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How Administrators and Consultants Built Behavioral Insights in Danish Public Agencies

Laage-Thomsen, Jakob

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Jakob Laage-Thomsen
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Abstract

Recent work on consultants and academics in public policy has highlighted their transformational role. The paper traces how, in the absence of an explicit government strategy, external advisors establish different organizational arrangements to build Behavioral Insights in public agencies as a new form of administrative expertise. This variation shows the importance of the politico-administrative context within which external advisors exert influence. The focus on professional expertise adds to existing understandings of ideational compatibility in contemporary Policy Advisory Systems. Inspired by the Sociology of Professions, expertise is conceptualized as professionally constructed sets of diagnosis, inference, and treatment. The paper compares four Danish governmental agencies since 2010, revealing the central roles external advisors play in facilitating new policy ideas and diffusing new forms of expertise. This has implications for how we think of administrative expertise in contemporary bureaucracies, and the role of external advisors in fostering new forms of expertise.

Keywords: Expertise, Policy Advisory Systems, Behavioral Insights, Sociology of Professions

Introduction

Recent work on consultants and academics in public policy has shown the importance of understanding their role in transforming administrative and public policy (Kirkpatrick et al. 2019; Williams 2018; Ylönen and Kuusela 2019). One such transformation is the development of Behavioral Insights (BI) Teams in public administrations, that apply insights from behavioral sciences to public policy (Halpern 2016). Behavioral Insights draws together classical economic theory, cognitive science, and behavioral psychology, constructing an image of the less-than-rational actor with systematic deficiencies in rational decision-making that can be experimentally characterized and anticipated in order to develop more effective policy tools (OECD 2017). As an approach it has gained politico-epistemic authority by combining experimental evidence-making with political practicality, in the way that it allows policy-makers to act as "choice architects", while behavioral experts act as intermediaries between science, politics and citizens (Strassheim, Jung, and Korinek 2015).

While BI Teams are known in several OECD countries (OECD 2017; World Bank Group 2019), variation in their establishment within public agencies remains understudied. Denmark is known to follow international management trends in public administration with close affinities to Anglo-American management ideas (Greve, Lægreid, and Rykkja 2018). But where most administrations have diffused BI ideas through elite units associated with the executive branch, BI has developed without such central coordination in Denmark. Given this we can expect to see variation in how BI is introduced. It is known that Danish bureaucrats remain primary sources of policy information for politicians, while external advisors, like consultants, are secondary (Blom-Hansen, Bækgaard, and Serritzlew 2020). Research on sources of influence in public administration should account for such variation, including in the role of consultants.

Studies across national settings have noted the growth of a distinct market for consultancy services targeted at the public sector. It has particularly been questioned how such changes may affect the *ethos* of civil service and change the *practices* of policy production and program management within public bureaucracies (see the Editors' introduction to this symposium). To interrogate the changes, this analysis builds on the tradition of Policy Advisory Systems (PAS) and the Sociology of Professions. PAS stresses the importance of disentangling the influence of consultants in systems of policy advice and understanding the policy context within which they operate (van den Berg et al. 2019). The Sociology of Professions literature sees experts and professionals, regardless of their institutional locations, as engaged in struggles for legitimacy and 'jurisdictional' control in the competition for expert work inside and outside the public sector (Abbott 1988; Eyal 2013; Noordegraaf 2007). Together they highlight the importance of understanding the actors engaged in policy advice and the context in which they interact, alongside what types of expertise that get recognized as valuable policy-advice, and how.

The paper investigates how external advisors embedded Behavioral Insights as new administrative expertise in the Danish Public sector, comparing four case studies of public agencies since 2010. Two characteristics of the case stands out. The first is the enrolment of academics into diffusing and initiating BI initiatives in public agencies, both in their capacities as researchers and as consultants. The second is the involvement of small

specialized consulting firms, that have received less attention in the literature compared with Global Professional Service Firms and Management Consultancies (Armbrüster 2006).

The paper contributes to the existing literature on policy advisory systems in three ways. Firstly, it extends existing conceptions of policy advisory 'content' by putting forward 'expertise' as consisting of professionally constructed sets of diagnosis, inference, and treatment. Second, applying this conception leads to a deeper understanding of how administrators and consultants interact in the embedding of new forms of administrative expertise. Finally, analyzing this process in a Danish neo-corporatist regime, it enriches our empirical understanding of how the 'scientization' of policy advice operates in an administrative setting (Christensen 2018). Scientization has so far been suggested as a form of externalization, where academic advisors and scientific arguments play an increasing role as sources of policy advice, this case further shows their interplay in the introduction of science-based practices as administrative expertise.

The first two sections of the paper outline the analytical framework and methodology. The third section presents an analysis in three steps. It first focuses on the relevant politico-administrative and policy transformations over a 20-year period that provide the context for embedding BI work in the public sector. It then compares the roles played by external advisors in facilitating BI policy ideas and diffusing BI forms of expertise. Finally, it investigates how these external relationships have become lasting parts of the various organizational setups. In the final sections I discuss the implications external advisors and administrative expertise have for public administration scholarship.

Administrators and consultants in public administration

One way of studying the effects of consultancy on civil service ethos and practices is through a focus on policy advice. Policy advice, at its core, has to do with the kind of information and advice that is available and influence policymakers. Analyzing policy-advice within a changing system, PAS basically asks two questions; who is supplying the policy advice and what is the content of that advice? These are the 'location' and the 'content' dimensions of policy advice. PAS has developed a detailed framework for studying the actors supplying policy advice and their positions in relation to the politico-administrative system, geared towards comparative and historical studies of their development (van den Berg et al. 2019; Craft and Howlett 2012; Halligan 1995; Howlett and Migone 2013). Traditional PAS has

political decision-making at the center of analysis, developing fine-tuned typologies to distinguish positions of actors inside and outside the official political system and administration to see how these change over time or between contexts. These actor positions are often represented as belonging to four separate "communities" depending on their "distance" from Government and their "insider-outsider" status in relation to the public sector (van den Berg et al. 2019). Here, policy influence is seen as a function of the proximity of actors to government decision-makers.

Recent theoretical developments, the 'second wave' of PAS, has transposed this framework in crucial ways to better incorporate 'context' and 'content' (Manwaring 2019). This is because location only forms part of the picture of policy advice, and particularly in the case of increasingly complex advisory systems, understood as systems with more distributed agency, content might better depict the nature of policy advice (Craft and Howlett 2012, 2013; Hustedt 2019). In this development, the question of influence has been transposed to ones of 'access' and 'ideational compatibility' (Craft and Wilder 2017). Focusing on access, shifts analytical emphasis to the policy subsystem context in which advisory systems are situated. The basic idea is that policy subsystems, the decision-making networks structured around policy issues, can be more or less accessible to particular actors. Ideational compatibility refers to different aspects of policy advisory systems that make them more or less open to different kinds of policy advice.

Craft and Wilder (2017) originally suggested four ideational compatibility archetypes, encompassing 'content', 'purpose', 'issue' and 'relational' aspects, that makes Advisory Systems more or less ideationally coherent. The ideational compatibility approach has been criticized for potentially downplaying issues of political demand and power, and to risk overlooking the distribution of power within PAS (Manwaring 2019). Such criticism is valuable, particularly by emphasizing the question of "why some advice is accepted and others not" in specific instances, although the initial problem may be overstated. The model developed by Craft and Wilder is specifically aimed at understanding the "compatibility among adviser and advisee" (2017: 231). In this perspective, there is a clear potential for revisiting the archetypes of 'content' and 'purpose' which are understood as *policy* ideas/aims/instruments. An overly focus on *policy* overlooks a potentially central source of ideational compatibility (and change) found in the literature on professions and expertise in the Sociology of Professions. Such literature sees 'experts', be they academics or consultants,

as competing for expert work in struggles of legitimacy and 'jurisdictional' control over professional work (Abbott 1988; Eyal 2013, 2019). By incorporating these, we are therefore able to re-conceptualize ideational compatibility in terms of professional norms and expertise, that might be more or less shared or contested across institutional locations. This becomes important because much policy advice, particularly in public bureaucracies, are forms of professional work, and because it allows us to understand how peripheral actors participate in changing the professional norms of advice-giving inside the bureaucracy.

The Sociology of Professions has traditionally been concerned with the development of professions and influence of ideas over time in both national and transnational settings (Abbott 2005; Seabrooke and Tsingou 2015). In political-administrative and organizational settings, Noordegraaf (2007) has suggested the term 'hybrid professionalism' when dealing with the civil service. Particularly in the public sector we find bureaucratic pressure for hierarchical control conflicting with professional pressures of expert control.

In this context, we can understand the dynamics of expert competition as around control over diagnosis and treatment of policy problems. That is, between professionally constructed sets of diagnosis, inference, and treatment. This builds directly on the original definition of professional work and jurisdiction by Andrew Abbot (1988). Public administration ultimately allows for mixed professionalism, since bureaucratic expertise relies on both disciplinary and practical knowledge (Mangset and Asdal 2019). However, professional orientations and identities do change over time, and these changes are important for ideational compatibility in the system.

An important finding in the Sociology of Professions, is the way science and expertise has acquired a more prominent role in politics and daily life, particularly in relation to the increased prevalence of 'regulatory sciences' that sit at the interface between science, which does not proscribe action, and politics, which does (Eyal 2019). Examples of studies that mirror discussions of evidence-based policy-making, is of how Randomized Control Trials have grown as the "gold standard" for evaluation in international development policies (de Souza Leão and Eyal 2019), showing how experts, particularly in situations of vulnerability, subordination and crisis, turn to the "mechanical objectivity" provided by such methods. Other examples on the long-term transformation of professional disciplines are studies of the internationalization of the economics profession (Fourcade 2006) and how professionals

trained this way have found positions within public administration and impacted policy-making (Christensen 2017).

Some of these ideas have found their way into the PAS literature (Krick, Christensen, and Holst 2019). For example, Christensen (2018) has observed an increasing 'scientization' of policy advice, that is, a growing reliance on academic expertise in public policy. His study of the increased access of academic economists to Norwegian advisory commissions, show this transformation in corporatist systems. While corporatists systems with consensus or compromise-based policymaking styles, such as in northern Europe, have often been more open to external policy advice, this has mostly been in the form of including organized interests in governmental advisory bodies (van den Berg et al. 2019; Hustedt 2019). These observations indicate that external advisors can combine elements of scientization as well as forms of 'externalization' identified in PAS literature (Craft and Howlett 2013). These can be important transformations of policy advice, while not being explicitly politicized as being partisan. Generally, while processes of externalization and politicization have been confirmed in most OECD countries (Howlett 2019), countries vary (Craft and Halligan 2017), and we should be aware of a potential 'Westminister bias' (Hustedt 2019).

Returning to the question of how external advisors embedded Behavioral Insights as a new administrative expertise in the Danish Public sector, PAS stresses the importance of understanding consultancy and advice within its political subsystem context. In this case, that context is one of politico-administrative reform policy across agencies, and of the individual agency policy areas. The PAS perspective also makes it important to understand the role of smaller academic and specialized consultancies vis-à-vis administrators, in building administrative expertise. The Professions perspective ultimately reorients the focus on these actors, seeing their role in cross-cutting professional competition by focusing on the content of expertise, as professionally constructed sets of diagnosis, inference, and treatment

Combining these perspectives generates three questions that structure the analysis. First, what is the political-administrative and institutional context in which BI becomes embedded in public administrations? Second, what impact do external knowledge advisors have on internal institutionalization of administrative expertise? Third, how and why does the form of BI expertise vary across types of agencies in public administrations?

Methods and data

The paper relies on interviews with civil servants and administrative documents, published and internal, from four agencies working with behavioral insights in the Danish Central administration. The agencies were identified by a thorough search of governmental reports and webpages containing reference to BI, existing enumerating reports (World Bank Group 2019) and interviewee snowballing. This search yielded the four cases for this study. Although important to the overall politic-administrative reform context, the Ministry of Taxation is not included in the case comparison because of its turbulent reform history (see Christensen and Mortensen 2018). As I discuss later on, there are clear historical politico-administrative reasons why behavioral insights have been institutionalized in these agencies and not others. Table 2 presents the four cases, their acronyms, the status of their BI work and the interview material from each.

10 semi-structured interviews were carried out with civil servants working in these teams and their collaborative partners. About half of respondents were BI specialists, predominantly junior officials with PhDs. The other half were senior officials, mostly with management responsibilities and diverse careers. This mix is characteristic of most BI teams. Each interview lasted between 1-2 hours and was preceded by a background interview of equal length. In addition to questions of career and profession, the interviews focused on: a) the organizational history of working with behavioral insights; b) how BI was applied in practice; and c) the actual and potential involvement of external advisors in both of these activities.

Table 1: Overview of cases and interviews

Ministry	Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs		Ministry of Employment	
Agency	The Competition and Consumer Authority	The Business Authority	The Agency for Labor Market and Employment	The Working Environment Authority
Acronym	KFST	ERHVST	STAR	ARBTIL
Year of first reported BI projects	2012	2012	2015	2016
Status of systematic BI work today.	'Large' unit of eight civil servants, anchored in consumer-political office.	Coordinated by one central civil servant. Relies on long-term partnership with consultancy. BI anchored in office for modernization and simplification	Coordinated by one central civil servant. Relies on partnership with University. BI anchored in office for knowledge and analysis	Small unit of two-five civil servants, anchored in communications office.
Interview material	Three respondents, four interviews of 1-2 hours, one 1-hour meeting.	Two respondents, one interview of 1 hours, 2-hour meeting	Two respondents, three interviews of 1 hours, 1-hour meeting	Three respondents, three interviews of 1-2 hours, 1-hour meeting
Respondents	K1, K2, K3	E1, E2	S1, S2	A1, A2, A3

It is difficult, in practice and in theory to clearly define the characteristics of a "BI Team". Institutionally, because of "a wide range of models for integrating BI into the daily work of public administration" (OECD 2017). But equally because of the hybrid nature of BI as a (proto-)profession drawing together sub-disciplines from the 'behavioral sciences', particularly Economics, Psychology, and Neuroscience. Here I have used a minimalist definition of cases where one or more civil servant explicitly work with BI on a regular basis, combined with an organizational awareness of a 'behavioral model'. This definition is appropriate for the level of institutional integration BI enjoys in Denmark.

Several process models exist for applying BI (e.g. BIT 2012; OECD 2019), but each empirical case shows variation. This is because, as a form of expertise, BI exists on a

continuum from Behavioral Design (design-driven) to Behavioral Economics (hypothesis-data-driven), all grounded in the regularities of behavioral biases. The process of 'diagnosis' is similar across BI: behavioral process models are used to diagnose policy problems as involving behavioral problems or not, and while both ends of the continuum stress the testing (and evaluation) of interventions via experimentation, its thoroughness and scope differ vastly. Inference is most often based on lists of behavioral biases but can again be more or less sophisticated. Finally, BI offers several treatments, but particularly 'nudges', in the form of interventions in the 'choice architecture' of citizens, have yielded popular and often cost-saving results.

Analysis

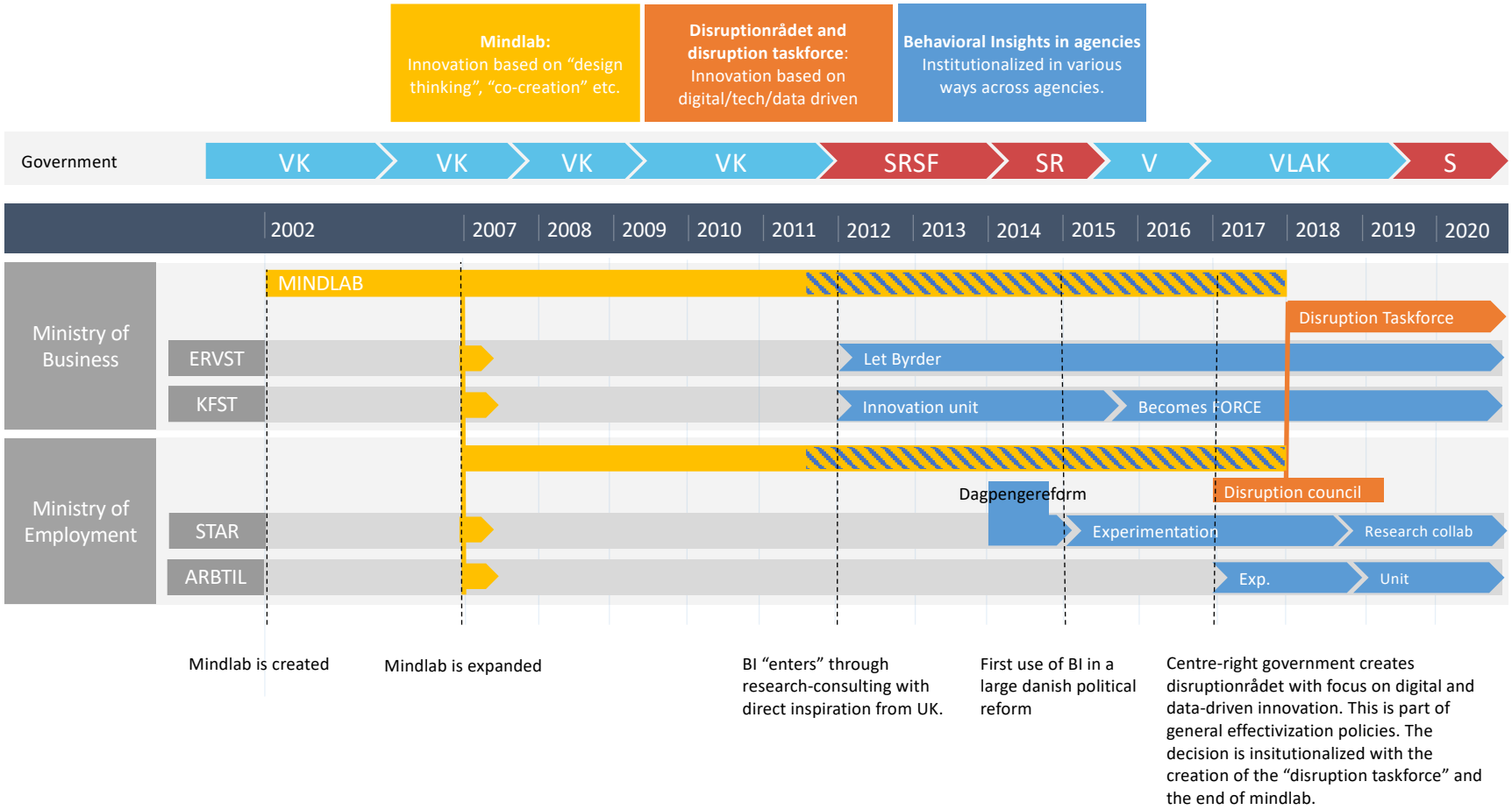
The analysis is structured in three sections. First, the four cases are situated in their changing politico-administrative context. Second, a comparison of the involvement of external advisors in each agency, and what impact it has had on internal institutionalization of expertise. Finally, the analysis compares how the form of BI expertise varies between agencies, relating to external relationships and affecting future reliance on external advisers.

Changing politico-administrative context

Denmark is characterized by a consensus-driven and neo-corporatist political-administrative tradition. Over the past 20 years, the country has experienced an entanglement of reforms variously characterized as New Public Management and New Public governance (Greve et al. 2018; Pedersen and Löfgren 2012). The challenge such reforms make for traditional professional roles has been noted (Sehested 2002). Added to these reforms is a growth in evidence-based policy-making in some areas of the public sector (Andersen and Randrup 2017). The use of consulting services in the central administration has been central to political and academic debates, but changing government accounting standards and practices make historical comparison difficult (Løhde 2019).

The period has been characterized by "de-bureaucratization" and "modernization" efforts of successive Danish governments. Particularly, administrative innovation policy has been central to support these agendas and thus forms the subsystem context for this study. The agendas entangle concerns that have been shown to have importance for the transformations in the organization of the public sector vis-à-vis consultants (van den Berg et al. 2019). These

Organizational genealogy:
Behavioral Insights in a transition of innovation



have been salient across different political agendas and are concerned with the power between the standing bureaucracy and political system and concerns of the disposition of human resources in light of the New Public Management business-orientation.

The process of change in administrative innovation policy can be demonstrated through an organizational genealogy. It shows how BI is embedded across agencies within a general transformation from an early 'public innovation'-model based on social-science met 'Design-Thinking' to a 'Disruption'-model based on tech and data-driven innovation. BI straddles these models in its versioning from Behavioral Design (softer, design-driven) to Behavioral Economics (harder, hypothesis-data-driven). The process is illustrated by focusing on five key moments, sketched in figure 1.

Mindlab was created by the then Ministry of Business Affairs in 2002 at the same time as a new center-right government. The ensuing period was marked by a series of reforms of the public sector, initiated on the back of a centralization of the administrative system. Mindlab was one of the first policy innovation labs in the world (Lee and Ma 2019). In its first iteration, the lab was focused on "enhancing the efficiency of the policy development cycle" as a catalyst of internal organizational development, modelled on private sector organizations. In terms of expertise, MindLab was staffed with employees with formal skills in creative facilitation, teambuilding, hosting, and policy development (Carstensen & Bason 2012).

In 2006, Mindlab became a cross-governmental unit between the ministries of Taxation, Economics and Business Affairs, and Employment. These ministries were central to effectivization efforts, covering more than 80% of business regulation. Mindlab took the form of semi-public consultancy/think tank working on projects assigned by its parent ministries but also developing doctoral researchers and engaging in private sector collaborations. A central part of Mindlab's mission brief was a focus on 'de-bureaucratization'. Mindlab pioneered regulative simplification through projects such as *Byrdejægerne*, using customer and user involvement to identify "unnecessary red tape" (Aspøy 2018).

The lab introduced a new type of expertise in government, adapting design thinking and qualitative research to policy development. Professional profiles were directly inspired by leading strategic design firms such as IDEO, Gravity Tank, and ReD Associates. The staff had backgrounds in anthropology, political science and interaction design (Carstensen & Bason 2012). The organization imported the methods of these strategic design firms, such as 'Business Development' into public administration policy language.

In 2011-12, inspired by the first BI team in the UK, Danish researcher-consultants initiated projects in the two agencies under the Ministry of Economics and Business Affairs, the Business Authority (ERVST) and Consumer and Competition Authority (KFST) (World Bank Group 2019, Interviews). Meanwhile, the Danish Nudging Network, created for stakeholder involvement in a research project in 2010, grew into a professional network across private, public and academic institutions. Several interviewees were involved in this network, for example, one used it to land his current job. KFST and ERHVST were the first agencies to experiment with Behavioral Insights through selected projects. ERVST formed a partnership with a researcher-consultancy and KFST invested in internal capacity building. Mindlab became recognized internationally as a Behavioral Unit, despite its foundations in design-thinking and "citizen co-creation" (OECD 2018).

In 2015, policy reforms actively incorporated BI in the form of Behavioral Economics (BE) for the first time. The Unemployment Benefits Commission was appointed to produce a report on the unemployment and benefit system drawing directly on BI ideas. The commission relied on expertise from Danish academics to prepare documents for the relevance of applying BE in the context of employment (Holmlund 2015; Kvist 2015). The reform directly initiated the use of BI in STAR – the agency responsible for implementation. In the following years BI consultants were hired for specific projects in relation to the reform work. However, STAR, with strong internal Economic expertise, did not pursue BI as an internal organizational model.

In 2018 Mindlab was terminated and replaced by a 'Disruption Taskforce'. The background was the center-right government's decision to set up a minister for innovation to centralize government's efforts to further modernize the public sector (Aspøy 2018). This change marked a paradigm shift in innovation policy, from one based explicitly on ethnographic/design expertise, to data-driven innovation and effectivization.

It is within this general change in administrative innovation policy, that BI efforts and ideas have found their way into the central administration. Since the early 2000s the ministries, of Business, Employment and Taxation - accounting for the majority of Business regulation and citizen interactions - have been central to modernization efforts. These are also the ministries where BI teams have emerged, highlighting BI's close relationship with these efforts and NPM in Danish public administration.

External advice and internal institutionalization

Within this context of wider transformations in the organization of public administration, we can compare how external knowledge advisors were involved in the institutionalization of BI work across the four agencies. The comparison shows how new policy ideas are transformed in the context of agency-specific policy goals, priorities, and existing forms of expertise. A recurrent, but not explicit, figure in all accounts is the interlinking of persons in the Danish Nudging Network, many of which joined the BI teams. The multi-locality of certain actors across business and academic (and public) boundaries, mirrors a form of expert positioning, known in the literature on Sociology of Professions as 'epistemic arbitrage' (Seabrooke 2014).

The account is structured around two ministries and three phases, in which external actors play different roles vis-à-vis the agencies. The three phases form a heuristic structure for comparing the cases but do not form consistent time intervals. The first phase considers early experimentation with BI. The second phase considers agencies' decision to work systematically with BI. The final phase considers the nature of this systematization and its relation to how BI efforts are internalized through frameworks, capacity building, expertise, and projects.

The Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs

The Business Authority (ERVST) and Consumer and Competition Authority (KFST) were the first agencies to experiment with BI in the Danish Public sector. According to interviews, the experimentation was initiated by office managers in both agencies with close relationships to the same BI academic-consultant.

<u>Phase 1</u>

ERVST built its BI efforts in a way that most clearly drew on the Mindlab legacy of public innovation. This was particularly so because of the agency's long focus on de-bureaucratization and simplification of the public-government interface. BI initiatives centered within the "office of fewer burdens", tasked with easing red tape for businesses in particular. In this work, the office had a long relationship with Mindlab, particularly in using ethnographic methods to discover areas for potential de-bureaucratization. Key people in the office, central for later BI developments, have careers through Mindlab and anthropological backgrounds.

Interviewees describe the agency as having an "innovation DNA", always looking for the next new thing (E1). BI experimentation started in the agency through a senior manager's contact with a key academic-consultant. A central employee was tasked with coordinating efforts. Looking at contemporary reports, the first five experiments were initiated in 2012, in collaboration with the medium-sized consulting firm Copenhagen Economics. The positive results from these first experiments led to the decision to establish "a permanent team… to identify and prioritize areas where the business support system can be improved by means of behavioral economics" (DBA and CE 2013).

BI efforts in KFST, as in ERVST, had affinities to Mindlab, but developed into a much stronger behavioral consumer policy unit. Efforts originated in the Center for Innovation; an office explicitly modelled on Mindlab. Much like in ERVST, managers were inspired by a key academic-consultant to learn more about the applicability of BI. In contrast to ERVST, KFST hired a graduate student to figure out how BI could be incorporated in the agency's work. From 2013-2016 the center pursued a strategy of testing and internal capacity building. This required legitimization by external academic advisors. In 2013 researchers were asked to establish a 'knowledge base' to account for the effect and potential of using behavioral economics in consumer policy (Damgaard 2013; Damgaard and Koch 2013). The following years were spent upgrading internal expertise; one employee pursued a doctorate researching behavioral consumer policy, while PhD level behavioral scientists were hired, with backgrounds in Epidemiology, Economics, and Psychology.

<u>Phase 2</u>

From initial experimentation, the ERVST team strove to build a network and an awareness of behavioral insights throughout the agency. The 'permanent' team at ERVST consisted of one coordinating employee with an internal network that developed a long-term relationship with BI consultants. The relationship grew out of a partnership with InudgeYou in 2014, to make a series of projects (E1). Interviewees highlighted that projects focused on combining experimental effects with "Business Case" cost-saving models inherited from earlier Mindlab project models. Courses in BI were arranged for some employees, but few steps were taken to upgrade 'harder' BI capacities. Instead, consultants were routinely called on to help with "all the behavioral bias knowledge, … and how to work experimentally" (E2).

In 2016 KFST sought to integrate the use of BI into policy development in a more substantial manner (K1). External advisors, this time the small and medium sized consulting firms, InudgeYou and Copenhagen Economics wrote a report creating and legitimizing the space for working with BI in a more policy-oriented fashion (InudgeYou and Copenhagen Economics 2016). Public reports from the BI team sketched out this view as legitimate and pointed towards its applicability as method (KFST 2017) and as "metaphor" for what is now termed "Behavioral Consumer Regulation" (KFST 2018). During the period, the team grew to eight full-time employees, four of them with PhDs. A significant investment in expertise.

Phase 3

In ERVST, the tradition and expertise of Mindlab has had a lasting effect in a focus on the "engine room" rather than the "policy road" of applying BI to public administration (E1). Analyses feature the language of Business Development to optimize administrative systems. The version of BI practiced here, puts most weight on optimizing user-experiences and simplifying systems, through prototyping and testing, and less on developing policy ideas. This reflects the office's mandate to "reduce burdens" in interaction with the public sector. In this way BI is seen as one in a range of optimization tools, with interviewees stressing the increased control of Data Science and UX Design professionals.

In comparison to ERVST's stress on optimization, in KFST BI developed as a policy-tool. This included establishing a behavioral 'lab' to test out principles of consumer protection in 'controlled settings', featuring eye-tracking and stress measuring technology. BI is also used paradigmatically to challenge and develop consumer regulation in the system. The team positioned itself as a central governmental resource for other agencies to consult in working

with BI. This, in turn, transformed their self-understanding; "what separates us from BI is that we do not use [simplified] 'cookbooks' in how we understand and solve problems… we use social science methods on consumer problems" (K3). Self-confidence as social scientists also affects their reliance on external advisors. Interviewees stressed how their internal expertise allows them to set up more limited and well-defined tasks for consultants to carry out (K2, K3).

The Ministry of Employment

The Agency for Labor Market and Recruitment (STAR) and the Working Environment Authority (ARBTIL) began their BI efforts later than the agencies in the Ministry of Business. While both cases show local management initiative, they more clearly display responses to external pressures.

Phase 1

BI efforts in STAR are the most clearly rooted in the discipline of Economics and reflect an existing evidence-based strategy. According to interviewees, STAR had an early awareness of BI in the Economist dominated office for "Knowledge and Analysis" (S2). However, the first BI experiment did not take place before 2016. When commenced, it built on the views of the unemployment commission of the previous year. There Behavioral Economics was explicitly factored into modelling, with the view that "this knowledge should affect the design of incentives in the unemployment system" (Dagpengekommissionen 2015). Again, academics were central in legitimating the applicability of behavioral economics in the commission (Holmlund 2015; Kvist 2015). The first BI-discussion took place in 2015, with a central researcher-consultant enrolled into the policymaking process (S2). In the following years, small consultancies were routinely hired for limited Behavioral Design projects.

ARBTIL shows how office-management-initiated experimentation in collaboration with external actors opened a space for internal expertise building. In 2016 BI consultants were invited to do half-day workshops with office managers. One interviewee recalled "We had some good discussions, and it was kind of a wake-up call, couldn't this be relevant to us..?" (A2). In the ensuing two years, the office ran three behavioral projects with different BI consultancies. According to an interviewee, two of these projects showed positive effects of

intervention. “Positive” results were central in gaining political traction within the administrative system and setting the scene for later institutionalization (A1, A2)

Phase 2

In STAR, existing expertise and management strategies shaped BI institutionalization. STAR was at the forefront of a ministerial wide evidence-based strategy initiated in 2013 (see Andersen and Randrup 2017). The strategy set the goal of empirically verifying the effect sizes of job market interventions with randomized control trials as the gold standard. The agency applied to the Ministry for research funding for a Behavioral Economics research center, at the University of Copenhagen, on “Labor Market Performance” that was funded in 2016 (Thoby 2017). As in the other cases, before the research center was setup, the agency had commissioned a legitimizing literature review on “behavioral economics and labor market policy” from academics, who were later to lead the research center (Nielsen and Sebald 2016).

In ARBTIL, following initial experimentation, an important outside factor was the establishment of the Expert Committee on Work Environment in 2017. The committee’s mandate included that it should look at “new instruments … to change company behavior (nudging)”(BM 2017). In its findings the commission relied on the agency, as well as large consultancies in documenting the potential usefulness of nudging as a policy tool (Rambøll and PwC 2017). Following the expert committee report, parliament increased the funding for ARBTIL over a three-year period, creating an opening for management to establish a BI team in 2019. The team became centered in the communication office, which led the early experimentation work and was close to the agency’s executive functions. A specialist BI consulting firm was hired to assist in setting up the new team and develop a prioritization and diagnostic tool (A1, A3). The first months were spent spreading knowledge of BI, creating ambassadors in the organization, and creating a project-framework for prioritizing ideas.

Phase 3

In comparison with the first two cases, STAR operates less explicitly with BI. Because of the existing economic expertise in the organization BI is reduced to interest in ‘nudging’ as a policy-instrument whose effects have not been properly evaluated in labor market research. Thus, BI has been enrolled in an existing evidence-based policy regime built around

economic expertise where economics sits atop the hierarchy (Fourcade, Ollion, and Algan 2015). Interviewees reason that STAR's problems are "more complex", making simple BI-process models unsuitable and increasing the need for a more general evidence-based approach.

The BI team in ARBTIL has developed a process model, which is supported with behavioral scientists hired for their "strong quantitative" backgrounds (A2). Within this agency there has been a trend towards hiring those with longer quantitative research training. The new team makes use of the existing BI units in government through a knowledge network and by borrowing KFST's lab. The two units appear to be building strong affinities.

Comparing BI expertise

Comparing how the form of BI expertise varies across agencies, BI has been adapted to existing forms of expertise in each. In ERVST, BI developed with a strong affinity with the Mindlab tradition of Business development, rooted in existing professional backgrounds. Here, a long-term partnership developed with a small behavioral consulting firm, providing specialized behavioral expertise when necessary. The team was centered around a central employee, with a loose project-network internally in the agency, and external networks with academic-consultants and the OECD. In practice, BI is used as part of a toolbox for user-optimization of systems, and the agency is increasingly moving towards data science, UX design and Machine Learning.

In KFST BI developed into a policy development tool and in the process built up a strong BI team with the expertise of four PhDs. They clearly distinguished their use of BI as a framework and Behavioral Economics as a discipline, permitting some claims for 'jurisdictional control'. They actively pursued a strategy of building consumer behavior expertise based on experiments. This makes particular sense in a context where much consumer regulation exists in other ministries with more traditional legal expertise. Here, "having your own evidence" is seen as a convincing basis for providing policy advice, creating better access into the system.

In STAR, BI is quite clearly subsumed in Behavioral Economics, because of the strong existing expertise and role of economists in the agency. Within the "evidence-based" strategy of the agency, random control trials are already valued. As such, the primary interest has

been in nudging as a potential new policy tool, for which job market effects have yet to be quantified. Apart from a few early projects with BI consultants, STAR has largely been advised by academics in their research partnership. In ARBTIL, the agency has built up strong (quantitative) internal BI expertise, clearly distinguished from "hardcore economists" (A2) and developed a clear organizational plan for working with behavioral insights.

Expertise in Consultant-Administrator Relationships

The comparison of four agencies show how internal expertise mediates the influence of external advisers. As a case of scientization, it shows the introduction of science-based practices into administrative expertise. Three factors are prominent here. First, interviewees from KFST and ARBTIL - the teams with the most specialized internal expertise - highlight the importance of internal expertise in evaluating and using external consultants efficiently. Both cases stress that building internal expertise has meant the use of fewer consultants, but in being better able to define and limit projects. Second, most interviewees discussed the experimental diagnosis of BI as a key strength within the administration, though also a potential risk. Successful experiments, regardless of quality, are key for the legitimacy of BI as a policy instrument, especially when it can be brought forth to parliament or the public. Experimental evidence is referred to by interviewees as "a superpower" in policy development, particularly arenas where others are not able to quantify their suggestions. However, the pressure to show "success" can be experienced as a preference to choose only "safe experiments". Third, the variation in organizational setups, and applications of BI, reveals the great flexibility of BI as professional project, but also its potential weakness in being coopted by bureaucratic pressures. Jurisdictional competition around the professional project also took place outside central administration to police the boundaries on what is acceptable BI practice. For example, central professional actors have tried to enforce the BE end of the BI continuum by saying "you do not become a 'nudge-expert' by being educated as graphic designer, journalist, anthropologist or communicator" (Hansen 2017).

Scientization has so far been suggested as a form of externalization, where academic advisors and scientific arguments play an increasing role as sources of policy advice (Christensen 2018). Thinking of 'content' as professional expertise, this case further illustrates their interplay in the introduction of science-based practices as administrative expertise. However, a turn towards 'mechanical objectivity' does not necessarily imply more policy authority to

professionals. In fact, the public administrative quest for 'mechanical objectivity' and outsourcing of expertise can be explained as contradictory responses to the same "legitimation crisis" (Eyal 2019). Public pressures for the legitimation of public regulations create dialectic movements between the "scientization of politics" and the "politicization of science". This perspective brings into focus underlying mechanisms relating to problems of trust (legitimacy from expert judgement or facts) and extension (legitimacy from democratic inclusion or exclusion) that structure advisory systems in contemporary democracies. The administrative developments reported in this study indicate that BI, as flexible professional project leverages this development but also adapts to institutional trajectories and objectives, corresponding with an understanding of Behavioral Public Policy as contested and historically changing concept (Strassheim 2019).

As a form of administrative expertise, BI is both evidence-based, and imposes a behavioral vision of public policy. Evidence-based policymaking has been severely challenged (Sanderson 2002). Andersen and Randrup, for example, critique the political bias that can arise in reliance on randomized control trials at the top of the "evidence-hierarchy". They show how such trials better capture the effects of some policies. If intervention effect-times are short, they are easier to capture in randomized control trials, leading to a potential policy bias against long-term initiatives. The UK setting, where BI initiatives have been most studied, has also been characterized by austerity politics, underscoring the importance of cost-reductions for the behavioral change agenda, but also for appreciating criticisms within this context (Berry 2016; Leggett 2014). Foucauldian critiques, have pointed out how BI makes the mechanics of human choice scientized and subject to disciplinary interventions (Jones, Pykett, and Whitehead 2013; Pykett, Jones, and Whitehead 2016). These criticisms are relevant to consider for studying the effects of BI expertise on policy advice, although these effects have not been the focus of this analysis.

Conclusion: Embedding expertise in public administration

Returning to the question of how external advisors have embedded BI as a new form of administrative expertise in public administration, the analysis reveals the complexity of disentangling consultancy influence in a concrete politico-administrative context. The premise for the investigation has been work in Policy Advisory Systems and the Sociology of Professions. Policy consultancy has been a blind spot for scholars, politicians and others

concerned with the quality of policies that shape society, forming a more sizeable component of the work that happens within governments than the literature acknowledges (van den Berg et al. 2019). Within the four investigated agencies in the Danish central administration, BI academics and consultants have embedded BI within a general shift in politico-administrative policy. Several insights lend themselves when comparing the involvement of external advisers in the institutionalization of BI across the cases.

First, smaller consultancies and academics have played central roles in spreading policy ideas, both in assisting with administrative practice and in legitimizing approaches. This matches with the conventional account of policy ideas being introduced through experimentation and institutional fit (Hall 1993). It also mirrors findings often emphasized in conventional accounts of management consulting in public policy, wherein researchers doubt the extent to which the growth of consultancy in public administration reflects "efficient outcomes" (Armbrüster 2006:8). What is apparent across the four cases is that the same advisers contracted to provide services are equally involved in producing the reports that legitimize the use and usefulness of their expertise. This is an empirical point to keep in mind when attempting to distinguish between "policy-consulting" and "services contracting" in the PAS literature (van den Berg et al. 2019:13).

Second, rather than existing in separate spheres, there is competition between consultants and academics in providing expert work. In all cases we can observe the use of consultants or academics in providing legitimizing reports for the application of BI, as a "new" form of expertise, to policy and administrative work in that agency's policy area. Furthermore, as the cases of STAR and ERHVST illustrate, there exist organizational models for accessing external consultant and research work. Here the concrete determinants appear to be either the public budgetary constraints at a given moment in time (are funds available in research or operating budget) and the degree to which a public organization has available/strong internal expertise in the particular area. There were some claims that STAR problems were more "complex", increasing the necessity for academic rather than consulting expertise. While this competition might be particular to the expertise of BI that blends scientific and practical legitimation, it also suggests a more general trend where academics are increasingly under pressure to demonstrate the value of their research in applied practical settings (Williams 2018).

Third, the study shows how individuals occupying dual positions (researcher-consultants) and cross-cutting networks play important roles as early 'brokers' of ideas in public administration. The importance of such sphere-spanning professionals have been shown particularly in transnational settings (Seabrooke 2014), where the occupation of roles in dual settings allow for epistemic arbitrage to position the supply of new professional services. BI work derives value from, and for, more abstract and more applied knowledge domains (see the Editors' introduction to this symposium). Behavioral policy experiments require real-world testing necessary for scientific publication, and such testing can provide legitimation for the effects of policy decisions internally and externally in the administrative and political system, creating demands for consulting work.

Fourth, the power given to middle managers in agencies matter for the way ideas are converted to administrative practice, and for future demand for consulting services. This points to the importance of expertise in defining client-advisor power relationships. In all cases middle-management (office managers) appear to have taken the initiative, while internal capacity building has largely resulted in a refinement of BI to fit that particular setting. The account lends credit to the notion of middle managing bureaucrats being empowered to influence policy, including through the introduction of ideas that reconfigures administrative expertise (Blom-Hansen et al. 2020), including how policy makers view the public.

Finally, these results must be understood in the context of a changing politico-administrative system. De-bureaucratization and effectivization policies have been salient across successive governments agendas and concern the power between the standing bureaucracy and political system and the disposition of human resources in light of the New Public Management business-orientation. As administrative expertise BI finds purchase within a general shift in innovation-policy, where innovation is seen as a political tool for effectivization. The fact that no BI teams appear outside the ministries central to these policies indicates that the policies are the central vehicles for introducing BI as a form of expertise in administrative agencies.

The case contributes to existing debates found in the literature on consultocracy or the scientization of policy advice. Where the consultocracy literature tends to emphasize the replacement of long-term civil servant work with short-term outsourced expert knowledge

production (Ylönen and Kuusela 2019), here long-term civil servant work is being embedded and assisted through various external relationships. This emphasizes the importance of establishing the kinds of relationships that exist between administrators and consultants. Similarly, while science-based practices in administrative expertise might, on the face of it, increases legitimacy, it is not clear that this kind of professionalization leads to more authority in the system.

Ultimately, the embedding of BI is an example of 'regulatory science' in governance. The rise of policy consultancy has been explained by politicization of the civil service, and emerging from a lack of trust between politicians and public administration (Suleiman 2003 in van den Berg et al. 2019). This coincides with similar explanations for transformations in public sector professions noted in the professions literature (Noordegraaf 2007). Here the paradoxes of (de)professionalization of "pure" professions and the simultaneous semi-professionalization of public managers are explained by a contest for control of professional practices. Both neo-liberal politics and bureaucratic administrative logics have worked against strong professional control, primarily through the use of evidence-based and outcome-oriented measures for cost- and quality-control (e.g. Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000). Reforms were initiated because "professional groups were seen as self-serving producer monopolies whose influence on the economy and society was negative" (Flynn 1998:19). This underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics between parliamentary politics, public management, and administrative professionalism. Future research can delve further into the question of how changes in particular forms of bureaucratic expertise might be related to changes in the use of external advisers across policy system.

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