians (including the role of parties as such) in the appointment process, within different policy areas, is described according to administrative section: ministries, non-departmental agencies, and executing institutions. As noted above, the *scope* of such appointments refers to whether political actors appoint to all, most, or only a few institutions, whereas the *reach* of such appointments indicates how deeply within the institutions political actors may interfere: at top, middle and/or low level (see below). Finally, the question is what

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\(^6\) Quantitative reporting of the data will be available in the forthcoming comparative European volume edited by Kopecky, Mair and Spirova (OUP).

\(^7\) We still need to shorten and streamline the case descriptions in order to make the results truly comparable.
goals politicians seek and what selection criteria they employ in public appointments: to the extent that politicians appoint independent of government change, what type(s) of political appointments occur?

**Vacancies and Appointments by Government Change**

As discussed above, the number of vacancies depending on government change in the state administration is a useful indicator for the degree of politicization as such appointments are, nearly by definition, overtly based on political considerations and selection criteria. In the three Nordic countries, the number of such positions is generally limited although greater in Norway than the other two. A weak, but clearly discernible trend may be observed towards increasing the number of formally political posts below the minister, but not elsewhere in the public administration, except perhaps for some board and committee memberships. Below, the extent and selection criteria appointments of ministerial assistants are described in more detail.

In Denmark, there were no such positions at of the ministries until the 1990s. With the decision in 1993 to introduce the so-called ‘special advisors’, the door was opened to bringing in personnel to assist the ministers in fulfilling their political-administrative roles. Contrary to all other positions in state institutions, it is unproblematic to select special advisors on partisan criteria. However, even if this formally did seem like a major change, the step taken to break the civil service monopoly has proved to be a modest one indeed. First, in terms of numbers, there are presently fifteen special advisors employed, which means that three Ministers have not employed any. Secondly, the formal roles and competences of the ‘special advisors’ are highly circumscribed. The special advisors do not have instructional competence over the civil service, which basically means that they are without power in the ministerial organizational hierarchy. Instead, they have to go through the permanent secretary with requests to the civil servants. Being directly employed by the minister, however, they are
generally the only ones with direct access to the Minister in addition to the Permanent Secretary (PS). In practice, the role of special advisors lies in advising on press related matters as well as political tactics.  

Generally, over half are journalists by profession and most have been active party members and/or worked in a party secretariat. However, about a third does not have explicit ties to any party and appear instead to be selected mainly on the basis of the professional qualifications. The role of special advisors – also referred to as ‘spindoctors’ in the Danish debate – has been hotly debated. However, it is probably safe to say that until now they have not fundamentally challenged the role of the permanent civil service in terms of advising the minister on politics and policy.

In Iceland, the Ministerial Act of 1969 established the right of each minister to appoint one ministerial assistant, who must leave their posts at the same time as the minister. Ministers increasingly hire ministerial assistants and in recent years there has been a tendency to add also temporary special advisors of various kinds. Formally the ministerial assistants stand outside the ministerial hierarchy but in practice the limits of their authority are not quite so well defined. The small size of most ministries tends to undermine standard authority structures and assistants close to the minister can gain a considerable amount of administrative authority despite lack of formal status. Kristmundsson (2005) argues that the assistants are becoming increasingly junior and contribute less than before to the strengthening of political leadership in the ministries. Ideas of establishing Junior Ministers in Iceland along Norwegian lines to boost political control in the ministries have ducked up from time to time but not found a receptive audience.

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8 The particular functions of each appear to vary considerably according to the needs of the appointing Minister. Respondents in the area of Education, for instance, said that the special advisor in this area had been recruited solely on professional qualification and worked exclusively on media related issues. However, other Ministers also use their advisors to advice on relations to their own party and more generally on political strategy.
In Norway, reshuffling of formally administrative ministerial personnel after an election is unusual, but the cabinet – the Council of State – has been allowed to appoint junior ministers (called ‘state secretaries’ or *statssekreterer*), since 1947. The aim was to strengthen the political leadership of the ministries and to ease the minister's administrative workload and, despite being disputed, the positions were included in the Constitution in the late 1970s (Christensen and Egeberg 1994: 49). The state secretary is a political civil servant who belongs directly under the minister, ranks above the administrative Secretary-General, but he/she cannot attend the meetings of the Parliament or the Council of the State. The job is, in general terms, to ease and advice the minister's political leadership of its ministry (*ibid*: 50). The specific responsibilities seem to be defined by the individual minister and may thus vary, but often includes press work and participation in public debates. The positions depending on government change also consist of personal advisors (*politiske rådgivere*) appointed by the Office of the Prime Minister. The advisors do not enjoy any formal authority, and their tasks vary from providing political advice and writing speeches to practical-administrative assistance before meetings and journeys. Both the state secretaries and the advisors do usually come from the same party as ‘their’ ministers. In 1950, there were 9 such appointees, in 1980 38 and in 2000 58 (Larsen 2003: 54). As of 2009, there were 67 political appointees in addition to the 20 ministers.

Hence, the size of the political leadership and its advisors in the ministries is about seven times higher today than it was after the Second World War in Norway – and significantly higher than in Denmark and Iceland. This said, all three countries would all fall at the low end of the scale in an international comparison.

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9 In 1946, personal secretaries were appointed for the first time. In the 1970s, the position of personal advisor was established instead (Larsen 2003: 54).
**Table 1 The extent and selection criteria of appointments by government change (overtly political appointments)**

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| **Extent (as of 2009)** | 15 special advisors  
Mainly press work;  
Political strategy. | 10 ministerial assistants  
plus some special advisors  
Press work, political strategy, personal assistants and advisors | 67 (state secretaries and personal advisors)  
The state secretary assists the Minister’s political leadership of the ministry.  
Personal advisors assist, but do not have any formal authority.  
Both positions are involved in media work/public relations. |
| **Selection criteria (background of persons recruited)** | Majority trained media professionals, about 2/3 with party background. | Partly experienced policy specialists (often party members or known sympathizers) and partly younger party members without substantive experience. | Usually come from the same party as ‘their’ ministers  
The level of formal education and (relevant) working experience seem to vary |

**Vacancies and Appointments Independent of Government Change**

How much room does exist for parties, cabinets or individual politicians – and their political and party-political considerations – to influence public appointments beyond changes of government? The formal freedom – or lack thereof – of political agents to decide in matters of personnel is regulated by the Constitution and/or common practice, but can also be constrained by the Civil Service Act, the Public Administration Act, labour market laws and ‘softer’ kinds of regulations and norms.

**The Legal Powers of Politicians**

Ministerial government Denmark, Iceland and Norway in most cases implies that ministers formally bear the main responsibility for appointments to higher level administrative posts.
Parliament is rarely involved but the role of the cabinet and cabinet committees varies, being greatest in Norway and more or less non-existent in Iceland.

In Denmark, ministerial power prevails at all levels of the administration with no direct constitutional impediments in matters of appointments. According to the Statute of civil servants, the competence to hire all civil servants resides with the King, which in practical terms refers the government and the relevant minister. The law on Ministerial responsibility also confers wide powers on Ministers in the direction of affairs within their portfolio, but they can – and do – delegate their competence to others (Knudsen, 2000; Christensen, 2004). When it comes to appointments to boards of companies or councils, committees or tribunals, a legal competence to appoint key members – though frequently not all members - clearly resides with the minister. Interestingly, this competence has not been subjected to generalized delegation (Knudsen, 2000). The Constitution is silent on the possible role of the cabinet in personnel issues. However, in practice a number of cabinet committees coordinate the work of government and in effect introduces a degree of hierarchy into its functions (Christensen 1985; Knudsen 2000a). Appointments are no exception: ministers must submit their recommendations for top level positions in ministries, agencies and boards to the government employment committee. Appointments for executing institutions are typically on the agenda for three consecutive meetings, the permanent secretary for at least two while other civil service positions are only mentioned once. Only after the committee’s approval can the specified positions be filled. The members of the committee include prominent government ministers. The question is whether it actually curbs ministerial power or not. In an interview, its former secretary (2005-2010) stated that its role is to ‘create transparency internally in the government’ and as a check on the individual minister who has to ‘stand up and defend [his/her] choice before the committee’. It was stressed that the process did not undermine the right of the minister to appoint, but since the PM can change the government, it would be
important to secure that those appointed not reflect the idiosyncratic choices of individual ministers, but could ‘function more universally’.

The Parliament (*Folketinget*) has its own powers of appointment to the board of the public broadcast corporation and de facto also to the board of the Central Bank. Moreover, minority governments have been the rule in most of the post war period, and outside control over government is therefore possible. However, the Parliament has respected the government prerogative on appointments and not made any active attempts to interfere (ref...). Opposition parties have on occasion criticized particular choices made by government, but do not get involved beyond this level. When it comes to expanding the number of political positions in the ministries, however, it is possible that its budgetary role has been critical. While the government has the power to appoint who it wants, it cannot fund new types of position in the state administration without the approval of parliament (ref). Accordingly, the modest introduction of political positions in Danish ministries occurred on the watch of the first majority government in 22 years in 1993 (Larsen, 2003:75).

The Icelandic constitution in general says very little about the cabinet, which it calls „minister meetings“*. Ministers are formally obliged to provide information at cabinet meetings on „important government issues“, but ministers have some scope for interpretation of what constitutes such issues. The Prime Minister has weak hierarchical authority within the cabinet and hierarchical mechanisms such as cabinet committees were unknown until the 1990s and remain relatively uncommon. Moreover, the cabinet cannot make decisions legally binding on individual ministers and in practice they have a high degree of autonomy in administrative decision making. In the case of appointments, the cabinet has no formal means of interfering. Formally there is nothing to prevent a minister from questioning a colleague’s appointment, but by all accounts this is rarely done, if ever. For coalition partners the
established practice of mutual non-interference has the added benefit of blame avoidance in cases where appointments meet with negative public response.

Parliament plays no role in appointments to permanent positions in the Icelandic administration. Icelandic law makes no provisions for the involvement of parliament in public appointments, except in the increasingly rare case of a few boards and committees. Governments, as a rule, are majority coalitions of two or three parties and although questions can be raised in plenum concerning the role of ministers in individual appointments they are in fact strongly protected by norms of party and government cohesion.

In Norway, the cabinet is ‘the supreme, collective leadership of the central administration’ (Strøm 1994: 42), even though the civil service includes a set of more autonomous and professional agencies (Egeberg 1998: 5). According to the Constitution, the King – i.e. the Council of State – formally chooses and appoints all senior civil servants of the Crown (embedsmenn).\textsuperscript{10} These positions include the top-level and mid-level posts in the ministries (from Secretary-General to Deputy Director General or Principal Officer) as well as various key positions outside the ministries – within the Judiciary, the Foreign Service, the military, the police, the Church of Norway, etc.\textsuperscript{11} An ordinary civil servant (tjenestemann) is ‘any employee of the Civil Service who is not a senior civil servant’ (of the Crown) (Civil Service Act §1). As the authority to appoint has increasingly been delegated to administrative top leaders or a particular collegiate body or boards of autonomous institutions (Civil Service Act, §5), only a small proportion of all government employees are senior civil servants in this sense today (Eckhoff and Smith 2006: 94), but still, the cabinet formally appointed an average of 359 persons per year to such positions between 2001 and 2006 (St. meld. nr. 10 (2006-\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} 2007).

\textsuperscript{10} A senior civil servant is any government official appointed by the Council of State and installed as a senior civil servant or an official who is temporarily appointed by the cabinet in a senior administrative post of the Crown (embeide). The term includes also ecclesiastical and military servants.

\textsuperscript{11} The Storting has voted to retain the state church system, with the King as its supreme representative, while granting the Church greater autonomy. (Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway, §21; Civil Service Act §1). The term includes also ecclesiastical and military servants.

The Storting has voted to retain the state church system, with the King as its supreme representative, while granting the Church greater autonomy.
Moreover, directors – senior servants – of ordinary, non-departmental civil service organisations are also usually appointed (beskikket) by the cabinet as a whole.

Other (lower-level) civil servants are administratively appointed by ministries, a particular collegiate body, or the board of the institution in question (Civil Service Act, §5). However, members of permanent advisory committees and board members in civil service organizations with extended authority and in government administrative enterprises are often also appointed by the Council of State (or individual ministers). Cabinet proposals regarding appointments are to be presented by the member within whose competence they fall, and are also discussed during the cabinet meetings and informal luncheons. Members of a few commissions and boards – like the Supervisory Council (Representantskapet) of Norway’s central bank, the Arts Council of Norway (Kulturrådet) and the Broadcasting Council (Kringkastingsrådet) – are appointed by the Parliament (the Storting). Government-owned companies, hybrid companies established by special laws, and government limited companies are subject to special regulations regarding appointments which to a greater or lesser extent may make possible appointments (to boards) by the minister in charge.

Hence, we see that the constitutional and legal framework allow appointments by politicians to key positions in all the three institutional categories studied here across sectors in Denmark, Iceland as well as Norway. However, it should be noted that political parties as such do not enjoy legal power to make appointments in any of the countries. Generally, ministers play a major formal part in public appointments; the role of the Parliament seems marginal, whereas the role of the cabinet as a whole is fairly large in Norway and smallest in Iceland.

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12 A state minister might appoint lower civil servants within his/her ministry or delegate this power to the nominating collegiate board (Innsstillingsrådet), if headed by the Secretary-General (departmentsråden), or to the individual department (Reglement for personalforvaltningen i departementene 1998).
13 For details on appointments to boards in the various types of companies, see Act Relating to Limited Liability Companies §20, NHD 2005; NHD 2006; NHD 2007; NHD 2008a.
Legal Restrictions and Processes

Even when politicians enjoy the right to appoint, their freedom to pursue political goals and apply political criteria when choosing may be significantly restricted. Ministers are obliged to abide by existing laws and regulations and may find it difficult to fully exercise powers over matters of staff due to the legal constraints.

In Denmark, the law requires employers to refrain from all forms of discrimination and explicitly states that personal convictions, political or otherwise, cannot be brought to bear on personnel decisions except in organizations with an explicitly partisan political purpose. Under Danish law, only the position of ‘special advisor’ is covered by this provision. By default, all other positions in the state are not. Moreover, the principle that the most qualified applicant must be chosen must be adhered to. In the bureaucracy, the nature of the contracts offered today are quite flexible and ministers who wish to transfer, demote or dismiss can do so on a discretionary basis as the protection offered to civil servants is primarily financial (Knudsen, 2000; Christensen, 2001). Historically, the regulation in this area has shifted radically. Top civil servants used to be as difficult to get rid of as judges. However, a clause was introduced in 1975, which made it easier to transfer them. Other more flexible types of contracts than the traditional one for civil servants was also introduced in the same decade and has been offered to an increasing number of employees. Contractual obligations do not therefore constrain ministers’ interference in matters of personnel to any large extent.

In Iceland, security of employment for non-political public officials is guaranteed partly by the constitution and partly by other law such as the Public Employment Act and the Public Administration Act. While general labour market legislation is more flexible than in Denmark and Norway the special legislation covering the public sector gives added security, making it very difficult to get rid of unwanted personnel except through reorganization. An attempt to provide greater flexibility in a new Public Employment Act in 1996 basically failed.
on account of a complex procedure for administrative warning. Formally the highest administrative positions (e.g. Permanent Secretaries and Agency Heads) can be advertised every five years but in practice they rarely are. Hence, there is very little administrative turnover at the change of government. Each new government takes over the appointees of former governments, which in some cases can cause problems of trust and loyalty. The formal restraints on ministers when making appointments in the first place are basically the various equal rights paragraphs found in the Constitution, Administration Act and the law on gender equality. The law, in the final instance, is interpreted by the general courts, but the office of the Ombudsman has also been active in this area since its foundation in 1988 as has the Complaints Committee on Gender Equality. The law on gender equality gives applicants from the minority gender in the relevant section of the administration special legal safeguards against possible misuse of appointment authority and most of the court cases that arise are based on gender rights. Even if a court, however, rules in favour of complainants the appointment stands and in most cases where the administration seems likely to lose a case it negotiates a financial settlement out of court.

The legal, and less formal, room for (party-)political goal-seeking and selection criteria seems limited in Norway. All decisions regarding appointments are based on thorough-going administrative procedures specified in regulations (e.g. *Reglement for personalforvaltningen i departementene* 1998); such processes usually include public advertisement of vacancies, competitive interview processes, occasionally headhunting firms, and often nomination and/or appointment committees or boards (comprising employee representatives) (*Statens personalhåndbok* 2010, ch. 2, Statskonsult 2003; Civil Service Act §4). Recruitment and promotion in the civil service are to be nonpartisan or apolitical.14 Norway’s civil service is meant to be professional and permanent, reflecting the Weberian

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14 Civil servants may have political assignments/positions, but administrative officials employed in government ministries, the Supreme Court, and in the diplomatic or consular services cannot simultaneously serve as elected MPs (Constitution §62).
ideal of administrators as neutral and removed from politics, since ‘future political
leaderships, potentially originating from a competing political party, have to inherit the
existing personnel’ (Egeberg 1998: 5; Strøm and Narud 2006: 545).

The career civil servant has traditionally been a highly educated legal specialist
(Christensen and Lægreid 2009: 954), and the limited number of former political appointees
wishing to become civil servants (again) must undergo a ‘quarantine period’ first (MD 2005).
In both the state and local administration, nominations and appointments should be based on
the ‘qualification principle’ (kvalifikasjonsprinsippet) – a principle that has become
established through legal usage, administrative usage, and juridical theory, and can be ignored
only by means of legal authority (see Civil Service Act, §7, §9, §13 for such exceptions). The
main evaluation criteria are formal education, work experience, and personal suitability (for
details, see Kroken 2006).¹⁵ As a general rule, civil servants are appointed on a permanent
basis (Civil Service Act §3), which formally protects against pressure to serve as the
ministers’ political staff (cf. Hanretty 2010: 84–5).¹⁶ This said, increased use of fixed-term
contracts outside ministries allows the government to use its power to appoint more
frequently. Also, new special salary agreements for top administrative leaders – including
acceptance of transfer if contractual results have not been achieved – may widen the legal
room for ‘reshuffling’ (cf. Christensen and Lægreid 2002: 110–14, see Statens
personalhåndbok 2.2.8.1-8.2).

Hence, we see that in all three cases, the freedom of politicians to appoint is formally
approved and constrained by the constitution and other regulations, but perhaps less so in
Iceland than in Denmark and Norway.

¹⁵ In 2005, the Storting approved a significant revision of the Public Service Act initiated by the non-socialist Bondevik II
coalition government; this revision which included simplification of nomination procedures and inclusion of the
‘qualification’ principle. However, in 2006, the new law was reversed by Jens Stoltenberg’s first red/green coalition
government (Eckhoff and Smith 2006: 94).
¹⁶ For exceptions, see The Constitution §23.
The Extent of Actual Involvement of Politicians

Albeit formally charged with strong powers of appointments in areas falling within their portfolios, ministers (or cabinets in some cases) in the three Nordic countries do not always use it. In the following, we first describe practices as they unfold in ministries, non-departmental agencies and commissions, and, executing institutions. The question asked was whether politicians actually appoint individuals – i.e. finally select – to positions within each institution category. Thus, the threshold applied for ‘actually appoint’ in this study does not equal total control, but the interviewees also describe the extent to which the actual choice seems constrained. Answers from expert interviews are summarized and compared country by country at the end of each sub-section.

A. Ministries

Ministries can be differently structured and vary in size across policy areas as well as countries. In general it is the level of the state administration that most directly services the minister in relation to important policy matters and political strategy. In principle, we can distinguish between the role of ministers as leading politicians representing their parties and as senior civil servants in charge of administration. At this point, however, we simply refer to minister and cabinet members as ‘politicians’.

In Denmark, ministers’ active influence over appointments is typically confined to positions at the top level in the ministry. In addition to playing a decisive role in selecting personal staff, the minister is clearly seen to play an active role in the selection of Permanent Secretary (PS) and none of the respondents indicated that use of this power was somehow illegitimate. However, in the sectors covered, three PS positions had been filled by the previous government rather than the current one so it is not a power that is always actively exercised by incoming ministers. For positions below the PS, the answers were more ambiguous. One respondent said: said ‘the procedure for hiring the permanent secretary is separate. The minister never interferes in all other positions...he never comes to the interview
or anything’. Control over personnel selection is generally perceived as an important source of power to the PS and the division of labour between minister and PS was mentioned repeatedly by respondents. As one top civil servant said: ‘the employment of civil servants is something the Permanent Secretary heavily controls. It is a very important management instrument and I believe all top civil servants are aware of this’. However, the respondents answers varied across sectors as well as positions on whether ministers got involved in appointments below the PS. Interestingly, most of the top civil servants interviewed said that they actually did not know whether the minister had had a say in their own personal appointments since the minister had not been visible in the process. The four permanent secretaries interviewed stressed that there was a dialogue with the minister about possible candidates to other top positions as section chiefs or important office heads, which pointed to a more active role for the minister than that indicated by other civil servants in the department. In any case, there was agreement that the choice incumbent ministers have is by and large constrained to candidates short-listed by the PS. This does not mean that a minister would never propose someone for a job on occasion, but typically it would be someone already in the system. Although a division of labour between ministers and the civil service most definitely is a strong norm, ministerial involvement is not constant. Personality differences as well as years in office mean that roles are interpreted differently. As one PS said ‘when a Minister has occupied the office for many years, then you have a Minister who is intimately acquainted with the staff and therefore also interferes’. However, interference is limited to the top positions (section chiefs and important office heads) and no instances of interference below this level was mentioned by any of the respondents.

In Iceland the ministers are always directly involved in the appointments of Permanent Secretaries and many other positions as well, especially at higher and middle levels in the ministries. Until the 1990s ministers basically accepted the existing Permanent Secretaries in
their ministries, but since then there have been instances when arrangements have been made
to transfer Permanent Secretaries if the right chemistry was not in place. The Permanent
Secretaries are involved in making appointments within the ministries and at lower levels
their decisions may in practice be the final ones. Ministers, in some cases, feel a need to
strengthen their position within the ministry by appointing people with experience outside the
ministry, who often form part of the minister’s personal and political network. While there is
a strong norm in the administration of compliance to the wishes of the minister, there is a
marked tendency among departmental employees to take a legalistic view of their duties and
avoid pro-active involvement in controversial policy projects. After all, tomorrow may bring a
new minister from the opposite camp.

In Norway, only a few experts, within a few sectors, think politicians simply rubber-
stamp the ranking of candidates proposed by the bureaucrats to entire institution categories.
Ministers are, in all ministries studied here, reported to make an active choice between
candidates to positions when a vacancy opens up by more than 90 per cent of the experts (on
average) across policy sectors, but only to the uppermost-level positions. The ministerial top
leadership includes the Secretary-General (equivalent to Permanent Secretary) with possible
deputy, the Director-Generals of the departments of the given ministry, and usually a Head of
Information. According to a few experts, the process of appointing ministerial Secretaries-
General is increasingly being managed by the Office of the Prime Minister. Hence, within the
ministries, the minister – or the cabinet – chooses many, but not all the top civil servants that
the Constitution formally allows them to appoint.

This said, even if Norwegian politicians enjoy real veto power, many respondents
stress that due process and pre-defined qualification criteria constrain the extent to which they
influence the early steps of the decision-making processes. A minister might change the
ranking order of final candidates, signal what kind of candidates he/she would prefer in
advance, and, in exceptional cases, even suggest specific names at the beginning of the procedure. But a minister is expected to take the administration’s evaluation seriously and to emphasize professional qualifications. Hence, the power of politicians is based on constrained selectivity. Equally important, sector experts do not fully agree on the extent to which politicians use their right to appoint, beyond making the final choice among candidates, which might reflect that some ministers try to strongly influence appointments, whereas others come closer to ‘rubber-stamping’ the administration’s proposals – perhaps depending on length of service and personality.

The results as regards ministries are summarized in Table 2. We see that the reach of – more or less constrained – political influence on public appointments is limited to the top-level in Denmark and Norway, but also includes the mid-level in Iceland. The scope of appointments by politicians is generally wide, but might be slightly narrower in Denmark than the two other countries.

*Table 2 Appointments by politicians to ministries*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>ICE</th>
<th>NOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reach of appointments</strong></td>
<td>Top level</td>
<td>Top and middle levels</td>
<td>Top level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What positions?</strong></td>
<td>Personal Staff, Permanent Secretary, Section chiefs (important office heads)</td>
<td>Personal staff, permanent secretaries, section chiefs, office heads, specialists</td>
<td>Secretary-General (with possible deputy), the Director-Generals of the departments of the given ministry, and usually Head of Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope of appointments</strong></td>
<td>Most ministries (?)</td>
<td>All ministries</td>
<td>All ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constraints on choice</strong></td>
<td>Yes: pre-selection PS led</td>
<td>Pre-selection by administration and employment agencies increasingly used</td>
<td>Yes: pre-selection by administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Non-Departmental Agencies and Commissions
Non-Departmental Agencies and Commissions (NDACs) mainly consist of regulatory and policy advising/devising agencies like directorates and special authorities. However, it should be noted that this category also includes permanent commissions and boards; i.e. units that are not ‘standard’ civil service organizations.

In Denmark, the minister formally appoints agency directors subject to the approval of the government employment committee. Official minutes of the cabinet committee meetings are not available, but according to respondents, the recommendations for filling positions in the civil service are typically not contested. However, it is not unusual for the minister to have her preferred candidates permanent councils or committees criticized or even overturned. It is of course difficult to see how an internal government procedure could serve as more than a check on appointments prompted by personal ends. The respondents gave varying accounts of how involved the Ministers actually were in the process with the PS tending to emphasize an active dialogue among alternative candidates while agency directors themselves and other top level civil servants were often not sure. The PS plays a central role in the selection process and in any case the choice among alternatives appeared to be generally constrained. Personnel decisions below this level is the prerogative of the agency director and it was considered ‘off-limits’ for a Minister to get involved.

Ministers in Iceland have sole responsibility for the appointment of agency heads except in independent agencies, where agency heads are usually appointed by the board. Ministers, however, often have a hand in appointing the boards and may thus, indirectly, affect the appointments also in independent agencies. Various restraints on ministerial power in agencies which enjoy a degree of legal independence from ministerial power, however, tend to limit their involvement in this sector of the administration more than elsewhere.

To the Norwegian NDACs, politicians actually appoint individuals when a vacancy opens up according to more than 90 per cent of the sector experts on average. But again, their
involvement is allegedly limited to the top-level: directors-generals or commission members. Moreover, regarding the scope of appointments: whereas all ministries apparently are subject to appointments, the non-departmental agencies and commissions are to a lesser extent reported to be: on average about 66 per cent of the experts think all (not only a few of) the NDACs within ‘their’ sector are included, but this means that in some sectors the experts were fairly or very divided in their perceptions of how many institutions politicians actually affected – especially within the area of Finance, Military and Police and Culture and Education. Hence, the interviews indicate that there probably is some variation how wide-ranging the role of politicians is in appointments to this kind of institutions, both across and within institutions. The general description of a constrained choice applies here as well, even if politicians are reported to play a more a more active part in the nomination process to advisory boards.

The results as regards NDACs are summarized in Table 3. We see that the reach of more or less constrained political influence on appointments is limited to the top-level in all three countries, and that the scope of appointments by politicians seems generally unclear: respondents seem to disagree somewhat as to how many institutions that are actually affected. Probably, however, this indicates that at least a few institutions, in some sectors, are virtually unaffected by political appointments.

Table 3 Appointments by politicians to non-departmental agencies and commissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DK (only agencies)</th>
<th>ICE</th>
<th>NOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reach of appointments</strong></td>
<td>Top Level</td>
<td>Top level</td>
<td>Top Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What positions?</strong></td>
<td>Agency director</td>
<td>Agency heads, board members</td>
<td>Agency director, board members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope of appointments</strong></td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constraints on choice</strong></td>
<td>Yes: pre-selection: PS led</td>
<td>Weak, except in legally autonomous agencies (where boards select).</td>
<td>Yes: pre-selection led by administration, but much less so in the case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Executing Institutions
Executing institutions are involved in delivering services and provisions, or in production, and the institutions belonging to this category are very diverse – ranging from courts to hospitals, museums, schools and various state-owned companies.\(^\text{17}\)

In the case of Denmark, sector differences in the extent of political involvement were apparent. In the areas of Finance, Economy, Culture as well as Education and Foreign Affairs the interviewees tended to agree that ministers make active use of their appointment powers. Where the competence to appoint to boards or directors resides with the minister, it is not a competence ministers are inclined to delegate to the civil service although the latter are involved in the process of listing potential candidates. Some respondents indicated that ministers actively add names to the list, but more emphasized that the selection was made from names submitted by civil servants. However, a few civil servants described how the ministers’ preferences were taken into account when identifying potential candidates and the difference may therefore not always be significant. With respect to the Judiciary, the respondents agreed that the Ministers role was not active, while for the sectors of Military & Police as well as Health, there were differences between respondent’s answers. Most portrayed the ministers’ role as passive in with respect to appointments to executing institutions, although a few indicated that for the minister plays an active role in a few or even most.

As in the case of non-departmental agencies in Iceland, ministers have the formal power of appointing agency heads in executive agencies and are actively involved. With the new Public Employment Act of 1996, however, their formal role in the hiring of lower level

\(^{17}\) This group includes government limited companies where the state owns at least a majority of the shares.
personnel in the agencies was abolished, usually leaving it in the hands of agency heads. There are sectorial variations, nonetheless, where special considerations apply. In the judicial and financial sectors, criticism of earlier practices prior to the economic crash of 2008, have led to far reaching changes which are intended to reduce ministerial involvement. In practice, the political leaders often have ways of making an impact, even where formal involvement is restricted, through boards and control over the budget and legislative initiative. Hence, the practice of political appointments is still felt in the executing agencies even in cases where the minister is not formally involved. 62 per cent of our respondents felt that politicians were involved in most or all executing institutions and 35 per cent thought their influence reached below the top level to which the formal involvement of politicians is confined.

In Norway, executing institutions are – by more than 90 per cent of the experts on average – reported to be subject to appointments by politicians across sectors, but again, the reach is limited to the top-level according to a vast majority: to positions as senior civil servants (*embeder*) and board memberships. Moreover, regarding the scope of appointments, on average only about 46 per cent of the experts think that all the executing sector institutions are included, but this means that in some sectors the experts are divided or they tend to think only a few institutions are affected. Within the Judiciary, Culture and Education and Foreign Service, at least 75 per cent of the experts believe that politicians actually appoint but only to a few institutions. Again, experts describe a more or less constrained choice – from active involvement to nearly rubberstamping – but numerous interviewees highlight that board memberships are more strongly influenced by politicians than other kinds of units.

Many of the executing units are largely autonomous or separate legal entities linked to the state through ownership in Norway. In government limited companies where the state owns a majority, a selection committee (elected by the general meeting or corporate assembly) nominates candidates to the board, and the general meeting or corporate assembly
makes the appointments, but it is assumed that the state minister, as the company’s largest owner, is consulted before a proposal is made. However, this does not mean that politicians have *entirely* withdrawn from the appointment of general managers in former state enterprises. In recent years, we have, for example, seen political turbulence regarding the chief executive for Norway’s major oil company Statoil (Statoil-Hydro from 2007 to 2009). The higher *over-all* ‘score’ of ministries compared to other institutional categories, and the relatively low ‘score’ of the area culture and education, primarily reflect variation in the *scope* of appointments. Only a few executing institutions supposedly experience appointments by politicians within areas as different in terms of formal structure as the Judiciary and the Foreign Service. On the other hand, politicians are by numerous interviewees reported to be more active during the early phases of the appointments process – by also proposing candidates – in the case of advisory boards and the boards of autonomous executing institutions than in the case of regular civil service organizations.

The results as regards executing institutions are summarized in Table 4. We see that the reach of more or less constrained political influence on appointments is limited to the top-level in Iceland and Denmark, but also reach ambassadors and ecclesiastical and military servants below the leadership level in Norway. Again, the scope of appointments by politicians seems generally unclear or to vary across sectors.

*Table 4 Appointments by politicians to executing institutions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>ICE</th>
<th>NOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reach of appointments</td>
<td>Top level</td>
<td>Top level</td>
<td>Top level, but also mid-level in a few sectors (those formally appointed by the Council of State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What positions?</td>
<td>Directors, board members</td>
<td>Directors, board members</td>
<td>Directors, ‘higher ecclesiastical and military servants, ambassadors’, board members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope of appointments</strong></td>
<td>Unclear, varies across sectors</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Constraints on choice** | Medium | Weak restraints | Mixed; pre-selection led by administration, but more involvement in the case of board memberships |

On the whole, politicians in all three countries are reported to actually select appointees the state administration independent of government change, but they mainly reach the uppermost level of positions. Moreover, the expert interviews suggest that the scope of appointments varies somewhat across sectors and ministries, NDACs and executing institutions in all countries. Noteworthy country differences also apparently exist. In Denmark, ministers seem most active in appointments to ‘auxiliary’ NDACs and executing institutions, whereas in Iceland, politicians seem to reach below the top-level of public institutions. In Norway, there is – as in Denmark – some disagreement as to the scope of appointments beyond ministries, but in general, a higher degree of political involvement seems to be reported to characterize appointments to ministries, NDACs as well as executing institutions than in the Danish case.

This said, it is important to note that involvement by politicians affiliated to parties does not equal involvement of political parties as such. Indeed, the expert survey consistently suggests that whereas parties at large play a marginal role in Denmark and Norway,\(^{18}\) party leaders apparently put pressure on individual ministers in Iceland during public appointment processes in general (see Allern, Bischoff, Kristinsson, all forthcoming, for details). Moreover, it remains to be seen whether politicians behave like political or administrative leaders.

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\(^{18}\) Party organizations might propose candidates when a vacancy opens up but do not control governmental administrative appointments through their parliamentary group and cabinet ministers. Only in connection with appointments to some kinds of non-departmental institutions parties – like the boards of autonomous executing institutions – are parties reported to play a significant role.
Motives and Selection Criteria

Next, the question is what goals politicians seek (reward of supporters, policy control or administrative control/management) and what selection criteria (political affiliation, personal links, or professional qualifications) they employ in public appointments. In this way, we may found out what type of political appointments that mainly occur.

In Denmark, none of the respondents indicated that reward was a common motive in appointments in any area. Naturally, this does not mean that it never occurs (or has occurred) but it is viewed as highly unusual. Some one in five respondents mentioned control as a motive in appointments while the rests point to administrative behaviour. That is, most believe ministers interfere in general to ensure well run institutions rather than to implement a specific political agenda. This finding was further supported by qualifications cited by respondents where all mentioned professional qualifications but only about one in five mentioned ‘political orientation’ as an additional qualification. Commenting on the freedom of ministers to introduce partisan candidates, one top civil servant commented; ‘As yet, I don’t believe we have seen a minister who proposes a party-political candidate. The system depends on a level of seriousness in the government employment committee so I do not think it would pass’. Hence, quasi-bureaucratic appointments seem to dominate in Denmark.

Interestingly, those who mentioned political orientation typically emphasized that party membership was often not a salient consideration but typically a broader ideological profile of the candidate. In discussing the issue, many emphasized that caution had to be exercised due to the risk of receiving bad press. Ministers’ party buddies or personal friends would therefore tend to be viewed as ‘risky’ appointees and as such to be avoided. However, in the Danish case, it is important to emphasize that none of the experts believed that political orientation play a role in civil service appointments – that is in ministries and agencies. Those who believed that political profile of candidates might serve as an supplementary criteria, mentioned it in connection with executing institutions in the areas of economy, culture and
media. Interestingly, several respondents emphasized that political profiles were not only in play just to enhance control in the traditional principal-agent sense, but rather to maintain a political balance. The former secretary of the governments employment committee said that ‘for many positions on boards, there has been a bit of a tradition...that there is a certain political balancing at play.....it is the government that appoints every time and the government could say that we don’t care about earlier principles in this respect, but it doesn’t...It is the politicians themselves that balance these matters. It is a Danish tradition’.

This type of appointments falls a bit between categories as neither reward nor control appear to be at work. Rather, it would seem that the object is a certain sharing of perks of office between parties. In the case of auxiliary bodies, selection on the grounds of political profiles and with motives to control appeared much more widespread as most respondents mentioned that it was normal practice in this area, although not universally for all bodies in this category. Particularly in respect to bodies that play policy advisory roles, appointing people on basis of personal persuasion in addition to other qualifications, was seen as a legitimate way of making appointments.

In Iceland, when asked what motivated political appointments, 16 per cent of respondents mentioned rewards only, 34 per cent control and 50 per cent both. This means that 66 per cent still think rewards play a role in political appointments while control is mentioned by 84 per cent. Most of the respondents thought that appointees usually meet the minimum requirements for a job. Political appointments to merit positions are increasingly costly to politicians, in terms of popularity, and far from accepted by the public at large. To be able to deny the political motives behind appointments politicians usually try to make credible their claims that appointments are in fact merit appointments by appointing persons who fulfil the minimum requirements for the job. 82 per cent of our respondents believe appointees fulfill professional requirements. However, political criteria are to some extent considered
acceptable when applied to various committees and boards. Apart from those elected by parliament the ministers appoint their agents to a number of boards, often the chairman, who are expected to serve a liaison function between the ministry and the agency. Most of these, however, are appointed for a fixed period of time and need not leave their posts with a change of minister, which inevitably reduces their usefulness as instruments of political control when a new minister arrives. On the whole, merit is the dominant criterion in Icelandic appointments, but political control and rewards play a larger role than in the other two countries.

In Norway, 72.5 per cent of the experts think that politicians engage in appointments for the wide purpose of political or administrative control. Many of them refer to efficient policy formulation and implementation, but some argue that politicians look for trustworthy appointees simply ‘to prevent administrative mistakes from being made’ or because they generally believe in a ‘particular type of leadership’ in the public sector. Moreover, according to the respondents, increasing the gender balance in public administration serves as a widespread motivation across policy areas and parties, not least within traditionally male-dominated sectors like the military and police.

Interestingly, no sector expert responds that appointments are used solely to reward party members or activists by providing them with posts in the core civil service or on the boards of autonomous institutions or public or semi-public enterprises and companies. Only 22.5 per cent opine that politicians are motivated by both reward and control (administrative or political). Control (in the wide sense) is presented as the sole motive in the Foreign Service, the military and police, and in regional/local administration. Appointments as reward are reported by some only within the areas of the economy, finance, media, healthcare, and culture/education, and here mainly in terms of appointments to commissions and boards. Moreover, those who argue that such motives do exist tend to see them as occasional
additions to the predominant motive of control. For example, it is argued that appointments to company boards may include an element of reward of partisans or individuals with similar policy views. Finally, only 2 out of 40 respondents see ‘other reasons’ as the major driving forces: for instance, that politicians act out of some sort of ‘constitutional necessity’ or simply in order ‘to provide a link between appointments and the elected bodies of democracy’.

When asked about those who have recently been appointed to positions controlled by politicians across institution categories, all experts claim that ‘professional qualifications matter’, in line with Norway’s formal ‘qualification principle’. Nearly 70 per cent think that ‘other qualifications matter’ – such as gender, geography, and general political experience. About 50 per cent say that candidates have been appointed on the basis of political ties, whereas one third indicates that personal connections play a part. More detailed analysis shows that about 48 per cent think that professional qualifications are the only criterion that matters, whereas 52 per cent mention political ties – and 69 percent ‘other qualifications’ – in addition to professional qualifications.

In light of previous research, and the minor role of parties as such, the proportion of experts who argue that political allegiance matters is surprisingly high. However, these figures might simply indicate that a majority thinks political criteria occasionally matter, in some administrative branches. Also, to the extent that party membership or policy views count, political ties are almost never reported as the sole determinant of appointments – they are held to tip the balance only in some cases. According to sector experts, sufficient professional qualifications are an almost-necessary condition for being appointed in Norway, at least to regular civil service jobs. In the case of commissions and boards, the political profile of candidates is perhaps discussed more openly. A recent example is the much-disputed appointment of new chairman for Statoil’s board in 2007 (Aftenposten 21.11.07). But
we cannot conclude that political allegiance usually determines if candidates are more or less equal in professional qualifications.

Moreover, political experience is, in some cases, seen as a qualification in its own right. For example, in the Foreign Service, appointing former politicians as ambassadors is not unheard-of. These might be seen as ‘retirement positions’ for key figures from the political establishment, and even as rewards for ‘long and faithful service’ on behalf of a political party. Nonetheless, the various Foreign Service experts tend to view such appointments mainly as selection of individuals with highly relevant, proven political experience.\textsuperscript{19}

Hence, it could be argued that patronage appointments are the exception that proves the rule in Norway. In contrast, appointments motivated by policy control are perceived as quite widespread and policy views seem to play less than a marginal role. However, this does not mean that there are numerous control appointments in Norway. The relative emphasis on professional qualifications rather makes many reported appointments approach the type of quasi-bureaucratic appointments. However, at the same time, the Norwegian experts question the correlation between policy control-seeking and emphasis on political selection criteria. Appointments based on partisanship are presented as virtually non-existent within the sectors that appear totally dominated by the (not only administrative) control motive.\textsuperscript{20} Political appointments aimed at ensuring policy control do not necessarily mean appointments based on partisanship or specific policy views.

\textsuperscript{19} Interesting, the proportion of top civil servants with a previous political career is generally low but has increased over time (Egeberg 1998: 9–10). In 1996, more than 40 per cent of the ministerial Secretaries-General (departementsråd) had held central political positions (in public office) prior to their appointments – although it should be noted that nearly half of them had been appointed by a government affiliated to another party than their own (Nerland 1997).

\textsuperscript{20} On the other hand, a new study of voting behaviour in the Norwegian Supreme Court (Grendstad et al. 2010) indicates that, even though appointment of Supreme Court justices is usually assumed to be a purely non-political exercise (ibid: 78), political values and attitudes are important determinants of judicial voting (in non-unanimous decisions), and that there is a correlation between the policy profile of Supreme Court judges and the political ‘colour’ of the government appointing them. Hence, a more subtle political pattern might exist which is hard for observers to detect – like emphasis on the candidates’ basic values or broader understanding of the political system, society and perhaps contested issues within the Judiciary (cf. Aftenposten 01.10.2009). But, by and large, the Norwegian Judiciary – as well as the Foreign Service and the Military – is fairly immune to clear party-political influence, according to those interviewed for this study.
The results as regards covert political appointments are summarized in Table 5. It seems clear that policy or administrative control is the main motive in all three countries while rewards play a smaller role. Professional qualifications are generally seen as very important. Accordingly, quasi-bureaucratic appointments seem to be the most common type in the Nordic countries studied here, but the existence of this type of appointment is contested in the Icelandic case. In Iceland the reward motive and partisanship still play a significant role even if clientlism has been in retreat for decades, whereas patronage appointments seem rare in Denmark and Norway. In Iceland control appointments also appear to be important. In Denmark they exist in a few administrative branches, whereas in Norway it seems as if appointments can often be motivated by policy control but frequently without using political criteria as a decisive factor in the selection process.

Table 5 Motives and criteria: types of covert political appointments in Denmark, Iceland and Norway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>ICE</th>
<th>NOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quasi-bureaucratic</td>
<td>Predominant</td>
<td>Contested</td>
<td>Predominant, but policy control orientation seems more common than selection based on partisanship etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appointments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronage appointments</td>
<td>Very rare</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control appointments</td>
<td>Important where political criteria are applied</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Partisanship is mainly related to reward motivated appointments, but control appointments do exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other motivations/selection criteria</td>
<td>Partisan balancing</td>
<td>In rare cases the parties share reward appointments, especially in the Foreign Service.</td>
<td>Partisan balancing might play a part in a few cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political experience a qualification in its own right</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary and Discussion
In Denmark, Iceland and Norway the formal responsibility for appointing to higher level positions within the public administration lies with the cabinet or individual ministers.

Appointments are connected to incumbency – overtly political – in only a small number of instances, limited to junior ministers and ministerial assistants and, in a few cases, membership of boards and of committees outside the ministries. A trend toward increasing use of overtly political positions in the ministries may be discerned in all three countries, aiming at strengthening political leadership and control in the administration. This change, however, is on a very modest scale and does not change the main characterization of the administration as overtly non-political. Of the three countries, Norway stands out as the one with the greatest number of overtly political appointees in addition to ministers, but this hardly amounts to large scale overt politicization of the administration.

For positions independent of government change (possible covert political appointments) there are various legal and procedural restrictions on the right of ministers to appoint, including labour market law and administrative rules, and the choice of ministers in some cases is restrained by the cabinet or cabinet committees. Restrictions of this kind, on the whole, play a greater role in Denmark and Norway than in Iceland. Still, the material under study indicates that ministers are actually involved in appointments in many instances across institution categories, especially at higher organizational levels of the administration. The scope of appointments – share of institutions affected – seems to vary somewhat across policy areas and ministries, NDACs and executing institutions within countries. In short, the over-all extent of reported political involvement – reach and scope – does not seem to exceed the formal appointment powers of the governments, perhaps with the exception of Icelandic executing institutions.

In most cases the motives for appointments which are given greatest weight are policy and/or administrative control which mean that a certain level of competence has to be
secured among appointees. Only in Iceland, among the three countries, do appointments to a significant extent seem to be used for reward purposes, and Iceland is also the case where the reach of ministerial involvement down the administrative hierarchy is deepest. The involvement of politicians in appointments in the three countries is often restrained by pre-selection procedures and the expectation that they mostly conform to established merit criteria for appointments. This is especially the case in Denmark and Norway, but increasingly in Iceland as well.

If any appointment where politicians are actively involved independent of government turnover is considered a political appointment we have distinguished between three sub-types, i.e. covert patronage appointments, covert control appointments and quasi-bureaucratic appointments. Patronage appointments, where reward is the dominant motive and political affiliation is the major selection criteria, are found in Iceland, whereas such appointments seem to be marginal phenomena in Norway and above all in Denmark. The scope available to politicians is based on more constrained selectivity here: the political leadership may affect appointments, but apparently not entire careers. Control appointments certainly exist in Iceland according to experts, but seemingly also in Norway to some extent – and in a few Danish administrative branches. In Denmark, the Minister has the freest hand in relation to the auxiliary institutions. In Norway, appointments to non-departmental agencies and executing institutions seem to a lesser extent subject to political involvement than ministries, but the impact of political motives and selection criteria seem stronger outside the core civil service organizations. However, it is also important to note that the experts suggest appointments can be motivated by policy control yet without political criteria as a decisive factor in the selection process in Norway. Overall, the level of politicization seems somewhat higher in Norway than in Denmark. Norwegian politicians appear to be slightly more involved in appointment-making and to more often pursue political purposes when appointing
than their Danish colleagues, in addition to standing out with a higher number of overtly political positions in the Ministries.

In sum, we see that alleged over-all degree of politicization of public appointments is modest but stronger than traditionally expected in these ‘less likely cases’ of political appointments, and that some differences have been revealed between countries that share political history and common cultural heritage and that have fairly similar political systems and party systems. Hence, there is more to the issue of political appointments than strong state institutions and the norm of a permanent impartial bureaucracy. To what extent does the variation revealed match the expectations informed by bureaucratic theory and principal-agent theory? We have not aimed to test the propositions presented, but a few speculative remarks can be noted.

In light of previous research, it does not come as a big surprise that there are more political involvement, and more appointments based on partisanship, in Iceland (to reward and control) than in Denmark and Norway. In Denmark and Norway, party organizations were formed after bureaucratic administration had been consolidated. Consequently, the parties had to rely on other sources of benefits for their memberships than public jobs, mainly policy and ideological ones. Late independence in the Icelandic case, on the other hand, created circumstances where party organizations and the state administration emerged side by side, which allowed the former to subdue and utilize the latter for party building purposes. Hence, weak bureaucratic autonomy seems at least as a factor explaining the development of patronage and other partisan appointments in Iceland (Kristinsson 1995). Accordingly, the bureaucracy is still perhaps less autonomous and partisan appointments are perhaps still more culturally acceptable and rational to employ here than in other Nordic countries. The Icelandic case confirms that patronage appointments generally reach further down the bureaucratic hierarchy than control appointments.
In Denmark and Norway the politicians tend to opt in favour of quasi-bureaucratic appointments or policy control without emphasizing political affiliation, whereas the extent to which appointments are made for control purposes rather than in accordance with bureaucratic criteria is a contested matter in Iceland. This finding is, in light of the discussion above, in line with the assumption that in systems where the bureaucracy is well-established and permanent normative and legal constraints make patronage and control appointments particularly costly, but where politicians still have access to appointment processes, we can expect the government to mainly use quasi-bureaucratic appointments as a tool. Whether the bureaucracy is more responsive in Denmark and Norway than in Iceland is, so far, a moot point. The prevalence of quasi-bureaucratic appointments in Denmark and Norway seems to rest on a delicate balance which depends on positions being reachable by politicians, while their actual choice is restricted by rules, procedures and fear of public opinion. The situation can be described neither as bureaucratic autonomy, in line with classical bureaucratic theory, nor political control of the bureaucracy, in line with principal-agent theory. Instead, each of the different players – the politicians and bureaucrats – has resources which may be used to ward of infringements by the other. In Iceland, where late statehood impaired the development of a similar balance, both patronage appointments and control appointments seem far more common than in the other countries and quasi-bureaucratic ones less dominant, also below the top-level.

This said, the tendency of slightly more political involvement and control appointments in Norway than in Denmark, remains to be explained, but it is for now interesting to note that the degree of hierarchy varies across countries: in organizational terms, the Norwegian Civil Service has been described as located between a smaller set of hierarchical ministries under strong political control, as in Denmark, and a larger set of more autonomous and professional agencies, as in Sweden. While Iceland formally resembles
Denmark in its ministerial structure, but a large and complicated agency structure effectively tends to undermine ministerial control. So the question is if the variation echoes an attempt by Norwegian (and Icelandic) politicians to regain political control after years of expansion and administrative reform in the public sector. As noted above, the impact of political motives and selection criteria seems stronger outside the core civil service organizations in Norway. That said, we should not exaggerate the difference: for sure, Norwegian political elites have not systematically sought to compensate for structural devolution in public administration by ‘penetrating the state’ through more strongly politicized appointments (Allern, forthcoming). Proximity to the government’s policy platform might favour candidates even for regular civil service positions more than traditionally assumed, perhaps reflecting that the grey area between politics and administration has grown. But appointments seem mainly to be used by politically accountable leaders as a tool of democratic government, and, then, only occasionally based on party-political considerations and selection criteria.

**Conclusion**

This article has challenged the common wisdom as regards political appointments both analytically and empirically in the Nordic setting. By distinguishing between the issue of who actually appoints and the dependency of government change with the motives as well as the selection criteria of appointments, we have been able to move beyond the traditional simple distinction between ‘patronage’ and ‘no patronage’. Our typological map of political appointments within the state administration illustrates that politicians might appoint also for other reasons than the aim of rewarding supporters and not only by selecting partisans (cf. Kopecký et. al, forthcoming). It has made it possible to reveal that politicized public appointments exist in the three Nordic countries studied here despite few overtly political appointments and a weak degree of patronage appointments in general. Also, the reported
emphasis on professional qualifications shows that appointments by political leaders, affiliated to parties, does not necessarily imply amateurish administration or a lack of professional competence (cf. Rouban 2007: 202). In addition, we have been able to clarify that cabinet members can behave as administrators rather than politicians in appointment matters: ‘political involvement’ does not equal ‘political behaviour’. This should all be important lessons learned for future comparative studies of political appointments across different settings.

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