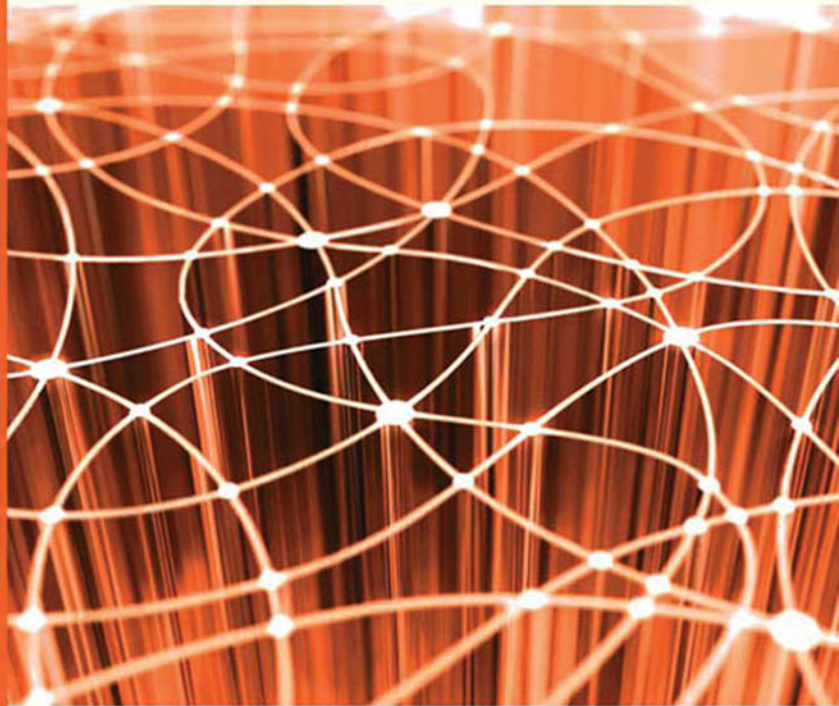# TRANSLATING AGENCY REFORM

Rhetoric and Culture in Comparative Perspective

Amanda Smullen

Translating Agency Reform

Public Sector Organizations

Editors: **B. Guy Peters**, Maurice Falk Professor of Government, Pittsburgh University, USA, and **Geert Bouckaert**, Professor at the Public Management Institute, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

Organizations are the building blocks of governments. The role of organizations, formal and informal, is most readily apparent in public bureaucracy, but all the institutions of the public sector are composed of organizations, or have some organizational characteristics that affect their performance. Therefore, if scholars want to understand how governments work, a very good place to start is at the level of the organizations involved in delivering services. Likewise, if practitioners want to understand how to be effective in the public sector, they would be well-advised to consider examining the role of organizations and how to make the organizations more effective.

This series will publish research-based books concerned with organizations in the public sector and will cover such issues as: the autonomy of public sector organizations, networks and network analysis, bureaucratic politics; organizational change and leadership and methodology for studying organizations.

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Koen Verhoest, Paul G. Roness, Bram Verschuere, Kristin Rubecksen and Muiris MacCarthaigh
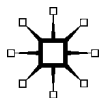AUTONOMY AND CONTROL OF STATE AGENCIES
Comparing States and Agencies

Translating Agency Reform

Rhetoric and Culture in Comparative Perspective

Amanda Smullen
Assistant Professor, Department of Politics, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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Introduction

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s a new international reform category emerged, the agency. Although not always consistent with local titles, the agency label was associated with public sector arrangements observed in countries as diverse as England (O'Toole & Jordan 1995), Sweden (Fortin 1996; Gustafsson and Rhodes 1989), Portugal, Japan (James 2000), The Netherlands (Ter Bogt 1999; Van der Knaap et al. 1997), Latvia (Pollitt et al. 2001; Pollitt 2002), New Zealand (Boston et al. 1996), Canada (Aucoin 1990), and Australia (Armstrong 1998; Rowlands 2002) – to name just a few examples. Agencies were also introduced by the European Commission to assist in EU policy making (Keleman 2002) and they were enforced upon developing countries such as Ghana and Tanzania as a condition for financial aid from the World Bank (Talbot & Caulfield 2002; Minogue et al. 1999). Their spread was the consequence of seeming universal agreement that they were a good thing and could bring about a range of benefits to all kinds of cultural political administrative contexts (see OECD 1997a:19). By the turn of century however the success story of agencies had changed. They were no longer regarded as solutions in a whole range of contexts but rather as a problem for accountability and coordination (OECD 2002; James 2004; Smullen 2004). Empirically this apparent pendulum swing presents a range of puzzles to be studied in this book. These include how similar public management reforms emerge across different political cultures, the nature of their commonality, and how and why they change?

The claim that the adoption of agency reforms constituted a new kind of administrative arrangement should be clarified. Broadly speaking, agency initiatives have been characterized by three features: their structural disaggregation from central departments, management autonomy and performance contracting (Talbot 2004:6). They function at *arms length* from departments but still remain part of the central core of government. This arms length relationship is not of itself a novel aspect of the organizational structure of administrative systems. Historically many countries used legal independence of government organizations for purposes of state building, harnessing expertise in particular policy fields, or for nurturing the role of civil society in implementing policies (Van Thiel 2000). Agency reform as studied here however was distinct to the period of New Public Management (NPM). NPM has been characterized by both reform activities of a substantive kind – certain practices, but also as a normative perspective which aspires to make government work more like a business – a certain story (Hood 1996; Smullen 2004). Typical watchwords in this NPM story included efficiency, management and financial autonomy, performance contracting, customer service and sometimes getting closer to the citizen (Hood 1996; Pollitt 2000; Smullen 2004). It was the trans-national character of NPM ideas, and the intensity of knowledge exchange, that made it and agencies, original to recent public management experience. Through both the forums of the OECD, but also cross country exchanges, the initiation and refinement of agency reforms was informed by a trans-national community (Sahlin-Andersson 2001).

The purpose of the book and theoretical background

The purpose of this book is to examine and compare the ideational evolution of agency reform in specific national contexts. It seeks to investigate the extent to which there was convergence in the way agency reform attained, and also lost, credibility across national political cultures. Studies of convergence in a range of policy fields have ensued in recent years as a consequence of the increasing trans-nationalization of policy making. In public management this has inspired research into the role of national political and administrative institutions in shaping the introduction and trajectory of reforms (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2000; Pollitt et al. 2004; Sundström 2003). Many

examples of the way that material political administrative structures have shaped the content and results of management reforms, including agency reforms, have been identified (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2000; Sundström 2003). Some commentators have suggested that there has not been convergence in the practice of reforms but rather in the stories being told about reform initiatives (Pollitt 2001a, 2001b). This assumes that talk is more mobile than material practices and easier to export across borders. However, empirical analyses and comparisons of the trajectory of talk about similar public management reforms have been lacking to date. The findings in this book fill that gap through analysing and comparing the way in which agency reform was constructed in official government documents in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia during a period of 9–15 years.

In comparing national official agency talk, as opposed to material agency arrangements, the present study should be situated within broader institutional debates. Talk is a way to represent ideas and beliefs, and both historical and sociological institutional theorists have recognized these as important variables in explaining policy outcomes and change. Indeed, there are two insights from these institutional traditions that have inspired analysing official agency talk. Firstly, research within historical institutionalism has highlighted the way that ideas can become durable structures and constrain actors from seeing alternative possibilities (Hall 1993; Marcussen 2000). This perspective tends to emphasize that durable ideas have a reciprocal relationship with material political structures and that they are part of an endogenous system. Schmidt (2002) has shown for example how discursive traditions became institutionalized within different political administrative contexts and shaped how policies were articulated and proceeded. From these studies it can be concluded that talk, like political or administrative structures, also has the potential to become resilient. Secondly, sociological institutionalism has pointed to the ways ideas or norms in a given organizational field can pressure states, organizations, or individuals to conform to certain symbolic behaviour (Dimaggio & Powell 1983). These pressures, such as NPM ideas and labels, may be external to the nation state or organization and can therefore challenge existing symbolic traditions. They are one way in which convergence in talk may occur. The analysis of official agency talk in this study draws from these insights about endogenous and exogenous ideational pressure by interpreting them, at least

initially, as competing explanations for what has been said about agencies.

There are also other empirical and theoretical reasons for studying and comparing official agency talk. NPM, though recognized as an international fashion in public management, was widely considered a particularly Anglo/American approach to government (Pollitt 1993). It was argued that individualist management ideologies and experiences from Anglo/American countries such as the UK, New Zealand and USA had become the models other countries should replicate (Sahlin-Andersson 2001; Premfors 1998). This was apparent from, and facilitated by, the Public Management Committee (PUMA) within the OECD (Premfors 1998). Though this committee was reformed in 2002, prior to that time and particularly in the 1990s, it was active in regularly reporting on management reform progress across member countries. Invariably these reports found Anglo-Saxon countries to be the leaders, as opposed to laggards, in NPM reform initiatives (Premfors 1998). This is hardly surprising since the reform categories relied upon English terminology, which sometimes had no equivalents in non-English speaking countries, and drew primarily from experiences in Anglo-Saxon countries (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). Concerns that NPM, and its spread, represented the cultural hegemony of Anglo-Saxon government styles were raised. Since styles of speaking are widely considered ways in which cultures express themselves, analysing whether convergence in talk occurred makes it possible to assess whether an Anglo-Saxon style has been hegemonic.

Of course, it is likely that the spread of NPM ideas were more complex than simply the succession of a common (Anglo Saxon) story about agency reform. Rather Sahlin-Andersson (1996, 2001) has argued that NPM ideas and practices were transformed and translated as they entered different political administrative contexts. In her primarily theoretical work she posed that translation involves national actors selecting, copying and editing fashionable management ideas such as agency reform. Moreover she suggested a number of contextual editing rules that govern translation, though she did not offer a detailed analysis of how these worked in practice (Sahlin-Andersson 2001:55). This study borrows the notion of translation to speak of the way that durable national styles of speaking interacted with common transnational stories of agency reform. It follows and compares trajectories of agency talk across different political cultures to examine and dis-

tinguish between nationally informed styles of speaking and common (trans-national) stories of agency reform. The argument here is that while there is evidence that there were common trans-national stories of agency reform circulating to different political cultures, they were mediated by, or rather translated through, durable national styles of speaking. This is found to hold even when there were pendulum swings in the trans-national story of agency reform. Against the background of these theoretical discussions about ideas in institutional theory, translation and the empirical experience of NPM, the central guiding question for this book is:

> *How was agency reform constructed in the official accounts presented in different political administrative cultures and why have there been similarities and differences in the accounts?*

Theoretical perspectives

While this study is interested in contributing to broadly institutional debates, the theoretical concepts selected for and applied in this study come from other traditions. They include The New Rhetoric and Grid Group Cultural Theory (GGCT). These conceptual frameworks were selected because they could be applied to the talk level and facilitated distinguishing between durable national styles of speaking (informed by political culture) and a similar fashionable story of agency reform. They recognize, in different ways, a relationship between ways of speaking and the cultural context in which talk is produced. Moreover both theories agree that ways of speaking provide indications of a cultural way of life.

Derived from Aristotle's own treatise the New Rhetoric builds upon the concepts of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* to identify rhetorical styles of speaking. These concepts represent respectively the character of the speaker (ethos), the techniques to move the audience emotionally (pathos), and the logical contents of the argumentation (logos). They are the *rules of speaking* about agency reform and are used to identify whether patterned and durable *national styles of speaking* can be identified in national official agency talk. One of the advantages of the New Rhetoric is that it distinguishes between self presentations of the speaker (ethos) which seek to obtain credibility from a broader (national) universal audience, together with appeals to

particular audiences (Perelman 1984:192). Over time the researcher can distinguish between durable and more fleeting self presentations of the speakers when describing agency reforms. Furthermore, similarities in particular audiences across political cultures can be distinguished from different universal audiences. As will be described further in Chapters 3 and 6 this provides a way to demonstrate how the national translation of international reform ideas like agencies occur.

A second theoretical perspective selected for this study is Grid Group Cultural Theory (GGCT). Initially developed by the anthropologist Mary Douglas GGCT proposes that there is a reciprocal relationship between social relationships and beliefs, such as those expressed in ways of speaking (Thompson et al. 1990:21). GGCT recognizes four ideal cultural ways of life and expects that social phenomenon such as management reform, or more specifically agencies, exhibit different cultural flavours, or combination of flavours, depending upon the cultural context in which they are formed. It also recognizes a limit to possible cultural flavours and identifies just four basic cultural ways of life. The four ways of life are derived from two basic dimensions of sociality: grid and group (Douglas 1982; Mamadouh 1999b). These represent the degree to which individual's lives are circumscribed by formal rules and regulations (grid) and the degree to which individual's lives are constrained by group membership and control (group). Together they are combined to distinguish hierarchical (high group, high grid), egalitarian (high group, low grid), individualist (low group, low grid) and fatalistic (low group, high grid) cultural ways of life (Douglas 1982; Mamadouh 1999b; Thompson et al. 1990). It is not unusual for GGCT theorists to focus upon just one level of analysis, such as talk (as opposed to talk and social relations), to make assessments about the cultural way of life being displayed (Mamadouh 1999b). Christopher Hood has described a number of themes and arguments in public management that are consistent with each of the four ways of life. His work is used in this study to classify the cultural flavour of agency talk (Hood 2000). Alternatively secondary literature is used to diagnose the broader political culture in which agency talk was produced in the cases under study.

One of the advantages of applying GGCT to agency talk, both over time and across political cultures, is that the theory recognizes mechanisms for cultural change. Each of the cultural ways of life is con-

ceived of as having its own limits and blind-spots that can be compensated by one or more of the other ways of life (Hood 2000:11; Thompson et al. 1990:4). Indeed Hood, and others, suggested that public management reform ideas are characterized by reactions against previous cultural commitments (Hood 2000:11; Hirschman 1991). Such descriptions of change are of interest here because they highlight the mobility of public management stories and the notion that they may actually have a (cultural) life of their own. In this study different national trajectories of agency talk will be examined to assess whether they exhibited reactionary pendulum swings in cultural flavour that replicated international shifts in the agency fashion. Moreover the argument is that national political culture, or rather the durable styles of speaking informed by political culture, mediated the degree to which there were pendulum swings in agency talk.

Together the New Rhetoric and GGCT also enable other kinds of contributions to be made. This includes examining whether particular cultural flavours of agency talk are also accompanied by, or rather promoted through, particular rhetorical styles (Hood 2000:177–189). Like the identification of pendulum swings in agency talk, the finding that certain cultural stories generally appeared together with particular rhetorical elements gives an indication of how fashionable stories can govern the composition of national agency talk. Furthermore, while analysing agency talk is the primary empirical contribution of this study, some consideration is given to how the rhetorical styles and cultural flavours of national agency talk corresponded to GGCT diagnoses of national political culture.

The selection of countries and role of comparison

This is an international comparative study, with some attention to how national agency talk appeared over time. It has been designed to enable explanations of official agency talk. As was already noted two competing explanations are of primary interest. These are the role of political culture or fashionable stories in shaping official agency talk. National cases of agency talk were selected with consideration for national similarities and differences. This required borrowing from existing diagnoses of political culture within the GGCT literature and other studies of culture within politics and society more generally (Grendstad 1999; Hofstede 2001; Lijphart 1975; Lijphart 1999; Horne

1964; Heclo & Madsen 1987). More specifically both quantitative studies of culture by Grendstad (1999) and Hofstede (2001) provided a basis for case selection.

Firstly, two similar high group consensus political cultures, The Netherlands and Sweden were selected. Following from Grendstad's analysis of citizen responses in the World Values Survey both Dutch and Swedish political cultures rated highest on egalitarianism followed by hierarchy (Grendstad 1999:473). Elsewhere Mamadouh (1999b) has likened the alliance between egalitarianism and hierarchy to Elazar's moralistic political culture. This is a political culture that conceives of democracy as a public service where the state is supposed to promote the good society and in which participation is emphasized (Mamadouh 1997:23).

Also their status as consensus democracies could be interpreted as corroborating the high group diagnosis of The Netherlands and Sweden, though clearly there are also differences in the way consensus functions in both countries. The Netherlands is renowned for being a more fragmented political administrative system than Sweden and is strongly committed to individual ministerial accountability as opposed to the collective government principle of the Swedish (Gladdish 1991; Van der Meer & Raadschelders 1999). This is the principle that the government as a collective is responsible for policy and administration and leaves little leeway for ministerial rule (Larsson 1995). Though there are some conflicting findings, the Netherlands generally rates higher than Sweden on individualism (Hofstede 2001). This is an important difference in these otherwise similar high group political cultures.

Secondly, an entirely different political culture, Australia, has also been selected. The inclusion of this case is particularly important for considering the role of a common international story, as opposed to political culture, in explaining official agency talk. It is an Anglo Saxon country and enables empirical material about Anglo Saxon accounts of agency reform to be presented and compared with the other countries. In contrast to The Netherlands and Sweden, Australia represents a low group adversarial political culture. While it was not possible to find studies that rated Australian political culture according to GGCT, other studies of Australian political behaviour would indicate it is low group. These include findings that Australian citizens are less often members of groups than either the Swedes or

Dutch and that they are more likely to detest and resist authority (Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2003, 2005).

Hofstede for example, who likens his own category of individualism as conceptually similar to that in GGCT, rates Australia as highly individualistic (Hofstede 2001:215). Australians also rate low on seeking to persuade friends about politics which could be considered evidence of a more fatalistic as opposed to individualistic political culture (Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2003, 2005). Certainly Australia has a long social and political history of being anti-mind (Horne 1964:22). In terms of political systems, the competitive features of Australia's majoritarian system correspond more to an individualistic way of life. The Australian parliament for example has been described as an unruly bear pit in which politics is a ruthless adversarial contest (Uhr & Wanna 2000:10). It also complies with Elazar's description of the entrepreneurial political culture where the state is likely to be reduced to minimal scope (Mamadouh 1997:23). An overview of these admittedly broad brush characterizations of the national political cultures is listed below:

- SWEDEN   (predominantly egalitarian then hierarchical – HIGH GROUP)
- NETHERLANDS   (predominantly egalitarian then hierarchical, higher individualism than Sweden – HIGH GROUP)
- AUSTRALIA   (predominantly individualist – LOW GROUP)

A comparison of official agency talk across this selection of countries makes it possible to assess the explanatory role of political culture in two ways. Firstly, when the high group consensus cultures are found to produce similar ways of speaking about agency reform that are different to the low group political culture, e.g. similar rhetorical styles and cultural flavours, this would indicate that there are typical national styles of speaking in these respective political cultures. Indeed, *national styles of speaking* are defined in this study as both durable rhetorical styles over the period studied in each country, as well as styles derived from comparisons of similarities and differences. Secondly, when agency talk is found to be different in The Netherlands compared to Sweden, because of more individualistic cultural flavours, this can be attributed to Dutch political culture rating higher on individualism than Swedish

political culture. Alternatively when agency talk is found to be similar across all the different contexts, independently of political culture, this would indicate that it is a fashionable story rather than political culture that has shaped talk. The selection of the national cases on the basis of GGCT diagnoses also makes it possible to assess the correspondence between political culture and the cultural flavour of public management talk. This is of interest since GGCT theorists sometimes appear to suggest that such correspondence at different levels of scale is likely (see Thompson 1998:211).

It may have struck the reader that contrasting the role of political culture (through national styles of speaking) with the role of stories, actually entails looking at different levels of analysis. This is also facilitated by the theoretical concepts applied in this study. For example the New Rhetoric distinguishes between broader universal audiences and more specific particular audiences, while GGCT can be compared at the level of national styles of speaking, as well as at the level of similar cultural themes. They enable the same empirical findings to be sliced in different ways for the purpose of showing how national agency talk was put together. Besides drawing conclusions about the distinctive role of national styles of speaking (political culture) or story in shaping agency talk, comparisons at these different levels of analyses can also demonstrate how these two aspects of agency talk interact. The interaction between national styles of speaking and common fashionable stories is argued in this study to be one way in which international management ideas are translated to national contexts.

Defining agency talk

There were also other reasons for selecting these national cases. Not least, there was the requirement that the countries under study should have experience with agency reforms and thereby empirical data exhibiting agency talk. This task was complicated by the generic term of agency itself, as well as by the rather broad characteristics that have been attributed to agency reform, such as structural disaggregation and performance management (Pollitt et al. 2001; Pollitt et al. 2004; Smullen 2004). In English speaking countries, like Australia, the label agency has long been adopted to refer to a government organization or even central departments, without any necessary allusion to the fashion of agency reforms (Halligan 1998). By contrast, in non-English

speaking countries such as Sweden, the label *agency* is clearly distinct from the national terminology (although it may be adopted when describing national arrangements to foreign audiences), yet there exists a plethora of statements referring to reforms of arms length organizations (*myndigheter*) in that country. There is in this case relevant rhetoric without direct application of the agency label.

In order to set some definitional limits about the object of study, and yet also be somewhat responsive to the variety of practices and talk that has characterized the agency fashion across countries, there were two criteria which were used to define agency talk. These included a *substantive criterion* regarding the content of agency reforms, as well as a *symbolic criterion* which required that cases be part of the international discursive community recognizing agency initiatives. With regard to the content of agency reforms, this study has followed from the definition of Pollitt et al. (2004:10) and included:

• Organizations that have their status defined principally or exclusively in public law (though the nature of that law may vary greatly between different national systems);
• Is functionally disaggregated from the core of its ministry or department of state;
• Enjoys some degree of autonomy which is not enjoyed by the core ministry, but is still closest to the core ministry in any given administrative framework;
• Is nevertheless linked to the ministry/department of state in ways which are close enough to permit ministers/secretaries of state to alter the budgets and main operational goals of the organization;
• Is therefore not statutorily fully independent of its ministry/department of state (e.g. Dutch ZBOs); and
• Is not a commercial corporation.

This definition applies to the introduction of the Dutch *agentschappen* program in 1991, to the introduction of the Australian service delivery agency *Centrelink* in 1996 and the Australian *executive agencies* which were created in the Australian Public Service Act in 1999. This substantive criterion also recognizes Swedish independent agencies, or rather authorities, (*myndigheter*) which have long been part of the Swedish administration. They were exposed to a number of reforms throughout the 1980s and 1990s including initiatives to grant more financial

autonomy to agencies and create contract-like arrangements for performance reporting in the budget (Sundström 2004). Chapter 2 describes in more detail the substantive aspects of the national agency reforms selected for this study.

With regard to the symbolic criterion of agency reform, the cases selected in this study were also recognized by one another, and/or the OECD community, as being part of a common agency fashion. Such symbolic recognition of agency membership was found in national or international statements associating national agency initiatives with the broader agency fashion. It included Dutch officials associating their agency reforms with the UK Next Steps agency program (Pollitt et al. 2001; Ministerie van Financiën 1991:30–32). It included Swedish officials associating their management reforms with initiatives in New Zealand and Australia (Sahlin-Andersson 2001:49), and Australian officials associating their agency reform initiatives with the UK Next Steps Agencies, Canadian Special Operating Agencies and New Zealand's Crown Entities (Newman 1997:2; Vardon 1997b; DOFA 1998a). It also included countries elsewhere such as the UK or OECD reports more generally, recognizing that the inspiration for agency reforms had come from Swedish experience (Fulton 1968:138–140). Since this study wishes to examine the degree to which there were common international stories of agency reform across political cultures this symbolic criterion of agency reform is important.

The plan of the book

The book has been divided into three parts. This introductory chapter and the following chapter, which describes the international story of agencies, set the empirical scene for the analysis of agency talk. Chapter 2 also presents an overview of the contents of agency reform in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. The second part of the book is focused upon theories of talk and the specific national trajectories of agency talk in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. Chapter 3 describes both the New Rhetoric and Grid Group Culture Theory in detail. It presents the ambitions for these theories in this study and the kinds of conclusions they are to facilitate. Chapter 4 then presents the first analyses of official agency talk. It presents an overview of the rhetorical styles and cultural flavour of agency talk in each of the countries under study. It identifies the variety of national agency talk that is to be explained in the remainder of the book.

The third part of the book then focuses upon explanations for agency talk. Both Chapters 5 and 6 present comparisons of the similarities and differences in agency talk across the different political cultures. Chapter 5 focuses upon the level of national agency talk and considers the role of political culture in explaining patterns in similarities and differences across the different countries. This chapter identifies national styles of speaking that are common to the high group consensus cultures and also different to the low group adversarial political culture, Australia. It also considers the correspondence between the cultural flavours of national styles of speaking and the political culture diagnoses used to select the countries. Chapter 6 then shifts to the level of culturally flavoured stories. It examines patterns in rhetorical style at the level of culturally flavoured stories. There is also a comparison between the empirical findings of this study with Hood's (2000:180) predictions for the rhetorical styles of different culturally flavoured stories. In the last part of Chapter 6 there is an examination of how national styles of speaking interact with culturally flavoured stories. This includes their consequences for shifts in the cultural flavour of stories, as well as how they are translated to different national cultures. Finally, the conclusions are presented in Chapter 7.

2
Agency Reform: Tracing a Public Management Fashion

Introduction

The focus upon national agency talk in this book departs from the claim that agency reform had constituted a public management fashion throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Pollitt et al. 2001). This fashion had manifested itself in both a certain kind of trans-national story about public management, but also in certain kinds of practices. This chapter sets the scene for the theoretical and empirical analyses of national agency accounts in the later chapters of this book. On one hand, it sketches an international story of agency reform as presented by the Public Management Committee (PUMA) within the OECD. It is shown how this story changed with the passing of the new millennium. On the other hand, this chapter also presents an overview of practices of agency reform in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. Agency reform initiatives in these countries also changed during the period of the international agency fashion. The overview of the contents and development of national agency reform initiatives presented in this chapter is used as a background to situating the national agency accounts described in the remainder of the book.

The international agency story from solution to problem

The rise of New Public management throughout the 1980s and 1990s was associated with an increasing internationalization of public management (Mathiasen 2005). Some commentators argued that the OECD, and more specifically its Public Management Committee (PUMA), had

become the dominant story teller on this front (Premfors 1998). Certainly there was a wealth of public management reports produced by PUMA throughout the 1990s, and by its predecessor the Technical Cooperation group in the 1980s (OECD 1991; OECD 1995). These generally focused on particular public management themes including agency reform. They also presented best practice cases or compared member countries and their apparent achievements with particular reform initiatives (OECD 1995). Though these reports have been criticized for their superficiality, there was and remains active involvement by member states in the OECD's public management reporting committees (Pollitt 2002; Sahlin-Andersson 2001). To this extent OECD/PUMA reports provide one way of examining how an international community of practitioners across member states, together with the experts appointed to the OECD, considered the idea of agency reform.

A review of two OECD reports from both the 1990s and more recently in 2002 provides an illustration of the character of the agency idea that circulated in the trans-national OECD community. In this study these reports are used to identify an international story about agency reform and an apparent pendulum swing in that story. As will be shown agencies went from being a solution in OECD documents to agencies becoming part of a new public management problem. The presentation of this international story provides an important backdrop for the later empirical chapters in this book. It makes it possible to consider the extent to which apparent trans-national constructions of agency reform were also emulated within the boundaries of national political contexts. This is part of examining whether symbolic convergence in public management talk occurred across different political cultures as reflected in similar kinds of agency stories. Moreover the trajectory of agency talk in national political cultures over time can be compared to the pendulum swing found within the OECD documents.

In 1995 the OECD published a report *Governance in Transition* which recognized that 'A number of countries have seen merit in the agency model' (OECD 1995:32). Autonomy was presented as one of the central features of agency reform and other kinds of solutions, which together provided 'a new paradigm for public management'. This paradigm was described as being 'aimed at fostering a performance-orientated culture in a less centralized public sector' (OECD 1995:7). Indeed, '(I)ncreasing autonomy and flexibility in resource use' was described as

'fundamental to developing a performance-orientated culture' (OECD 1995:8) and getting 'results'. It was something that public management could not get enough of and acted as a node bringing about a range of benefits. Relationships between the idea of more autonomy and other desirable effects such as responsibility, responsiveness and flexibility were constructed. The arguments were that more autonomy to managers, through arrangements such as agencies, would encourage them to take more responsibility and give them the flexibility to be responsive to both citizens and politicians. Another claim was that by granting more autonomy, together with performance targets, it would also be possible to make politicians and managers more accountable. This was the idea that agency arrangements could promote transparency and clarify expectations because of the existence of a performance contract.

The report was unequivocal about the various effects of arrangements such as agencies and it was stated that: '(D)evolution…. has been largely successful. It allows departments to adopt practices best suited to their individual business and needs. It has served to increase the responsibility and accountability of managers, and has contributed toward a sharper focus on results and a better use of resources' (OECD 1995:9). The solution of more autonomy was also part of a story about departing from *outdated institutions*. It was argued, that 'more of the same was inappropriate' and that '(I)f the public sector is to remain responsive to the needs of those it serves, governments must foster the development of organisations that perpetually adapt and reshape themselves to meet changing client needs, and that develop new ways to cope with the changing world' (OECD 1995:6).

Given this description of the public management predicament, the idea of semi-autonomous agencies was a useful solution that could be made to fit with this articulated need for an adaptable and responsive public sector. It was a problem that relied upon terms like 'highly centralized, rule bound and inflexible organizations' and called for solutions such as agencies which were described as flexible, autonomous and responsive.

By 2002 the international story had changed significantly. Following from an international gathering of experts from OECD member countries, a preliminary report had been published describing and classifying autonomous bodies against the background of the 'accelerated trend' of 'giving autonomy' to public organizations in the 1980s and

90s (OECD 2002:6). It noted that this trend had led to a 'realisation within many governments that managing from a distance had created specific accountability and control issues' and that 'improving the governance of these newly autonomous bodies' was a priority (OECD 2002:10). The final report of the working group entitled *Distributed Public Governance: Agencies, authorities and other government bodies* wrote that 'priorities have moved away from the need to create new separate bodies to the challenge of finding the right balance between accountability and autonomy, openness, performance management, as well strengthening the steering capacity of central ministries'. It went on to argue that 'whole of government' issues such as how to ensure policy coherence or a coherent public service, or how to maintain the clarity of the administrative organizational system have also arisen as crucial issues (OECD 2002:22). Agency autonomy, and with it other features of agency reform, was no longer a central public management solution, but part of some of the problems to be addressed.

Instead of praising the capacity to foster new types of organizations, as in the earlier OECD report, this report was of a different flavour, and focused upon identifying and defining clear classifications of existing independent or autonomous organizational types. 'Understanding the scope of distributed public governance' was now on the public management agenda (OECD 2002:10). In contrast to earlier claims that semi-autonomous agency arrangements would promote accountability, there was now concern that new roles had not been clearly defined. This made accountability arrangements unclear and the capacity for control limited (OECD 2002:25–26). There was a need for reassertion of political control from both ministers and parliament.

In addition, the challenges of *governance* were presented as requiring coherence. Service delivery was to be performed in concert with the broader goals of government policy. The creation of arms length organizations was presented as a risk for this coherence of government policy. Also concentration upon how to coordinate autonomous units across the administration was part of new concerns being associated with agency reform. There had been a shift in their status as an all purpose solution to a common international problem for institutional clarity, capacity and coordination. Irrespective of what had been happening in practice it could be argued that such a shift in the international story had only become possible because of earlier agreement that agencies did have autonomy and were numerous.

Agency reform initiatives in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia

Besides a trans-national story of agency reform, there have also been a range of actual initiatives to create or formalize agency arrangements across different countries. While the cases selected for this study have complied with the broader definition of agency reform described in the introduction, traditional historical institutionalists would remind us that they have nevertheless departed from different material starting points in different political administrative systems (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2000). Furthermore, they have taken up different proportions of the administrative landscape. For example in both The Netherlands and Australia agency programs constituted respectively in excess of 40 and less than ten agencies. They are lesser known cases of agency reform in the existing agency literature. By contrast, in Sweden, where independent agencies traditionally existed, there are approximately 450 state agencies (Premfors et al. 2003:164).

Although it is not the purpose of this study to examine the actual content of agency reforms, it is necessary to describe something of the national agency arrangements since these have been the consequence of official agency accounts. Through introducing the formal agency arrangements and events that have affected the status of agencies in the different countries, one also begins to obtain a feel for the variety of arrangements that have characterized the agency fashion. The different starting points from which agency talk was pursued can be identified. Furthermore these descriptions are useful for following the official accounts of agency reform analysed in later chapters.

The contours of Dutch agency reform

Dutch agency reforms, or rather *agentschappen*, were first described in 1991 (Ministerie van Financiën 1991). They were considered a means to obtain more efficiency and better management within the Dutch administration. Although they constituted a new organizational type within Dutch ministries, there had already been a long tradition of arms length organizations in the Dutch public sector (Van Thiel 2000). More specifically, functional decentralization of both policy making responsibilities and implementation to Dutch Zelfstandig Bestuurs-

organen (ZBOs) was, and remains, common practice within the corporatist Netherlands. Unlike agencies, Dutch ZBOs have a legal identity which situates them outside of the immediate ministerial fold. Compared to the some 40 agencies currently created in The Netherlands, an audit report counted 545 ZBOs in 1993 (Van Thiel 2000:18). In terms of both numbers and degrees of formal autonomy, the creation of agencies alongside the existing ZBOs was a rather mild initiative. An important note on terminology in the Dutch context has been the use of the term *internal autonomization* to describe agency reform and *external autonomization* to describe ZBOs. Autonomization comes from the Dutch word *verzelfstandigen* which is literally to give autonomy, but in the passive form.

The formal character of Dutch agencies are described in the Dutch accounting laws (*Comptabiliteitswet*), which were amended in 1994 to create an article defining agencies. Indeed, the primary distinction between Dutch agencies and other organizations within the ministries is that agencies must use an accrual accounting system. They have, in the terminology of the international agency story, some financial autonomy which consists of a flexible end of year limit, the possibility to shift funds between the material and personnel articles within their budget, and to reserve funds. The accounting legislation describes both the conditions for agency status and the procedure through which agencies are created. It requires that ministers announce their intention to create an agency to parliament. Following from this announcement the creation of an agency will only proceed if, in the following 30 days, there are no requests from the parliament for further information. There is also a clause that recognizes that if the parliament is opposed to the intention for agency creation it cannot proceed.

Besides the accounting legislation, there is also a concept statute written for each agency. This does not have a legal status but is used to describe the products and services of individual agencies and how the agency will report to ministries. The concept statute has also become the conventional way to inform parliament of individual agency arrangements. It is usually sent together with the letter of the minister informing of the intention to create an agency. The statute is also meant to demonstrate whether and how the proposed agency satisfies the conditions to become an agency. These conditions have become more stringent over the years, as will be

described further below. Initially they included that products be measurable and that an accounting declaration for the agency's financial reports be prepared. Another aspect of the agency statute is that it describes when the agency is to be evaluated. It has been the Dutch practice to evaluate individual agencies after five years.

Dutch agencies are also characterized by performance reporting arrangements. Initially these were specific to Dutch agencies although performance reporting has become characteristic of all ministerial organizations (Ministerie van Financiën 1998). An initial requirement of agency reform was to develop a cost price, which is to be compared with actual costs over time. It is used as a monitor for agency financial performance and is the main measure enforced upon agencies from the Ministry of Finance. The setting of all other performance information is the responsibility of the mother ministry. In general the performance measures are communicated in agency year plans, and later reported in their annual reports. There is no government wide approach to how agency performance is assessed or by whom in the ministries. Rather, each ministry has developed their own style and arrangements for performance reporting. The involvement of mother ministries in setting the performance measures and performance targets seem to vary from ministry to ministry and agency to agency, although some recent evidence would suggest that it is often agencies themselves that create their own performance measures (Pollitt et al. 2004:133–135, 156–182).

Dutch agency reform 1991–2002

There have been some formal changes to Dutch agency arrangements since their initial inception. Central among these have been adjustments to the conditions for obtaining agency status. Initially there were just three conditions that had to be satisfied in order to be considered for agency reform. Some of these were vaguely defined and included having measurable products and services, having the potential for efficiency improvements, and having an accountant's declaration for the organization's financial accounts. These conditions were changed and expanded on two occasions firstly in 1998 and then later in 2001 (Smullen 2004). Following from the first program wide evaluation of agencies in 1998, the three initial conditions were refined to

require agencies to describe their business processes in more detail (Ministerie van Financiën 1998). It was no longer enough to simply state that the products and services were measurable but this had to be demonstrated through clearly defined products and services. Also prospective agencies should define how they were going to assess their future efficiency achievements prior to agency status and have at least one quality indicator alongside a cost price indicator. Other more detailed refinements to agency conditions occurred in 2001. This involved introducing some 12, primarily financial, conditions to obtaining agency status and a period of preparation for agency status in the year prior to becoming an agency (Ministrie van Financiën 2001).

Related to the introduction of more conditions for agency status, has also been an increasing role for the Ministry of Finance in overseeing the process of agency creation. The Ministry of Finance had made the initial recommendations for agency reform and was recognized in accounting legislation as, together with the responsible Minister of the agency, advising cabinet and parliament on prospective agency creation. However, with the changing and more stringent conditions for agency status the role of the Ministry of Finance also

Table 2.1 A chronology of Dutch agency reforms

Year	Event
1991	The publication of *Further building on management* which presents the idea of Dutch *agentschappen*
1994	First four agencies created The publication of *Accountable Autonomization* which recommends think steps to guide decisions for internal and external autonomization
1995	National Court of Audit criticizes accountability arrangements of Dutch ZBOs Guidance team for the introduction of agencies established in the Ministry of Finance
1997	The report by the Commission Cohen recommends forbidding agencies from competing with the private sector and selling their products outside of government
1998	First evaluation of agency program recommends tighter conditions for agency status
2001	12 conditions and a trial period are introduced into the procedure for becoming an agency

became more comprehensive. A new guidance team especially for agency reform was created within the Ministry of Finance in 1995 and it undertook roles such as the evaluation of the agency program in 1998. Furthermore, in 2001 a testing group composed of Directors from both the Ministry of Finance and Home Affairs became responsible for ensuring that prospective agencies had satisfied the conditions for agency status.

More stringent control of agency creation through such conditions for agency reform had also been influenced by a greater scrutiny of arms length organizations from the mid-1990s. This had been sparked by Court of Audit findings in 1995 which had indicated that there were great disparities in the way that Dutch ZBOs were, if at all, regulated by ministries. This cast a shadow over autonomization more generally. The Ministry of Home Affairs, who had traditionally been responsible for policies regarding Dutch ZBOs, commissioned a report to consider how choices for autonomization should be governed (Department of Home Affairs 1994). More specifically, the report sought to clarify under which circumstances a choice should be made for ZBOs with an independent legal status, or for agencies with a financial status. It argued that ZBOs presented a greater threat to ministerial accountability. Furthermore, another commission report in 1997, Commission Cohen, also maintained the greater scrutiny over Dutch autonomized organizations by criticizing their commercial activities (Commissie Cohen 1997; Pollitt et al. 2004:164–166). It argued that the commercial activities of agencies and ZBOs were threatening the health of markets in the private sector. This had implications for the capacity of agencies to sell their products and services to the private sector, which was initially encouraged. In some cases, such as for the Dutch meteorological agency KNMI, the commercial activities of the organization were even privatized.

The contours of Swedish agency reform

Swedish agencies, or rather *myndigheter*, have traditionally been part of the administrative landscape in Sweden. Indeed, the Swedish constitution recognized their independence and separation from Swedish ministries already in 1809 (Andrèn 1961:14). This meant that recent arrangements to modernize Swedish agencies, through, among other things, performance contracting, has actually put these agencies more

in 'arms reach' than at arms length. Nevertheless some commentators argue that Swedish agencies continue to predominate over policy making in their given fields because of their established histories and expertise, as well as through sheer numbers (Pierre 2004). Swedish ministries are small, and though the personnel of Swedish agencies has declined substantially over the last ten years, agency personnel continues to far exceed those in ministries. The growth and power of Swedish agencies fueled, and was fueled, by the expansive Swedish welfare state throughout the twentieth century.

Given the nature of the Swedish political administrative context, there have been ongoing initiatives to reform agencies in one way or another over the two centuries of their existence. However with the rise of an NPM in the international community throughout the 1980s and 90s, there was also concern in Sweden for the political steering of agencies. This was because they were deemed beyond democratic control and accountability (SOU 1983). There was particular concern for identifying different management instruments for formalizing the relationship between agencies and ministries (SOU 1983, 1985). Though its origins were in budgetary reforms proposed in 1985, results steering was introduced in the budget from 1992 and entailed reporting on the achievement of performance goals within an annual report. There were also a number of other management changes made to Swedish agencies such as the introduction of accrual accounting and changes to the appointment procedures for agency director generals (SOU 1985; ESV 2001). All of these reforms were to improve agency reporting to the political sphere and their direction from the political sphere.

As already noted the Swedish constitution provides the legal basis for the separation of Swedish agencies from the government offices. This occurs both in the constitution's recognition of Sweden as a dualistic system separating government policy making from implementation, as well as in the *independence principle* [självständighets-principen]. This article prescribes that agencies should make their legal decisions in particular cases (e.g. about individuals) independent of other or higher authorities. It has its origins in the *rechtstaat* tradition of the Swedish state and has led to some commentators characterizing Swedish agencies as similar to a court (Premfors et al. 2003:67–69). Agency independence from departments has also been promoted by the requirement of collective government decisions,

and not ministerial directives. Ministerial steering [ministerstyre] is widely understood to be forbidden and can result in a minister being reprimanded by the Parliament for abusing his/her position (Peters & Pierre 2001:206). While the degree of independence that the constitution prescribes to agencies is contested amongst Swedish commentators, it continues to be dealt with cautiously by departments and ministers (see SOU 1983; Peters & Pierre 2001).

The tasks of agencies and the framework within which they should be conducted are defined in government ordinances. There are two types of ordinances affecting agencies, a more general ordinance which outlines the criteria that all agencies should seek to satisfy in the operations (e.g. avoiding unnecessary costs, cooperating with other agencies) and a more specific ordinance describing agency tasks and management structure (Molander et al. 2002:73–74). The government prescribes one of three different kinds of management structures that can apply to agencies. They may be prescribed a *one man rule model [enrådighetmodel]*, which confers full responsibility for decision making to the agency director, a *limited responsibility board* where the director general of the agencies is chairperson of a board, or an *extended responsibility board* where the director general is only a member of the board (Larsson 1995:60). Limited responsibility boards are still quite common among agencies in Sweden today and entail strategic decisions being made by a board wherein the director general is chairperson. Boards have been a recurring theme in agency reform debates because of criticisms that they confuse lines of responsibility and represent interests other than those of the general good (SOU 1983, 1985). However they remain a characteristic feature of the management of Swedish agencies.

It is the government that is responsible for the appointment of both agency directors and board members. In practice the selection is often based upon recommendations from responsible departments (in consultation with the agency) and, depending upon the nature of the agency's task, through negotiations within the policy sector. In the period between 1987–1994 three changes to the recruitment of agency directors were introduced to promote government steering of agencies. These followed from concerns by a Conservative government (the first after 46 years) that the administration had obtained a party political flavour (see Pierre 1995:148). The changes introduced created more discretion for the government to change agency directors (SOU 1985).

They gave the government the capacity (where deemed necessary) to shorten the second term of director generals, to transfer director generals to another agency (with the same employment conditions), and created a unit in ministries which could facilitate quick transfers. Although clearly these arrangements are convenient to the government, political party appointments are condemned and ministers may be reported in this matter to the parliamentary committee on the constitution. Nevertheless some observers seem to be suggesting that political appointments are on the increase (Pierre 2004).

The government has also used the budget process to set performance objectives for agencies (Sundström 2003). The appropriation document [regleringsbrevet] in which financial resources are allocated to agencies, has since the late 1980s become the means for communicating broader performance requirements. This includes the general political goals the agency is to achieve, as well as some performance measures that should be reported to the government in an annual report. It is not always the case that precise targets are set, and the agency may be required to develop their own measures that demonstrate achievement of the set political goals (Pollitt et al. 2004:92). Furthermore, the government also uses the appropriation document to request other kinds of policy information about agency activities. Although formally it is the department that prepares the information presented in the appropriation document, the contents have generally been the subject of informal negotiations with the agency. Indeed some agencies write most of the document themselves because the departments have lacked the knowledge to develop (specific) performance goals and measures for agencies (Sundström 2003:265; RRV 1994:23, 32).

Accompanying the introduction of performance reporting in the budget has also been the delegation of more financial and personnel decisions to agencies. This was first in the form of setting financial frames for agencies, wherein managers were required to decide how set resources would be distributed in their organization. They were also delegated some decisions regarding wages and the design of their organization. In 1993 accrual accounting was introduced and this also enabled agencies to save funds over time with interest (up to 3–5% of the total appropriation) and to make investment decisions (Pollitt et al. 2004:94).

Swedish agency reforms 1983–2001

The budgetary process provided the main instrument through which Swedish agencies were made to become more performance orientated and contract like. This was no coincidence as both coordinating agencies, the Agency for Administrative Development (Statskontoret) and the National Audit Office (RRV) had been developing ideas for performance budgeting since the 1960s (Sundström 2003). Furthermore, the budget was a realm which the constitution recognized as legitimately directed by the government. In 1988 the first budgetary reform was introduced. This was ambitious and entailed a three-year budgetary process. It was to promote more long term perspectives on government decision making and to encourage detailed reporting from agencies. These budgetary changes began the arrangement of using the budgetary appropriation document [regleringsbrevet] to steer individual agencies. They required agencies to supply in-depth analyses of their activities once in a three-year cycle following from long term goals set by the government in the appropriation document. Agencies were then to report back at the end of the three-year period, which was in turn to provide material for further directives. Incorporated in the budget goals were 2% saving standards for all agencies to satisfy in their existing budgets. They were required to identify how they would achieve these savings themselves (Brunsson 1995:114).

By 1993, the three-year system had been dismantled as financial crisis took over in Sweden. Three-year expenditure limits were still being set but reporting was once again annual without an in depth report in the third year. The budget unit in the Ministry of Finance took over the responsibility for public sector reform and accrual accounting was introduced across the administration (ESV 2001). In 1996 the budgetary decision making process was refined even further. The beginning of the fiscal year was changed and even more precise stages were identified for exchanging various documents to support the budgetary process (OECD 1998). 27 expenditure areas were defined in the budget and two decision making phases were introduced. These included first setting the limits of an expenditure area, and secondly the specific allocation within that area. Each expenditure area was divided into sectors that corresponded to an overarching goal that agencies should aim to achieve. Furthermore they were broken down to goals specific to each agency. This has since been criticized for the detail in reporting it has entailed (SOU 1997:57, 81).

Table 2.2   A chronology of Swedish agency reforms

Year	Event
1983	The publication of *Political steering – administrative independence* analyses the possibilities for the political sphere to steer agencies. It finds it is constitutionally legitimate to steer Swedish agencies.
1985	The publication of *Government, agencies and agencies' management* makes recommendations for improving the management of agencies. These include the introduction of three-year budget and changes to appointment of agency director generals.
1987	First changes to the appointment of agency director generals – their contracts shortened to three years.
1988	Budget unit in Ministry of Finance takes over responsibility for management of the administration. Three-year budget cycle introduced – agencies receive performance objectives in budget.
1993	Introduction of accrual accounting across central agencies. Three-year budget system dismantled.
1994	Change to law enabling government to transfer director generals of agencies.
1996	Budget changed to include appropriation levels for different policy sectors. Goals are also included within these sectors for individual agencies. New ordinances setting out categories to be reported in budget.
1997	Publication *In the citizen's service* criticizes goal setting for individual agencies in budget, the marketization of agencies, and threat to public service ethics.
1997	New minister post for questions of democracy and administration in Ministry of Justice.

Although budgetary reforms continue to characterize efforts to control and coordinate Swedish agencies, there was a period from 1997 when the Ministry of Justice took over responsibility from Finance for agency reform initiatives. This was short lived and included creating a minister post responsible for question of democracy and administration. It followed from recommendations in a commission report of 1997 which criticized the closed-ness and dominance of financial agencies in setting the results management agenda (SOU 1997). New units were created in the Justice Ministry and they focused more upon employment and recruitment matters in agencies, including the

professional training of agency employees. Also there were other units created for steering and management and for matters of democracy (Premfors et al. 2003:307–308). In more recent times, however, the Ministry of Finance has once again become solely responsible for public management issues. They have continued to refine budgetary arrangements and in 2001 were beginning the process of moving towards full accruals within the national budget, as well as for agency accounts (Ministry of Finance 2001; DS 2000).

The contours of Australian agency reform

Australian agency reforms at the Commonwealth level were only pursued from the period of 1996 when the new Conservative government led by John Howard was elected (see Rowlands 2002; MAC 2004). Prior to that time Australian reformers had distanced themselves from agency trends in the UK. This was because financial devolution in Australia initially emphasized devolving financial autonomy while keeping policy and implementation together in an integrated department (MAB 1992:252). There has also been some controversy since that time as to whether the Howard government initiatives and particularly its service delivery agency Centrelink, constituted agency reform (see Wettenhall 2003; Rowlands 2002; Mulgan 2002). This is because Centrelink was created through statutory legislation, which likened it to the existing tradition of statutory authorities and corporations in Australia. These are organizational types which date back to Australia's state building period and, like Dutch ZBOs, are considered somewhat beyond the immediate core of government.

Those who emphasize Centrelink's agency-like character focus upon the contract-like arrangements that have characterized its relationship to a range of government departments (Rowlands 2002). This is not a feature of the traditional statutory authorities operating in Australia. It has also been the association of Centrelink with agency arrangements elsewhere such as Canada and New Zealand which have been important in defining it as an agency in this study (Newman 1997; Vardon 1997b; DOFA 1998a). Centrelink was formed through an amalgamation of activities that had previously been the responsibility of the Department of Social Security (DSS), the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA), and to a lesser extent, the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS). It is a

social security agency responsible for the payment of a range of government benefits and initially belonged to the portfolio of the Minister of Social Security. With changes of government and other shuffles of departments it has since come to belong to the portfolios of the Minister for Human Services and the Minister for Financial Services.

A second lesser known Australian agency initiative was the creation of executive agencies in the revised Public Service Act of 1999. Australian executive agencies operate separately from departments and are directly subordinate and accountable to the minister of the agency portfolio. As will be described below it has not been entirely clear what the motivations for these agencies were. Since their introduction, however, there were nine executive agencies created including the National Archives, the Bureau of Meteorology and the CrimTrac Agency (provides expert support in national security and police matters) (Wettenhall 2003:9). With the re-election of the Howard Government in 2004, there was also a change in position regarding these organizations and four executives agencies were reabsorbed into the departmental organization (Halligan 2005).

The Service Delivery Agency Centrelink

Centrelink was created through the Commonwealth Service Delivery Act (CSDA 1997) which granted the organization a separate status from departments. It also defined a role for the chief executive of the agency. This act was passed through parliament with little dissent, although one substantive amendment was made to a provision which would have allowed the agency to engage staff outside of the conditions recognized in the Public Service Act (Rowlands 2002:125). Many provisions of the CSDA, including the management board, emulated provisions traditionally adopted for statutory corporations in Australia. However, unlike statutory corporations Centrelink remained subject to the same type of personnel and financial regulations as organizations within a government department (Boxall 1997). Indeed, the chairperson of the management board of Centrelink was legally recognized as equivalent to a secretary of a department. Therefore it was allowed to develop the same kind of administrative capacities as a government department such as audit units, lawyers and personnel experts.

In addition, like organizations within a department, and unlike statutory corporations, Centrelink could not enter into contracts in its own right, nor has it the power to hold property (Rowlands 2002:127). However, the act did provide that the chief executive of Centrelink be able to enter into *arrangements* with the principal officer of a commonwealth authority (the equivalent of a departmental secretary) for the provision of commonwealth services (CSDA 1997: paragraph 7). These arrangements have generally come to be known as business partnership agreements (BPA) and are contract-like arrangements for services to different government departments. Finally, another important distinction between Centrelink and a department is that Centrelink has had no direct access to the Australian government budget (Rowlands 2002:128). Instead, it was required to earn its revenue almost entirely from payments under the service agreements (Rowlands 2002: 128).

Originally the act defined the board of Centrelink as being responsible for deciding the 'goals, priorities, policies and strategies' of the agency, as well as overseeing the agency's performance (CSDA 1997: paragraph 12). In addition, the chairperson of the board was required to deliver the annual report of Centrelink to the minister around July every year. This report was also tabled in parliament and, like the annual reports of departments, should comply with the parliamentary standards of reporting. The members of the management board, with the exception of the chief executive officer, were to be appointed by the minister, and were prescribed to include a chairperson, the chief executive officer, and at least four other members, two of which cannot be principal officers of commonwealth authorities, e.g. heads of departments (CSDA 1997: paragraph 16). The board was granted the powers to appoint the chief executive officer of the agency, although this was to be done in consultation with the minister. Following the re-election of the Howard government in October 2004, the separate board of Centrelink was dismantled, and was replaced with an advisory board within the new Department of Human Services.

The act also established some conditions for the contacts between the minister and the (now dismantled) board. More specifically there were clauses describing how to give ministerial directions, (policy) notifications or make ministerial requests for information. Except for in the case of information requests, the minister must always make directions or notifications in writing to the board and the particulars of these must be published in the annual report of Centrelink. In addi-

tion, the act required that the minister seek consultation with the board before giving directions, and that alternatively, the board advises upon the impact of these directions (CSDA 1997: paragraph 10). Mulgan (2002:17) noted that there 'were no formal written instructions made in the first year of Centrelink's operations and only two in the second year'. This may suggest that contacts occurred in more informal ways. Both the chairperson and the minister were able to convene a board meeting at any time, and a meeting had to be convened on receipt of a written request signed by at least two members.

Although very much the public face of Centrelink, the chief executive officer of the agency was originally subordinate to the board, and had responsibility for the day to day administration of the agency (CSDA 1997: paragraph 16). The chief executive reported to the board of Centrelink, who also decided her remuneration and allowances. Originally the chief executive officer of the agency had no formal accountability requirements to report to the minister. This was reversed with the changes in 2004 denoting the chief executive, rather than board chair person, as statutory officer. This grants the chief executive 'a range of powers, functions and responsibilities for the financial management of Centrelink, as well as a number of reporting requirements' under financial accountability legislation (Rowlands 2002:129–130). From the time of agency creation until November 2004, Sue Vardon maintained the role of chief executive in the agency. She became a very public figure, speaking regularly to the media and various other audiences about the activities of Centrelink. She resigned in 2004 after the government's announcements of their plans to scrap the Centrelink board.

The contents of the first service agreements between Centrelink and the Department of Social Security were agreed upon 'by a very small team working with minimal input from 'program branches' in each organization' (Rowlands 2002:168). Nevertheless, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) has noted that the agreements between Centrelink and all her purchasers (the DSS, DEETYA and DHFS) followed a series of workshops where the main principles and elements of the agreements were defined (ANAO 1997:44). These principles included a commitment to clear measures of success and clear lines of accountability, as well as the need for balance between Centrelink's requirement of flexibility and the purchaser's need to control policy direction (ANAO 1997:44). Among other things, these agreements

focused upon identifying the programmes Centrelink is responsible to deliver, the performance measures and monitoring systems used to assess delivery, the payment of Centrelink for services delivered and the timing of reporting (ANAO, 1997:45). There were also provisions for how to deal with ministerial directions that contradicted with established arrangements within the agreements (Rowlands 2002).

Australian executive agencies

Executive agencies were created in the Australian Public Service Act of 1999. This legislation followed initiatives already pursued by the previous government to replace and simplify the earlier Public Service Act of 1922. Among its provisions was the category of *executive agency*, which can be created on the advice of the Prime Minister through an order of the Governor General. Executive agencies are defined as separate from government departments and are directly subordinate and responsible to the minister of the agency portfolio. There is no intervening departmental level between the head of the agency and the political sphere. According to the Public Service Act, the head of an agency is deemed accountable to the government, the parliament and the public in the same way as the secretary of a department (APSA 1999:35). In contrast to managers of government organizations within departments, and like the secretaries of departments, the head of an executive agency is appointed, and can be terminated at any time by the minister of the agency portfolio. To this extent, their position outside of departments has located them much closer to the political realm.

Other features of the Australian executive agency status include the provision that the remuneration of heads of executive agencies be determined by the responsible minister after consultation with the Remuneration Tribunal. The APSA also requires that executive agency heads, like secretaries of departments, provide an annual report of the organizations' activities to the minister at the end of the financial year. In both cases, this report must also be presented to parliament and must be in accordance with the parliamentary standards set out in the guidelines of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts. In this respect, the accountability requirements of departmental units and executive agencies are exactly the same. Rowlands (2002) has pointed out that there is no distinctive performance reporting regime required of exe-

cutive agencies, such as that included within the service agreements of Centrelink. Indeed, performance matters or contract-like arrangements are not referred to at all in the few documents published about executive agencies. It should be noted, however, that like organizations within departments, executive agencies are required to comply to the accrual-based outcomes and outputs framework that were first introduced to the whole of the APS in 1997 (DOFA 1998b). This requires that executive agencies report performance measurements in their annual reports.

An unpublished document prepared by the Australian Public Service Commission in 2003 gave examples of when executive agencies might be appropriate. The examples listed included:

- When agency functions cross portfolio lines, making it inappropriate to place it in a portfolio department;
- When it is desirable to separate substantial service delivery functions to allow a policy department to focus on core business;
- When the agency is administering a joint Commonwealth-State initiative; or
- When it is used as an interim step to corporatization.

Executive agencies were already being created in 1998 in anticipation of the changes to the Australian Public Service Act and some of these organizations, e.g. meteorology, crimtrac, archives, were designed with a management board, although the chief executive remained responsible to the minister for daily operations.

Australian agency reforms: 1996–2004

With the election of the Conservative Howard government in 1996, their vision for public management reform was described as at best vague, and at worst uninterested (Halligan 2000:5). Aside from the immediate dismissal of a number of heads of departments (which had been made possible by the reforms of the previous government), the most vocalized intentions of the government were initially privatization, savings and workplace reform. There was no description of how agency reform fitted into this agenda, although Centrelink was created with the goal of reducing expenditure by 146 million within the first three years of its existence (Budget Review 1996). On one

hand, it has been argued that the creation of Centrelink as a service delivery agency was actually the initiative of departmental heads anticipating the incoming government's demands for savings (Rowlands 2002:117–120). On the other hand, the lead up to legislation creating the executive agency status was dominated by discussions to de-regulate employment conditions in both the public and private sector (Reith 1996). Agency arrangements appeared to be an aside label that could be attached to these different agendas.

The creation of Centrelink at arms length from government departments was desirable to departmental heads in the welfare field because, in the face of budgetary cuts, it did not require a loss of turf from one or other departmental organization (Rowlands 2002). This was also reflected in the initial board structure of Centrelink which gave representation to both the Department of Social Security (DSS) and to the Department of Employment, Education and Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) (Rowlands 2002: 130–131). Separation from departments came, however, to fit with the emerging philosophy of the government for the public sector. This included emulating the private sector through purchaser-provider arrangements, through bench-marking with private sector activities and encouraging a contestable environment in the public sector more generally (Aulich 2000:163; Halligan 2000:52). Also following from the creation of Centrelink, official statements endorsing separation of policy and implementation began to be made (see Newman 1997:2). For example the then head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Max Moore-Wilton was cited in 1997 as describing the movement towards the separation of policy advice and service delivery as 'absolutely fundamental to the future health of the public service' (Rowlands 2002:89).

Executive agencies were initiated through a clause in the new Australian Public Service Act of 1999. This act replaced a previous one from 1922 and was being prepared for change by the previous government. The Coalition government announced their reasons for changing this act in a discussion paper from late 1996 *Towards a Best Practice APS*. It has been cited as one of the first attempts by the incoming Howard government to outline intentions for the parts of the public sector that were not to be privatized (Halligan 2000:51). The primary focus of the report was the need to reduce personnel regulations and to devolve more powers of employment conditions to managers. It also identified the private sector as the primary bench-

Table 2.3 A chronology of Australian agency reforms

Year	Event
1996	Budget announcement that a new service delivery agency to be created.
1997	Commonwealth Services Delivery Act passed creating Centrelink. Prime Minister John Howard opens Centrelink. Financial Management and Accountability Act passed enabling the introduction of accrual accounting across central government.
1999	Australian Public Service Act passed creating executive agencies, three of these had already been established. Introduction of first accrual budget across central government.
2003	Uhrig report criticizes accountability arrangements of boards including the Centrelink board.
2003	Prime Minister announces ban on individual agency logos.
2004	Four executive agencies return to their previous status within departments. Connecting Government report published promoting whole of government initiatives across and within agencies, including within executive agencies.

mark for activities in the public sector (Reith 1996:4, 6). The National Council of the Institute for Public Administration in Australia criticized the report for its lack of examination of the basic institutional arrangements for management (Rowlands 2002:87). For the purposes of this study *Towards a Best Practice APS* was most surprising because it did not include any mention of executive agencies, although this was to become a feature of the legislation that eventually followed in 1999.

Prior to the passing of executive agency legislation, the government also created new arrangements for financial management. These would apply to the whole of the central administration including Centrelink and executive agencies. The arrangements included new financial management legislation, an accrual-based outcomes and outputs budgeting and reporting framework, and *whole of government* accrual financial statements (Boxall 1997). It followed from previous reforms to devolve management responsibilities to *chief executives* (heads of agencies/organizational units) and was described as 'retaining only the bare essential rules and regulations' (Boxall 1997:4). Most spending decisions (as well as whether agency activities are conducted internally

or externally) were delegated to the chief executive of organizational units and, among other things, required them to have their own audit committee and fraud control plan in place (FMAA 1997).

After an announcement in 1997, the first accrual budget was presented in 1999. This required all organizations with a status equivalent to departments, including Centrelink and executive agencies, to plan, budget, manage and report on accrual basis (DOFA, 1998b). They also had to specify outputs, set prices for outputs and outcomes, as well as the contribution of outputs to outcomes. This information is presented in annual reports that compare planned outcomes and outputs against the actual results. Together with the devolution of personnel decisions, one commentator has noted that the effect has been an individualization to organizational units and persons such that coordinating departments have become superfluous with even the role of the Department of Finance being diminished (Halligan 2005; Campbell 2001).

Just as quickly as all these reforms were put in place, the shift towards devolving responsibilities would now appear to be tempering in Australia, and even reversing to some extent. Perhaps one indication of a turn in the tides was a controversy in 2003 about how many departmental organizations and agencies were using their own logos (Burgess 2003:42). The prime minister of Australia banned this activity of 'having different brands' … 'because we are one Government' (Burgess 2003:42). Following critique from parliament, regarding the new accrual arrangements, a Budget Estimates Framework Review has been established by the Department of Finance to streamline the new financial framework (Halligan 2005). In addition, Centrelink's board was dissolved after the re-election of the Howard government for their fourth term in 2004. A portfolio advisory board was to be established to oversee the six delivery organizations of the newly created Department of Social Security. Furthermore, only four of the nine executive agencies that had been created since 1998 still remain. The others were returned back into their departmental fold. These changes were presented as a means to ensure more effective ministerial responsibility for policy together with operations, to ensure better coordination, and, as a part of a more general commitment to the *whole of government* (Shergold 2004, 2005).

Conclusion

This chapter has described the shift in OECD accounts of agency reform. It poses that there was an international story of agency reform which

first presented semi-autonomous agencies as an all purpose solution to public management problems. By the turn of century this had changed and the autonomy and performance orientation of agencies were presented as problems for accountability and coordination. Furthermore, an overview of the national contents of agency arrangements in the Netherlands, Sweden and Australia was presented. Each of these cases indicated variation in their starting points of agency reform, as well as changes in their national trajectories over time. Agencies were a novel organizational form in both The Netherlands and Australia, though in The Netherlands they departed from more numerous and radical forms of autonomization such as ZBOs. In both countries, there were indications that like the international story of agency reform, the contents of national agency initiatives became more regulated and less autonomous over time. In Sweden, there was a different starting point of reform since independent agencies had traditionally existed in that country. In the period analysed in this study Swedish agency reform departed from a concern with establishing greater political control over agencies. This occurred primarily through the budget, though there was a period in the late 1990s when Swedish agency initiatives also emphasized issues of professional development and justice. Significantly, agency initiatives in all of the countries have been characterized by changes in financial arrangements such as accrual accounting (Pollitt et al. 2004). The remainder of this study considers to what extent this variety of agency practices was also informed by particular varieties of national talk, or rather a common international story.

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Part II
Theory and Trajectories of Talk

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3
Theoretical Concepts and Tools: Rhetoric and Culture

Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual framework used to analyse and compare official agency talk. It describes in detail concepts from both the New Rhetoric and Grid Group Cultural Theory (GGCT). Both of these perspectives offer different heuristic tools for comparing similarities and differences in agency talk across The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. They are particularly appealing to this study because they are sensitive to how similar reform practices and even labels, such as agencies, can be situated in entirely different discursive structures. In answering the research question of how agency reform has been constructed across different political cultures they provide a way to distinguish both the rhetorical styles and cultural flavour of agency talk. They can also be used to examine how these aspects of national agency talk have changed or remained stable over the period studied.

Some of the advantages of combining GGCT with rhetorical analyses were already recognized by Christopher Hood in his book *The Art of the State* (2000). More specifically he has argued that together these frameworks can capture much of the variety in public management ideas and yet also show how this variety is limited (Hood 2000:6, 178). Extending upon Hood's ideas it is argued here that public management talk can be limited by the cultural flavour of an argument, since this may bring with it certain rhetorical styles, and it can be limited by cultural context more generally (Hood 2000:178, 180). While this chapter draws from Hood's (and colleagues) earlier works (Hood

2000; Hood & Jackson 1991) and particularly the classification of GGCT to public management ideas, it also introduces the New Rhetoric as useful for examining and comparing the spread of public management fashions. This is because the New Rhetoric can distinguish between the levels of analysis at which symbolic convergence in agency talk may occur.

Agency talk and social construction

Before presenting the conceptual frameworks of the New Rhetoric and GGCT it is important to situate them epistemologically. While this is a comparative study seeking to explain agency talk, it nevertheless applies theoretical frameworks of talk that are social constructivist. That is the frameworks are being used to show how the idea of agency reforms has been constructed, and made credible, through talk as an action, rather than merely the representation of the world (Wittgenstein 1972; Austin 1975; Potter 1996). These frameworks can do that because they are somewhat sensitive to the particular rather than the general, and they accept that their object of study, agency talk, may not only vary in value, e.g. more or less individualist cultural flavours, but also in meaning (Burr 1995:3; Jost & Hyde 1997:11; Nussbaum 1990:54–82). The same symbol 'agency' is being analysed according to the rhetorical elements and cultural worldview that gives agencies meaning and credibility in different political cultures. This means that while some convergence in talk about agencies may be found, they could be located in a broader web of statements that take different things for granted and lend agencies somewhat different cultural connotations.

There is also an explicit interest in the cultural limits to claims about agencies in this study, and social constructivism more generally. Allowing meaning about agencies to vary by focusing upon the range and combination of statements that constituted agencies across different political cultures is not a commitment to anything goes. Rather it is an empirical interest in the limits of what is possible to say about agencies across different political cultures (Rabinow 1984:73; Foucault 1972). Indeed, both the New Rhetoric and GGCT recognize and can elucidate in different ways how agency talk may be limited. On one hand, through their focus upon ethos, pathos and logos, rhetorical theories such as the New Rhetoric give insight into who has the credibility to

speak across different political cultures, and how and to whom they must speak (Summa 1991; Foss et al. 1985). This is why the rhetorical elements (ethos, pathos, logos) have been labelled the rules of speaking in this study. It will also be explained that one aspect of ethos in the New Rhetoric, the universal audience, is a cultural criterion of truth or rather limit to which arguments about agencies must comply. On the other hand, GGCT with its four cultural ways of life accepts that there is variety in the cultural meaning of talk but that this is limited to (mixes of) the four ways of life (Douglas 1999:412). Finally, given that the selection of national cases in this study have been based on (static) political cultural diagnoses representing similarities and differences, it will be examined in the coming chapters whether this is also reflected in patterned regularities which have limited agency talk across political cultures.

The study of rhetoric

Rhetoric has been defined as the art of using language effectively. In Ancient Greece it developed into an area of study concerned with identifying how one could successfully persuade. Among the most famous tracts emerging from this discipline is Aristotle's *Art of Persuasion*. This work was written as a manual for how to be persuasive and laid out a number of foundations for conceptualizing and analysing rhetoric which continue to be relevant to rhetoric today. At the most rudimentary level the focus on rhetoric has required an assessment of the respective roles of the audience, the speaker and the argumentative message being relayed.

Three interconnected Aristotelian concepts depicting this relationship between the speaker and audience – *ethos, pathos* and *logos* – have survived. They are important notions for the orator wishing to be effectively persuasive, but also for the rhetorician seeking to evaluate argumentation (Summa 1990).The first two of these dimensions – *ethos* and *pathos* – have to do with the character of the relationship between the author and the audience. Although they do not refer to the basic content of the argumentation, they are 'connected to the forms that arguments take as they actually occur in (particular) human contexts' (Edmondson 1984:15). *Logos*, by contrast, refers to the 'abstract intellectual structure of the argument itself' (Edmondson 1984:15). It is useful to describe these three dimensions of rhetoric in

more depth since all three aspects will be present in any form of verbal communication which aims to convince or persuade an action.

Ethos refers to the character of the speaker or addresser and the way that she projects herself upon the audience. Central to this dimension of persuasion is how the speaker shows herself to be trustworthy, knowledgeable and speaking for the interests of the audience. Aristotle explains the relationship between ethos and effective persuasion as requiring the speaker to appear in a way that is agreeable to a given audience and thereby disposes the audience to the speaker (Aristotle 1991:140). The ethos of a text will be revealed in the kinds of aims, morality, voice of authority and vocabulary which the speaker amplifies in addressing the audience. This in turn is informed by what the speaker believes to be persuasive for an audience.

Pathos is the dimension of persuasion concerned with the way the speaker moves the audience. Hood (2000) has referred to it as the *mood music* adopted to create a state of mind receptive to the arguments being projected. Edmondson (1984) calls it *sensitization*. Both Plato and Aristotle drew attention to *pathos* out of the recognition that anyone who wishes to communicate effectively must do more than argue logically. They must also understand the emotions (Edmondson, 1984:18; Aristotle 1991:139; Nussbaum 1990). Pathos refers to the way the speaker goes about preparing or sensitizing the audience for the logical content of an argument in order to make it appear favourable.

Finally the dimension of *logos* points to a focus upon the logic of the argument and the actual subject matter that is being discussed. It is the argument itself and a focus upon the steps that have been made to demonstrate the validity of the argument. Scholars of rhetoric have repeatedly advised that it is generally not enough to obtain an audience's agreement through ethos or pathos alone, rather the decisive judgements of the speaker must also be stable enough to guide the actions of the audience (Oskenberg Rorty, 1996:20–21). Moreover it is the interaction between ethos, pathos and logos in the process of argumentation that is crucial, or rather inevitable, in obtaining the agreement of the audience (Summa 1990:186).

The New Rhetoric

Aristotle's manual of persuasion was revived by Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (2003), who adapted it to develop a description of reasoning

based upon value judgements. In their book *The New Rhetoric*, they identify a framework for analysing argumentation, which they claim is relevant to a range of subject matter and is applicable to both written, as well as oral forms of argumentation (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003). Unlike a number of other theories of rhetoric, their framework is concerned with argumentation in colloquial language and does not impose norms from outside to indicate what ought to happen in argumentation (Van Eemeren et al. 1987). Instead their criterion for persuasive argumentation, is the effect upon the audience for whom it is intended, or rather, the judgement of the community of minds to which the argument was directed (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:14). For example if a reform was introduced following from a policy proposal describing it, the argumentation in that document has satisfied the criterion of persuasive argumentation.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca identify three main categories for analysing argumentation which are akin to *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. They include the construction of the audience (*ethos*), the premises of argumentation (*pathos*) and the techniques of argumentation (*logos*). Each of these three main categories is described extensively in the New Rhetoric and attributed different kinds of attributes. The main rhetorical tools to be applied in later chapters are described in more detail below. It should be noted that this description is only a small selection of the numerous rhetorical tools identified in the New Rhetoric. Indeed, the sheer quantity of concepts described in the New Rhetoric makes the application of their entire repertoire in the boundaries of this study impossible. For example they identify in excess of 45 argumentative techniques (*logos)* alone.

Ethos and the construction of the audience

According to the New Rhetoric the self presentation of the speaker (*ethos*) requires attention for the construction of an audience. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca define the audience as an ensemble (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:19; Foss et al. 1985:124). It includes all whom the speaker is intending to persuade through argumentation. The speaker will try to play on the opinions of the audience and give both the argumentation and her own character a flavour which accords with those opinions. In order to do this the speaker must construct a view of the people or person she wishes to persuade, and the associated opinions deemed acceptable to them. Constructing an *ethos* that

is acceptable to the audience is all the more complicated because most audiences, even within a given cultural context, are likely to be quite heterogeneous. Therefore Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca recognize that the speaker needs to stitch together, and give presence to, different audiences in the process of arguing (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:17, 35). Their unique contribution to rhetorical analysis is the distinction and connection between the speaker's construction of *universal* and *particular audiences*.

The *universal audience* is a hypothetical representation of what is valid and true to all reasonable people in a given cultural context. It transcends the preferences of particular audiences. By contrast, the *particular audience* may be any real or hypothetical audience limited by some particular features such as a profession, taxpayers or customers. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca propose that the speaker will seek to unify particular differences across the audience (particular audiences) by identifying broader ideals or commitments (universal audience), such as human rights, which are agreeable to almost everybody in a given cultural context. They write: 'Everyone constitutes the universal audience from what he knows of his fellow men, in such a way as to transcend the few oppositions he is aware of…each culture, has thus its own conception of the universal audience' (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:33).

It is important to recognize that the universal audience has a number of important functions in the framework of the New Rhetoric, some of which are particularly relevant to this study. Firstly, the universal audience is used in the New Rhetoric as a standard of truth or rather an indication of what is possible to obtain agreement about in a given cultural context (Crosswhite 1996:148–149). To this extent it is a cultural ideal to which the speaker assumes, given her knowledge of the audience, the argumentation must conform. Crosswhite (1996:147) explains that there must always be some agreements that stand fast when making an argument since otherwise argumentation is impossible. The universal audience is therefore a rhetorical way for the speaker to set standards from which her unfolding claims can be assessed. As already noted the universal audience is generally hypothetical and does not have to accord with an actual audience, or the audience receiving the argumentation. Nevertheless it is informed by the empirical experience of the speaker in a given cultural context and the specificities of the rhetorical situation in which they are speaking (Crosswhite 1996:148–151).

Secondly, the universal audience is a rhetorical way to draw together and transcend different particular audiences. The New Rhetoric recognizes that speakers generally address (particular) composite audiences who normally do not assent to the same arguments (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:30–33; Crosswhite 1996:148). The art of the speaker is then to give presence to different particular audiences by assuming their vocabulary or addressing their concerns, but then uniting these through the universal audience. A good orator will aim to illustrate how the concerns of the particular also equate with general notions of the (universal) common good (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003; Crosswhite 1996). For example the particular concerns of the medical profession and patient groups may be drawn together through a speaker's universal commitment to quality of care. This can occur in spite of the likeliness that quality of care will have distinctive meanings for both groups. The *particular audience* has been defined as 'any limited group of addressees, either a concrete, temporally or spatially defined group of listeners, or an abstract target audience specified according to some principle' (Summa 1993:225). Like the universal it also does not necessarily refer to those physically present to a speech or receiving a document, rather it is a target audience of argumentation.

While they are distinctive concepts the universal and particular audiences clearly interact with one another in any rhetorical exposition. Therefore in identifying them in this study they have been sought for together. Firstly, the potential particular audiences were identified in each document across the countries by noting the terminology, goals and evidence adopted and used throughout the argumentation. Associations were made between this knowledge and particular professions or actors in the political administrative system. Notes were also made of any attempts by the speaker to link the interests of these different particular audiences.

Secondly, there were two criteria used to identify the construction of universal audiences. Firstly, it was assumed that the universal audience was likely to be characterized by some durability over time and attention was paid to any patterns in the self-presentation of the speaker across the documents. It should be noted that durability of the universal audience is, according to the New Rhetoric, not a necessary condition of universality. Indeed it would be susceptible to more change where the rhetorical situation, such as the actual speaker, the audience or the forum they were speaking from changed in a national context

(Crosswhite 1996). Secondly, the universal audience was conceived of as transcending the other particular audiences in the documents. This required identifying the universal audience in relationship to the particular audiences also being constructed in the argumentation. It required returning to the common links made between particular audiences or rather how the speaker sought to unite and transcend them.

Pathos and the premises of argumentation

In establishing agreement with an audience the New Rhetoric also recognizes that the speaker must prepare the audience for the arguments being presented (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:65–114). This is to be achieved by selecting premises or starting points of argumentation which are already deemed acceptable to that audience (Perelman 1982:23). In addition these premises are to bring the audience to see the necessity of the substantive actions or decisions being incited in the argumentation. Among the range of premises of argumentation described in the New Rhetoric, are *loci* and *presumptions*. Both of these concepts are to be applied to national accounts of agency reform in the following chapters. They are ways in which the national speakers sensitized their audiences to the benefits of agency reform.

The *loci* are known as the common places in rhetorical analysis. This is because they may be adopted indiscriminately in any kind of argumentation and be successful (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:83; Skinner 1996:113–114). They represent general forms of reasoning that can be made appealing to a range of audiences and individual cases (Skinner 1996:113). Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca argue however that the intensity with which different cultures adhere to different loci varies (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:85). It follows that the sensitization of audiences to agency reform in different cultures may be pursued through the adherence to different loci. There are two main types of loci, those that emphasize qualitative features and those that are quantitative. These have been described respectively as sensitizing the audience through what is special in a given case (qualitative) or sensitizing them to what is general (quantitative). They go on to suggest that *qualitative loci* are more useful to reformers who wish to change something, while *quantitative loci* are more useful to those wishing to maintain the status quo (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:89).

Among the numerous qualitative loci that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca identify are *the locus of the unique* or new, the *locus of the difficult* and the *locus of the precarious* (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003: 89–95). The locus of new or unique relies upon the pleasure that people attach to something that stands out or that is remarkable in some way (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:90). It sensitizes masses to agreement by being contrasted to that which is normal, even dull. Similarly the locus of the difficult also gives arguments appeal by showing how they stand out in some way. It relies upon the commonly held appreciation for that which cannot easily be acquired (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:91). Finally, the locus of the precarious sensitizes the audience to the goodness of something because it is under threat or transitory (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:91).

Alternatively, there are *quantitative loci* that emphasize the goodness of something for quantitative reasons. The most common of these is the *locus of more is better* which relies upon the belief that a greater number of good things are of more value than a lesser number (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:85). It follows that when a decision or action is presented as bringing about more of that which is valued, it is also likely to be found desirable by the audience. Another type of quantitative locus is that which emphasizes durability. The *locus of durability* sensitizes the audience through the appreciation of tradition and that which is stable rather than superfluous (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:86–87). It helps the audience see the benefits of a reform because it reinforces and complements what has always been valued and done.

Besides sensitizing audiences through loci, speakers also generally prepare their audiences for arguments through a range of *presumptions*. These are agreements with the audience about that which is problematic or can be reasonably expected to be true. They are generally not part of the proofs of a particular argument but are imposed to show the audience that certain action must be undertaken or that certain solutions are satisfactory. In this study presumptions have been understood as the description of problems that agency reforms are meant to resolve or the assumptions in the solutions that are posed. For example, the presumption central ministries (will and can) actively steer agencies is prominent in accounts of agency reform. It has been noted that one of the advantages of using presumptions in argumentation is

that they require opponents to prove otherwise (Perelman 1982:24–25; Foss et al. 1985:128).

Logos and the techniques of argumentation

The techniques of argumentation lend the rationale to a certain claim and are part of establishing agreement for the substance of arguments. Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca identify a number of techniques that can be used to present the substance of arguments (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:186–410; Van Eemeren et al. 1987:227). Many of these are established through processes of association whereby separate elements are brought together to show the reasonableness of a particular argument (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:190). There are three main types of argumentative techniques based upon association. These include quasi-logical techniques, techniques based upon reasonable belief and techniques to structure reality.

Quasi-logical techniques seek to establish the agreement of the audience through demonstrating how a reform idea follows the character of formal logic. A quasi-logical structure is attributed to a given problem or claim even though the argument does not actually satisfy the criteria for formal proofs. Indeed it is the replication of formal logic that lends prestige to the substance of the argument (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:211–214). Quasi-logical techniques commonly take the form of syllogisms that set up procedures of mathematical compatibility and incompatibility. The most famous of which includes *All men are mortal, Socrates is a man. Therefore Socrates is mortal.*

Among the quasi-logical techniques identified by Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca are *definition*, *comparison* and the *division of the whole into its parts*. The *technique of definition* is straightforward and involves ordering the elements in argumentation by grouping them under one or more distinct categories. This lends formality to the argument and also enables the speaker to then establish relationships between what has been defined and other phenomenon (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:211–214). Often accompanying techniques of definition are techniques of comparison. The *technique of comparison* involves evaluating one or more objects through their relationship to each other. It provides a kind of measure, as described in a definition, that the speaker can then use to show whether a particular decision or action satisfies the measure (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:242–247). In arguments about management reform this may include definitions of

efficiency or accountability that are then compared to the achievements or characteristics of particular organizations.

A third quasi-logical technique is the *division of the whole into its parts*. There are different ways in which this technique is used to demonstrate the substance of arguments to audiences. It can involve a speaker dividing up a particular problem or solution into different elements and then demonstrating how these work together or which part is the problem/solution. Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca describe for example using subdivisions which are then deemed to exhaust all (the whole) of the possible motivations for murder (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:235). Other ways in which division of the whole into its parts can be used include referring to a part such as a motor or an agency, as exemplary of the whole, respectively a car or the state (Montgomery et al. 2000:152).

In contrast to quasi-logical techniques, *techniques based upon reasonable belief* rely upon accepted opinion to obtain agreement from the audience (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:261–349). They generally seek to demonstrate a sequential or coexistent relationship between different objects or actions, and attribute positive or negative consequences to these. A common sequential association made between objects and actions is that of the *causal link*. This can involve the speaker demonstrating that two successive events are related to each other by a causal link purely through the association of these two events in argumentation (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003: 263–273). Similarly, the causal link may be established through associating a likely effect from a given event or action. In the public management literature causal associations are plentiful ranging from links being made between competition and efficiency to individual performance incentives causing fragmentation. Other kinds of arguments that rely upon the reasonableness of sequential relationship emphasize the direction one is taking. They include the *argument of unlimited development* (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:287–292). This insists upon the possibility of always going further in the direction one is taking while increasing value as one proceeds. This kind of reasoning seeks to establish that a favourable situation is on the horizon and that the current period is just a stepping stone to something more worthwhile.

Among reasonable associations establishing coexistent relationships are the *interaction of the person and act* or *arguments by authority*. *The interaction of the person and act* is a technique whereby the speaker

associates a particular act or decision with the qualities of a person. It can be used to attribute blame or success for a reform or outcome to a particular person or group (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003: 293–305). In promoting particular management reforms the concept of a particular person can be used to give the reform the quality or qualities of the person initiating or promoting the reform, whether these are stability, fairness, unreliability, innovation or something else. It establishes the reasonableness or unreasonableness of reform through the associated character of particular individuals. Similarly, the *argument by authority* also relies upon the character of individuals or expert groups to establish agreement with the audience about a particular claim. It tends to have a less personal character than the *interaction of the person and act* and invokes expert opinion or prestige such as that of economists or the bible to gain acceptance (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:305–310).

Thirdly, there are also argumentative techniques that *establish the structure of reality*. In contrast to formal logic or reasonable belief, these techniques resort to particular cases to draw broader lessons (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:350–410). They are often used to show the audience some kind of ordering that is new in a discussion or situation (Van Eemeren et al. 1987:240). While there are numerous techniques to structure reality such as pointing to specific examples or models, this study limited itself to *metaphors*. *Metaphors* are condensed analogies which enable the speaker to impart a similar structure or idea about one object to that of another. They are perhaps the most well known and theorized aspects of language and argumentation, though it is not always entirely clear where they get their persuasive power from. Metaphors can include drawing similarities between physical objects or attributes of physical objects to reform arrangements or activities. For example Edmondson describes how the term *bridge* (a term referring to a physical structure) operated to gain the audience's adherence in discussions of occupational *roles* in factories (Edmondson 1984). Other physical attributes that are frequently used in reform talk include flexibility, transparency or creating a balance. They make reform ideas appear more tangible and therefore acceptable. There is a wealth of other types of metaphors, whether from nature or the theatre that can be used to obtain the audiences' agreement. An overview of the concepts from the New Rhetoric is presented in Table 3.1. Furthermore there is a description of how the rhetorical analysis of the documents were conducted in Appendix A.

Table 3.1 Conceptual framework: The New Rhetoric

Ethos	Universal audience
	Particular audience
Pathos	Qualitative loci – unique, difficult, precarious
	Quantitative loci – the durable, more is better
Logos	Quasi logical – definition, comparison, division of whole into parts
	Reasonable belief – causal link, unlimited development, arguments by authority, the person and the act
	Structuring reality – metaphors

Grid Group Cultural Theory: context and talk

Grid Group Cultural Theory is used in this study to diagnose both the political cultures in which agency talk was produced, as well as the cultural flavour of that talk. Like the New Rhetoric, GGCT is a heuristic tool, and was developed by the anthropologist Mary Douglas to deal with cultural diversity and even compare it (Douglas 1982). Since the cultural ways of life identified by GGCT are conceived of as representing structure with attitude, it is possible to apply them at different levels of analysis (Mamadouh 1999b; Thompson 1998). The correspondence between diagnoses of the broader political culture and the cultural flavour of agency talk remains however an empirical question. In this study such correspondence would be demonstrated by finding predominantly egalitarian agency stories in the high group consensus cultures and predominantly individualist stories in the low group adversarial culture. It was already explained in the introduction to this book how GGCT's broad-brush diagnoses of political culture are being used through a similar system designed to examine the role of political culture in shaping agency talk.

Therefore, following from a more general description of GGCT, this section will focus primarily upon how it can be used to examine the cultural flavour of agency talk. By enabling different themes in agency talk to be grouped together as one of the four cultural flavours, GGCT enables different kinds of culturally flavoured stories about agencies to be distinguished. Unlike the New Rhetoric which also recognizes a relationship between culture and talk, such as through the concept of the universal audience, GGCT ascribes predefined cultural categories to certain argumentative themes (Yanow 2003). It provides a cultural

label such as individualism or egalitarianism wherein patterns in rhetorical styles may be identified and categorized.

The four ways of life

GGCT recognizes two basic dimensions of sociality in different cultures. They include *grid* which denotes the degree to which peoples' lives are circumscribed by rules and conventions in a society, and *group* which denotes the extent to which persons are tied to one another as part of a collective group. Taken together they generate four ideal cultural types which have been labelled hierarchy (high group, high grid), egalitarianism (high group, low grid), individualism (low group, low grid) and fatalism (low group, high grid). They are typically presented in a matrix which is replicated in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2   Four ways of life: grid group cultural theory

	Group	
Grid	*Low*	*High*
High	Fatalist way	Hierarchist way
Low	Individualist way	Egalitarian way

Source: Douglas 1982 and Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky 1990

To make the framework applicable to empirical experience there has been a concerted academic effort to identify schemes of favoured ways of organizing, of policy styles, and stories which are typical of each of the ways of life (Douglas 1982; Thompson et al. 1990; Hendriks 1996; Coyle 1994; Mamadouh 1999a). It is useful to briefly review some of the more general characteristics attributed to each way of life before describing how Hood and others have applied them to argumentation in public management (Hood 2000; Hood & Jackson 1991).

The hierarchical way of life (high grid, high group) is a worldview that favours the exercise of authority. It is conceived of as accepting the idea that different roles should be ascribed to different people on the basis of their rank in an organization or society. Indeed, it believes that such ordering promotes harmonious social relationships (Douglas, 1982:206–207). Explicit rules and regulations, informed by tradition and experts, are desirable to ensure order and collective advancement.

The world is viewed as a place to be managed, and where advance can be possible as long as the correct rules and procedures are applied (Hendriks 1996:60; Thompson et al. 1996:26). Politically, hierarchists approve of differentiating the public and private sphere and frequently harbour an expansive view of state functions (Thompson et al. 1990:217).

The egalitarian way of life (high group, low grid) rejects distinctions in status and authority. It is a worldview which prefers rules to be the continuous subject of negotiation between group members. Inclusion and participation of group members are primary concerns of egalitarians and any group decisions should apply equally to all members. Maintenance of group boundaries is supported through intensive contact between group members, as well as through emphasis upon their differentiation to those outside of the group (Douglas 1987). Egalitarians are always on alert for abuses of authority and unmasking risks (Hood 2000). Their view of the world is one of vulnerability. Egalitarians fear that resources can be exhausted and collapse is eminent, unless radical changes are made (Hendriks 1996:60; Thompson et al. 1990:26). They seek to reduce the boundaries between the political and non-political and promote a public sphere in which all can actively participate to give consent to collective decisions (Thompson et al. 1990:216).

The individualist way of life (low grid, low group) can be described as favouring self-regulation. It advances the worldview that roles and opportunities should be achieved and taken rather than ascribed (Hood 2000). Interference from any authority, including the state, is continually challenged, and competition is the preferred means of regulation (Mamadouh 1999b). The individualist views the world as an endless source of possibilities, in which growth and improvement can continue, as long as individuals are stimulated to use their creativity (Hendriks 1996:61; Thompson et al. 1990:26). At the political level, Thompson et al. (1990:216) have associated the individualist way of life with a narrow definition of politics since the potential for private gain should be unhindered by government regulation.

Finally, the fatalist way of life (high grid, low group) is characterized by lots of rules and regulations and little collective loyalty (Thompson et al. 1990). Distrust and alienation are reinforced in this culture. It is not really disposed to one particular way of organizing since in this way of life one must be prepared for erratic events. Fatalists have a

pessimistic view of the world, expecting that attempts to improve their lot will result in failure (Ellis and Thompson 1997:53). In politics, they do not discriminate sharply between the private and public spheres, since irrespective of definitions of the political, the blows come without apparent meaning or pattern (Thompson et al. 1990:217). Coping is the only strategy fatalists deem possible (Hood 2000).

As noted in the introduction to this book GGCT also recognizes mechanisms for cultural change. This is because the theory embraces the notion of competition between ways of life and use the idea of hybrids or rather cultural regimes (a mix of cultural flavours) to understand swings in the predominant cultural flavour within any given social unit (Thompson et al. 1990). They claim not all ways of life will be equally represented at a given point in time, but rather some flavour(s) will be more prominent than others (Thompson et al. 1990:4). This means that when the vulnerabilities of a more prominent way of life become visible, it can be compensated and even surpassed in degree by a counterpart. Although this appears a fairly reasonable claim, the more extreme assumption of some GGCT theorists regarding *requisite variety* is rejected in the present study. This is the claim that all of the ways of life will *always* be present (albeit in different degrees) at any point in time (Thompson et al. 1990:4; Mamodouh 1999b:397). As Hendriks (1996:79) and others (see Coyle 1994:227–228) have pointed out, this claim is difficult (and even unnecessary) to maintain at lower levels of analysis such as agency talk where many examples of just one cultural flavour are successful. In conducting the analysis of agency talk in this study, one has remained open to the possibility that more than one cultural flavour may or may not be exhibited.

GGCT and the cultural flavour of public management talk

As already noted this study draws on the work of Hood and colleagues, who have already gone some way in sorting public management ideas according to GGCT's different cultural ways of life (Hood and Jackson 1991; Hood 2000). In his most recent work Hood (2000) has also identified the favoured solutions, problems and watchwords that reflect the different cultural flavours. These are used in this study to analyse the cultural flavours being exhibited in official accounts of agency reform.

Furthermore Hood (2000) has made suggestions for the possible ethos, pathos and logos that are likely to accompany and support the different cultural flavours in management talk. These suggestions will be presented in Chapter 6 and compared with the findings of official agency talk across the countries. For now Hood's descriptions of each of the ways of life are presented, as well as how they may react to one another over time. Hood's descriptions provide frames for looking at and characterizing official agency talk in the following empirical chapters.

The hierarchical way of life in public management is characterized as favouring institutional arrangements that clarify and tighten up (differentiation in) roles, regulations and procedures (Hood 2000: 73–97). It considers planning, better rules and management, and (independent) expert knowledge as the favoured solutions of public management. Like the egalitarian way of life, the hierarchical way life emphasizes the priority of the collective good, as opposed to, and even at the expense of, individual interests (Hood 2000:26, 73–74). This may be expressed in the consideration of public management problems within the context of broader social issues or values. Some examples of hierarchical flavours in public management include setting clearly defined limits in management discretion, the systematic focus upon how the state can best steer the administration and society more generally, as well as preferences for a professional civil service (Hood 2000:73–97). The hierarchical way of life is vulnerable to misplaced trust in expertise and the dramatic collapse of *big* visions (Hood 2000:28).

The egalitarian flavour in public management is also associated with concerns for management outcomes that benefit the collective, as opposed to individuals. However, the egalitarian approach rejects privileging expert authority since it is prone to abuse (Hood 2000: 120–128). Indeed it is problems of individual power play that are generally used to legitimate egalitarian solutions. These include institutional arrangements that are inclusive (and empowering) of affected groups, whether that be fellow agency directors, community members or front line staff (Hood 2000:26, 120–130). They are associated in this study with public management arguments to get closer to, and include the citizen. Rather than favouring a rigid set of rules, egalitarians prefer these to be constantly in play and subject to informal (face to face) consultation. Some examples of egalitarian approaches to

public management include arrangements to limit abuses of power through limited terms of office for chief executives, the inclusion of citizens in the production of public management goods and services, e.g. through board representation, and collegial arrangements for decision making among administrative elites (Hood 2000:120–144). The egalitarian way of life in public management is vulnerable to deadlocks and weak leadership since it does not recognize any one supreme authority (Hood 2000:28).

The individualist way of life in public management is characterized as favouring institutional arrangements that stimulate competition and respond to, and play on, the incentive structures of managers and employees (Hood 2000:98–118). This is because it prioritizes individual self interest as a primary mechanism in institutional reform. It considers the lack of price signals in the public sector as central to most problems in the public sector and therefore often associated with wanting to make the public sector work more like a business (Hood 2000: 109–118). In contrast to the high group cultural flavours (hierarchy and egalitarianism) individualist conceptualizations of public management problems and solutions tend to be rather narrow (Hood 2000: 99). This is because the individualist way of life takes concrete public management problems, rather than collective goals, as the point of departure for considering solutions.

Among individualist public management solutions, Hood identifies the introduction of performance pay, benchmarking and creating contestable markets (Hood 2000:109–119). Transparency is also argued to be an individualist theme since (together with egalitarians) individualists also hold reservations about putting a great deal of discretion in the hands of authority. With its trust in the positive effects of playing to individual self interest the individualist approach to public management is vulnerable to failures stemming from lack of cooperation or individual corruption.

Finally, Hood has also developed an account of the fatalist way of life in public management (Hood 2000:120–142). This stresses the unpredictability and unintended effects of management approaches and favours institutional arrangements that build in an element of randomness. On one hand, Hood identifies the scepticism of fatalism to any way of organizing since from this perspective all attempts to control one's environment are doomed (Hood 2000:146). On the other hand, he also notes that there may be positive prescriptions asso-

Table 3.3 Four stories in public management according to a cultural theory framework

Fatalist story	Hierarchist story
Stress on: unpredictability and unintended effects	*Stress on:* expertise, forecasting and management
Blame: the 'fickle finger of fate'	*Blame:* poor compliance with established procedures, lack of professional expertise
Solution: minimal anticipation at most ad hoc response after the event	*Solution*: more expertise, tighter procedures, greater managerial 'grip'
Watchwords: 'resilience', beyond control, luck	*Watchwords*: 'steering', authority, morality
Blind-spots: failures stemming from excessive inertia and passivity	*Blind-spots:* dramatic collapse of think big plans or projects
Individualist story	**Egalitarian story**
Stress on: individuals as self interested rational choosers	*Stress on:* group and power structures
Blame: faulty incentive structures through over-collectivization and lack of price signals	*Blame*: abuse of power by top-level government/corporate leaders, system corruption
Solution: market-like mechanisms, competitions and leagues, information to support choice (e.g. rating systems)	*Solution*: participation, the citizen, communitarianism, whistle blowing
Watchwords: 'enlightened self interest', innovation, choice	*Watchwords*: 'community participation', democracy, mutuality
Blind-spots: failures stemming from lack of co-operation or individual corruption.	*Blind-spots*: failures stemming from unresolved feuds or collegiality degenerating into coexistence.

Source: Hood 2000:26

ciated with fatalism and that it is not just a passive stance, but rather one in which unintended consequences and surprise can be expected. He suggests that fatalist solutions in public management include random compliance checks of clients or of employees (Hood 2000:159). He also mentions *firewall* arrangements in which related elements or roles in decision making are separated in order to prevent corruption (Hood 2000:161). According to Hood the fatalist way of life is vulnerable to inertia (Hood 2000:28). It is difficult to imagine how a fatalist way of life might apply to *official* rhetoric about agency reform since reformers tend to emphasize their ability to control the effects of their

initiatives, nevertheless we might find some discussion of how to control for unintended effects.

Derived from Hood's account of GGCT in public management, Table 3.3 presents a summary of the kinds of themes, problems, solutions, watchwords and vulnerabilities that characterize each of the four ways of life. These features of each way of life in public management, or in the case of vulnerabilities the blind-spots, will provide the basis for assessing the cultural flavour of agency talk in this research.

Pendulum swings in public management talk

The identification of change in agency talk involves assessing the degree to which national agency talk in official documents exhibited certain cultural flavours. This was assessed in a quantitative way in this study by identifying the number of cultural themes presented per document, and how this changed over time. It can be that agency talk changes incrementally rather than in a reactionary way over time. Some attention was given to this in the analysis of agency talk. In addition, reactions in rhetoric, or rather pendulum swings, were assessed by identifying whether solutions in previous agency documents became the problem in later agency documents. This was informed by the favoured *blame* that is typical of each cultural way of life in public management (see Table 3.3). They include the apparent international shift from applauding individual agency performance or autonomy to blaming this for the fragmentation of the administration. It is of course possible that changes in the degree to which cultural flavours characterized agency talk over time may also be the consequence of changes in the speakers presenting agency reforms (Smullen 2010). In comparing the role of political culture or stories in explaining agency reform, some attention is also given to the actual speakers presenting reforms across the countries.

Translating agency reform: putting rhetoric and culture together

Thus far the conceptual frameworks of the New Rhetoric have been presented separately and described according to their roles in distinguishing between rhetorical rules of speaking and the cultural flavour of agency talk. However in the coming chapters they will be applied together to discern and compare national styles of speaking and the

rhetorical styles of culturally flavoured stories. These are different levels of analysis and they are important in this study for a number of reasons. Not least they provide a way to distinguish between the roles of political culture (as expressed in durable national styles of speaking) and also the role of common culturally flavoured stories in explaining agency talk. Furthermore, they also provide a way to demonstrate how international management fashions may be translated to national political cultures. This is because the rhetorical features of common cultural stories across the countries maybe incorporated into, rather than displacing, national styles of speaking. Moreover some rhetorical elements such as the particular audience or logos, may be more responsive to fashionable public management stories than others such as the universal audience.

To facilitate the distinction between national styles of speaking and culturally flavoured stories in the coming chapters the concepts of the universal and particular audiences are important together with GGCT. Firstly, national styles of speaking are defined as durable rhetorical aspects of agency talk that are patterned across high group consensus political cultures compared to low group adversarial political cultures. The universal ways (universal audience-ethos) in which the speakers seek to obtain credibility across the different political cultures are of primary interest at this level of analysis together with the durable pathos and logos. These durable national styles and the themes they address can be culturally assessed according to GGCT. It is of interest to assess whether the cultural flavour of durable national styles of speaking also correspond to the diagnoses of political cultures used to select the national cases in this study.

Secondly, the New Rhetoric and GGCT can also be combined at the level of cultural stories. This involves comparing agency talk across the countries according to cultural flavour. It makes possible assessing whether there were patterns in the rhetorical styles of speaking at the level of cultural stories. Hood has suggested for example that there are likely to be different rhetorical keys that promote the acceptability of particular culturally flavoured stories (Hood 2000:187). At this level of analysis it is the particular audiences (ethos) together with the pathos and logos, which were used when given cultural ways of life were most prominent. The proposition following from these distinctions is that in uniting different particular audiences to the universal audience, speakers across the

countries are also uniting and translating different culturally flavoured stories in their agency talk.

Conclusion

The theoretical frameworks to be applied to national accounts of agency reform were presented in this chapter. There are four different functions that these frameworks are to serve in this study and in answering the central research question regarding explanations of similarities and differences in the construction of agency talk. Firstly, both the New Rhetoric and GGCT were selected because they offer concepts which are sensitive to variety in agency talk, and therefore to the specificities of different political cultures. This will become apparent in the following chapter when both frameworks are applied over time to national accounts of agency reform in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia.

Secondly, in a comparative perspective these theories provide concepts which facilitate distinguishing between the explanatory role of national styles of speaking and international fashionable stories in shaping national agency talk. This is because rhetorical styles can be compared at the level of national agency talk, as well as at the level of culturally flavoured stories. It should be noted that comparing agency talk in this way involves taking a static view of the rhetorical styles. It is no longer how rhetorical elements interact with one another to persuade audiences that are the main focus, but rather the snapshots of rhetorical elements that were adopted within and across cultures. This is also the case when examining how cultural stories maybe incorporated into, or translated through national styles of speaking.

Thirdly, the adoption of Hood's application of GGCT presents an opportunity to examine some of his claims about this theory through empirical experiences of agency reform. This includes examining whether reactions to the blind-spots of cultural flavour is a useful way to understand the trajectory of public management fashions. It also enables testing the correspondence between political culture and the cultural flavour of talk across cultures (social relations and beliefs), as well as checking whether certain cultural stories really bring with them common rhetorical keys. Finally, the New Rhetoric in particular can provide insight into how to speak persuasively about public management reforms in different political cultures.

4
The Trajectory of Agency Talk Across The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia

Introduction

This chapter presents initial findings about the nature of agency talk in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. It applies the concepts of the New Rhetoric and Grid Group Cultural Theory to government documents that initiated and described agency reforms across the countries. For now the focus is upon identifying the distinctive trajectories of agency talk that were adopted across the countries, the specific issues they dealt with, and any durable features of this talk. This includes identifying the themes and rhetorical strategies exhibited in national agency accounts over time, as well as the cultural flavour of the arguments.

A deliberate choice was made to present the findings about national trajectories of agency talk separately in this chapter before proceeding to comparisons of national talk in the following chapters. This is to illustrate the situational particularity of national agency talk and the network of statements which gave agencies specific meanings in the different political cultures. According to the New Rhetoric, it is important to demonstrate how the different rhetorical elements, such as the particular and universal audiences, worked together to establish regimes of truth about agencies in the national political cultures (see Crosswhite 1996:146–149). To this extent the rhetorical analyses in this chapter lend greater attention to the interaction between the rhetorical elements in a given document, while these are compared across countries in a more static way in the following chapter.

The selection of official documents

The data used to examine official agency talk across the countries and over time were drawn from official government documents. These were documents initiating, refining or describing agency reforms. There were three kinds of criteria that were used to select the documents. Firstly, the year of publication was an important consideration. As noted in the introduction to this study, agency reform has been conceptualized here as part of the rise of New Public Management (NPM). Therefore the start date from which documents were considered was 1980 when the introduction of the UK Next Steps agency programme was taking shape. It should be noted that this criterion was only important in the case of Sweden which already had a tradition of independent agencies prior to the identification of agencies as an international NPM fashion. The early 1980s coincided with a period of debate in Sweden about the independence of their agencies and recommendations to steer and modernize them through yearly performance agreements (SOU 1983). Considerations of agency reforms in The Netherlands and Australia did not begin until the 1990s. In those cases the documents selected were the first to propose or announce the national agency initiatives.

A second criterion which affected the selection of documents was consultation with national experts. Following from a preliminary review of the available government documents initiating or describing agency reforms in the different countries, as well as some interviews, an expert questionnaire was developed. This questionnaire was sent to four national experts in each country including representatives from both academic and practitioner domains. Besides asking the experts to rate and give their assessment of a proposed list of documents, the questionnaire also asked them to identify any further documents that may not have been identified in the preliminary review. Following from this process of consultation with the experts a final selection of documents was made. A third criterion affecting the selection of documents was their spread over time. While a primary criterion was that the documents analysed described initial agency reforms or their refinement, there was also attention given to the time period over which agencies were studied in each country. This was to enable the possibility for assessing both durability in national styles of speaking, but also reactions in rhetoric. The documents selected are presented in Table 4.1 together with their authors and date of publication.

Table 4.1   An overview of the selection of documents

The Netherlands	Sweden	Australia
1991. Ministry of Finance. *Further building on management.*	1983. SOU. *Political steering – administrative independence.*	1996. *The Prime Minister's address at the official launch of Centrelink* presented by John Howard (then Prime Minister).
1995. Ministry of Home Affairs. *Accountable autonomization.*	1985. SOU. *Government, agencies and agency managers.*	1998. *Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop – challenges at each stage* presented by Sue Vardon (then CEO).
1997. Ministry of Finance. *Further with results.*	1997. SOU. *In the citizen's service.*	2004. Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet. *Connecting Government.*

A more detailed description of the process of document selection, an example of the expert questionnaire and the experts consulted in each country are presented in Appendix B. It should be noted that all the Swedish and Dutch documents were prepared by committees, while two of the Australian documents were speeches presented either by an individual politician or agency director. These different actual speakers were a consequence of the different political systems represented in this study. In the consensus political cultures it is typical that proposals for public management reforms, and particularly those across central government, be prepared by a group of experts commissioned to make recommendations for reforms. By contrast, in the adversarial political cultures it is typical that the government will have a majority in the parliament and therefore few barriers to implement reforms of the executive. Since the only public documents providing the initial descriptions of agency reforms in Australia were actually speeches, these have been selected for analysis in this study. A comparison of the different rhetorical situations across the high and low group political cultures and their consequences for agency talk is described in more detail in the following chapter.

The trajectory of Dutch agency talk 1991–1998

Dutch official documents provided the initial blueprint for agency reform (*Further building on management 1991*), identified guidelines for selecting among alternative forms of arms length organizations (*Accountable autonomization 1994*), and introduced tighter conditions for agency status (*Further with results 1997*). Both the first and last documents (*Further building on management 1991, Further with results 1997*) were prepared by the Ministry of Finance, while the second document *Accountable Autonomization 1995* was prepared by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Together the different documents emphasized the unique financial character of Dutch agencies compared to other departmental units, and their greater accountability compared to other types of arms length organizations – and more specifically Dutch ZBOs.

The first document *Further building on management 1991* presented the initial blueprint for Dutch agency reform. It described problems with the existing financial management system in central government such as the end of year limit, lack of management flexibility and lack of incentives for more efficient operations (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:6–9). Agencies were presented as a new organizational form which would have a different financial management system than other departmental organizations. This included the adoption of an accrual system and the capacity to reserve funds that were not spent in the one year budgetary cycle. More generally agencies were envisaged to be recognized in the Dutch Accounting Laws and to have annual performance agreements wherein performance targets, such as efficiency improvements, were set. The recommendations from this report, and particularly the accrual accounting status of agencies, were incorporated into the Dutch Accounting Laws in 1994.

The second document *Accountable Autonomization 1994* presented a principled discussion about the choice for different types of arms length organization including agencies and Dutch ZBOs. It defined different forms of arms length organizations, or rather autonomization, and described the consequences these had for ministerial accountability and steering. The report also presented a range of think steps that should guide ministries in their selection for different types of arms length organizations. These included considering the collective interest in the task and whether it was a task requiring government responsibility (Commissie Sint 1994). More generally the report dis-

couraged ministries from using Dutch ZBOs to implement policies as they argued that ZBOs reduced ministerial authority and accountability (Commissie Sint 1994:v). The think steps presented in this report were incorporated into the procedures for obtaining parliamentary approval for proposals to give agency status to existing departmental organizations. The third document *Further with results 1998* was actually an evaluation of the first phase of agency creation in the Dutch agency programme. It described the experience and achievements of agencies and made recommendations for improvements in the reform programme. More specifically, the conditions for obtaining agency status were tightened to include the calculation of a cost price prior to agency status and to set internal and external performance reporting requirements.

Dutch agency rhetoric: agencies as a unique and accountable alternative

Ethos and the construction of the Dutch audience

The self presentation of the Dutch speaker was distinguished by three main particular audiences across the documents and over the period studied. These included the construction of particular audiences of financial experts, of public law/organizational experts, and business consultants. The mix and prominence of these particular audiences changed with the documents. There was greater emphasis upon the vocabulary and knowledge of the financial expert in the first document *Further building on management 1991*, though the public law/organizational expert was also frequently given presence in the argumentation. There was greater emphasis upon the vocabulary and knowledge of the public law/organizational expert in the second document *Accountable autonomization 1994*, together with some limited presence of the financial expert. While the third document *Further with results 1998* exhibited a mix of the financial expert and business consultant audience. It became evident that financial or business knowledge was most prominent in the documents published by the Ministry of Finance, while the public law/organizational expert audience were most prominent in the document published by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

When the particular audience of financial experts was being constructed it was typical of the speaker to establish credibility through

demonstrating knowledge of developments in Dutch financial administration. This occurred through detailed references to previous reports, projects or committee proceedings concerning financial developments (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:1, 14–20; Ministerie van Financiën 1998:8). Furthermore the vocabulary of the speaker was characterized by technical accounting terminology regarding different types of accounting regimes, reserve or lending facilities, budgetary principles or articles. These concepts were rarely explained to the audience; rather it was assumed that they were familiar with the ideas. Another characteristic of the particular audience of financial experts was their commitment to improving efficiency, to promoting orderly accounts, and to budgetary savings.

By contrast, the particular audience of public law/organizational experts was characterized by a vocabulary of organizational types, their legal status, clear separation of tasks, and principles of accountability. When the speaker constructed this audience she typically drew upon very formalistic language to describe distinctions between proposals for Dutch agencies and existing ZBOs. They were respectively referred to as internal (agencies) and external (ZBOs) autonomization (Commissie Sint 1994:7–9; Ministerie van Financiën 1991:68–70). This distinction represented the different degrees of legal autonomy the types of organizations were deemed to have and their associated distance from ministries and ministers (Commissie Sint 1994:24). The particular audience of organizational experts was committed to a systematic and principled approach to autonomization wherein clear rules were defined for which circumstances and under what conditions autonomization should be allowed to occur.

A third particular audience identified from the self presentation of the Dutch speaker was the business consultant. In contrast to the technical vocabulary of the financial expert, the business consultant spoke of economic theories and even accounting concepts, but then in an informal way (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:22, 24). These notions were presented in user friendly information boxes and various concepts such as the end of year limit were briefly explained. Other characteristics of the business consultant audience were the adoption of business terminology to describe the features of agencies, e.g. business operations, business plans or business wins, and the use of motivational slogans (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:5, 24; 1991:76, 77). These included evoking the audience to 'learn by doing', pointing to

agency heroes who had gone to their farthest limits, and becoming the boss of one's problems (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:19, 21, 32). Finally there was some presence given to agency managers in both the financial documents. This included pointing to problems (the bottlenecks) manager's experience with the existing financial system in *Further building on management 1991* and motivating managers in *Further with results 1998*.

There were also three main ways in which these different particular audiences were united and transcended through the construction of a Dutch universal audience. Firstly, both the financial and public law/organizational experts were drawn together through a commitment to ministerial accountability. In the first two Dutch documents *Further building on management 1991* and *Accountable autonomization 1994* the speaker sought to demonstrate that agency reform was reasonable to all particular audiences, and the broader Dutch political community. This was because it would not disturb the principle of ministerial accountability. On one hand, the accounting concerns of the financial expert were shown to correspond to the principle of ministerial accountability because financial changes would enable ministries to obtain better product information about agencies. On the other hand, unlike ZBOs, agencies would still be vertically subordinate to ministers and would not be legally immune from ministerial intervention or steering. It was noteworthy that ministerial accountability was no longer a feature of the universal audience in the third Dutch document *Further with results 1998*. This was the only document in which the particular audience of business consultants was constructed together with financial experts. Rather than the principle of ministerial accountability, the speaker demonstrated that agency reforms would not disturb macro budgetary principles.

Other characteristics of the universal audience were the commitment to scientific rationality and to consultation. All the Dutch documents typically introduced their report and recommendations with an account of how the findings for the report were gathered and the selection of cases used to draw conclusions. For example in *Further building on management 1991* the speaker explained that the problems with existing financial management systems had been drawn from interviews with respondents from an inventory of different types of organizations. Particular claims of both the financial and public law/organizational experts could be deemed acceptable

against this broader principle of appropriate ways to gather findings. Similarly, the speaker in *Accountable autonomization 1994* gave presence to how cases had been selected for the study, while in *Further with results 1998* this explanation went so far as to consider and demonstrate knowledge of theories and hypotheses about agency initiatives.

A third way in which the speaker sought to transcend the various particular audiences was also to give presence to the matter of consultation. Not only were findings consistently presented as being drawn from well thought out case selections or theories, but also after following from consultation with stakeholders. This was consultation with managers in the public sector about financial bottlenecks in *Further building on management 1991,* and consultation with heads of ministries about case selection itself in *Accountable autonomization 1994*. Furthermore consultation with agency employees was to promote the support for agency reform in the final document *Further with results 1998*. While not always directly linking the specific claims of the different particular audiences to the broader commitments of science and consultation, the durable presence of these commitments over the period studied indicated they were part of obtaining agreement about the universal reasonableness of agency reforms.

Dutch pathos or loci and presumptions

The speaker prepared the audience to accept the various proposals for agency reforms and their claimed benefits using both qualitative and quantitative loci throughout the argumentation. The prominence of these different loci changed with the document and there were sometimes different qualitative loci used. In both the Ministry of Finance documents (*Further building on management 1991*, *Further with results 1998*) there was frequent use of the qualitative locus of the unique. This relies on the appeal of something because it is special or unusual in some way (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:90). The way in which this appeal was used in Dutch accounts included describing agencies' financial regime as deviating from *normal* organizations or as being special (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:70). A typical way in which the financial regime of agencies was described included the following citation; '*Special regulations* for units that *depart* from central government regulations can be considered a form of internal autonomization' (Ministerie van Financien 1991:x, *my emphasis, my translation*).

The later Ministry of Finance document, *Further with results 1998*, also employed the qualitative locus of the difficult to promote the appeal of agencies. The locus of the difficult sensitizes the audience to the goodness of reform since if something is difficult to achieve it must be worth doing (Perelman & Olbrechts–Tyteca 2003:91). It was apparent from such statements as 'the concept of (agencies') results orientated management doesn't go automatically and requires continuous time and maintenance (Ministrie van Financien 1998:21, *my translation*).

Besides qualitative loci, there were also examples of the quantitative locus of more is better across all of the Dutch documents. This locus prepares the audience to see that a reform must be good since it brings more of the good things. The locus of more is better was often used in comparisons of agencies with Dutch ZBOs, or with comparisons between agencies and normal departmental units. On these occasions agencies were described as having more independence, as being more efficient, more transparent and offering more even complete (ministerial) accountability (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:70; Commissie Sint 1994:7–10). It was striking that the second Home affairs document *Accountable autonomization 1994* relied solely upon the quantitative locus of more is better to sensitize the audience to the goodness of agency reforms. As in the other Dutch documents, the speaker in this document frequently contrasted agencies with ZBOs and noted that with agencies there was more possibility to steer.

There was also evidence of different presumptions acting as starting points of the argumentation, thereby promoting the audiences' agreement. In the Ministry of Finance documents these were presumptions about the effects of financial incentives. It was presumed that they would bring about desired changes in behaviour such as behaviour promoting more efficient decision making or improved performance. For example the authors wrote; 'through building incentives into the financial and personnel regime, the responsibility of managers can be promoted such that they are less likely to make maximum use of their budget' (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:20, *my translation*). In the Home Affairs document (*Accountable autonomization 1994)* there was the presumption that through ordering organizational types, administrative practice would also become more orderly and accountable. A related presumption was also that if an organization is

in the core government, such as agencies, and subject to ministerial intervention, this will also make it more accountable. Other presumptions made across all the Dutch documents was that political or ministerial actors would know how to steer agencies, and that ministerial intervention in agency decision making would always be for purposes of accountability.

Dutch logos and the techniques of argumentation

Dutch argumentative techniques (*logos*) were primarily characterized by *quasi-logical argumentation* over time. Quasi-logical arguments were used in all of the documents examined and were most central to the argumentation in the first two documents (Ministerie van Financiën 1991; Commissie Sint 1994). These were the documents in which the speaker sought to construct particular audiences of (financial or public law) experts rather than business consultants. In the later document *Further with results 1998*, there were more techniques of reasonable belief than of quasi-logical arguments. Typical quasi-logical techniques included *definition*, *comparison* and the *division of the whole into its parts*. For example the division of the whole into its parts was used to distinguish between macro budgetary principles, such as defined limits to expenditure and parliamentary authorization, and micro principles such as the financial regulations of agency managers. Since changes to the micro principles, such as greater financial differentiation for agencies, were presented as not changing the value and application of macro principles, the agency proposals were argued to be agreeable.

Among the various definitions and comparisons used to consider the nature and effects of Dutch agency proposals were the definition of results orientated management. This played a central role in demonstrating the desirability of agency reform because all of the aspects of a results management style were shown to characterize the proposals for agency reform. These included more complete management (greater management control over resource decisions) and agreements about products and budget limits (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:22). Other definitions and comparisons that were central to obtaining the Dutch audience's agreement to the benefits of agency reform concerned internal and external autonomization. This was most prominent in the Home Affairs document *Accountable autonomization 1994*. For example internal autonomization (agencies) was defined as being vertically subordinate to the minister, while external autonomization (ZBOs)

involved a horizontal relationship with the minister. Since agencies could also have the same financial regulations as ZBOs they were demonstrated to be an efficient and yet more accountable type of autonomization.

Some techniques of reasonable belief were also identified across the Dutch documents. These included the *argument of unlimited development* in both Ministry of Finance documents *Further building on management 1991* and *Further with results 1998*. The argument of unlimited development obtains the audiences agreement through presenting them with the notion that going further with a particular decision or action is likely to also bring an increase in value. As is evident from the titles of both financial documents (Further building on management, Further with results), there was the suggestion that the adoption of agency initiatives was part of an existing process of improvement. This was also accentuated through the discussion of past financial initiatives and developments in both documents. For example the authors of the report *Verder bouwen aan beheer 1991* wrote, 'The management of central government is steadily developing. This report builds further upon foundations laid in 1985 with the operation accounting system' (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:1, *my translation*). By presenting these past activities as a (factual) success, and introducing new initiatives that refine the financial system (further), agency reform came to appear as a reasonable, even inescapable progression in financial management.

Another argument of reasonable belief, most prominent in the final document *Further with results 1998,* was the *argument of the causal link*. This is argumentation seeking to show the likely effect of a given action. In the accounts of Dutch agency reform, the speaker sought to demonstrate that agency initiatives would and had caused improvements in efficiency. This followed from presumptions in the argumentation that managers would respond to financial incentives and behave in ways that promote efficiency. The reader was also drawn to make these connections through the presentation of various indicators such as decreasing cost prices at apparently constant or increasing levels of quality. This was to obtain agreement that it must have been agency initiatives that caused these efficiency improvements. Significantly, this conclusion was explicitly made in the report even though it also recognized that the way the different kinds of measures were calculated continually changed (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:32).

Different kinds of *metaphors* were also used across the Dutch documents to help the audience see the advantages of agency reform. These ranged from quite fervent control metaphors to metaphors likening agency initiatives to the attainment of freedom or rather space and being business like. The most durable of the Dutch agency metaphors was the metaphor of steering. Dutch agency reform was always presented as an initiative that enabled *steering at the headlines*. This gave the impression that agencies were something that could be controlled and driven like a ship or car. Moreover in the second document *Accountable autonomization 1994* the control metaphors were extremely explicit and included agencies being subject to ministerial *grip* or *commands*. It can be argued that the term *autonomization* itself fitted into this control genre since it is autonomy in the passive form and gives the impression of controlled autonomy. The term *transparency* was also used in *Accountable autonomization 1994* to describe the think steps that were being proposed to make decisions about autonomization. This was to make the audience see that the use of these think steps could make choices for agency initiatives clearer and more transparent like glass.

Among the metaphors attributing to agencies the feeling of freedom were descriptions of them as being flexible like plastic and thus not controlled in some kind of straitjacket. Furthermore the description of their financial regulations included being spacious or having decision space [*beslisruimte*] and there were references to them having freedom. In the final document *Further with results 1998* there were also a range of metaphors likening the adoption of agency reforms to a travel adventure. The creation of agencies was described as *rigging one's sails* as if it involved a journey to sea, and the evaluation report itself was presented as giving handles or rather direction to the journey. Also in emphasizing the idea that agencies would only be a part of a much greater development or journey, they were described as still being in children's shoes. Finally, there were a number of descriptions of Dutch agencies as being business-like. They were presented as having business plans, business operations, as seeking business wins and even undergoing business redressing.

The cultural flavour of Dutch agency talk over time

The cultural flavour of argumentative themes describing Dutch agency initiatives shifted across the documents from individualist

Table 4.2 The rhetoric of Dutch agency accounts 1991–1998

	Further building on management, 1991	Accountable autonomization, 1995	Further with result, 1997
Ethos			
Particular	Financial expert Juridical expert	Financial Expert Juridical expert	Financial expert Business consultant & Managers Managers
Universal	Scientific principles Consultation Ministerial accountability	Scientific Principles Consultation Ministerial accountability	Scientific Principles Consultation
Pathos			
Loci	The unique (new/different) More is better	More is better	Unique (new/different) Difficult More is better
Presumptions	Financial incentives will promote efficiency Ministers and departments know how to steer and want to steer	If organizations are clearly defined, practice will also be clear and accountable Accountability can be guaranteed if organizations are part of core of government	Financial incentives will promote efficiency Ministry of Finance will know how to steer
Logos			
Quasi-logical	Definition Comparison Whole and its parts	Definition Comparison Whole and its parts	Definition Comparison
Reasonable belief	Unlimited development		Unlimited development Causal link
Metaphors	Steering Flexible	Steering Autonomization	Steering Rigging one's sails
	Spacious Building Flexible	Grip Transparent	Children's shoes Step by step Business redressing Flexible

and hierarchical cultural flavours (*Further building on management 1991*), to primarily hierarchical (*Accountable autonomization 1994*) and then to primarily individualist flavours (*Further with results 1998*). There was also consistent, though quite limited, reference to egalitarian cultural themes in each of the Dutch documents examined. This limited presence of the egalitarian cultural flavour was surprising since the Dutch political culture was diagnosed as highly egalitarian. An overview of the cultural flavour of Dutch agency talk over time is presented in Table 4.3.

Among the hierarchical themes in Dutch accounts of agency reform, was the concern for broader political principles such as the primacy of politics. Agency initiatives and arms length organizations more generally, were to be assessed with respect to their accountability and legality to the government and society at large (Commissie Sint 1994:6). This theme was only found in *Accountable autonomization 1994* which exhibited the most hierarchical themes of all Dutch documents. Other related ways in which hierarchical flavours was expressed included frequent references to the supremacy of ministerial accountability and its continued relevance with the introduction of agency reform. For example it was argued that agencies, like other departmental units, would continue to be subordinate to ministers and, where necessary, subject to their control and intervention. This was accentuated through the distinction between internal autonomization (Dutch agencies) and external autonomization (Dutch ZBOs). Here it was argued that agency status, unlike Dutch ZBOs, guaranteed continued 'ministerial grip'. Significantly, while ministerial accountability was prominent in the first two documents examined, it was not mentioned once in the final (more individualistic) document *Further with results 1998*. Instead, as in all the Dutch documents, the hierarchical flavour was presented in *Further with results 1998* through references to steering agencies.

The individualist flavour was also frequently adopted in Dutch agency accounts although it was most prominent in the third document *Further with results 1998*, and to a lesser extent the first document *Further building on management 1991*. These documents presented the idea of agency reform narrowly – it was primarily a means to encourage *business like* practices and address problems with financial management. Among the individualist themes, were the use of agency reform to introduce price forming and incentives for good financial performance. Agency reform was depicted as a desirable solution because

Table 4.3 The cultural flavours of Dutch agency talk over time

	Further building on management, 1991	Accountable autonomization, 1995	Further with result, 1997
Hierarchy	Central steering at headlines	Broad focus – primacy of politics in society	Central steering at headlines
	Defined autonomy	Separation policy and implementation	More coordination through external planning
		Categories of autonomization	
	Agencies subordinate to ministers	Agencies subordinate to ministers	
Individualism	Narrow financial focus		Narrow financial focus
	Price forming	Price forming	Price forming
	Incentives for agency savings		Incentives for individual employees Benchmarking & quasi markets
Egalitarian	Consultation with agency managers (problems)	Consultation with stakeholders (case selection)	Consultation with employees (information)

through the calculation of cost prices it could promote efficiency savings and better financial decisions. Indeed, the attainment of efficiency savings could be encouraged by rewards, such as the maintenance of these savings in an agency reserve fund (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:76) or through individual performance pay (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:23). The theme of cost prices, together with some reference to business plans and wins were the only individualist themes identified in the more hierarchical document *Verantwoord verzelfstandingen 1994*. By contrast, the third document *Further with results 1998* embraced an individualist cultural way of life most extensively. Besides presenting the individualist themes already mentioned, it also envisioned the possibility for competition through agency reform. This was to be facilitated through benchmarking between agencies, as well as through quasi market arrangements, where some agencies were to compete for tasks from other ministries (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:42).

The depiction of an egalitarian way of life in Dutch accounts of agency reform was, compared to hierarchy and individualism, quite limited. It appeared at least once in each document but then only through the theme of consultation. This included consultation with managers about the existing problems with the financial system (Ministerie van Financiën 1991), consultation with stakeholders about which cases to examine when studying the experience of agency reforms (Commissie Sint 1994), and consultation with agency employees about the transition to agency status (Ministerie van Financiën 1998). There was not one occasion when such consultation extended to citizens, nor were any of the other egalitarian themes such as power structures or problems of corruption identified throughout the argumentation. Finally, there were also no fatalist cultural themes found in Dutch official accounts of agency reform.

The trajectory of Swedish agency talk 1983–1997

Swedish documents reconsidered the constitutional independence of agencies (*Political steering – administrative independence 1983*), presented initial recommendations for introducing performance reporting (*Government, agencies and agency management 1985*), and brought about some revision to these reporting arrangements (*In the citizen's service 1997*). All of these documents were prepared within the Swedish Com-

mission system which develops policy recommendations following from a request from ministers. They brought together statements interpreting the prescriptions of the Swedish constitution and the way in which agencies could best be steered to promote democracy. There were some tensions between the reports and their recommendations for how democracy could be promoted. For example the earlier documents (*Political steering – administrative independence 1983*, *Government, agencies and agency management 1985*) argued that agency independence was a problem for democracy and political control over agencies. They recommended direct political steering through performance targets and reporting by individual agencies within the budgetary process (*Government, agencies and agency management 1985*). By contrast, *In the citizen's service 1997* identified agencies' constitutionally recognized independence as a precondition for horizontal democratic relationships with citizens. It also recommended a shift from performance goals for individual organizations to performance goals for a policy sector. This was to promote cooperation across the administration.

The first Swedish document *Political steering-administrative independence 1983* considered both the constitutional prescriptions for ministers to steer agencies and the actual independence that agencies had attained. It lent legitimacy to the introduction of management reforms which were described in *Government, agencies and agency management 1985*. This was because *Political steering- administrative independence 1983* concluded, in contrast to widespread (Swedish) belief, that there was no constitutional barrier for the political sphere to directly steer agencies. Moreover it found that delegation of decision making to agencies and their increasing independence had limited the possibility for government to be accountable for policy decisions. Another finding was that the management boards of agencies contributed to a lack of clarity between the political and administrative spheres. Among the recommendations of the report were the return of competencies to the political sphere and an increase of political influence over the management of agencies.

The second document *Government, agencies and agency management 1985* identified more practical ways in which the political sphere could steer agencies. Indeed this report was some 292 pages and made in excess of 70 recommendations to improve the steering of agencies. This was because the state bureaucracy was deemed to have become

too specialized and insensitive to the steering signals of the political sphere (SOU 1985:13). The recommendations ranged from using informal contacts to promote concurrence between the political and administrative sphere, to changing the appointment regulations for director generals of agencies, as well as quite detailed recommendations for political steering through the budget process. The changes following from the report included the introduction of a unit responsible for recruiting director generals and also with the capacity to transfer them at the government's discretion. A three-year budgetary procedure was also introduced which incorporated agency performance and reporting requirements into the budget documents. This was the beginning of management by results in Sweden and also included changes to financial management arrangements in agencies. As a consequence of the length of the report, a decision was made to only conduct the rhetorical analyses on four of the chapters. These included the introductory chapter, chapters on changes to the budget and appointment conditions of agencies, as well as the section on informal contacts.

The third document *In the citizen's service 1997* also addressed the difficulties of steering the Swedish administration, but studied this together with the increasing fragmentation of the state and decline of a civil service culture. It was not so much agency independence that was presented as a problem for political steering but rather the complexity of policy making generally. The report focused upon the place of Swedish agencies in the Swedish state and the overriding values that they were to uphold. These included legality as well as efficiency and democracy. It made recommendations for refinements to the management by results system including a change in the oversight of this system and its progress. For example there were proposals for promoting more cooperation between agencies through shared performance goals. The report also gave detailed attention to civil service values and recommended greater professionalization of civil servants through training. The rhetorical analysis of this lengthy report (179 pages) was limited to five chapters which described changes to management by results, civil service culture, and the introductory chapters.

Swedish agency rhetoric: agencies for democracy

Ethos and the construction of the Swedish audience

The self presentation of Swedish speakers in accounts of agency reform included *particular audiences* of political scientists, financial experts,

agency directors and citizens. The vocabulary of political scientists were most prominent in the first and last Swedish documents (*Political steering – administrative independence 1983; In the citizen's service 1997*), while the self presentation of a financial expert was only found in the second document, *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985*. The presentation of a financial expert occurred together with attention for the appointments of agency director generals. The final document *In the citizen's service 1997* was the only Swedish document to address citizens, and this occurred together with some attention for agency directors.

The particular audience of political scientists was apparent from the extensive use of concepts, definitions and theories from the study of politics. For example the speaker sought to locate the discussion of agency independence within the context of the formal political system and its duality, separation of powers, and design based upon the sovereignty of the people (SOU 1983:16, 37). While political science concepts about public power were used to legitimate the authority of politicians to steer agencies in the first document *Political steering – administrative independence 1983*, in the later document *In the citizen's service 1997* the same kinds of principles were used to argue that agency independence enabled the state to be responsive to the sovereignty of the people. In both accounts the discussion of these issues drew extensively from principles of political and administrative authority as prescribed in the Swedish constitution (SOU 1983:19–29). It could be said that knowledge of public law was also part of the repertoire of the particular political science audience being constructed in Sweden.

There was also a particular audience of financial experts identified in the Swedish accounts. This only occurred in *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985* which sought to identify more and better ways to steer agencies. Here the self presentation of the speaker included a vocabulary of technical accounting and budgetary concepts and a detailed analysis of how the budgetary process could be used to promote better steering. Some examples of the vocabulary were the appropriation proposals, interest income, different budgetary articles and discussion of banking arrangements of agencies. The financial expert also expressed a commitment to more effective financial decision making in agencies and the potential to be able to steer them in more precise ways. As in the first Dutch Ministry of Finance document there was no attempt to explain these various terms to the audience.

Other particular audiences identified across the different Swedish documents included Swedish politicians (in *Political steering – administrative independence 1983*), directors of agencies (in *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985*, *In the citizen's service 1997*) and citizens (*In the citizen's service 1997*). When the speaker constructed a particular audience of politicians this was characterized by an expression of sympathy for their struggles to oversee the activities of agencies. The agency account shifted to numerous direct citations from politicians describing their desires to protect democracy and their lack of powers to intervene in administrative decision making. By contrast, when the speaker constructed directors of agencies this was characterized by direct interview quotations wherein directors expressed their frustrations about bureaucratic regulations (*Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985*) or their experiences of a loss of integrity with the introduction of market like reforms (in *In the citizen's service 1997*). Finally, when citizens were made part of the particular audiences in *In the citizen's service 1997*, the speaker expressed a commitment to making the citizen central to the obligations of agencies. There was also a less formal character to the argumentation and greater prominence of interview material as opposed to quoting academic or government reports.

The Swedish *universal audience* was consistently characterized by a commitment to Swedish democracy and also some kind of theoretical and methodological foundation in the argumentation about agencies. Firstly, the various particular audiences in the different documents were always united and transcended by commitments and appraisals of Swedish democracy. This occurred irrespective of the different ways in which particular audiences espoused how democracy should be achieved. For example it was typical in the earlier documents for the various claims of political theorists, agency directors and financial experts about improving and changing steering to be drawn together under the banner of promoting Swedish democracy. Similarly in the later document *In the citizen's service 1997* it was particular claims about maintaining agency independence as expressed by political theorists, agency directors, and citizens that were also joined together to promote democracy. In all instances this universal commitment to Swedish democracy was also accentuated by the speakers' demonstration of extensive historical knowledge about the Swedish state and constitution. It became apparent that to speak credibly about Swedish agency reforms it was always necessary to provide an appraisal of Swedish democratic institutions.

A second universal aspect of Swedish agency accounts was the formality of the reports and the demonstration of scientific credentials through the application of formal theories and social science methods. Irrespective of the particular audiences being constructed, there was always some reference to formal theories. These included political science theories about the post bureaucratic state and specialization of the bureaucracy, or organizational theories about learning (SOU 1985:41; SOU 1997:21). Furthermore the speaker always presented detailed evidence of the arguments being made using different kinds of methods. This included the presentation of statistical findings regarding the growth of independence of agencies or the dissatisfaction of directors with existing employment regulations. It also included extensive reporting of interview material from director generals themselves or academic experts. As in the Dutch case, all of these features of the Swedish accounts of agency reform indicated that the speakers should demonstrate some kind of scientific credentials in obtaining broader cultural agreement for their argumentation.

Swedish pathos or loci and presumptions

The speaker consistently prepared the audience to accept the different recommendations of agency reform through the locus of the precarious. This functions to obtain the acceptance of the audience through sensitizing them to the fragility of the situation if there is failure to take action, or monopolize on the (perhaps transitory) state of affairs (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:91). In Swedish accounts of agency reform the locus of the precarious always appeared as a threat to Swedish democracy. The failure to do something about the growing independence of agencies in both *Political steering – administrative independence 1983* and *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1995*, or to respond to the loss of civil service integrity from business like practices in *In the citizen's service 1997* were all presented as threat to the functioning of Swedish democracy. Moreover in *Political steering – administrative independence 1983* the speaker even argued that because of current debate the *time was now ripe* to finally do something about the growing power of the agencies. Other qualitative loci found in Swedish accounts of agency reform included the locus of the irreparable (the loss of the Swedish tradition) and some reference to the locus of the unique – but then it was the uniqueness of the Swedish state.

There was also consistent and quite prominent use of quantitative loci across the documents. The quantitative *locus of more is better* was

apparent from references that agency reforms would enable more political steering, and even more democratic steering. Also in the description of proposals for budgetary reforms in *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985* there was frequent reference to how these would enable more precise steering, more efficiency, more freedom and an increase in the long term perspective of politicians when considering their priorities (SOU 1985:16, 64). In the final document *In the citizen's service 1997* quantitative loci was apparent from statements about how proposals would improve the *whole* of the administration. This document also relied upon the *quantitative locus of the durable* which relies upon the idea that that which is lasting or durable is more desirable than that which is less so. This was used to sensitize the audience to the need to strengthen Swedish traditions of agency independence as opposed to limiting this through more direct political steering.

There were different kinds of presumptions underlying the various problems and solutions being identified across the Swedish documents. For example in the first two documents there was a strong emphasis upon the capacity and desire of politicians to steer. It was assumed that only politics could keep the power of bureaucracy at bay (SOU 1985:13). In the later document *In the citizen's service 1997* this changed because complexity was argued to make it impossible for politician's steer. Instead it was assumed that agencies themselves would know how to collaborate by identifying and contributing to shared performance goals. More generally the presumption of complexity played an important role in Swedish accounts of agency reform. In the first two documents it was presumed that because there was complexity, the government needed to pay better attention to steering and planning. *In the citizen's service 1997* also made the presumption of complexity but used this to argue that it required agencies to cooperate (SOU 1997:38). Moreover it presumed that agencies could cooperate to identify shared performance goals that they then could achieve together (SOU 1997:26).

Swedish logos and the argumentative techniques

The argumentative techniques or *logos* adopted to promote Swedish agency reforms were consistently *quasi logical*. Indeed quasi-logical techniques were predominant in each of the documents examined. *Division of the whole into its parts*, *definition* and *comparison* were used

to establish agreement about the legitimacy of political steering of agencies and the means of steering adopted. It was typical for these kinds of argumentative techniques to be used together with reference to the Swedish constitution. For example constitutional articles *defining* the limits of agency independence would be *compared* to findings about their actual independence. This was used in *Political steering – administrative independence 1983* to establish that the Swedish tradition of agency independence was not based upon law but custom (SOU 1983:17–18). Similarly, in *Government, agencies and agencies' managers 1985* constitutional articles were again used to *define* the limited cases for which agency independence was valid (SOU 1985:35–36). *The division of the whole into its parts* was widely used and functioned by presenting agencies or agency reform as part of a broader system of democracy or values of democracy that were related to one another in a zero sum way. For example the legitimacy of active political steering, despite references to agency independence in the constitution, was established by presenting agencies as just one link in a chain of responsibilities in which the people were sovereign (SOU 1983:16). It was concluded that lack of concurrence between government intentions and agency decision making *reduced* democracy.

Arguments based upon reasonable belief were also found across the documents. These included *arguments by authority*, *the causal link* and the *argument of unlimited development*. While articles of the Swedish constitution were used in quasi-logical techniques to compare with what happened in practice, e.g. appropriate level of agency independence, they were also used as sources of authority for how politicians could potentially steer agencies. This occurred in *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985* which pointed to the constitution to legitimate changes to the budgetary process. It was argued that since there was no passage in the constitution limiting the government's right to change the design of the budget, it was a legitimate way to steer agencies more directly (SOU 1985:61). The argument of authority establishes agreement with the audience through prestige. Given the extent of references to the constitution in Swedish accounts of agency reform, it would seem it was the ultimate source of authority. Other arguments based upon reasonable belief included the use of the causal link. This was used in *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985* to establish that changes to the budgetary procedures would bring about more effective decision making by both politicians

and managers. It was also used in the later document *In the citizen's service 1997* to demonstrate that the same budgetary changes had led to fragmentation in the administration and myopia in agencies. There was also the argument of unlimited development in *Government, agencies and agencies management 1985* which was used to show that changes to the budgetary procedures, and also to agencies' financial management more generally, were part of continual improvements in the financial developments of the state. This was evident from a range of statements describing the 'step by step modernization' of the budget (SOU 1985:63, 68).

The *metaphors* identified in Swedish accounts of agency reform ranged from control metaphors about steering and making the state *strong*, to metaphors about the physical attributes of agency reforms and travelling, to organic metaphors describing the Swedish state through nature. The control metaphors were most prominent in the first two documents (*Political steering – administrative independence 1983*; *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985*). They included frequent references to the desirability of the state to steer in precise ways. The goodness of this idea of steering was promoted through word combinations like *democratic steering* which entailed the political sphere being able to use the administration as a *tool* [*redskap*, my translation] for pursuing government intentions (SOU 1983:13, 31). Other ways in which the term steering presented was as *direct steering*, *indirect steering, budget steering*, *overarching steering* and the *steering route* (SOU 1985:13, 61, 168). In the final document *In the citizen's service 1997* the notion of horizontal steering was also presented, it involved the administration responding directly to citizen's demands (SOU 1997:22, 57). Accompanying many of these references to improving steering was also the idea of promoting a *strong* state or *strengthening* Swedish democracy.

Among the physical metaphors were the terms *balance* and *imbalance* which were used to argue that the political sphere needed greater capacities to steer agencies (SOU 1983:96), or alternatively to show that market values had come to exceed other values like legality or democracy (SOU 1997:38, 57). The term *sharpening* was used to describe how budgetary reforms would improve steering and clarify the roles of agencies, as well as *deepen* political examination of agency activities and reduce *pressure* from time (SOU 1985). *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985* used the term *broadening* to describe their proposals

for changes to regulations for employing agency directors, while *In the citizen's service 1997* described their recommendations for more independent evaluations of agency reforms as promoting greater *openness*.

The metaphors in *In the citizen's service 1997* were distinctive from the earlier documents because they used organic metaphors. In accentuating the specialness of the Swedish state and its durable administrative traditions the speakers wrote; 'The Swedish state administration is a *tree* with many *year rings* and many *branches*. It has preserved certain fundamental aspects having their *roots* in the 1600s, while the activities have expanded to new *fields*' (1997:21, *my translation)*. Similarly in making the claim that earlier budgetary initiatives had contributed to the fragmentation of the Swedish state, the authors argue that Swedish civil service culture had been *watered down* or rather dissolved. This was because there had been too much focus on the individual performance of organizations as opposed to the administration as a *whole*.

The cultural flavour of Swedish agency talk over time

The cultural flavour of Swedish agency talk shifted from primarily hierarchical in the first document with some egalitarian themes, to primarily hierarchy with some individualist and egalitarian themes in the second document, to primarily egalitarian and hierarchical in the third document with some individualist themes. More generally, the cultural ways of life depicted in Swedish accounts of agency reforms were primarily hierarchical over time. There was also always some reference to egalitarian watchwords such as democracy and concerns for power structures. However when egalitarian watchwords or themes were adopted in Swedish accounts of agency reform they were often used to describe hierarchical arrangements. Finally, the Swedish case was unique in this study because it allowed one fatalist theme into official accounts of agency reform.

Consistent with the hierarchical way of life, all the Swedish documents depicted agency reform within the broader context of Swedish democracy. In some instances this even included the role of the state in steering Swedish society (SOU 1983). There were numerous hierarchical themes identified across all of the Swedish documents. These included clarifying the role of the political sphere in steering the

Table 4.4 The rhetoric of Swedish agency accounts 1983–1997

	Political steering – administrative independence 1983	Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985	In the citizen's service 1997
Ethos			
Particular	Political scientists Swedish politicians	Financial experts Agency directors	Political scientists Civil servants Citizens
Universal	Democracy Scientific rationality	Democracy Scientific rationality	Democracy Scientific rationality
Pathos			
Loci	Precarious (threat of independent power bureaucracy)	Precarious (threat of special interests & bureaucrats)	Precarious (threat of the market) Unique (of Swedish state)
Presumptions	Politicians can and want to steer Complexity in the policy environment requires more attention for planning and steering More is better	Politicians can and want to steer Complexity in the policy environment requires more attention for planning and steering More is better	Complexity has the consequence that nobody can steer Mutual learning between agencies will promote good performance The durable
Logos			
Quasi-logical	Definition Comparison Division of whole into parts	Definition Comparison Division of whole into parts	Definition Division of whole into parts
Reasonable belief	 Argumentation by authority	Unlimited development Argumentation by authority	Causal link
Metaphors	Steering Mapping Balancing Sharpening Strong state	Steering Broader Deeper Sharpening Modernization Flexibility	Steering Tree Branches Dissolving like water Fragmentation Whole

Table 4.5 The cultural flavour of Swedish agency talk over time

	Political steering – administrative independence 1983	Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985	In the citizen's service 1997
Hierarchy	The steering state Clarify roles politics and administration	Steer agencies Planning in budget	Strengthen the rule of law
	Tighten procedures informal contacts	Tighten procedures budget Greater discretion government selection of agency directors	Tighten procedures informal contacts More expertise to develop results budgeting
Individualism		Financial incentives for savings Price forming Blaming existing budget arrangements for inflexibility Decision making in bureaucracy closed	More openness in evaluating agency reforms
Egalitarian	Democracy to legitimize political control	Democracy to legitimize political control	Democracy and more horizontal relationships with citizens Mutuality in budget for agencies to set shared goals and performance

administration. The Swedish constitution and descriptions of the Swedish chain of democracy were widely cited in the first two documents to demonstrate that it was legitimate for the political sphere to require greater regulation of and reporting from agencies (SOU 1983; SOU 1985:14). There was also concern for tightening up rules and procedures including recommendations to formalize the informal contacts that took place between ministries and agencies (SOU 1997:91), detailed rules about timing and reporting for agencies within the budgetary process (SOU 1985:14), and greater discretion for the government to select and transfer agency managers (SOU 1985). In the third document examined, *In the citizen's service 1997*, a different hierarchical theme was exhibited in the call for more expertise in the development of results orientated management. This document also argued that the principle of the rule of law should be strengthened and that civil servants should be subordinate to it.

The individualist themes were far less prominent in Swedish accounts of agency reform. They were exhibited primarily in *Government, agencies and agencies' management 1985*. This document recommended reform to the financial administration of agencies and the budgetary process more generally. It identified a range of economic incentives to be embedded in these changes and proposed that they would promote greater cost consciousness and better management decisions. Among these incentives were interest returns on savings in a given a budget year (SOU 1985). Incentives also played a role in the proposals for changes to the appointment of agency directors. These were designed to remove sanctions, in the form of career advance, to the mobility of directors. More generally the individualist flavour of Swedish accounts was apparent in the description of the problems of the existing budgetary system, such as its lack of flexibility or short sightedness, rather than in the solutions being proposed. There were also some themes in Swedish accounts which were low group, but difficult to situate as specifically individualist or egalitarian. Such themes included the desire for more openness in the development and evaluation of agency reforms and criticism that decision making within the bureaucracy was closed and technocratic.

The depiction of the egalitarian way of life in Swedish accounts of agency reform has already been qualified. There was widespread use of egalitarian watchwords, as they have been defined by Hood, but these were sometimes used to promote hierarchical arrangements. In

particular references to democracy and informal contacts were mentioned in all the documents. However these watchwords, at least in the first two documents, were generally used to promote hierarchical arrangements. They were used to describe more political control of agencies through budgetary rules and to justify formalizing informal contacts between agencies and ministries – this was to occur by documenting the contact. By contrast, *In the citizen's service 1997* lent greater emphasis to more horizontal democratic arrangements. These were expressed in references to serving and including the opinions of the citizen in agency decision making (SOU 1997:35, 39).

Mutuality was here promoted in recommendations to create greater possibilities for agencies to cooperate to achieve budgetary goals. There was always some reference to the egalitarian theme of power structures in Swedish accounts of agency reform. Recommendations for agency reform were made against the background of the rise of the bureaucracy as an independent power in society or the destruction of the Swedish public service through private sector values. There was also a high group blame on individualist stories which characterized egalitarian and hierarchical themes *In the citizen's service 1997*. This presented as follows: 'Results steering, such as the extensive delegation of authority to agencies to decide over their own organization, has increased the focus in agencies upon their own performance and thereby strengthened their organizational identity within the different parts of the administration. This can at the same time increase the effectiveness within separate individual activities, and weaken the powers that hold together the state administration as a whole...too strong a focus upon results steering can lead to fragmentation' (SOU 1997:25–26, *my translation*).

Finally, *In the citizen's service 1997* incorporated a fatalist cultural theme in the argumentation of agency reform. This appeared as part of a criticism of the introduction of results budgeting in Sweden. It was argued that the detail required of this system had brought with it a number of perverse effects. These included a disinterest from politicians and departments because the information was too detailed (SOU 1997:57, 84). It also argued that there was a tendency to focus on what was easy to measure and that the measures reduced the ability of civil servants to depart from the performance agenda, even when events required them to do so (SOU 1997:87). While these criticisms of performance measurement systems are not novel to academic

literature, the scepticism with which they were described in the report gave it a fatalistic tone. The report encouraged civil servants in particular to become better at managing the unexpected as opposed to set performance measures. It also criticized politicians for their lack of interest in performance (SOU 1997:88).

The trajectory of Australian agency talk 1997–2004

Australian accounts of agency reform emphasized the customer service aspects of their agencies. In the earlier documents (*The Prime Minister's address 1996*; *Three stages of an evolving model 1998*) it was the one stop shop possibilities, the use of information technology, and the business like character of Centrelink that would promote integrated and tailored customer service. In the later document this changed somewhat and customer service was to be promoted by the durable tradition of Centrelink and the capacity for executive agencies to respond to contentious issues. There was also an emphasis upon the integration of services in all Australian accounts of agency reform. It has already been noted that two of the Australian documents were speeches because these were the only official government documents describing the motivations for agency reforms. The first speech *The Prime Minister's address at the official launch of Centrelink 1996* was presented at the opening of Centrelink by the then Prime Minister John Howard. It was televised across Australia and described the process, ambitions and political ideology of the reform. The second speech *Three stages of an evolving model to a One Stop Shop-Challenges at each stage*, *1998* was presented to the National Conference of the Institute of Public Administration Australia by, the then Chief Executive of Centrelink, Sue Vardon. It was selected, among a series of similar speeches by Sue Vardon, which described the ongoing management developments and intentions within Centrelink.

The third Australian document *Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges 2004* was a committee report prepared by the Management Advisory Commission (MAC). The MAC is a forum of departmental secretaries and agency heads representing all 18 departments and was chaired by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Dr Peter Shergold. This report was selected because it described features of the Australian executive agencies which had been introduced in the Australian Public Service

Act 1999. More generally, it gave some indications of a shift towards greater concern for connecting or whole of government, as opposed to individual agencies. This was also reflected in the dismantling of the then existing Centrelink board.

Australian agency rhetoric: agencies for customer service

Ethos and the construction of the Australian audience

The main *particular audiences* constructed in Australian accounts of agency reform varied across the documents and included tax paying voters, the staff and managers of agencies, business consultants, and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet itself. Taxpayers and agency staff were most prominent in the *Prime Minister's address 1996*, business consultants were most prominent in *Three stages of an evolving model 1998*, while the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and business consultants were most prominent in *Connecting Government 2004*. It was noteworthy that while there were references to specific technical features of agency reforms such as budgetary changes, the descriptions of these remained informal and user friendly.

The particular audience of tax paying voters was apparent from John Howard's attention to hard working and honest Australians in his opening speech of Centrelink. Howard continually presented himself as a speaker who considers the interests of hard working individuals and families as foremost. This was evident from the commitments he made to cracking down on social security fraud and for ensuring that Centrelink delivers services efficiently. Howard stated, 'We need to deliver services in an efficient and friendly manner but, nonetheless with an eye to our overall obligations to the taxpayers of Australians who pay for the services and the support which is delivered to others within the community' (Howard 1997: 4). More generally, the centrality of the taxpayer in the speech was evident from the emphasis upon promoting the independence of users of social security services and in the 'proudly private enterprise' commitments of the speaker.

There was also a particular audience of Centrelink staff constructed in both the speeches by John Howard and Sue Vardon. Centrelink staff were frequently referred to throughout both speeches and were presented as hard working and greatly valued (Howard 1997:2, Vardon 1998:4). Howard states that 'you are greatly valued' while Sue Vardon notes it is to the great credit of the public sector that our staff came

through' (Vardon 1998:4). Centrelink staff was also constructed as being benefitted by agency reforms. This was evident from statements about the positive effect that the Centrelink reform would or was having on their career opportunities (Howard 1997:2, Vardon 1998:4, 9). For example Sue Vardon reminds the audience that the 'Customer Service Officer Traineeship…will give people a nationally recognized qualification' (Vardon 1998:9).

The business consultant audience was constructed in Sue Vardon's speech and the report *Connecting Government 2004*. In both documents there was widespread attention for 'harvesting best practice' and getting things to work on the ground. More generally the self presentation of the speakers maintained a motivational tone throughout their argumentation. This was accompanied by a prominent business vocabulary in the Sue Vardon speech where the work of Centrelink was continually described *as doing business*, getting *quick business wins*, promoting the Centrelink *brand* or *outlets*. Vardon also made frequent references to information technology innovations in the private sector that were to be adopted in Centrelink to promote business. While business terminology was more subdued in *Connecting Government (2004)*, the self presentation of the speaker as a kind of business consultant audience was drawn from the user friendly summary boxes and checklists that were presented throughout the document. These identified issues to consider when adopting reforms, including agency reforms. They regularly pointed to the needs of agency managers and what they should consider.

Two other particular audiences were the audience of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and some reference to citizens. The Prime Minister and Cabinet audience was only identified in *Connecting Government 2004*, which was literally prepared for the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The construction of this audience was evident from the central role ascribed to the Prime Minister and Cabinet in defining and coordinating the role of the administration. There was a repetition of statements reminding the audience that the Australian Public Service is to be responsive to the elected government and a range of initiatives instigated by the Prime Minister and Cabinet's department were identified. These were primarily whole of government activities and lent the Prime Minister and Cabinet's department a strong and positive presence throughout the argumentation. There was also some cursory reference to citizens in Australian documents, though it was

sometimes difficult to distinguish these from taxpayers or even a broader audience of customers. This can be illustrated by Sue Vardon's claims that Centrelink will make it easier for 'citizen's to do business with government'. Other references to citizens occurred in *Connecting Government 2004* such as 'availability of a comprehensive service at the local level.…gives the citizen a greater sense of being in touch with decision makers' (MAC 2004:7).

There were two main and related ways in which the different particular audiences were united and transcended through the construction of an Australian universal audience. The most prominent of these was the universal and durable commitment to customer service across all documents. This united the interests of tax payers and agency staff since it was through good customer service that tax payers could see they were getting their monies worth, while staff could develop their skills. It also fitted with the business consultant's commitment to motivating and developing the organization and the 'interests' of the citizens. More generally customer service was transcendent in the argumentation since it was presented as the desire of all Australian people. In *Connecting Government 2004* it was stated that 'the Australian public increasingly expects services to individuals, business and communities to be tailored to their particular needs' suggesting that citizenship is primarily defined by customer service (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2004: preface). This also points to the second universal audience which was the Australian community. In all the documents examined the speaker made frequent reference to the Australian community or tradition and the speaker demonstrated their credibility through knowledge of the regions of Australia or some famous Australians (Vardon 1998; Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2004). However, as already noted the Australian community was frequently identified as expecting seamless and personalized customer service. It was stated 'Australians rightly demand the delivery of government programs and services in a seamless way' (MAC 2004:16).

Australian pathos or loci and presumptions

Irrespective of the speakers or documents analysed, the locus of the difficult was always used to sensitize the audience to the different

Australian agency initiatives. The locus of the difficult functions to sensitize an audience through the notion that if is something is hard to achieve it must be worth doing. It appeared repeatedly throughout the Australian documents and included references to the creation of agencies as a momentous political feat, as generating improvements through persistence, and as being established to respond to complex policy problems. For example in the first Centrelink speech John Howard congratulated departmental leadership for introducing a (difficult) reform that previous generations could only have dreamt of (Howard 1997). He stated: 'And over the years, at various stages, attempts were made to do this and suggestions were made that it would actually happen. But it has taken the past 18 months and the arrival of a new government and, if I may say so, new Ministers to bring it about' (Howard 1997:2)…'it represents something that previous generations…have dreamt of doing' (Howard 1997:4).

Similarly, Sue Vardon also highlighted the various *challenges* of the Centrelink reform in her speech and she described it as an innovation that followed from the hard work and persistence of employees (Vardon 1998). In the committee report *Connecting Government 2004* the locus of the difficult was present in descriptions of the complex challenges of the new millennium. Executive agencies were referred to as frontier agencies designed to meet these challenges (MAC 2004:20).

There were other less consistent loci identified in the Australian documents. More specifically the earlier speeches adopted the locus of the unique to show the audience that Centrelink would bring benefits because it was new and distinct, while *Connecting government 2004* used the quantitative locus of the durable. It presented Centrelink as a long standing Australian tradition. In the earlier speeches the locus of the unique was apparent from the presentation of Centrelink as 'carving out a completely different horizon' (Howard 1997:2) or as being distinct from traditional bureaucracy. The Vardon speech, *Three stages of an evolving model 1998* made extensive use of the locus of the unique by contrasting Centrelink to traditional models of bureaucracy. This was done through describing Centrelink as separate from departments, as having an independent chairman, and being governed by service contracts. Finally the quantitative locus of more is better was also found in all Australian documents, though this appeared primarily in references to the large size of Centrelink. Centrelink was

made to appear good primarily because it was a reform of enormous dimensions (Howard 1997:4).

Among the presumptions about the agency initiatives presented in Australian documents were the presumption that agency staff would be motivated by the reform initiatives and that they would respond to career incentives (Howard 1997; Vardon 1998). There was also the presumption that good customer service alone is what makes citizens or service users happy and that their access to services would increase with integrated services and information technology. In *Connecting Government 2004* there was also the presumption that leaders and managers would know how to stimulate efficient behaviour and that they could show the way to success (MAC 2004). Other presumptions in the Australian documents included the presumption that dependency was bad (Howard 1997) and that dissatisfaction with government services was a consequence of customer service rather than particular kinds of policies. In the Vardon speech (1998), which was littered with references to information technology and how this could promote tailored customer service, there was also the presumption that Centrelink's customers would know how to use this technology. Finally, in *Connecting Government 2004*, there were the presumptions that policy making had become more complex thereby requiring more attention for planning and that leader's would know how to lead the way.

Australian logos and the argumentative techniques

The argumentative techniques to promote agency reform over the period studied were primarily based upon reasonable belief. Both John Howard and Sue Vardon used the technique of the *causal link* to establish that Centrelink would promote efficiency and staff motivation (Howard 1997; Vardon 1998). This involved associating the introduction of Centrelink with these positive effects. Howard identifies Centrelink as a means of ensuring efficient delivery of services and makes this association by pointing to the way it integrates services. Vardon does this through identifying Centerlink's (business-like) independence and performance agreements. There were also causal links established in the committee report *Connecting Government 2004*. It identifies events that have led to (caused) a new whole of government approach, as well as to some of the negative effects of agency independence. For example in presenting the role of agencies in a

whole of government perspective, the speakers establish a link between past agency practices and their limits. They write, 'devolution of authority to agency heads and clear vertical accountability of agency outcomes may make collaboration across organisational boundaries more difficult' (MAC 2004: 6). Among the causes of a whole of government approach were the complexity of social problems, globalization and the increasing demands of customers for accessibility (MAC 2004:4–5).

The *argument of unlimited development* was also used in the documents *Three stages of an evolving model 1998* and *Connecting Government 2004*. The very title of *Three stages of an evolving model* points to the focus upon continual improvement throughout the document, which is also accentuated with the distinction of three phases of development within the speech itself. The audience is ushered through three successive phases of Centrelink's development beginning with the then completed stage of creation, to the phase of consolidation and to a future phase of a new service delivery model. These phases are presented as part of a process of continually improving customer service and Centrelink more generally (Vardon 1998:2). One of the ways in which Centrelink is presented as continually improving includes the following: 'We're also using value creation workshops to get people who are in an internal service role to listen to their customers, find out what it is they value and begin to deliver services which add value…In this way, we'll also ensure that the service to external customers continues to improve' (Vardon 1998:8).

In arguing about continuous development, the speaker also uses a negative picture of the past, such as 'this requires *a move from* traditional bureaucratic interaction to genuine partnerships cooperation' (Vardon 1998:8, *my emphasis*). In *Connecting Government 2004* the technique of continuous improvement was presented to describe the whole of government approach generally, but also in the description of the outcomes and output budget framework (MAC 2004:1, 78). For example it is explained, 'The Australian outcomes and output framework has been progressively refined.' (MAC 2004:78).

There were two other techniques of reasonable belief that were distinctive, or at least used in a distinctive way, in the Australian accounts of agency reform. Firstly, Sue Vardon made repeated references to information technology throughout her speech and used this as an *argument of authority* to obtain the agreement of the audience. The predominant presence of information technology applications

throughout her speech, which consumed five of the seven pages of the speech, gave plausibility to the argument that Centrelink would ensure tailored customer service. On one hand this role attributed to information technology corresponded to establishing a causal link about Centrelink's positive effects. On the other hand, because it consumed so much of the content of the speech it was the notion of information technology itself that was used to establish that Centrelink was modern and innovative. The argument of authority obtains the acceptance of the audience through the prestige of a particular figure or object (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:305–310). Arguably the association of Centrelink with the application of information technologies brings with it prestige and a kind of assurance that it must also bring improvements.

Secondly, there was John Howard's technique of the *interaction between the act and the person*. This occurred by identifying the Centrelink initiative as a clear and sensible solution to access problems he had long noted in his own political career. Howard stated:

> From the moment I entered Parliament in 1974 and began talking to constituents about their various problems in my electorate in Sydney, I began hearing complaints about the number of agencies you had to visit….And what focused my mind at the time was that so many people felt that if only they could go to one place and have all their business done in that one spot it would be a lot more efficient (Howard 1997:2).

He goes on to explain, 'And I'm somebody who's very dedicated to sensible reform and change where necessary in all sectors of the Australian community' (Howard 1997:5). The sensibility of John Howard was used to demonstrate that the Centrelink reform itself was also sensible.

Some quasi-logical techniques were identified in Australian agency talk. These occurred most often in *Connecting Government 2004*. The quasi-logical techniques in *Connecting Government 2004* included definition and comparison. There were definitions of whole of government, of outcomes and outputs, and of the administrative items in the budget. All of these acted to bring formality to the argumentation. There were also comparisons made between a set of common principles about how whole of government can best be achieved and the case

studies presented in the report. This was to demonstrate how well the different cases had incorporated the success criteria for whole of government responses. It gave the speaker a measure from which whole of government responses could be assessed.

Australian *metaphors* included metaphors to personalize agencies, business metaphors with some reference to individual skill, travelling metaphors and metaphors attributing physical attributes to agencies, or reform more generally. Among the metaphors to personalize agency reform were references to Centrelink having a human face (as opposed to the paper shuffling of bureaucracy) and as being in touch with citizens (Howard 1997; Vardon 1998). These were also combined with business metaphors such as providing personalized customer service. The business metaphors were most prominent in the Vardon (1998) speech and included referring to Centrelink as doing business, making quick business wins, having customers, outlets and brands or as being a one stop shop. These metaphors were so prominent in the speech that one could be forgiven for thinking that Centrelink was a business rather than a government organization. As well as personalizing metaphors, the business metaphors were combined with metaphors of individual skill such as harvesting best practice – a gardening metaphor, or tailoring customer service – a sewing metaphor and travelling metaphors (e.g. driving down the road, leading the way).

Finally the metaphors ascribing physical attributes to agencies or the reform programme were most prominent in *Connecting Government 2004*. Whole of government arrangements, including agencies, were presented as broadening the administration's perspective and as seeing the whole or big picture. Similarly the relationship between agencies or between agencies and ministries were presented as connecting government, increasing mobility, sharpening responsibilities and balancing agencies abilities. The introduction of an outputs and outcomes budget was described as promoting transparency, while whole of government agencies are also presented as being flexible.

The cultural flavour of Australian agency talk over time

Australian agency talk was primarily individualist over time although there was a shift towards more group arguments in the final *Connecting Government 2004* document. There were also only a few of Hood's themes found in the *Prime Minister's address 1996*. This was because the

Table 4.6 The rhetoric of Australian agency accounts 1996–2004

	Prime Minister's address official launch Centrelink 1997	Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop 1998	Connecting government 2004
Ethos			
Particular	Taxpaying voters Staff of Centrelink	Business consultant Staff of Centrelink	Business consultant & Managers Department Prime Minister & Cabinet Citizens
Universal	Customer service Australian community	Customer service Australian community	Customer service Australian community
Pathos			
Loci	Difficult (challenge to create Centrelink) Unique	Difficult (challenge to improve) Unique	Difficult (challenge of complex policy environment) Durable
Presumptions	Dependency is bad Employees motivated by career incentives Customers dissatisfied with service not policy	Customers know how to use IT Employees motivated by career incentives Customers dissatisfied with service not policy	Complexity requires more attention for planning Leaders know how to respond to complexity Best practices can be drawn from particular cases
Logos			
Quasi-logical		Definition	Definition Comparison
Reasonable belief	Causal link (efficiency) The person and the act	Causal link (efficiency) Unlimited development Argument by authority	Causal link (fragmentation) Unlimited development
Metaphors	New horizon Human face Being in touch	Brands & outlets On the road, leading the way, key drivers Personalized services Harvesting best practice Flexibility	Broad Big picture Whole Integrate Transparency Sharpening Balancing

speech focused more upon issues related to social security as opposed to agency reform and public management. Nevertheless it did represent a view the world that favoured small government. More generally, Australian documents always emphasized the watchword of customer service which undoubtedly relates to the individualist preference for having government function more like a business. An overview of the cultural flavours of Australian agency talk over time is presented in Table 4.7.

Among hierarchical themes found in Australian documents was consolidation. This was discussed in the Howard speech of 1997 and emphasized that the consolidation of services into one agency Centrelink would promote efficiency. It was also linked to a number of statements promoting the large size of Centrelink. It should be noted that the efficiency from consolidation argument is not easy to interpret according to GGCT since it fits with the interests of different ways of life. These include the equality preferences of communists, as well as the preferences of industrial capitalists for efficiency (See Hood & Jackson 1991:116). All other Australian hierarchical themes were identified in *Connecting Government 2004*. This document took a broad view of the complex issues facing the administration and society more generally, and promoted a central role for government in responding to this. It emphasized the coordinating role of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the subordination of the administration to ministers and the desirability of establishing clear tasks and lines of accountability. There was also frequent reference to planning throughout *Connecting Government 2004* as expressed in the following citation about executive agencies.

> A key to the successful creation of a frontier agency is in early planning. Planning should focus on inculcating a new set of values related to the new agency's charter and could encompass physical co-location, single IT financial systems and staff development work to develop a new culture and set of values relevant to the new agency's charter (MAC 2004:41).

Finally, another hierarchical theme in *Connecting Government 2004* concerned the call for expertise. It was argued that executive agencies were an appropriate form for dealing with complex problems because they could provide neutrality and expertise (MAC 2004:75).

Table 4.7 The cultural flavour of Australian agency talk over time

	Prime Minister's address official launch Centrelink 1997	Three stages of an evolving model to a one stop shop 1998	Connecting government 2004
Hierarchy	Consolidating services in one big organization		Clear separation of roles and accountability Coordination by Prime Minister & Cabinet Expertise in frontier agencies Need for planning to respond complex problems
Individualism		Customer choice Personalized services	Tailored customer service
	Providing incentives for hard work – citizens & employees	Providing incentives staff	
		Price forming & competition	
Egalitarian		Policy learning through feedback loops implementation	Policy learning through feedback loops implementation In touch with citizens Watchword collaboration

Individualist cultural flavours of Australian agency reform were found across all the documents. This was most apparent in the construction of Australian universal audience as committed to customer service. It emphasized both the desirability of personalized services for individuals, as well as customer choice. This was somewhat surprising given that most individuals receiving a social security benefit do not choose their products. Other ways in which individualist themes were evident were through references to individual incentives and rewards for good performance. This included incentives in the form of career advance but also performance pay for managers promoting whole of government behaviour (MAC 2004:14). More generally the individualist way of life was presented in the construction of Centrelink as a business. This occurred most fervently in the speech by Sue Vardon *Three stages of an evolving model 2008*. It presented and promoted Centrelink as a business working in a contestable environment. It used information technology to show that Centrelink was a modern business and not a traditional bureaucracy.

There were also some egalitarian themes in Australian accounts of agency reform. These occurred primarily in *Connecting Government 2004* although there were also some references to the citizens in *Three stages of an evolving model 1998*. The egalitarian themes include concerns for citizen participation and mutuality within the administration. For example Connecting Government 2004 explains:

> Until the 1990s many integrated initiatives were top-down, focusing upon policy coherence. In the last few years there has been a new suite of whole of government projects aimed at coherent delivery of support to communities, regions and individuals, with an emphasis on community consultation and participation (MAC 2004:8).

More generally the use of terms such as collaboration, cooperation and horizontal management throughout *Connecting Government 2004* promoted the view that the speaker was interested in processes and forms of organization that embraced mutuality. In all of the Australian documents there was some reference to reforms enabling citizens or the community to be in touch with government.

Finally, Australian accounts of agency reform presented some themes that were difficult to locate within the cultural ways of life. More spe-

cifically there were arguments about the delivery focus of agency initiatives enabling policy makers to learn about implementation. This emphasized the feedback loops between agencies and ministries which in turn could be used to improve policy. Given that this argument suggests a bottom-up approach to policy making it could be interpreted as a low grid argument about mutuality. There were no fatalist themes found in Australian official accounts of agency reform.

Conclusion

The idea of agency as presented in official talk in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia was shown to have quite distinctive trajectories in this chapter. There were two ways in which this trajectory was analysed. Firstly, there were the rhetorical elements identified in official agency talk. Broadly speaking, these indicated that Dutch agencies were constructed as a unique alternative to ZBOs which would guarantee ministerial accountability. Swedish agency reform was constructed through constitutional prescription and should guarantee democracy in one way or another, while Australian agencies were about taking on the challenge to integrate services and knowledge for the customer. Perhaps unsurprisingly the chapter has found that national reformers attributed quite nationally specific meanings to the international fashion of agency reform.

There was also some durability in the rhetorical styles of national agency talk. In particular, Sweden and Australia exhibited durable ethos, pathos and logos over time. For example Swedish agency talk was always characterized by a commitment to democracy (ethos), the pathos of the threat (precarious) and primarily quasi-logical argumentation (logos). By contrast, Australian agency talk was characterized by a commitment to tailored or personalized customer service (ethos), the pathos of the challenge (difficult) and primarily arguments based upon reasonable belief. The Netherlands exhibited the least durability over time with pathos shifting from qualitative loci of the unique or difficult to solely quantitative loci of more is better. Dutch agency talk also exhibited a shift from primarily quasi-logical arguments in the earlier Dutch documents to primarily arguments based upon reasonable belief in the final document. It is the purpose of the following chapters to examine and compare these features of agency talk for any patterns in rhetorical style across similar and different

political cultures and across similar culturally flavoured stories. Indeed there were some examples of similar argumentative themes and styles across all countries, e.g. unlimited development. In the following chapters it will be shown that there were actually regularities in this diversity of talk and that these different outcomes can be explained.

A second way in which the national trajectories of agency talk were examined was through the cultural flavour of talk across the national documents. These also indicated different mixes of cultural flavour across the countries and different shifts in the cultural flavour of agency talk over time. Dutch agency talk was initially characterized by a mix of individualist and hierarchical flavours which shifted first to predominantly hierarchical and then to predominantly individualist cultural flavours. Swedish agency talk was initially primarily hierarchical and then shifted to hierarchical and some individualist flavours to finally a mix of hierarchical and egalitarian flavours. Finally, Australian agency talk was initially extremely individualistic in the earlier two documents and shifted to a mix of group arguments and individualism in the final document. While there were themes that seemed to replicate the shift from agencies as a solution to agency as a problem in the international story, it is evident from this initial analysis that like material political structures, national talk about public management reform also has its own trajectory. A closer examination of the shifts in the cultural flavour of national agency talk and how these may also be explained will be conducted in Chapter 6.

Finally, this chapter found that the fatalistic cultural flavour in official agency accounts was quite limited. Only one example of fatalistic cultural themes was identified and this was in the Swedish document *In the citizen's service 1997*. The fatalist flavour appeared as a critical reaction to the (individualist) Swedish results budgeting. It was argued that this system was having perverse effects such as less interest of politicians in performance reporting and myopia in agencies. One explanation for this lack of fatalist themes could be that it is at odds with official speakers obtaining a degree of certainty about what to do. Given the lack of fatalist themes found in this chapter, fatalist cultural stories of agency reform are excluded from the analysis in the remainder of this book.

Part III

Comparing and Explaining Agency Talk

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5
Comparing Official Agency Talk: National Speaking Styles and the Role of Cultural Context?

Introduction

This chapter focuses upon the role of the political culture in shaping national accounts of agency reforms. It brings together the findings about the trajectories of national agency talk in the previous chapter and compares their rhetorical similarities and differences. Patterned similarities and differences in the styles of speaking across high and low group political cultures would indicate that agency talk has been shaped by national political culture rather than a (transnational) fashionable story. By contrast, similarities in official agency accounts across different political cultures would indicate that there were common agency stories spreading independently of cultural context. Preliminary findings about similarities in agency talk across different political cultures are presented in this chapter though their detailed analysis is deferred until the following chapter. This is to enable the separate examination of the explanatory role of culturally flavoured stories.

In examining how and if political culture can explain official agency talk, this chapter presents two different comparisons. Firstly, there is the comparison of similarities and differences in national agency talk across the high and low group political cultures. When the high group consensus cultures exhibit similar ways of speaking about agency reforms that are different to the low group adversarial cultures this would indicate that there were typical national styles of speaking in these respective cultures. Secondly, there is a comparison of similarities and differences between the high group consensus cultures themselves. While The Netherlands and Sweden were both selected because they were similar high group cultures,

The Netherlands rated higher on individualism than Sweden. It follows that if political culture can explain agency talk, then Dutch official accounts would be more similar to the low group adversarial context (Australia) than Sweden, and would be more individualistic than Swedish agency talk. This chapter identifies national styles of speaking across high and low group cultures and it reflects upon how these rhetorical styles correspond to the GGCT diagnoses of national political cultures.

Comparing rhetorical situations across high and low group political cultures

Before proceeding to the comparison of national agency talk, it is useful to take stock of the rhetorical situations in which this talk was produced across the high and low group political cultures. Rhetorical situation here refers to the actual speaker and audiences being addressed when delivering accounts of agency reform, as well as the forum in which they are speaking (see Bitzer 1968 for a more complex definition). In GGCT speak rhetorical situations constitute, in very specific ways, the social relations (structures) in which official attitudes (as represented in talk) about agencies were produced and presented. Describing and comparing the rhetorical situations of national agency talk lends contextual detail to the diagnoses of political culture used for the national case selections. It gives insight into the material institutional arrangements that support the different national political cultures, their traditions, values and beliefs. Moreover the types of speakers privileged to describe agency reforms, and the forums from which they spoke in the different political cultures, are made explicit. This is relevant to the issue of scale in this study and for later considerations of whether GGCT diagnoses of the broader political culture are applicable to explaining official agency talk. For the reader this section also has the practical advantage of briefly reciting the national documents that were analysed in the previous chapter.

Rhetorical situations of agency talk in the high group consensus cultures

Beginning with the rhetorical situation in the high group consensus cultures, it was found that they always privileged groups of speakers, in the form of committees, to produce the official accounts of agency

reforms. In both high group consensus cultures recommendations for policy change or management reforms are typically made by groups of experts at some distance from the political apex. This is to promote the independence of the recommendations. In The Netherlands these groups were civil servants with expertise in the financial administration of the public sector (e.g. financial controllers) or experts appointed because of their knowledge and experience within the Dutch public sector. In Sweden, there was more diversity among the members of the committees authoring the agency documents. Like The Netherlands they included civil servants (both from financial units and other ministries), but also politicians and academics. The composition in the variety of actors on the committees varied for each of the documents across both countries. This variety is noted, together with the relevant document, in Table 5.1.

Another aspect of the rhetorical situation concerns the forum from which these groups of speakers were presenting their accounts of agency reform. In The Netherlands this forum varied from document to document and included either the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Home Affairs. Dutch agency accounts were always hosted by a particular ministry who was responsible for setting the terms of the report, sometimes in response to government request, and for publishing it. By contrast, Swedish agency accounts were always produced within the same Swedish commission system. This system is more centralized than the Dutch committee system with common procedures for setting up the commission, the allocation of specific roles to members, and specified reporting requirements. These requirements include a remiss procedure enabling interested parties to respond formally to the commission's recommendations. An indication of the more structured nature of Swedish commission reports include the way they are published. They are always part of the same series of reports – the prestigious SOU [Statens Offentlig Utredning] – and they appear with uniform cover and publishing style. Premfors (1983:629) has noted they are typically detailed and long.

Thirdly, official agency accounts in the high group consensus cultures were generally addressed to an audience of political and administrative elites. In The Netherlands these elites were the ministries themselves, but also parliamentary committees composed of politicians, and the government. In Sweden, the commission reports are

Table 5.1 Comparing the rhetorical situations of agency talk in high group political cultures

	Netherlands			Sweden		
Doc.	Further building on management 1991	Accountable autonomization 1995	Further with results 1998	Political steering 1983	Government & agencies' management 1985	In the citizen's service 1997
Forum	Ministry of Finance	Ministry Home Affairs	Ministry of Finance	Commission system	Commission system	Commission system
Actual speaker	Primarily financial officials	Mix officials different ministries	Primarily financial officials	Primarily politicians	Primarily financial officials	Primarily academics
Audience	Political & admin. elites	Political & admin. elites	Political & admin. elites Managers	Political & admin. elites	Political & admin. elites	Political & admin. elites

formally prepared and commissioned by the government, but they are also presented to parliament. In addition, the commission reporting system requires that the authors go to great lengths to invite opinion of all parties that might have a stake in the issue (Larsson 1995:81). Traditionally this has included organized interests (unions and business), as well as affected agencies. It can also include citizen groups. To this extent, there is greater potential for Swedish commission reports to be presented to a broader actual audience than in The Netherlands.

Rhetorical situations of agency talk in the low group adversarial culture

In contrast to the high group consensus cultures, the speakers producing agency talk in the low group adversarial culture, Australia, were more often individuals than groups. These individuals included a political figure, the then Prime Minister John Howard, as well as Sue Vardon, the Chief Executive of the service delivery agency Centrelink. Sue Vardon became a prominent media figure throughout the period that she was Chief Executive of Centrelink. While she was not appointed directly by government, her position was legally equivalent to a departmental secretary, and therefore close to the political apex (Rowlands 2002:126). There are fewer barriers to governments in majority systems from pushing through their reforms without parliamentary approval. This is because the government has a majority in parliament and can therefore simply make reform changes. The agency initiative Centrelink only became public with a brief announcement to parliament and speeches such as those analysed in this study. The third document examined in the Australian case, *Connecting Government 2004*, was produced by a committee and group of speakers. These were both heads of departments and the heads of some agencies across the administration. There was some variation in the speakers describing agency reforms in Australia.

Following from the different individual and group speakers in the Australian case, the forums from which they expounded their agency reforms also varied. Those agency accounts produced by individuals were presented as speeches at, sometimes televised, public events such as the opening of Centrelink (in the case of John Howard) or at a conference directed at public servants (in the case of

Sue Vardon).This had the consequence that they were not governed by detailed formal procedure as in the commission system in Sweden nor by the structuring that is required in a written text. The one Australian agency account that was produced by a group of civil servants was commissioned by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. It had a clear frame of reference and period within which it was to report.

The nature of the different forums in which the Australian speakers presented their agency accounts had consequences for the actual audiences they were addressing. Rather than being directed at other political elites, the speeches were addressed most directly towards actual audiences of citizens and agency employees. The third committee document was prepared for other administrative and political elites such as the government and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Comparing rhetorical styles across high and low group political cultures

The previous chapter indicated that there were some durable aspects to the rhetorical elements (ethos, pathos, logos) characterizing agency talk across each of the political cultures examined. Like material administrative structures, reform talk would also appear to be resilient and have a national trajectory of its own. This notion of trajectories of reform talk is strengthened if there are also patterns across the high and low group political cultures. Indeed such patterns give indications of the culturally appropriate ways in which public management reforms should be packaged in high and low group political cultures. They challenge suggestions that convergence in public management talk has, or is likely to occur, and provide political cultural explanations for the agency accounts that were found in this study. An overview of similarities and differences in the rhetorical elements across the cultures are first presented followed by the grouping of patterns into the national styles of speaking of high and low group political cultures.

Comparing the construction of audiences (ethos)

For the purposes of clarity the comparison of national universal audiences is first presented followed by the particular audiences. This is not to disregard the inter-relationship between particular and universal

audiences that was emphasized in the previous chapters. The universal audiences had some distinctive features in each of the countries under study. This means that the ways that national agency reforms obtained universal cultural agreement were not homogenous or convergent. Among the unique national ways in which agency initiatives were made universally acceptable were the Dutch speaker's commitments to ministerial accountability and consultation with speaking partners. In Sweden, it was commitments to democracy and the speaker's demonstration of historical knowledge about the Swedish state. While in Australia, universal credibility for agency reforms was established by a commitment to customer service. All of these different aspects of the universal audience would indicate that the symbols of agency reform were – at least at this level of ethos – coloured by certain themes that were nationally specific. Indeed, with the exception of ministerial accountability in The Netherlands, these universal aspects of agency talk were durable over time in each of the national documents examined.

There were also some similarities in the universal audiences among the high group consensus cultures (Netherlands, Sweden) that were different to the low group adversarial cultures (Australia). These similarities were of both a more specific and general nature. Firstly, the speakers in the high group consensus cultures consistently demonstrated their scientific credentials when presenting their accounts of agency reforms. This entailed explaining the selection of case studies in their reporting or using academic theories to consider issues of agency reform. Secondly, at a broader level, the universal audiences in the high group consensus cultures were both committed to public values whether ministerial accountability or democracy. By contrast, in the low group adversarial culture, Australia, the universal audience was characterized by a private value, customer service. These similarities and differences between the high group consensus cultures and low group adversarial cultures are presented in Table 5.2. They indicate that the universal self-presentation of the speakers, were characterized differently but nevertheless were patterned depending upon high or low group political culture.

Such patterns were less consistent at the level of the particular audience. There were both similarities in particular audiences across the consensus political cultures that were different to the adversarial culture, as well as similarities across the different type of cultures

Table 5.2 Comparing similarities and differences in the universal audiences

	The Netherlands	**Sweden**	**Australia**
Universal audience	Ministerial accountability (public value)	Democracy (public value)	Customer service (private value)
	Scientific rationality Consultation	Scientific rationality History Swedish institutions	Australian community

(both high and low group). Among the similar particular audiences constructed by speakers in the high group consensus cultures, that were different to Australia, there were again broader and more specific similarities. Firstly, there were always particular audiences of experts constructed in the high group consensus cultures, whether these were financial experts, juridical experts and also academics. Secondly the financial experts were identified among agency accounts of both high group consensus cultures. They typically used technical financial vocabulary regarding types of accounting and appropriation systems, interest returns, cost prices, or end of year flexibility. They never sought to explain or describe in an informal way what such terms might mean and demonstrated credibility through knowledge of earlier experiences with financial management. Finally, goals of efficiency improvement, better financial administration, and savings always appeared when the particular audience of financial experts was being constructed. Although such goals were also found in Australian accounts of agency reform, they tended to be described in a less formal way such as through self help boxes or with less technical language.

An important difference between the particular audiences in The Netherlands and Sweden was the construction of a particular audience of business consultants in The Netherlands. This audience was only constructed in one of the Dutch documents (Ministerie van Financiën 1998) and appeared together with expert particular audiences. Significantly the business consultant audience was also constructed in Australian documents. It was typified by an informal tone wherein financial and management ideas, or even economic theories, were described through user friendly self-help boxes. Other characteristics of the business consultant audience included the adoption of motiv-

ational slogans such as 'learning by doing', 'creating quick wins' or becoming the 'boss of one's problems' (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:17, 19, 32; Vardon 1998). Agency initiatives were presented as an opportunity for developing both individuals but also organizational business more generally. This was apparent from references to individual or organizational heroes that had, in one way or another, sought to further the boundaries of their business as a consequence of their agency identity (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:21). As noted while the business consultant audience was a similarity between the high group consensus culture The Netherlands and the low group adversarial culture Australia, it never appeared in Swedish accounts of agency reforms.

Finally there were also similar particular audiences, such as citizens or the employees of agencies, constructed in Sweden and Australia. However these audiences were attributed different characteristics. In Australian documents, the speakers gave special recognition to Centrelink staff as hard working, providing valuable contributions and being offered career opportunities through agency reform. Alternatively, Swedish civil servants were constructed as being burdened by shifts towards private sector management practices. These arrangements were presented as a threat to the integrity of Swedish administrators. Citizens were also constructed differently in Australia and Sweden. In Australia they were presented primarily as taxpayers funding agencies or consumers receiving a service or good from them. There was some reference to Centrelink presenting the potential for citizens to be more *in touch* with government. By contrast, in the final Swedish document *In the citizen's service 1997*, citizens were identified as the primary actor that the administration and democracy should serve. It is noteworthy that references to citizens, and with one or two exceptions customers,

Table 5.3 Comparing similarities and differences in particular audiences

	The Netherlands	**Sweden**	**Australia**
Particular audience	Financial expert Legal expert Business consultation	Financial expert Political scientists	Business consultant
		Civil servants Citizens	Agency staff Citizens

never appeared in Dutch accounts of agency reforms. An overview of the comparison of particular audiences is presented in Table 5.3.

Comparing loci or the sensitization of the audience (pathos)

The way in which the speakers prepared the audiences emotionally to accept agency reforms was analysed through the locus of argumentation. Two broad types of loci were used to examine the way that the different national audiences were moved to accept agency reforms. These included qualitative loci which sensitize an audience to reform because it is *unique*, because a situation is *precarious*, or because the activity being undertaken is *difficult*. In addition there is quantitative locus which sensitizes an audience to accept reforms because they will bring about more good things. Patterned similarities and differences in loci across the high and low group cultures were not found in the analyses of agency talk, although in some instances similar loci were used in both the Dutch and Australian cases.

Both Sweden and Australia were found to have durable loci over the period studied and these provided stark contrasts to one another. In the Swedish case it was always the loci of the precarious that was used to condition the audience to accept proposals for agency reforms. This occurred consistently through the speakers' references to a looming threat to the Swedish democracy. In the earlier Swedish documents this threat was from growing bureaucratic power and closed technocratic groups (SOU 1983:17), while in the final Swedish document it was the threat to public service values (SOU 1997:146). By contrast, audiences in Australia were consistently sensitized to the desirability of agency reform through the locus of the difficult. This was presented in constructions of agency reform as a challenge. These included challenges from the immensity of the reform such as Centrelink, from the requirements to respond to change, or challenges from the complex policy problems that agencies would have to address (Howard 1997:2; Vardon 1998; MAC 2004:77). Australian agency reform was always presented as a good thing because it was difficult.

There were also some similarities between the loci adopted in the Dutch and Australian cases, though this was not consistent over time. More specifically the locus of the unique was used in both the Dutch Ministry of Finance documents, as well as in the first two Australian speeches. The locus of the unique functions to obtain acceptance from

the audience because the reforms to be undertaken are in some way special and therefore must be good. In the Dutch Ministry of Finance documents the audience was sensitized to accept agency reform because it was new, special or distinct. This occurred through pointing to the differentiated financial systems that agencies would acquire or through contrasting them to either ZBOs or other 'normal' departmental units. Similarly Australian accounts of Centrelink tended to present it as a new type of administrative arrangement. This occurred by contrasting it to other more traditional departmental units. Significantly the locus of the unique was never adopted to promote agency reforms in Sweden even when they entailed departures from existing administrative arrangements such as changes to the financial system.

Compared to all other documents and countries, the Dutch document *Accountable autonomization* was distinctive in its sole use of the quantitative locus of more is better. This locus was used to sensitize the audience to Dutch agency initiatives because they would be more accountable than ZBOs and more efficient than normal departmental units. While the locus of more is better was generally found in all documents and countries, it appeared together with qualitative loci in those other cases.

There were similar presumptions of argumentation across all countries. These included the presumption that authorities wanted and knew how to steer agencies (Ministerie van Financiën 1991, 1998; SOU 1983, 1985; MAC 2004) and that financial or career incentives would bring about desired effects such as improved efficiency (Ministerie van Financiën 1991, 1998; SOU 1985; Howard 1997; Vardon 1998). In both Sweden and Australia there were some similar presumptions about complexity. These included the presumption that complexity in the policy environment could be responded to by better planning (SOU 1983, 1985; MAC 2004). Different presumptions across the countries included the Dutch presumption that agencies in the core of government would be more accountable by virtue of their subordination to a minister. The *Citizen's Service 1997* also represented the only document which presumed that complexity meant that nobody could steer (SOU 1997:21).

Comparing the techniques of argumentation (logos)

The reasoning, or rather logical content, of the claims being made about agency reforms across the countries were distinguished by techniques

of argumentation. Three broad types of techniques were considered including quasi-logical argumentation, techniques based upon reasonable belief and techniques that structure reality. Quasi-logical argumentation involves the replication of mathematical deductions to establish agreement about agency reforms. It includes the use of definitions, comparison or the division of the whole into parts to demonstrate that agency reforms will add value to a given situation. Techniques of reasonable belief, by contrast, establish validity through likely relations of coexistence and direction. These include causal relationships (the argument of a causal link), but also relationships between individuals and outcomes (the person and the act or arguments of authority) and between an act and progress over time (unlimited development). Finally, techniques to structure reality establish agreement by extending generalizations about a particular case to other phenomenon. A classic technique to structure reality is metaphor which is the only technique of this category applied here. While a mix of the three techniques were used to describe agency initiatives in all countries, there were also patterns of similarities and differences in the prominence of particular techniques across the high and low group political cultures.

Quasi-logical techniques were most prominent in official accounts of agency reform in the high group consensus cultures. They were present in all of the documents examined in the high group cultures and were, with one exception, more often used in each of these documents. The exception was the final Dutch document *Further with results 1998* which relied more upon techniques of reasonable belief to establish agreement about agency reforms. While quasi-logical techniques were also adopted in the low group adversarial culture (Australia), they were not used in all of the Australian documents, nor were they the most often used technique. Among the quasi-logical techniques used across all countries, were the techniques of definition and comparison. These were used in The Netherlands to demonstrate that agency initiatives constituted a form of results management and were a more accountable way to autonomize government tasks than Dutch ZBOs. In Sweden, definition and comparison were used, among other things, to demonstrate that more precise steering of agencies from the political sphere was consistent with constitutional prescription. While multiple definitions featured in most Dutch and all Swedish documents, they were only used in

the last two Australian documents and then once or twice. These included defining whole of government together with features of the budget which would promote this.

There were also similar quasi-logical techniques adopted in the high group consensus cultures which were not found in the low group adversarial culture. In particular the technique of the *division of the whole into its parts* was used in both Dutch and Swedish documents to locate agency reforms within a broader political or value system. This technique was used in Dutch documents to demonstrate that agency reforms merely constituted changes at the micro level of the budgetary system and would not disturb the macro principles of the system such as budgetary limits. It was also used to demonstrate that the whole issue of autonomization could be divided into a choice between reducing ministerial accountability (in the form of ZBOs) or not (agencies). In Sweden, the *division of the whole and its parts* was used to demonstrate that Swedish agencies were formally subordinate to the political sphere. This involved describing the various links in the whole chain of democracy, where reducing the link of political control was presented as reducing democracy generally (SOU 1983:16–17). Similarly Swedish accounts also adopted the division of the whole into its parts to break down the goals and values of the Swedish state and present these as having a zero-sum relationship with one another (SOU 1997:38, 57). These goals included democracy, effectiveness and legality where maintaining a balance between these in the pursuit of agency reforms was essential.

Argumentative techniques based upon reasonable belief were most prominent in Australia, the low group adversarial political culture. These techniques were used in all Australian documents and, in contrast to the high group cultures, always out-numbered (Australian) use of quasi-logical argumentation. Among Australian use of techniques of reasonable belief that were different to the high group consensus cultures was the use of the argument of the *person and the act*. This technique achieves agreement through establishing a relationship between the (stable) attributes of a person and what that person does (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:294–295). It was used by the then Australian Prime Minister John Howard in his opening speech of Centrelink. In this document Howard associated the very creation of Centrelink with his own personal experience and integrity (Howard 1997:2–5). Besides

pointing to knowledge he had gathered from constituents over the years regarding the desirability of integrated services, Howard also associated his own reasonableness with the reasonableness of Centrelink (Howard 1997:5). Since he was a sensible man and politician, then the act of creating Centrelink must also be reasonable. Such connections between particular individuals and agency initiatives were never adopted in the high group cultures.

There were also similarities in the techniques of reasonable belief used across the high group and low group cultures. Moreover, as noted above, in the final Dutch document *Further with results 1998* there was even greater use of techniques of reasonable belief than of quasi-logical argumentation. This predominance of techniques based upon reasonable belief never occurred in the Swedish documents. The most striking similarities across all of the high and low group political cultures included the adoption of the techniques of the *causal link* and also of *unlimited development*. Firstly, the argument of the *causal link* was used at least once in documents across all countries to establish that agency reform would bring about greater efficiency or effectiveness. The technique of the *causal link* relies upon creating a likely relationship of succession between an act and outcome. In agency accounts this occurred by either pointing to problems of existing regulations that would be removed by agency initiatives or to incentives that could be changed by agency initiatives (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:i). It was also used to argue that past reforms to give autonomy to agencies and focus upon individual performance had led to fragmentation of the administration (SOU 1997:86).

The technique of *unlimited development*, by contrast, insists on the possibility of always going further in a certain direction without any limit to increases in value (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003: 287–288). This technique was used in each country primarily when financial aspects of agency reforms were being discussed. In The Netherlands it was used to describe the financial developments that had inspired agency reforms, and for which they were a continuation. The Dutch also used it to describe performance measures which were continually being refined (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:36). In Sweden unlimited development was used to describe refinements to the budgetary process and how this would promote continued improvement in information provision of agencies and their efficiency and transparency (SOU 1985:68). In Australia, unlimited development was used

to describe the phases that Centrelink was going through to improve customer service and the 'progressive refinements' to whole of government financial reporting (Vardon 1998; MAC 2004:78). A rhetorical advantage of the technique of unlimited development, particularly in the area of management reform, is that it establishes agreement about the goodness of reforms because they will bring about improvements even though these have not yet been achieved. It relies upon the acceptance of a more favourable condition that is yet to follow (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2003:288).

Patterns in the metaphors across the high and low group political cultures included similar control metaphors among the high group consensus cultures. The metaphor of steering was consistently present in all of the Dutch and Swedish documents examined, though it never appeared in Australian accounts. This metaphor functioned to make agency reforms appear as if they could be controlled and directed by political actors, such as ministers or politicians. In the Dutch case they were generally used to describe the way that performance reporting or macro budgetary principles would be used by ministries to limit the autonomy of agencies. In the Swedish case steering was used to describe phases in the budgetary process and the activities of political actors. Sometimes the phrase democratic steering was adopted to indicate that control of the administration by the political sphere was legitimate. Other distinctive control metaphors adopted in the Dutch case include the term *autonomization* itself – which is autonomy in the passive form – and also ministerial *grip*. Compared to all other documents the second Dutch document *Accountable autonomization* was exceptional in its frequent use of control metaphors.

By contrast, the metaphors in the Australian case consistently involved personalizing agency initiatives. This included attributing a *human face* to government services, as well as providing *tailored* or *individualized* services to customers. These metaphors were generally used to distinguish agency initiatives from bureaucratic forms of organization. They were also often combined with the presentation of agency initiatives as business like arrangements. This included describing Australian agencies as having *customers* and in the case of Centrelink having *brands* and *outlets*. There were some similarities between the use of business metaphors in the Dutch and Australian accounts of agency reforms. For example, there was reference to *business wins* or plans and *business redressing* in both countries, though Dutch accounts

never individualized their agency services. Such direct links between agencies and being business-like were never made in Swedish accounts of agency reform.

There were some similar metaphors to describe agency initiatives across all the countries. These included metaphors which likened agency reform to a journey or travelling and metaphors that described agencies as being flexible like plastic. All of these similar metaphors appeared together with the argument of unlimited development in each of the countries under study (see above). Firstly metaphors that made agencies appear as a journey, or rather travelling, included 'rigging up ones sails' in The Netherlands, 'being on the path' in Sweden or on the 'road in Australia'. They were part of demonstrating to the audience that agencies would bring about continuing improvements and modernization. Similarly the flexibility metaphor was also used in all countries to show that agencies could respond to a range of demands.

Finally there were also some similar metaphors across the high group culture Sweden and the low group culture Australia. These similarities with Swedish metaphors were only found in the *Connecting Government 2004* document and included descriptions of the *whole* of the administration, of *broadening* skills and performance, *sharpening* tasks and *balancing* values. Sweden was the only country to adopt organic metaphors, such as the state as a tree, in arguments about their public management reforms.

National styles of speaking across high and low group political cultures

The comparison of similarities and differences across the high group consensus political cultures (The Netherlands, Sweden) and low group adversarial culture (Australia) indicate that there are patterns in rhetorical styles that can be attributed to political culture. It is now possible to summarize these patterns and present the *national styles of speaking* that characterized official agency talk across high and low group political cultures. These different styles illustrate that symbolic convergence in official agency talk was not attained (entirely) and that cultural differences, as opposed to homogeneity, continued to characterize the national presentation of agency reforms. Nevertheless there were some important similarities in talk across all of the cultural con-

texts, and more between The Netherlands and Australia which will be discussed in the following section.

The similarities in agency talk across the high group consensus cultures that were different to the low group adversarial culture were most consistent across the rhetorical features of *ethos* and *logos*. While there were some similarities in *pathos* across the consensus countries, it was more difficult to identify this as a particular national style because it changed so radically in the Dutch case from document to document. Therefore leaving aside pathos, the national style of speaking across the high group consensus cultures can be typified by four main features. Firstly, in their construction of universal audiences the speakers in the high group consensus cultures generally demonstrated commitment to public values, whether this was ministerial accountability as in The Netherlands or democracy as in Sweden. Secondly, they also always established their credibility through demonstrating their knowledge of scientific principles by using scientific rationales. This was apparent in their accounts of case selection to examine the potential of agency reforms and the use of formal theories, such as economic or political theories. Thirdly, the speakers in the high group consensus cultures always constructed particular audiences of experts. These included financial experts, juridical experts or different types of academics (historians, political scientists). Finally, the techniques of argumentation in the high group consensus contexts were predominantly quasi-logical over the period studied, as were some control metaphors (steering).

By contrast, the national style of speaking in the low group adversarial culture, Australia, was characterized by different features. Firstly, the speakers in Australian agency accounts established the universal credibility of agency reforms through commitments to customer service – a private, rather than public value. Secondly, the particular audiences were never experts but rather tended to be beneficiaries of the reforms whether it was taxpayers, agency staff or managers. One exception was perhaps the construction of a business consultant audience, but the informal style typical of this audience made it difficult to define as an expert audience. More generally, when expert information was presented in Australian accounts, such as financial information it was always presented in an informal way. Thirdly, there was a consistent pathos over time in the Australian case and this was the pathos of the difficult. The audience was always prepared by the speaker to

Table 5.4   Comparing *National Styles of Speaking*

	The Netherlands	**Sweden**	**Australia**
Universal	Public value Scientific rationale	Public value Scientific rationale	Private value Informal style
Particular	Experts	Experts	Interest groups
Pathos			The difficult
Logos	Quasi-logical	Quasi-logical	Reasonable belief
Metaphors	Control metaphors	Control metaphors	Personalizing metaphors

accept agency reforms because they were a challenge. Fourthly, the techniques of argumentation used to obtain agreement about the substantive aspects of Australian agency reforms were consistently based upon reasonable belief. There were always metaphors personalizing agency reforms. These two contrasting national styles of speaking found to typify accounts of agency reform in the high and low group political cultures are presented in Table 5.4.

Similarities in talk: a role for political culture and transnational stories?

The comparison of rhetorical styles also revealed some similarities across high and low group political cultures. These were not durable similarities but limited to particular rhetorical elements in particular documents. They included similarities that were only found across all the countries and similarities between The Netherlands and Australia, or between Australia and Sweden. These mixed similarities can be interpreted in different and sometimes complementary ways. Since this argument will be pursued further in the following chapter, the similarities will only be briefly sketched here together with some of the different interpretations.

Firstly, similarities across all the political cultures occurred at the level of logos, and more specifically were techniques of reasonable belief. They included the argument of the causal link to show agencies would improve efficiency, and the argument of unlimited development to show agencies would continue to improve the public sector. These common themes and rhetorical style, irrespective of

political culture, would suggest that there was some symbolic convergence in agency talk that can be attributed to the (trans-national) story itself. They indicate that national political culture (as depicted in rhetorical styles) cannot account for all aspects of official agency talk. Secondly, the similarities between Sweden and Australia would also seem to corroborate that some aspects of agency accounts travelled independently of political culture. Again these similarities were in logos and included metaphors such as the *whole*, *sharpening* responsibilities and *balancing*. They were espoused in the third Swedish and Australian documents which both blamed past individualist agency initiatives for problems of coordination and fragmentation. As already noted the role of stories in shaping official agency talk is examined further in the following chapter.

Thirdly, there were more similarities in the rhetorical elements of The Netherlands and Australia, compared to Sweden and Australia. These went beyond similarities in logos and also included similar particular audiences of business consultants (ethos) and the similar locus of the unique (pathos). The finding that there were similarities between the Australian and Dutch cases, that did not occur in Sweden, is at first sight compatible with the focus upon cultural explanations in this chapter. This is because while Dutch political culture was rated similar to Sweden as high group, it was also different to Sweden because it rated as more individualistic. One aspect of the comparative design in this study was based upon similar systems and the rationale that political culture could account for agency talk if it could explain both the similarities and differences among the similar high group cultures. Leaving aside similarities across all countries, the finding that Dutch political culture could produce some agency talk that was different to Sweden, and more similar to Australia, corroborates a political culture explanation.

An alternative interpretation of all the similarities across high and low group political cultures concerns the actual speaker/s presenting the agency reforms. These were financial officials in the consensus cultures when there were similarities across all the countries and between The Netherlands and Australia, and a group of speakers in Australia when there were similarities between Australia and Sweden. The role of speakers will be examined together with the role of stories in the following chapter.

The correspondence between political culture and national styles of speaking

Now that the patterns in rhetorical styles across the high and low group political cultures have been identified, it is time to take stock of the cultural flavour of these national styles of speaking using GGCT. This may at first appear somewhat repetitive, since it has already been shown that political culture matters in explaining the predominant rhetorical styles of official accounts of agency reforms. However, it has not yet been demonstrated how, and if, the national styles of speaking can be characterized as high and low group. Such an assessment sheds light on the relationship between the different levels of analysis in this study and the way in which GGCT applies to them.

In the theoretical chapter it was explained that GGCT was being applied at two levels of analysis including the national political level and the level of talk. On one hand, GGCT was applied at the national political level using statistical ratings from citizens in the World Values Study. On the other hand, one of the empirical contributions of this study was the application of Hood's characterization of GGCT in public management to official agency accounts. Since both The Netherlands and Sweden rated highest on egalitarianism, it was expected that they would also have many egalitarian themes in their accounts of agency reform. By contrast, since Australia rated highest on individualism it was expected that Australian accounts of agency reform would be primarily individualistic. The correspondence between the national styles of speaking and their cultural flavour is considered in the following sections.

The cultural flavour of ethos across the high and low group political cultures

The construction of the audiences (ethos) in the high group consensus cultures, were primarily hierarchical rather than egalitarian. In these countries the universal audiences were constructed through both public values (ministerial accountability, democracy) and a scientific rationale. These were generally used to unite and transcend particular audiences of experts. While Hood did not attribute a cultural flavour to the principle of ministerial accountability, it was used in the Dutch case as a source of authority and control over agency initiatives and operations. Similarly, in Sweden the notion of demo-

cracy was mainly used to justify greater political control over agencies rather than egalitarian notions of mutuality or informality. In addition, the scientific credentials exhibited by speakers in both consensus cultures corresponded to Hood's descriptions of a hierarchical way of life in public management. The hierarchical way of life favours experts and expert knowledge and this was how the speakers presented themselves in the high group consensus cultures.

Some exceptions to the primarily hierarchical character of the *universal audience* in the consensus cultures included the speaker's use of democracy in the third Swedish document *In the citizen's service 1997*. Unlike the earlier Swedish documents, *In the citizen's service 1997* attributed an egalitarian flavour to the universal commitment to democracy. For example it brought together particular audiences of citizens with a civil service mentality to promote the inclusion of citizens in administrative decision making. Similarly, the consistent commitment of the speakers to consultation in the Dutch documents was an egalitarian aspect of the universal audience in The Netherlands. However, such consultation was never envisioned to occur with Dutch citizens, but rather with ministries, agency managers and sometimes agency employees.

By contrast, the *universal audience* in the low group adversarial culture, Australia, had an individualistic character. In all Australian documents the speaker united different particular audiences of interest groups and business consultants through a universal commitment to customer service. Rather than representing some shared collective value, customer service united interest driven actors to accept agency reforms because they enabled individual tailored needs to be met. The speakers' descriptions of the Australian public desiring good customer service from agencies conceived of their relationship with the government as merely users or purchasers of goods and services (see Clarke and Newman 1997:121–122). In this respect they corresponded to individualist cultural preferences for making government emulate the market and promoting better services through the self interest of individual users (Hood 2000:98–100).

The cultural flavour of pathos and logos across the high and low group political cultures

The cultural flavours of national pathos and logos across high and low group political cultures are somewhat more difficult to characterize from the national styles of speaking. There are at least two reasons for

this. Firstly, there was no consistent locus (pathos) identified in the Dutch case since this changed from document to document (the unique, quantitative or difficult). Secondly, it is more difficult to attribute a cultural flavour to quasi-logical arguments or techniques of reasonable belief. This will be attempted in the following chapter when comparisons of rhetorical styles at the level of cultural stories are presented. For now, Hood's cultural flavours are attributed to national loci (pathos) in the Swedish and Australian cases. Some reference is also given to where these were similar or different to rhetorical styles in the Dutch case.

The durable and prominent loci (pathos) in both Swedish and Australian accounts of agency reform corresponded remarkably to the cultural world views of respectively egalitarian and individualist ways of life. In the high group culture in Sweden the locus of the precarious was consistently used across all documents to prepare the audience to accept agency reforms because of threats to the Swedish state. More generally, the notion of a threat has been characterized as an egalitarian concern by GGCT theorists. In their famous myths of nature Thompson et al. (1990) described the egalitarian world-view of nature as vulnerable and subject to eminent collapse. By contrast, it was both the loci of the *difficult* and *unique* which were most durable over time in the low group political culture of Australia. These notions have been recognized as typically individualist by GGCT theorists. For example the representation of agency reform as enticing because it was a difficult challenge in Australia corresponds to individualist worldviews of nature as conquerable through effort (Thompson et al. 1990:26; Hendriks 1996:61). Similarly, the locus of the unique or rather the goodness of agency reform because it is new, corresponds with GGCT theorists descriptions of the individualist worldview. Mary Douglas has characterized the individualist society by a short term memory since competition drives out particular dynasties and 'brings upstarts to the top' (Douglas 1987:80). Sensitizing audiences to the unique or rather new, as occurred consistently in Australia and more infrequently in The Netherlands, corresponds to this individualist worldview.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that political culture matters in explaining agency talk. It can account for many of the differences and similar-

ities in official agency talk. It was shown that there were similar patterns in the rhetorical styles of agency talk across high group consensus cultures (Netherlands and Sweden) compared to the low group adversarial culture (Australia). These included universal audiences committed to public values in the high group cultures compared to private values in the low group adversarial culture, and respectively more quasi-logical techniques compared to more techniques based upon reasonable belief. It was also found that there were more similarities between The Netherlands and Australia, than between Sweden and Australia. These included a similar particular audience of business consultants, some use of the locus of the unique and more business metaphors. The nature of these similarities provides evidence that they may be attributed to the higher ratings of individualism for Dutch political culture compared to Swedish political culture. It could be concluded that convergence in agency talk across high and low group political cultures occurred to a greater degree in The Netherlands and Sweden because Dutch political culture is more individualistic. An alternative, and possibly related, explanation is that Dutch talk was more individualistic because of the actual speaker's privileged to speak about their agencies. This will be explored further in the following chapter.

However, there were also some rhetorical similarities between high group Sweden and low group Australia. These occurred primarily at the level of *logos* and included similar metaphors about the *whole* and *sharpening* responsibility. Finally there were also similarities found across all of the different political cultures such as similar arguments based upon reasonable belief (unlimited development, causal link) and similar travelling metaphors. These similarities across different political cultures would indicate that common trans-national stories have also contributed to official accounts of agency reform. These similarities will also be examined further in the following chapter.

A surprising finding from both this and the previous chapter is that while political culture does appear to matter in explaining agency talk, it has not had a predominantly egalitarian flavour in the high group consensus cultures. Rather the national styles of speaking in The Netherlands and Sweden were predominantly hierarchical. This was reflected in their durable commitments to steering, scientific rationales and expert speakers, though there was always an egalitarian feature to the universal audience, e.g. consultation or democracy. The

predominantly hierarchical cultural flavour of Dutch and Swedish agency talk was in contrast to the predominantly egalitarian diagnoses of their political cultures. This was not the case in Australia where correspondence was found between the predominantly individualistic Australian national styles of speaking and the individualist diagnosis of Australian political culture. Following from GGCT's claim that cultural ways of life represent structure with attitude, one could be forgiven for reactively concluding that the disparities between talk and political cultural diagnoses in the high group cultures indicated that they are actually more hierarchical than egalitarian.

A more considered, and less controversial conclusion, is that disparities can be explained by the level of social relations in which agency talk was produced and its distance from the political apex of the different political cultures. At the outset of this chapter the different rhetorical situations in which agency talk was produced was compared across the countries. It was shown that the high group consensus cultures produced agency talk within a rhetorical situation of experts addressing elite audiences at some distance from the political sphere. By contrast, in the low group adversarial culture agency talk was more often produced by individuals for a broader audience (including citizens), but also closer to the political sphere. For example Australian speakers were politicians (John Howard), equivalent to heads of departments (Sue Vardon) or brought together by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. These features of the rhetorical situations and the kinds of speakers they privileged had implications for their correspondence to the broader political culture. Nevertheless it remains an interesting finding that the policy communities producing agency talk in the high group consensus cultures had a more hierarchical than egalitarian flavour. Indeed, elsewhere it has been noted that technocratic rationales are typical of policy making communities in consensus democracies since they de-politicize issues and thereby make political consensus possible (Andeweg & Irwin 2002:105).

6
The Role of Culturally Flavoured Stories and Their National Translations

Introduction

This chapter analyses and compares official agency talk according to the cultural flavour of argumentative themes. It shifts from the national level of analysis in the previous chapter to consider patterns in rhetorical styles at the level of cultural stories. There are a number of reasons for examining agency accounts according to their cultural flavour. Firstly, similar patterns in the way cultural stories are told across high and low group cultures provide evidence that stories, independent of political culture, also shaped official agency talk. The cultural flavour of these common stories will be identified, as well as the rhetorical styles that characterized them. In addition, the nature and degree of similarities of rhetorical elements at the level of cultural story will be more closely examined.

Secondly, sorting rhetorical styles according to cultural flavour presents the opportunity to assess Hood's predictions for how GGCT and rhetoric complement one another in public management. In his own work Hood has made suggestions about the rhetorical elements that are likely to complement GGCT's four ways of life in public management. These suggestions will be compared and complemented with the empirical findings about agency talk in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia. It is one of the theoretical contributions of this study that it can contribute to refining the rhetorical features of GGCT categories and how they appear in different political cultures. Thirdly, analysing rhetorical style at the level of cultural flavoured stories enables conclusions to be drawn about

what happens to the rhetorical elements when the cultural story changes. This includes examining why there are changes in the cultural flavour of stories, as well as how these interact with national styles of speaking.

Comparing common cultural flavours and their rhetorical styles

The shift to the level of cultural stories in this chapter brings with it changes in the selection of empirical data presented. Most significantly, when presenting the *ethos* that accompanied culturally flavoured stories the focus here is primarily upon the particular audience. This is because, as was shown in the previous chapters, the universal audiences were generally durable aspects of agency talk and rarely changed together with cultural stories. In the following analysis one exception is made in the presentation of the ethos of egalitarian stories; this was because there were so few examples of this story in agency talk, and some of those included a universal audience. More generally, the reader is reminded that in contrast to the focus upon the durable or predominant rhetorical styles in the previous chapter, this chapter presents rhetorical elements that may have only been fleeting in some political cultures. Each of the cultural flavours are first presented according to how they view public management reform, which of these themes were used in agency talk, the actual speakers who presented them and the rhetorical elements that accompanied this story across the countries.

Agency talk and an individualist rhetorical style

The individualist cultural flavour was characterized by themes like self-seeking individuals, competition, financial incentives, price forming, and a focus upon customer service. More generally, this worldview of public management conceives of problems narrowly and prefers government to work like a business. Individualist themes about price forming and financial incentives were found in the agency talk of the high group cultures, while Australian talk was more fervent in commitments to self-seeking individuals, customer service and competition. There were also frequent examples of agencies being presented as business entities in both Australia and The Netherlands, though this never occurred in Sweden.

Individualist agency talk appeared in the consensus political cultures, when financial officials were predominant among the speakers delivering the accounts. By contrast in Australia there were a range of different kinds of speakers espousing the individualist cultural flavour, though it was most fervent when individuals, rather than groups, were speaking. There was a change in the degree to which individualist flavours were presented in Dutch agency talk. While individualist themes only included price forming and organizational incentives in the initial financial document *Further building on management (1991)*, these were extended to include (limited) competition and individual performance in the later document *Further with results (1998)*. These changes in the degrees of Dutch individualist talk occurred together with changes in the rhetorical situation. The earlier document was primarily addressed to internal administrative and political elites, while the later more individualist document was an evaluation also addressed to agency managers.

The *ethos* used to present individualist themes included particular audiences of financial experts in the high group consensus cultures, particular audiences of business consultants in The Netherlands and Australia, and particular audiences of groups characterized by particular interests in Australia such as voters, taxpayers and agency employees. The Dutch particular audience of business consultants only appeared in the more individualist document *Further with results 1998*. Drawing together the various motivational pats on the back typical of both Australian and Dutch business consultant audiences, the *individualist ethos* can be characterized as a motivator with a self help vocabulary. This was evident from the user-friendly guides that were presented with their accounts of agency reform and calls for going one's furthest limits.

The *loci* used to sensitize the audiences to individualist agency talk were different in Sweden compared to The Netherlands and Australia. While Swedish individualist talk appeared together with the national loci of the precarious (the threat), Australian and Dutch individualist talk moved the audience through the unique and (sometimes in The Netherlands) the difficult (the challenge). As with the business consultant ethos, the individualist pathos of the challenge only appeared in the Dutch document *Further with results (1998)*. To elaborate on the common pathos in Dutch and Australian individualist accounts, the unique was used to sensitize the audience to agency reforms because they exhibited business-like characteristics that were different to other

organizational forms. By contrast, the difficult or rather challenge was used to show the audience that agencies could continually improve and rise to the pressures of being market like. There was however the presumption that financial incentives would promote efficiency in all individualist accounts of agency reform across the countries.

The most striking similarity when individualist agency talk was produced across the countries was the adoption of similar logos. It was found that the documents exhibiting more individualist themes in each country also exhibited more arguments based upon reasonable belief. This occurred even in the high group consensus cultures where quasi-logical techniques were more durable over time. Among the similar arguments of reasonable belief that appeared together with individualist talk was the technique of unlimited development. This was used in Sweden and The Netherlands when financial initiatives such as budgetary initiatives and refinements to performance reporting, including of cost prices, were presented (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:1, 1998:29). In Australia it was used to describe initiatives to develop Centrelink's customer service orientation (Vardon 1998). All of these aspects of agency reform were presented as part of a further step in continuous improvement. In addition the causal link, another technique of reasonable belief, was used across all countries to establish that agency reforms would improve efficiency through price forming and incentives.

Among the metaphors typical of individualist agency talk were *travelling* metaphors and *flexibility* across all countries. As noted in the previous chapter the travelling metaphors were used across all political cultures together with the argument of unlimited development. They were part of getting the audience to see that agencies would continue to bring about improvements. In The Netherlands introducing agency reforms was presented as *rigging one's sails*, in Sweden it was *on the path to modernization* and in Australia it included *driving on the road* and *leading the way*. In both The Netherlands and Australia there were similar business metaphors about agency *products*, though these were more extensive in Australia and included *brands* and *outlets*. Australian individualist accounts also adopted the metaphor of *transparency* to describe the use of individual cost units in the budgetary system (MAC 2004:76, 80, 85). Australia consistently adopted individualist themes across all agency documents and embraced metaphors emphasizing the individual or self-seeking through government

Table 6.1 Comparing individualist rhetorical styles across high and low group political cultures

	The Netherlands	**Sweden**	**Australia**
Ethos	Financial expert (Hierarchical)	Financial expert (Hierarchical)	
	Business consultant		Business consultant
	Managers	Managers	Managers
Pathos			
Loci	The unique	The precarious	The unique
Presumptions	Financial incentives will promote efficiency	Financial incentives will promote efficiency	Career incentives will promote efficiency
Logos	Continuous development	Continuous development	Continuous development
Metaphors	Flexibility Rigging one's sails	Flexibility Taking the path	Flexibility On the road

services. They included *personalized* agencies or agency and customer services that were *tailored* or even agencies that were presented as *humans* themselves – agencies with a *human face*. An overview of the rhetorical elements found to characterize individualist agency talk in this study is presented in the Table 6.1.

Agency talk and a hierarchical rhetorical style

The hierarchical cultural flavour was characterized by emphasis upon steering, planning and coordination, clear delineation of roles, and the application of formal rules. This cultural worldview conceives of public management in the context of broader social issues and tends to focus upon relationships of political control over the administrative sphere and even society. Hierarchical accounts of agency reform were most durable in the consensus political cultures, and particularly in Sweden. The Dutch document *Verantwoord Verzelfstanding 1994* was exceptional in this study for its almost complete embrace of hierarchical themes. There was also a shift to more hierarchical themes in the final Australian document *Connecting Government 2004*, though this never

used terms like steering. Agency talk depicting hierarchical themes included the identification of rules or conventions defining the capacity of the political sphere to intervene in administrative operations, defining limits to agency autonomy, identifying design principles for selecting organizational types, the need for more expert knowledge and defining procedures for agency reporting.

Irrespective of the composition of commissions in Sweden and The Netherlands, there were always some hierarchical themes in the argumentation. They were however more prominent in The Netherlands and Sweden when there were no, or few, officials from finance ministries represented on the commissions. In Australia more hierarchical cultural themes appeared when the speakers changed from being individuals to being groups, and when they were addressing political and administrative superiors, as opposed to a general public.

The *ethos* used to express hierarchical agency talk included particular audiences of experts. These were financial experts and juridical experts. The typical vocabulary of these speakers was technical and they rarely sought to explain the various accounting or legal terms that they used to describe agency reforms. The ways these speakers sought credibility, particularly in Sweden, did not make them very accessible to a general public. Swedish hierarchical speakers presented in lengthy reports and featured detailed problem analyses, the history of the administration, and political theories and terminology. Similarly the Dutch hierarchical speaker in *Accountable autonomization 1994* sought credibility by focusing upon rational principles as opposed to fashions. By contrast, the particular audiences constructed to present hierarchical themes in Australia were the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. It was not technical vocabulary that was being used to establish the speaker's credibility in Australian accounts but rather the centrality of the Cabinet office in matters of direction and coordination.

The *pathos* used to sensitize the audiences to hierarchical agency talk tended to include more quantitative loci across the countries. This was exemplified in the most hierarchical Dutch document *Accountable autonomization 1995*. In contrast to the other Dutch documents, which also exhibited individualist flavours, *Accountable autonomization 1994* relied solely upon quantitative loci to demonstrate agencies were a superior means of guaranteeing ministerial accountability. Similarly the pathos in Australian agency accounts shifted to the quantitative

locus of the enduring when there were more hierarchical themes in the argumentation. This was particularly surprising since Centrelink had been presented as new and unique in earlier individualist accounts. The Swedish documents also provided a number of examples of *more is better* in their conditioning of the audience although they also used the *locus of the precarious*. A typical hierarchical presumption across all of the countries was that authorities or leaders would know how to steer agencies or respond to complexity.

Logos or the techniques of argumentation were typically quasi-logical when agency talk was hierarchical. This even occurred in Australia where quasi-logical argumentation was the exception. Hierarchical themes such as the need to steer or regulate agencies were presented in The Netherlands and Sweden through the technique of the *division of the whole into its parts*. This was used to demonstrate that agency autonomy would be granted within the parameters of macro budgetary principles or was legitimately curbed by a vertical chain of control from the political to the administrative sphere (Ministerie van Financiën 1998; SOU 1983). In addition, the quasi-logical techniques of *definition* and *comparison* were used to define rules or responsibilities applying to agencies and compared these to practices. As already noted quasi-logical argumentation was rare in Australia but definition and comparison were both used in the more hierarchical document *Connecting Government 2004*. As in the hierarchical Dutch document *Verantwoord Verzelfstandingen 1994*, *Connecting Government 2004* also defined different organizational types and sought to identify principles for allocating tasks appropriately (MAC 2004:28). There were some exceptions to the use of only quasi-logical argumentation to promote hierarchical themes in agency accounts such as Sue Vardon's definition of key drivers to customer service (Vardon 1998).

Metaphors depicting hierarchical themes were never common across all countries. There were either some similar control metaphors across the consensus political cultures or similar metaphors between Australia and at least one of the high group cultures. Similar hierarchical metaphors across the high group consensus cultures included *steering*. This was used in all documents describing agency reforms in the high group cultures and functioned to show the audiences that changes to the administration would not interfere with ministerial or democratic controls. Again the Dutch document *Accountable autonomization 1994* was distinctive for the vivid hierarchical metaphors used. These

included maintaining ministerial *grip* of agencies or having them under *command*. There was also the Dutch metaphor of *autonomization* or being *autonomized* [verzelfstandigen] – which describes giving autonomy to agencies but in the passive form. This is specific to the descriptions of management reforms in The Netherlands and depicts controlled autonomy in organizations. The metaphor of *transparency* was used to support the hierarchical theme of clearly defined organizational tasks and responsibilities in *Accountable autonomization 1994*.

Similar hierarchical metaphors across Sweden and Australia included terms such as the *strong* state in Sweden or *strong* leader in Australia, as well as references to *sharpening* tasks or responsibilities. In both these countries hierarchical themes such as coordination were presented through metaphors depicting the bigger political or administrative system. These included considering the *balance* or *imbalance* in political values or task distribution, in promoting *integration* – actually a term with origins in mathematics, and in seeing the administration

Table 6.2 Comparing hierarchical rhetorical styles across high and low group political cultures

	The Netherlands	Sweden	Australia
Ethos	Financial expert Juridical expert	Financial expert	Business consultant (individualist)
Pathos			
Loci	More is better Sometimes unique	More is better The precarious	The enduring The difficult
Presumptions	Ministers and departments know how, and want to steer	Politicians know and want to steer	Leaders will know how to respond to complexity
	Clear organizational categories promotes order in practice	Complexity requires planning	Complexity requires planning
Logos	Quasi-logical	Quasi-logical	Quasi-logical
Metaphors	Steering Autonomization Ministerial grip Command	Steering Strong state Whole Balance Sharpen	Strong leaders Whole Balance Sharpen

as a *whole*. References to the *whole* never appeared in Dutch agency accounts even when hierarchical themes were promoted. Perhaps this could be attributed to the tradition of fragmentation in the Dutch political system more generally.

Agency talk and an egalitarian rhetorical style

Egalitarian accounts of agency reform were defined as emphasizing grassroots participation, mutuality and informal contacts, as well as highlighting a concern for deliberation and power structures. It is difficult to identify elements of a rhetorical style that were typical of egalitarian themes across the countries because their adoption was limited. This has meant that most of the egalitarian rhetorical elements identified here have been drawn from the Swedish document *In the citizen's service 1997*. This document exhibited the most egalitarian themes in this study. In contrast to the rhetorical situations of earlier Swedish documents, the predominant speakers or rather members of the commission responsible for this report were academics.

Another problem with identifying an egalitarian rhetorical style was that egalitarian themes often only presented as watchwords like democracy, as mood music (pathos) like threats from the growing power of democracy, but not as references to specific organizational or decision making arrangements. Indeed, in many instances when egalitarian themes appeared they were used to describe hierarchical organizational arrangements. For example Swedish accounts of agency reform tended to appraise the use of informal contacts as a means to share and learn from information about agency operations. While this could be defined as an instance of promoting egalitarian mutuality, the recommendations drawn were hierarchical since they should formalize these contacts by documenting them. The lack of more substantive egalitarian themes makes it is difficult to draw conclusions about a most typical egalitarian argumentative technique (logos), however it was arguments of reasonable belief that tended to accompany the egalitarian arrangements identified in this study.

The most consistent way in which egalitarian themes appeared across the documents was in the universal audiences of the high group consensus political cultures. Speaker's established credibility through commitments to consensus in The Netherlands and to democracy in Sweden. On both occasions these commitments gave an

egalitarian flavour to agency accounts. On closer inspection some qualifications can be made about the egalitarian nature of these styles in each high group culture. In The Netherlands the universal appeal to consultation was generally used to bring together particular audiences of elites such as financial or juridical experts and only in the last document employees of agencies. There were also specific references to including agency stakeholders such as heads of departments. It can be said that, with a few exceptions, egalitarian mutuality was generally used in Dutch accounts to bring together internal administrative elites.

Similarly in Sweden the universal appeal to democracy was also primarily used to bring together elite particular audiences including academic audiences. This changed in the last Swedish document *In the citizen's service 1997* which did include a particular audience of citizens. Like references to informal contacts, the use of democracy in Swedish documents was also often used to legitimize hierarchical administrative arrangements, such as increasing political control over the administration. Again this changed in *In the citizen's service 1997* where democracy was conceived of as including (particular audiences of) citizens in administrative decision making. Compared to earlier Swedish documents the tone was also more informal with less use of technical jargon throughout the argumentation. The Australian document *Connecting Government 2004* also included citizens among the particular audiences.

The *pathos* accompanying egalitarian stories about mutuality, such as arrangements to promote collaboration at the level of agencies (SOU 1997:87) was achieved through relying upon the presumption of complexity. This occurred in both Swedish and Australian documents where it was increasingly complex policy environments which required greater (egalitarian) collaboration and information sharing between agencies or department heads. In both countries there were some emphasis upon the desire for forms of horizontal accountability. The idea of complexity was also the precursor to getting audiences to accept group arguments (both hierarchical and egalitarian) more generally. At least in both Australia and Sweden the notion of complexity provided the background to considering the *whole*. Anecdotally perhaps the lack of discussion about complex policy environments in The Netherlands was also part of the failure to include metaphors of the whole in Dutch accounts of agency reform.

Following from more general descriptions of the egalitarian world-view, it was already suggested in the previous chapter that the *locus of the precarious* was typical of an egalitarian way to sensitize the audience. This is because the egalitarian way of life has been conceived of as alert to vulnerability. The Swedish locus of the precarious which is generally presented as the threat to Swedish democracy from the growing power of the bureaucracy corresponds neatly to descriptions of the egalitarian worldview in GGCT. Not only did it accentuate the notion of vulnerability, but it also connected it to other egalitarian themes such as power structures. Another presumption in Swedish egalitarian arguments was that agencies would be able to cooperate to define their performance objectives.

Egalitarian themes and watchwords in the logos of accounts were most clearly adopted in the form of blame upon past individualist solutions. These blames were made with the technique of the causal link. In both Sweden and Australia this occurred with the claim that the focus upon individual agency performance and accountability presented risks to collaboration and encouraged fragmentation (MAC 2004:6; SOU 1997:25). Egalitarian concerns for the citizen were observed in Sweden with the argument that greater independence for agencies would enable citizens to have a greater influence upon policy outcomes (SOU 1997:22, 57). Furthermore there was the egalitarian argument that greater deliberation about the role of civil servants, rather than a code of conduct, would best encourage commitment to a public service ethos.

Metaphors were particularly important in lending agency stories an egalitarian flavour. Indeed sometimes it was the metaphor alone that gave official accounts their egalitarian quality. Focusing upon *horizontal* relationships was a common theme in both *In the citizen's service 1997* and *Connecting Government 2004*, with the Swedish document emphasizing greater mutuality within the budget and the Australian document encouraging more communication across the higher echelons of departments. In *Connecting Government 2004* there was some reference to citizen participation but this occurred in a cursory way through statements such as agency reforms enabling the citizen to have more access to and be more *in touch* with government services. Both these Swedish and Australian documents also emphasized the *whole* of the government or *whole* of the state when presenting high group arguments about mutuality and joining up

government. It is noteworthy that *In the citizen's service 1997* was distinguished by the use of organic metaphors. Since it was the document with the most egalitarian themes in this study it could be suggested that organic metaphors are more typical of egalitarian stories in public management. However there is no comparative material to confirm this. The organic metaphors were used when describing how deliberating about public service values would encourage a *living* consciousness of citizens among public servants (SOU 1997:57, 147). Other organic metaphors adopted included describing the Swedish state as a *tree* and concerns that the Swedish public service tradition was *watering away* or being dissolved through market like reforms.

The comparisons of rhetorical styles at the level of cultural stories indicated that there are some common rhetorical keys to promoting certain public management themes. In particular the logos of public management talk would appear to be most responsive to the cultural flavour of an agency story. For example individualist stories would appear to favour arguments based upon reasonable belief while hierarchical stories would appear to favour quasi-logical argumentation.

Table 6.3　Comparing egalitarian rhetorical styles across high and low group political cultures

	The Netherlands	**Sweden**	**Australia**
Ethos	Mediator (speaking partners)	Democracy	
Pathos Loci Presumptions		The precarious Complexity means nobody can steer Agencies can cooperate to develop performance goals	
Logos		Causal link (blame for fragmentation) Mutuality can promote learning about good performance	Causal link (blame for fragmentation) Mutuality can promote policy makers to learn from practice
Metaphors		Organic metaphors	Being in touch with citizens

There were also similar patterns in presumptions (pathos) such as the individualist presumption that financial incentives will promote efficiency. All of these examples suggest that some aspects of agency stories did have a life of their own and can contribute to explaining national agency talk. By contrast, the other rhetorical features of cultural stories such as the loci or ethos appeared to be somewhat less responsive to the cultural flavour of a story. The exception was the Dutch case, which of all countries exhibited more variation in ethos and pathos over time. The degree to which the cultural flavour of stories contributed to national accounts of agency reform is discussed later in this chapter.

Hood's predictions and the rhetorical elements of cultural world views in agency talk

The identification of rhetorical styles that complement the cultural ways of life in agency talk was inspired by Christopher Hood's own applications of rhetoric to GGCT (Hood 2000:187). Hood extended upon his own descriptions of the cultural ways of life in public management and gave predictions for possible rhetorical applications of the four world views. It is useful to compare these suggestions with the findings about cultural rhetorical styles in the previous section. This is for the purpose of developing understanding of how certain types of knowledge become credible in public management and for refining the categories of GGCT itself. Through the empirical findings in this study, more can be said about how the cultural themes are argued about in practice, and how these vary in different political cultures.

It should be noted that not all of the rhetorical suggestions of Hood are directly comparable to the categories of the New Rhetoric applied in this study. For example in his descriptions of *pathos* Hood identifies different kinds of emotional relationships that the speaker establishes with the audience. This is somewhat different to the loci and presumptions used here. Also Hood only identifies game metaphors as possible logos, while in this study agency talk has been examined for three different types of argumentative techniques and there was no limit set on the kinds of metaphors examined. Keeping these differences in rhetorical focus in mind, the suggestions of Hood can now be compared with the rhetorical styles of cultural flavours in agency talk. The predictions of Hood are presented in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 Hood's predictions for the rhetorical styles of cultural flavours

	Hierarchist	Individualist	Egalitarian	Fatalist
Possible 'ethos'	Authority figure	Lonely figure battling collective pressures	Member of persecuted solidaristic group	Sceptic
Possible 'pathos'	Teacher and pupils or priest and flock	Self-help	Outrage against abuse of power at the top	'Whats the use?' skepticism
Possible 'logos' – game metaphors	Public management as a captained team game (e.g. hockey)	Public management as an individual game of skill (e.g. chess)	Public management as a non-captained non-competitive group sport (e.g. folk dancing)	Public management as a game of chance (e.g. gaming machine)

Source: Hood 2000:187

Beginning with individualist flavour in agency talk Hood suggested that the rhetorical style was likely to include speakers (ethos) presenting as lonely figures battling collective pressures. He also identifies the individualist mood music (pathos) as self-help, and metaphors emphasizing individualist skill (Hood 2000:180, 187). These have family resemblances to the individualist rhetorical elements found in this study, however there are slight differences. For example both the individualist ethos in The Netherlands and Australia were described as a business consultant figure. This was a consequence of the motivational slogans and user-friendly style of speaking. There were some elements of a lonely figure since it was only those that went to the furthest limits who were considered heroes (Ministerie van Financiën 1998:21). The self help pathos of Hood clearly has relevance to the findings about individualist agency stories in this study but it was interpreted as part of ethos or rather the speaker's business consultant identity. Instead it was the locus of the challenge that was found to characterize the individualist mood music in agency talk. Finally, there were individualist metaphors describing individual skill in this study such as the Australian metaphors of *tailoring* customer service (MAC 2004:2; Vardon 1998:3, 4, 12). It was metaphors of (adventurous) travel that most typified individualist agency talk in this study.

Hierarchical rhetorical elements were characterized by Hood as including authority figures (ethos), the mood music of a teacher to their students or priest and flock, and metaphors of a captained game (Hood 2000:187). There are many similarities that can be drawn between these predictions and the findings in this study. For example all of the particular audiences found across the countries when hierarchical stories were told corresponded to Hood's suggestion that a hierarchical ethos will involve the speaker presenting as an authority. These authorities were of a different character across the political cultures and included experts in The Netherlands and Sweden and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in Australia. It is more difficult to make a correspondence between Hood's suggestion of a hierarchical pathos involving setting the scene through a teaching and the pupil relationship, and the finding of more quantitative loci with the presentation of hierarchical stories. Certainly there is something elementary about sensitization through quantitative loci. Finally, the range of control metaphors identified in the hierarchical stories of

high group cultures, including steering, were similar to Hood's description of hierarchical metaphors as describing a captained sport. While steering was never adopted in Australian hierarchical stories it might be suggested that the physical metaphors of *balancing* relationships or *sharpening* responsibilities also indirectly refer to steering (MAC 2004: 52, 51, 81). Balancing and sharpening were also metaphors used in Swedish high group stories.

Finally Hood's likely egalitarian ethos of the speaker presenting as a member of a persecuted group is somewhat more difficult to identify in the egalitarian stories identified in this study. This may be because the egalitarian stories found in this study were drawn from official accounts of agency reform. The Swedish universal audience of democracy gives the appearance of being interested in persecuted groups though it tended to be used in quite hierarchical ways in Swedish agency talk. Alternatively, the construction of the particular audience of Swedish civil servants in the final Swedish document did put forward a construction of Swedish civil servants being burdened by results orientated management (Ministerie van Financiën 1997:81). They were presented as losing their integrity through market like reforms (SOU 1997:22, 91). This was the closest example of a persecuted group in this study.

Alternatively the Dutch egalitarian universal audience of speaking partners likened the egalitarian agency ethos to a mediator rather than an oppressed group. Hood's likely egalitarian pathos of outrage at abuse at the top could be likened to the Swedish pathos of the precarious. This is because it was also presented to describe threats to democracy coming from either the growing influence of (corporatist) interest groups or a specialist and increasingly independent bureaucracy. Finally, the metaphor of the *whole* which was identified in both Australian and Swedish high group stories corresponds neatly with Hood's description of egalitarian metaphors encouraging a view of public management as a non-captained, non-competitive team sport. However, the suggestion from this study that organic metaphors may also be typical of egalitarian themes is something that could be examined in other accounts of management reform.

Shifts in the cultural flavour of agency talk: reactions of rhetoric or the rhetorical situation?

Thus far the examination of the rhetorical styles adopted when agency talk had particular cultural flavours has been presented in a static way.

They were presented per cultural flavour across the national documents. This is part of considering whether stories have a life of their own since they bring with them particular rhetorical styles, irrespective of context. The findings in the previous sections would indicate that there is evidence of cultural stories having favoured rhetorical styles such as techniques of reasonable belief for individualist agency stories or quasi-logical arguments for hierarchical agency stories. But what about suggestions that public management stories also have a life of their own because they react to one another? This requires examining whether shifts in cultural flavour were characterized by blaming past cultural commitments.

In all countries there were changes in the degrees to which certain cultural stories were embraced over the period studied (see Chapter 4). While there were durable national styles of speaking, which were most established and resilient in Sweden and Australia, some shifts in the mix of cultural flavours were observed from document to document. In The Netherlands this was a shift back and forth from a mix of strong individualist and hierarchical flavours, to primarily hierarchical flavours, to a primarily individualist flavour. In Sweden there was a consistent hierarchical flavour over time but also shifts from primarily hierarchical to hierarchical with an individualist tint, to primarily group themes (egalitarian and hierarchical). By contrast, in Australia the changes in cultural flavour went from primarily individualist themes in the first two documents to more hierarchical flavours with individualist themes in the final document.

However, not all of these changes in cultural flavour occurred as a reaction to past cultural commitments. There were cases when rhetorical reactions did occur but these were limited to just three instances found in this study. First among these was the adoption of individualist themes in the first Dutch document *Further building on management 1991*. It argued for more flexible financial regulations in agencies because the existing (hierarchical) situation presented a bottleneck of rules preventing efficient decision making (Ministerie van Financiën 1991:5). The other instances were shifts away from individualist flavours to more group themes in both the final Swedish and Australian documents (SOU 1997:24–29; MAC 2004:6). In these cases recommendations for more attention to (hierarchical) coordination and the *whole* of government were legitimized through blaming past individualist solutions. Past individualist arrangements such as focusing upon individual agency performance or a market orientation in

agencies were identified as causing fragmentation (SOU 1997:24–29; MAC 2004:6) and a loss of public service integrity (SOU 1997:22, 91). These changes in the cultural flavour of national agency accounts emulated the shifts in agency talk at the level of the international community. They are similar to the description in Chapter 2 of agencies changing from being solutions in public management to becoming problems. To this extent they seem to verify Hood's cultural theory explanation for changes in public management fashions occurring as reactions in rhetoric.

At the same time there were other patterns in the rhetorical situations across the countries that can also account for more of the shifts in the cultural flavour of agency talk. Not least among these was the identity of the actual speakers responsible for the agency accounts. For example individualist themes were only prominent in the high group consensus cultures when financial officials dominated the commissions authoring the documents. While individualist themes were always present in Australian accounts, they were most prominent when individual speakers addressed the broader Australian community. This was also similar to the Dutch case where the individualist flavour was strongest in the final evaluation document *Further with results 1998*. While this document was prepared by a group of (predominantly financial) experts for a parliamentary committee, it was also an evaluation prepared for a broader community of agency managers. It can be concluded that individualist stories are likely to be stronger when financial officials speak, but also when they are addressing a broader public.

By contrast, hierarchical accounts of agency reform were most prominent when the speakers were composed of groups of civil servants (other than Ministry of Finance) or politicians. While hierarchical agency themes were always present in the documents of the high group cultures, they were most prominent when these accounts were only addressed to political or administrative superiors. Similarly Australian accounts of agency reform became more hierarchical when groups of civil servants addressed the Prime Minister and Cabinet (MAC 2004). Again this indicates that hierarchical agency stories not only occurred as a reaction to past individualist agency solutions, but were also the product of particular kinds of rhetorical situations. These examples indicate that hierarchical accounts of public management reforms are more likely when groups of civil servants or experts are

addressing political superiors. Finally, the one document exhibiting a strong egalitarian flavour in Sweden was distinguished from all other documents by the majority of Swedish academics among the actual speakers.

All of these examples demonstrate that variation in the cultural flavour of agency talk was not only the consequence of reactions to past cultural commitments, but also occurred together with changes in the rhetorical situation. It can be said that certain speakers, such as financial officials, would appear to have their favoured cultural stories (e.g. individualism) and certain kinds of rhetorical situations, such as groups addressing internal superiors, also lend themselves to certain cultural flavours, e.g. more hierarchical stories. Since the rhetorical situations were most variable in the Dutch case, it is then not surprising that Dutch national styles of speaking were more variable than in other countries. Changes in the cultural flavour of stories were not merely led by reactions to stories themselves but also depended on the actual speakers presenting agency reforms.

The national limits of shifts in the cultural flavour of talk

Besides the role of speakers, shifts in the cultural flavour of agency talk were also conditioned by (culturally informed) national styles of speaking. This was indicated in the analysis of the rhetorical styles characterizing culturally flavoured stories. It was shown that not all rhetorical elements (ethos, pathos, logos) changed together with the story. Indeed there were different combinations of particular audiences, pathos and logos depending upon the political culture. For example Swedish agency talk never constructed particular audiences (ethos) of business consultants when individualist stories were told, Dutch agency talk never used personalized metaphors in their individualist stories (logos), while Australian agency talk never constructed expert particular audiences (ethos) when hierarchical stories were told. Furthermore, the chapter on national styles of speaking indicated that some aspects of agency talk remained durable over time (the universal audience, loci). This means that national styles of speaking limited the degree to which cultural flavours could shift.

As noted in the previous chapter national styles of speaking had their own predominant cultural flavour. They were primarily hierarchical in the high group consensus cultures (The Netherlands,

Sweden) and individualistic in the low group adversarial culture (Australia). Therefore when the different political cultures adopted more high group arguments such as promoting collaboration (SOU 1997) or getting a better ministerial grip of agencies (Commissie Sint 1994), this meant that in sum there were more high group arguments adopted than in the low group adversarial culture (MAC 2004). For example when there was the similar group blame on individualist stories for fragmentation in both Swedish and Australia documents, Swedish official agency accounts still continued to exhibit more group themes than in Australia. There remained more commitments to steering, to expert knowledge and there were still the loci of the precarious and the universal audience of scientific rationality. Similarly, while the Dutch agency accounts never emulated this high group blame, when they exhibited primarily hierarchical agency stories they, like Sweden, were more fervent in their hierarchical commitments than Australian hierarchical accounts. This was accentuated by their hierarchical universal audiences (ministerial accountability, scientific rationality) and the durability of quasi-logical argumentation.

By contrast, when individualist themes became more prominent across the political cultures, the degree to which individualist themes were adopted was more extensive in the low group culture Australia. For example, when there were shifts to more individualist cultural themes in The Netherlands and Sweden (Ministerie van Financiën 1998; SOU 1985), this was never as extensive as Australian individualist agency stories. As already noted Sweden never embraced a particular audience of business consultants when expressing individualist agency themes nor were their Swedish individualist arguments about using competition. Although the Netherlands embraced somewhat more individualist themes than Sweden, and even gave presence to a business consultant audience, it never committed to customer service as in Australia. Since individualist themes were found to be typical of the Australian national style of speaking, a cultural shift to more individualist flavours would inevitably exhibit more extensive individualist commitments than the high group cultures. It can be concluded that when international management fashions exhibit more individualistic or hierarchical cultural flavours, and are also adopted by national speakers in the different political cultures, the effect will nevertheless be mediated and accentuated by culturally informed national styles of speaking.

Translating fashionable agency stories

Finally, the interaction between national styles of speaking and the rhetorical style of a common agency story can now be put together. This is to show one way in which international management fashions are translated to national contexts. While this clearly relates to the issue of the degree to which culturally flavoured stories were adopted and changed across different political cultures, it is analytically distinct. This is because it is concerned with how, rather than to what extent, common stories were incorporated into national styles. At the outset of this study it was recognized that the notion of translation has been used to describe how international management fashions are transformed and edited to the national contexts in which they are adopted (Sahlin-Andersson 2001). However, there has been little empirical discussion or evidence of how this occurs in practice. One of the contributions of this study is then to show how rhetorical analyses can be used to illuminate the way in which national cultures mediate international management fashions.

The argument is that translation occurs through incorporating culturally flavoured stories into durable national styles of speaking. In this chapter it was shown that it was actually the *logos* of agency talk that was most variable over time across the countries and sensitive to the cultural flavour of agency stories. For example when more individualist stories characterized national agency talk there were more

Table 6.5   Translating an individualist story of public management

	Netherlands	**Sweden**	**Australia**
Ethos			
Universal audience	Ministerial accountability	Democracy	Customer service
Particular audience	Business consultant	Financial expert	Business consultant
Pathos (loci)	Unique	Precarious	Unique Challenge
Logos	Unlimited development	Unlimited development	Unlimited development
	Quasi-logical	Quasi-logical	Reasonable belief

Table 6.6 Translating a hierarchical story of public management

	Sweden	**Australia**
Ethos		
Universal audience	Democracy	Customer service
Particular audience	Experts	Department Prime Minister & Cabinet
Pathos	Precarious	Difficult
Logos	Definition & Comparison	Definition & Comparison
	Quasi-logical	Reasonable belief
Metaphors	Sharpening, balancing, whole	Sharpening, balancing, whole

arguments based upon reasonable belief, or rather unlimited development, across the countries. These argumentative techniques were incorporated into the national styles of speaking and formed different national accounts of agency reform. A snapshot of how these common individualist stories and national styles of speaking is presented in Table 6.5.

Alternatively, when there were more hierarchical stories there were more quasi-logical arguments. The *pathos* of national agency talk was also somewhat sensitive to the cultural flavour of stories, at least in The Netherlands and Australia. They respectively adopted the *locus of the unique* when individualist stories were told and more *quantitative loci* when hierarchical stories were told. These features of culturally flavoured stories were stitched together to durable national styles of speaking by the speakers presenting agency reform. This is why when there was some convergence in agency stories across all countries such as when individualist stories were told, complete symbolic convergence was never achieved. A snapshot of how the common group stories were translated to durable national styles is also presented in Table 6.6.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the cultural flavour of agency stories also played a role in shaping national agency talk. Irrespective

of political culture there were some patterns found in rhetorical styles at the level of the cultural flavour of agency stories themselves. This was most striking when individualist stories were told since common argumentative techniques (unlimited development, causal link) and travelling metaphors were found to characterize individualist agency stories across all political cultures. Other rhetorical patterns were also found when hierarchical and egalitarian stories were told across high and low political cultures. They indicate that there was some symbolic convergence of agency talk across the different political cultures, though this was temporary and limited to the level of culturally flavoured stories. In addition, similarities in culturally flavoured stories were most striking at the level of logos, rather than ethos and pathos.

Another contribution of this chapter has been to consider and nuance Christopher Hood's own work on GGCT in public management. One of the ways of doing this included identifying the rhetorical elements that accompanied culturally flavoured agency stories across the countries. These were compared to Hood's suggestions for likely ethos, pathos and logos. While many of his predictions corresponded to the findings in this study, there were nevertheless different rhetorical elements identified that may be of use when applying GGCT in later studies of public management ideas. Not least, the role of the business consultant ethos in individualist stories and the argument of unlimited development seem to accord with much recent experience in public management. Furthermore, Aristotle's tools as revived in the New Rhetoric such as loci (pathos) lent even more insight into how different worldviews of public management come to appear persuasive.

This chapter has also queried Hood's work particularly with regard to the notion of reactions in rhetoric or rather pendulum swings. Firstly, it has shown that shifts in the cultural flavour of agency stories were more often the consequence of changes in the actual speakers presenting agency reform talk or the rhetorical situation generally, rather than of blaming past cultural commitments. For instance the individualist story of agency reform only appeared in the high group consensus cultures when financial officials were prominent among the actual speakers describing the reforms. Similarly, Australian agency talk became more hierarchical when the actual speakers shifted from individuals addressing a broader public to a committee addressing political and administrative elites. These findings suggest that it is not

story alone, but rather the actual speaker who plays an important role in linking management fashions and ideas to national styles of speaking. Inevitably certain kinds of speakers also have their favoured stories which are influenced by who they are addressing.

Furthermore, findings in this chapter would indicate that there are national limits to pendulum swings in the cultural flavour of public management stories. The pendulum would appear to swing wider depending upon the correspondence of the cultural flavour of stories to national political culture. High group political cultures adopted high group stories more fervently, while the low group political culture adopted low group stories more fervently. Both the role of speakers and national styles of speaking in mediating changes in the cultural flavour of public management talk are matters for further research.

Finally, this chapter has shown the way that rhetorical analyses can be used to demonstrate how fashionable management stories were translated to national political cultures. This occurred because it was generally only some rhetorical elements of the fashionable story, such as logos or to a lesser extent pathos, which were incorporated into national accounts of agency reform. Moreover fashionable management stories such as the individualist story of agency reform were mediated by the national style of speaking. Rhetorical aspects of the fashionable story were stitched together to more durable national styles of speaking such as the universal audiences of democracy in Sweden, ministerial accountability and consultation in The Netherlands and customer service in Australia. They indicate that agency practices across these different political cultural were informed by a different constellation of ideas about agencies. This means that cultural homogenization has not been a consequence of the spread of similar management ideas such as agencies nor is it ever likely to be.

Conclusion

Introduction

The trajectory, limits and variety of agency talk across political cultures has been the object of this study. It has demonstrated that while the idea of agencies constituted a management fashion that spread to a range of political cultures, the symbolic convergence characterizing agency talk was limited. This is because the international idea of agency was translated by national speakers through culturally informed durable national styles of speaking. More generally, it can be said that the spread of public management fashions will always be mediated by national trajectories of management talk, and the kinds of official speakers privileged to present reform initiatives in different political cultures.

National styles of speaking and fashionable management stories

Similarities and difference in agency talk were compared across similar high group (The Netherlands, Sweden) and different low group (Australia) political cultures. This was to distinguish the role of political culture (through national styles of speaking), or common public management stories, in shaping official agency talk over time. Indeed, rhetorical regularities governing the construction of agency talk were found at both the level of national styles of speaking, and to a lesser extent, at the level of cultural flavoured management stories. These were linked together by different kinds of speakers to produce different accounts of agency reform across the political cultures studied. The central findings from this comparison and the

explanation for similarities and differences in agency talk can now be summarized.

Firstly, it must be recognized that agency talk in all the political cultures was exclusive in some way. Not least, it was governed by distinctive cultural criteria for good management reform (the universal audiences) such as the maintenance of democracy in Sweden, of ministerial accountability and consultation in The Netherlands, and customer service in Australia. Nevertheless, the different cultural constellations of national talk broadly reflected the diagnoses of political culture that were used to select the countries. Like Dutch and Swedish high group political cultures, their agency talk was also predominantly high group over time, and Dutch talk was more individualistic than Swedish. This corresponded to diagnoses of Dutch political culture rating it as more individualistic than Swedish political culture.

The political cultural diagnoses of the high group cultures had not, however, anticipated that agency talk would be so hierarchical in those countries and much less egalitarian than the political cultural diagnoses indicated. This disparity was argued to be a consequence of the kinds of official speakers privileged to speak about management reform in consensus cultures and their distance from the political apex. Australian agency talk by contrast was predominantly individualistic and this corresponded to diagnoses of Australian political culture. Official Australian speakers were predominantly individuals speaking from a forum close to the political apex. It was a fitting contrast that high group cultures generally privileged groups in committees to speak to other elites about agency reform, while the low group culture generally privileged individuals to address a broader public.

Secondly, the role of durable patterns in national styles of speaking and their contribution to shaping agency talk was a novel finding. Following from historical institutionalism it indicates that public management talk, like political administrative structure, also has its own trajectory. High group political cultures constructed agencies through a commitment to public values and scientific reasoning. They tended to adopt a formal tone and privileged expert knowledge as reflected in their use of quasi-logical techniques. There was consistent adoption of control metaphors over time. By contrast, the low group political culture constructed agencies through a commitment to private values. Australian agency talk was generally informal and privileged different

particular audiences of interest groups, rather than experts. There was a predominant use of arguments based upon reasonable belief and business metaphors over time.

The findings about how differences between the similar high group cultures could explain their official agency talk were more difficult to interpret. As already noted one explanation was that since the Dutch political culture was more individualistic, it also exhibited more individualistic agency talk. Indeed, in some instances Dutch official agency talk emulated Australian official agency talk with regard to a particular business consultant audience and user friendly style. On the other hand, this could also be attributed to the speaker and rhetorical situation. It only occurred in The Netherlands when financial officials were responsible for producing agency talk and were addressing agency managers in general, as well as other political administrative elites. One may suggest that this rhetorical situation was in turn a consequence of the more individualistic Dutch political culture which, in this study, was characterized by a greater variety of official speakers and forums than Sweden.

Thirdly, the cultural flavour of agency stories was also found to effect official agency talk. Indeed, there was a similar individualistic agency story adopted in all countries irrespective of political culture. This story entailed emphasizing price forming and financial incentives in promoting efficiency and better agency performance. It was characterized by similar argumentative techniques such as the causal link and unlimited development, and the adoption of travelling metaphors. More generally the cultural flavours of agency stories were characterized by some rhetorical patterns. For example there was also a similar high group story found in the different high and low group political cultures, Australia and Sweden. This story was characterized by a concern for the complexity of policy making and management and the need for more coordination and collaboration within the administration. It blamed past individualist solutions for existing administrative difficulties with coordination and collaboration, and featured metaphors such as balancing, sharpening and connecting.

Fourthly, while there was some evidence of pendulum swings in the cultural flavour of agency talk, most shifts in the cultural flavour of agency talk did not involve blaming past cultural commitments. Rather they were effected by the speakers and rhetorical situation in which agency talk was being produced. As already noted a common

individualist agency story across all political cultures only occurred when financial officials predominated among the committee membership in the consensus cultures. It was also strongest in The Netherlands when the target audience for the report also changed somewhat to include both political administrative elites and agency managers. Similarly, Australian agency talk became more hierarchical when the speakers changed from individuals to a group and were addressing political administrative elites rather than a broader audience of citizens.

It should be added that while the speaker did play a role in effecting the cultural flavour of agency stories, the degree to which this occurred was limited by the broader political culture. When high group consensus cultures exhibited a shift towards more hierarchically flavoured agency stories this occurred to a greater degree than when there were shifts to more hierarchical stories in the low group adversarial culture. Similarly when the low group adversarial political culture exhibited individualist stories, these were much more fervent than when the high group consensus culture exhibited shifts towards more individualist stories. There was also some evidence to indicate that the frequency with which blame on past cultural commitments occurred was greater in low group adversarial cultures. In just a period of eight years the pendulum had swung in Australia from individualist themes about agencies to more hierarchy, while rhetorical reactions took longer in the consensus cultures. Elsewhere Pollitt & Boukaert (2000:47) have argued that adversarial and systems are subject to quicker cycles of change than consensus system. This is a consequence of the resources ascribed to political actors to make change, and more generally to the maintenance of competition within the system.

It might be added that the prominence of the locus of the unique in the styles of speaking of the more individualistic cultures in this study, make them more vulnerable to pendulum swings in management reform. This is because it relies upon the appeal of reforms because they are new or different in some way. The highest group culture Sweden exhibited a much longer public memory in her national styles of speaking than the other countries. This was illustrated by the wealth of references to the history of Swedish institutions, and their more general appraisal in Swedish agency talk.

Fifth, this study has offered some suggestions for how international public management fashions are translated to national political cultures. It found that only some aspects of national public management

talk are responsive to international symbolic pressures. More specifically, it is the *logos* of agency stories that are most likely to be incorporated into existing national styles of speaking and therefore travel to national contexts. All of the cultures under study exhibited the capacity to adopt a range of different metaphors and both quasi-logical and reasonable belief techniques in their agency talk. These were attached to existing national preferences for ethos and pathos such as private values, informal speakers and the challenge in Australia or public values, expert speakers and the threat in Sweden. The Netherlands was the most exceptional case in this study since it was also adaptive in aspects of ethos and pathos. This can be attributed to the variety of speakers and forums in which agency reform was presented in The Netherlands. More generally, it is always a speaker in a given rhetorical situation that translates management fashions to national styles of speaking. Speakers are the link between national styles of speaking and management fashions and have consequences for the composition of public management talk.

Theoretical contributions and evaluation

The application of GGCT and the New Rhetoric in this study provides the opportunity to reflect upon their contributions to understanding empirical phenomena in public management. It also provides the opportunity to consider the nature of these theoretical perspectives and how well they can support international comparative research. Indeed, it has been an often cited advantage of GGCT that it enables variety in empirical phenomena to be compared (Hood 2000; Douglas 1999). It is claimed that it can do this even within a social constructivist perspective that recognizes variety in meaning. Another advantage of the New Rhetoric and GGCT in this comparative study was that they facilitated distinguishing between the level of national styles of speaking and culturally flavoured stories.

The ambition that GGCT and the New Rhetoric could support the comparison of agency talk within a social constructivist perspective was satisfied in this study. While patterns in cultural flavour and rhetorical styles could be found across the political cultures they were sensitive enough to allow the researcher to also show specific variations in themes. In Chapter 4 it was shown how official speakers stitched together different particular audiences to distinct universal audiences

in order to give meaning to and obtain agreement for agency init-
iatives. These differences were despite patterns in national styles
of speaking. In addition, it was apparent that the different cultural
flavours of agency talk in all countries appeared in slightly different
ways such as the role of the constitution in Swedish hierarchical
themes and that of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in Australia. It
becomes possible to appreciate the same cultural ways of life as having
family resemblances across cultures, rather than being assuming same-
ness. This brings further nuance to discussions about convergence and
how management ideas travel.

The focus that GGCT brought to the research and its ability to cap-
ture variety was nevertheless accompanied by a wealth of variety
in talk that could not be captured completely. While Hood's (2000)
earlier work was clearly of great use to this study the empirical data
revealed a number of themes and arguments that had not been dis-
cussed or placed in the GGCT literature before. They included argu-
ments about consolidation or feedback loops between policy and
operations or mutuality between agencies with a set sector goal in the
budget. This presented a problem of classification as the data was to be
interpreted in the language of the ways of life (see also Maesschalk
2004:367–369). Similarly rhetorical styles also had to be interpreted
and were not always mutually exclusive. In addition some themes
such as *democracy, ministerial accountability* or even *steering* are rather
general and arguably applicable to more than one way of life. Indeed,
in terms of rhetoric their ambiguity was distinctly useful. It can be con-
sidered a theoretical contribution of this study that it has attempted
to classify or identify further arguments and themes according to the
GGCT typology, thereby opening up discussion about how they are to
be interpreted within public management.

One danger of GGCT as a lens for interpreting the data was that
it can distract the researcher from other features of the documents.
Certainly, it is more appealing to focus upon the themes and argu-
ments that are easiest to interpret. To some extent, this danger has
been averted through the addition of the New Rhetoric since it required
a quite different lens for analysing culture and talk. Indeed, the uni-
versal audience provided a competing diagnosis of the cultural context
in which agency talk was being produced. While it could not support
the selection of national cases as GGCT has in this study, the advan-
tage of the New Rhetoric in interpreting culture is that it can reveal

the production of culture through the ambiguous process of joining up different particular audiences. It also does not pre-define the cultural flavour being presented by certain terms like GGCT. There is more possibility for watchwords such as steering for example to be given a cultural interpretation based upon their use in a give rhetorical situation.

Another query about the use of GGCT concerns its applicability in different levels of analysis and the relationship between these levels (see Thompson 1997). While the correspondence found between diagnoses of high and low group political cultures and agency talk was astounding, it remains difficult to show which level of organization this talk applies and how to apply GGCT to social relations more generally. Clearly the political administrative differences across the cultures were somewhat more varied than differences in degree of hierarchy or individualism, though GGCT is largely silent on these aspects of social relations.

The most important theoretical contributions of this study have been to show the role of the rhetorical situation and speakers in effecting the selection of cultural flavours and composition of public management talk. This not only challenges claims about pendulum swings in talk which are purely reactions to past cultural commitments, it also provided a means to speak of how translation of public management fashions occur. These findings could be developed and verified through further international comparative research examining the conditions (such as rhetorical situations and speakers) under which reactions or shifts in the cultural flavour of public management talk occur. It would be interesting to test the findings from this study about the rhetorical styles accompanying culturally flavoured stories in other political cultures, and further develop the concept of national styles of speaking.

Finally, given the greater focus that Hood sought has to give to the fatalist way of life in public management (Hood 2000:145–167), it must be noted that its identification in official documents was extremely limited. One exception was the interpretation of the unintended effects of result steering as reflecting fatalist scepticism in the Swedish document *In the citizen's service 1997*. These were arguments that results steering had actually brought about greater detail in steering and resulted in managers writing reports for the sake of auditors rather than for future planning (SOU 1997:83–85). According to

some GGCT proponents the lack of fatalist themes was not surprising since it is typical of the fatalist way to be silent and let the other ways of life speak for them (Mamadouh 1999a:400; Hendriks 1996:62). In addition, it was noted in Chapter 3 that the fatalist way of life was less likely to feature in *official* rhetoric about agency reform because it was at odds with the speaker obtaining a degree of certainty about what to do. It is arguably more likely that fatalist stories can be found in unofficial arguments as presented by managers within organizations themselves or by other actors outside of the political administrative system such as the media. Similarly, egalitarian themes and arguments were also few and far between in the documents analysed. It may also be that these are more likely to be espoused by actors outside of the administrative system.

Reflecting on public management knowledge

Another criticism of GGCT has been that it does not relate to the practice of public management and the problems facing public managers (Hood 2000:223). This criticism could also apply to the New Rhetoric. However, both theoretical frameworks present the possibility for practitioners and policy makers to be confronted with and reflect upon official knowledge and its *blind-spots*. While not ignoring that there is also a wealth of other unofficial knowledge that informs practice, the findings of this research can promote greater consciousness of the boundaries of official knowledge and what not to forget completely when cultural commitments shift. To put it another way neither GGCT nor the New Rhetoric provide answers to normative questions about *what should be done*, but their categories do enable us to identify some of the limits of certain stories and knowledge. They open a space for considering the consequences of these blind-spots and how certain plots might be thickened or which subject positions have been silenced. Reflection can then take place about both the appropriate content of reforms, as well as the official role that is envisioned for actors such as policy makers, managers and citizens.

In Chapter 3 some blind-spots to the four cultural stories were already identified such as the hierarchist's misplaced trust in authority and expertise, the individualist's lack of consideration for corruption or cooperation, and the egalitarian's inability to respond to failures stemming from unresolved feuds. Similarly, the category presumptions

in the New Rhetoric helped to identify some aspects of stories that have been less developed or ignored in official accounts. From the application of both theories it is possible to see that official accounts of reform continue to place a large degree of faith in the capacity of authorities. This was reflected in the arguments about ministerial accountability in The Netherlands where agencies were preferable to ZBOs because ministers could intervene in the operations of the former and presumably ensure that they functioned adequately and accountably (Ministerie van Financiën 1991; Commissie Sint 1994). In Sweden it was apparent in the faith put in politicians to be interested in setting and following up upon performance objectives and knowing how to identify precise goals (SOU 1983, 1985). In Australia it was reflected in arguments that executive agencies would be able to give a neutral response to complex policy problems. All of these presumptions are likely to find weakness in practice.

In individualist stories there was often the presumption that civil servants' incentive systems were understood and that they would respond in appropriate ways to financial rewards. This was reflected in Dutch desires to introduce performance pay and in Australian proposals for rewards for cooperative behaviour. Such recommendations are blind to the effects that these arrangements have upon ethical behaviour and the possibility for gaming or even corruption. Finally, egalitarian proposals for more mutuality within the budgetary system in order to promote cooperation (SOU 1997) or about a deliberative approach to ethics, lack responses to the problem of what to do when agreement cannot be found. This study reminds us that all solutions have their drawbacks and limits.

There are four more general observations that can be made about the official rhetoric analysed in this research. Firstly, detailed accounts of the practice of agency reform were surprisingly few and far between in the official documents analysed. Instead most of the information about practice was presented in a very superficial way stating for example that benchmarking was present (Ministerie van Financiën 1991) or that governance arrangements were clear in agencies (MAC 2004), whatever that might mean. Such statements, based upon limited explanation or even observation, suggest a great deal of confidence and certainty in the management arrangements pursued. They suggest the need for more fatalistic stories in order to encourage caution about what to do. The one exception was *In the citizen's service 1997* which

provided some detailed case studies and interview statements from directors regarding the use of results management.

Secondly, there was the very limited role and voice that managers and employees of agencies were given in official accounts of agency reform. Managers only appeared in accounts of financial changes, and then it was to legitimize the changes being pursued. It is claimed that these financial changes met the problems managers had already identified (Ministerie van Financiën 1991; SOU 1985). This was sometimes expressed using statements from managers themselves. While managers and employees did seem to feature more in individualist stories (Ministerie van Financiën 1991; Ministerië van Financiën 1998; Howard 1997; Vardon 1997a; SOU 1985), there was little analysis of their motivations apart from financial or career opportunities. Such limited conceptualization and distance from other features of manager's work or their goals is surely likely to only increase the lack of relevance of official accounts to practice. Again the exception was *In the citizen's service 1997* which did seek to describe some of the conflicting goals public managers face and even to encourage more deliberation about their role.

Thirdly, it became clear that arguments about citizenship and the effects of agency reform on citizens remain a very limited and undeveloped concept in official circles. Their role was cited most frequently in *In the citizen's service 1997* with statements about the desire to give them greater influence or make them a part of a *living consciousness* within the administration (SOU 1997). In numbers of words/ statements in that document, they still appeared in a fairly limited way and few practical means, aside from law enforcement, were identified for promoting this. There was also only limited attempt to discuss how more participation might be achieved or promoted through agency reform. In the other documents where citizens appeared it was primarily as a voter in the democratic system (SOU 1985) or as a customer (Howard 1997; Vardon 1998). There is little reflection upon the consequences of this for the democratic system as a whole or for the opinions of citizens about this characterization.

It may well be that these last two observations cannot be changed within official stories, because rhetorical situations in political administrative systems do not permit this. If this is the case, then it may be possible that they come from other actors outside of the system, ideally in a dialogue with policy makers. Such dialogue may promote more

enriched or useful meanings for big ideas such as (ministerial) accountability, democracy and customer service, than as appeared in this study. The way that agency reform has been constructed by managers themselves or by other actors outside of the political system has not been investigated in this study and is certainly an area for future research (see Smullen 2003).

Fourthly, it became apparent that agency reform initiatives were advocated on the basis of very limited research findings or even upon questionable findings. The Dutch evaluation document *Further with result 1998* was an example of the latter. New changes, particularly in Australia, were also introduced with little detailed evaluation or analysis of the previous reforms. It sadly remains a common but all too relevant criticism that more time and detailed analysis needs to be devoted to the assessment of management reforms before they are implemented. Furthermore, observations of the dominance of financial officials and their role in translating individualist stories to the high group consensus cultures invites further investigation. It would indicate that professional networks may be particularly important in spreading management ideas to different political cultures.

Speaking persuasively in high and low group political cultures

Finally this study alerts reformers and other actors wishing to promote particular management ideas to the ways of speaking which may best obtain acceptance in different national political administrative systems. This study has shown for example that quasi-logical argumentation is most valued in Sweden and The Netherlands, while arguments based upon the structure of reality are more likely to win acceptance in Australia. It has also revealed that pathos such as the precarious in Sweden, the unique in some cases in The Netherlands, as well as the challenge in Australia are likely to promote the success of reforms. Though speakers were found to have an ability to influence the linkages between management fashions and national styles of speaking, it was also evident that the successful packaging of just any management idea to different audiences is highly unlikely. It requires a great deal of *inventio* [invention] from the speaker (Vickers 1988:62). Such a Hercules of rhetoric was not found among the speakers observed in this research.

Appendix A – Analysing the Documents

A.1   Applying the new rhetoric

The process of document analysis required for this research has been a very time consuming and laborious task. It is also a hermeneutic task, although I have tried here to record in detail how I went about this interpretation. Firstly, prior to the application of the argumentative schemes of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2003) each document was read on numerous occasions in order to become familiar with the contents of the text, the terminology used and its structure. Secondly, detailed inventories were made of each document in order to support and assist my analysis of the text. The documents were read to identify the main conclusions of the text and make a global assessment of what was being said in the text. This was to enable a reconstruction of how these conclusions had been argued throughout the document and be conscious of any presumptions in the text that made these conclusions possible. In addition, notes were made of the main themes discussed in each document, as well as their location and order in the text.

The preparation of the inventories and analysis also involved cross checking the appearance of similar kinds of terminology, themes or argumentative techniques across all the documents in the same context and also across the documents in other contexts. Certain terms, as well as any phrases that seemed exemplary of the argumentative standpoints or styles being pursued in the document were also noted for later consideration. Any terms or phrases in the document that seemed at odds with its main conclusions were also noted for consideration. To check these inventories of the documents and their significance, I also sometimes counted the use of certain terms and made notes of the points of their appearance in the text. This information was used to support later diagnoses of the rhetorical strategies. Once this process of familiarizing with the documents was complete, I then began to assess the documents again according to the conceptual framework of both Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, and Hood's classifications of public management arguments.

The conceptual framework of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (2003) was described in Chapter 3. The way that I have applied these concepts is described in the following paragraphs. Throughout this discussion it should be kept in mind that once one begins to deconstruct a text and identify argumentative arrangements and strategies, it becomes possible to use these findings to uncover even more language games in the text. To this extent, the rhetorical approach pursued in this research can be an unending circle or rather spiral that becomes bigger, the deeper one delves into the text. The repetition of sequences in the analysis is therefore not unusual and almost impossible to avoid. As noted above I have generally proceeded from identifying the kinds of conclusions that were made in documents in order to reconstruct how such conclusions were made appealing to the audience. Beginning from the conclusions also provided me with my own starting point for considering the processes that were essential to conditioning the audience to accept certain arguments and findings.

Among the most controversial features of the New Rhetoric is the construction and distinction between the universal and the particular audience. These notions refer to the effective community of minds that the speaker constructs and the relationship with this audience. It required me to assess the kind of knowledge bases that are used in official documents to obtain credibility with the audience. In general final assessments of the constructions of particular and universal audiences were not completed until the other concepts the loci, premises and argumentative techniques had also been identified. This was because these features of the argumentation provided indications of the character of the audiences being wooed. Nevertheless in my initial readings of the documents I first noted the kinds of terminology, concepts and evidence that were adopted in the documents and how these varied throughout the argumentation. Where possible I have also tried to associate such terminology with particular professions or actors within the political administrative system. This has been especially important in identifying particular audiences.

I have also been alert to the tone of the argumentation, its level of detail or simplicity, whether it is formal or informal and the kind of action that such a style is trying to incite. In this endeavor I used Hood's (2000:180) prescriptions for ethos in the different ways of life as a guide for my assessment, e.g. did the speaker appear as an expert, a battler, skeptic or warrior for the oppressed and how? Or was there another characterization appropriate? Furthermore, the actual authors of the text were noted as well as the forums in which the document was to be received. This was to assist in making sense of the argumentative procedures adopted and its target audience. At this stage of the analysis the following question was posed; to whom is the text addressed and to what kind of audience?

As noted in Chapter 3 there were two characteristics that were important in identifying universal audience. These included their transcendence of particular audiences in a document and also their durability. Therefore I sought to identify features of the argumentation that would appeal to broader audiences, not just the particular audiences I had identified as being constructed

in the text. I looked for claims or principles that sought to establish acceptance across numerous professions or particular audiences in the documents and indeed that sought acceptance within the broader political culture. When assessing the universal audience I also consulted all of the documents that I had analysed in each of the countries in order to identify any patterns in conceptualizations of a cultural standard of good reform, or in the way that information was given over time.

The presumptions were also a difficult concept to apply as Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (2003) recognize that they can be implicit to the argumentation. In order to identify presumptions I have sought to identify the problems and solutions presented in the documents and the way they were used to justify the need for reform. In reading the text in this way consideration was also given to the conclusions of the argumentation and the way that problems or claims being identified in the text prepared the audience for such conclusions and made them good. In general the loci and many of the argumentative techniques were less difficult to distinguish. There were however some problems with distinguishing between some of the categories of The New Rhetoric. In particular presumptions and the causal link sometimes appeared not to be mutually exclusive. Both concepts involved making associations between events without necessarily explaining how they were linked.

A.2   The problem of language

The rhetorical analyses conducted for this research has required reading and analysing documents in languages other than one's own mother tongue. This has not been without concern for misinterpreting documents. Dutch and Swedish remain second languages to me, no matter what my experience with them, and I cannot overcome this fact. I have tried to reduce misinterpretations as a result of language capacity, by consulting with Dutch and Swedish colleagues and friends about my analysis. This has included email discussions about the use and meaning of certain terms, as well as obtaining opinions about my reading of the documents and the plausibility of my analysis. This said, language remains a contested site, where meaning is never exhausted or pinned down. All interpretations remain therefore my own.

Appendix B – Selection of Documents

B.1   Process of document selection

The process of document selection required familiarity with the agency reforms that were introduced in each country, the process leading to their creation, and the range of official descriptions in circulation. A two-pronged strategy was adopted to navigate the field of available documents and make the selection for this study. Firstly, I consulted a range of primary and secondary sources discussing administrative arrangements and agency reforms in each country. This included consulting academic literature, as well as government sources such as policy documents, parliamentary proceedings, and agency evaluations. In this phase of the research, visits were also made to Sweden and Australia, and in all countries interviews were conducted with government officials about their agency reforms.

From the information gathered during these experiences, a preliminary selection of official documents that had announced, described or discussed agency reforms in their initial phases was made. This was relatively easy in the case of The Netherlands where agency reform had been described in a small set of clearly identifiable policy documents and sources. It was more difficult in Sweden and Australia, where the candidate documents were in the first case multiple with broader terms of reference, and in the second case, not available to the public except for official speeches and legislation.

The second stage of document selection involved consulting with experts in each country regarding their opinion on the most significant documents, and upon my own preliminary selection. A questionnaire was sent to four experts in each country, including representatives from both academic and practitioner domains. The questionnaire was not only used to make an assessment about my own selection of documents but also to check the existence of documents which I may not have considered in my preliminary field work. Consultation with these experts was also conducted by email, particularly where there were disagreements about the appropriate documents for analysis. As a result of these interactions, a final selection of documents was made for each country.

B.2   Experts consulted in The Netherlands, Sweden and Australia

The Netherlands

Walter Kickert, Professor of Public Administration, Erasmus University, Rotterdam
Nico Mol, Professor of Business Economics for the Public Sector, University of Twente, Twente
Ronald Oosteroom, Former Director of the BIFI unit Ministry of Finance
Dr Peter Van der Knaap, Director of Policy Evaluation, The Netherlands Court of Audit

Sweden

John Pierre, Professor of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg
Rune Premfors, Professor of Political Science, University of Stockholm, Stockholm
Lennart Gustaffson, Director, Ministry of Justice
Dr. Richard Murray, Chief Economist, Swedish Agency for Public Management

Australia

John Pierre, Professor of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg
Rune Premfors, Professor of Political Science, University of Stockholm, Stockholm
Lennart Gustaffson, Director, Ministry of Justice
Dr. Richard Murray, Chief Economist, Swedish Agency for Public Management

B.3   The questionnaire

(1) Can you please identify the five most important government documents that have initiated, described or evaluated agencies *(national title)* in *country* during approximately the last twenty years? Under the title of the document could you also identify why this document is selected.

Title of document	Type of reforms	Yr	Series or author
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

(2) Which government documents about *(national title)* – if any – have focused most upon agency independence or freedom during approximately the last twenty years?

(3) Please identify whether you agree that these documents have been of importance and rate them according to the level of importance you believe they have had in the discussions and initiation of agency reforms more generally.

Name of document	Important? (Y or N)	Rating
A.		
B.		
C.		

(4) Are there other government documents, not noted in the list above or mentioned in your earlier answers, that you would identify as initiating important agency reforms in the last 20 years?

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