Changing market values? Tensions of contradicting public management discourses

A case from the Danish daycare sector

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to address studies of New Public Governance (NPG) as a post-New Public Management (NPM) tendency. Although NPG is considered a contrast to NPM and its market incentives, it argues that the practices emerging in tensions of NPM and NPG discourses indicate not a clear-cut shift away from NPM, but rather changes that combine competition with collaboration and trust.

Design/methodology/approach – It offers a discourse approach to advance the theorizing and empirical unfolding of the tensions of contradicting, yet co-existing discourses of NPM and NPG and their effects in practice. Drawing on a case study from the Danish daycare sector, it investigates local collaborative governance initiatives that develop new quality-management methods.

Findings – The study elucidates how NPM and NPG discourses collide in local practices of public sector management within daycare. It shows that the discursive tensions between such value-laden practices indicate a changing marketization associated with collaboration and trust, yet also competition.

Research limitations/implications – To research it becomes critical to advance theoretical and empirical knowledge on the constitutive effects of such complex discursive tensions in public organizations.

Practical implications – To practice it becomes necessary to acknowledge and handle co-existing, yet contradicting management discourses, and not mistake their opposing values as necessarily distinct, but rather as entangled in practice.

Originality/value – The paper contributes with original findings that shed new light on colliding management discourses in practices and their effects within the public sector area of daycare.

Keywords New Public Management, Discourse analysis, Marketization, Daycare sector,
New Public Governance

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

During the past decade, public management research has discussed the emergence of a post-New Public Management (NPM) era often referred to as New Public Governance (NPG) (Osborne, 2006; Christensen and Lægreid, 2011a; Pedersen *et al.*, 2011). Such post-NPM tendencies are defined by more networked and hybrid governance processes in public organizations through various forms of cross-sector collaborations and partnerships that involve, e.g. citizens, the private and/or non-profit sectors (Ferlie *et al.*, 2003; Osborne, 2006; Hartley *et al.*, 2013). In practice this enables interorganizational

dynamics across stakeholder groups that work as human resources and relational contracts with the aim of co-creating public services, outcomes and value. These tendencies are seen in contrast to practices associated with NPM including a focus on market incentives and competition through, e.g. cost-benefit, top-bottom structures, managerialism and performance contracts.

So the role of hierarchy and market-incentives is challenged by the interorganizational processes of collaboration and co-creation in studies of NPG. Nonetheless, some of these studies stress that this emerging change is not a clear-cut shift in government practice. Rather the change is seen as more fluid "layered realities" that produce tensions and contradictions, which challenge public sector organizations when incorporating more networked, collaborative governance practices alongside already existing NPM practices (Hartley, 2005; Pedersen and Hartley, 2008; Plotnikof, 2016). Thus, exploring such tensions become critical to understand how NPG affect public sector management in practice. As regards, a stream of studies on collaborative governance theorize the contradicting and paradoxical tensions of NPG initiatives (Vangen and Huxham, 2011; Vangen and Winchester, 2013; Purdy, 2012; Plotnikof, 2015). With various theoretical approaches, they unfold how new cross-organizational collaborations challenge management practice. For example, they discuss the paradoxical nature of contradicting goals, the fine line between success and failure, the tensions between culturally diverse actors and the complex design issues of collaborations. However, they overlook how emerging practices associated with NPG discourses affect and change public sector management in tensions with existing NPM practices.

Adding to these, the purpose of this paper is to unfold discursive concepts to investigate the tensions between value-laden practices associated with NPM and NPG discourses and explore their effects within the policy area of daycare. Thus, it questions how value-laden practices related to NPG discourses emerge and affect collaborative initiatives alongside other public management discourses in cases from the Danish daycare sector? Public sector management in the education area, and daycare specifically, has been influenced by reforms related to NPM the past 20 years with increasing standardization and market incentives (Gunter and Fitzgerald, 2013a; Jensen *et al.*, 2010; Plum, 2012). Practical effects include quality-management reports, performance measurements, new working hour agreements, customer satisfaction and competition. However, alternating tendencies toward more networked and collaborative initiatives concerning the improvement of quality in public sector management in general – and in daycare more specifically have emerged the past couple of years (Tanev *et al.*, 2011; Ansell and Torfing, 2014; Bason, 2010; Jensen *et al.*, 2013). This paper is based on a case study from two local governments' collaborative governance initiatives to improve quality management of the daycare services. This included collaborative networks, innovation partnerships and the development of a so-called marketplace for daycare education involving stakeholders such as politicians, administrators, daycare managers and teachers, parents, children and union representatives. Data were collected from 2010 to 2014 through methods like observation, interview and document analysis.

This study shows how discourses of NPM and NPG collide in local practices of public sector management within daycare, and it elucidates how discursive tensions between such practices changes local market values into collaboration, trust and dialog, while also remaining aspects of competition. By drawing on organizational discourse concepts it unfolds theoretical and empirical knowledge that contributes to existing public management studies concerned with contradicting and paradoxical

tensions in cross-sector networks (Hartley, 2005; Christensen and Lægreid, 2011a; O'leary and Vij, 2012; Vangen and Huxham, 2011). In particular, the paper offers unfolding and demonstration of discourse theory unused in public management studies, although its relevance is acknowledged (Purdy, 2012). Furthermore, it extends recent NPG debates to the field of education, a central and costly public sector area, by demonstrating discursive effects on collaborative governance practices in daycare and their changing marketization.

In the following, I first discuss the studies of NPG tendencies, then I turn to discourse theory for concepts that offer new insights to such tensions. Next, I describe the methods, case and analysis. Then the findings are demonstrated, and in conclusion, I discuss the tensions as a changing marketization, as well as the implications for practice and research.

Tendencies of post-NPM: literature on complex tensions within NPG practices

The NPM agenda is often defined by a marketization – broadly referring to government reforms that aim to innovate public services nationally or regionally by strengthening market incentives, standardization and competition mechanisms (Hood, 1991; Hood and Peters, 2004; Hansen, 2010). Multiple studies have shown the effects and problems following NPM – also in the education sector; see e.g. Ball (2006) concerning NPM in the UK education sector, Verger and Curran (2014) for a discussion of NPM within Southern European education or Plum (2012) for NPM effects within daycare education in Denmark. Furthermore, a general discussion of NPM within education systems is evident (Gunter and Fitzgerald, 2013a, b). The effects of NPM discussed include competition by free user-choice, standardizing quality-management methods, performance management and testing that change both managers' and frontline workers' practices.

Although NPM is considered a widespread concept, alternatives are also manifesting in public sector management practice and theory. As Hartley *et al.* (2013, p. 824) argue:

> Although NPM has spurred some public innovation, the gains have been accompanied by some clear drawbacks […]. Competition, which in the public sector has taken the form of government-controlled quasi-markets, is a double-edged sword. While it may drive innovation, it can also discourage service-providers from sharing knowledge and engaging in interorganizational learning, both of which, along with trust, are central to developing innovative solutions to joint problems.

A decade ago, the term NPG was established (Osborne, 2006) to describe new tendencies that distinct current policy and public sector management trends from NPM. NPG-related practices are defined in terms of, e.g., whole-of government approaches, collaborative governance initiatives, public participation in co-creation of public value and innovation in policy and services (Ferlie *et al.*, 2003; Hartley, 2005; Christensen and Lægreid, 2011b; Pedersen *et al.*, 2011). Although scholars discuss the NPG label, many agree that these tendencies indicate a new direction in government practices; thereby indicating that NPM and its marketization is challenged by other public management discourses.

In this regard, NPG and related collaborative practices are seen as alternating to NPM. Especially, the potential of collaborating across organizational and hierarchical levels as well as across stakeholder groups with the aim of co-creating new solutions,

processes and outcomes are seen as promising (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Ansell and Torfing, 2014; Bryson *et al.*, 2015). Nonetheless, as Hartley (2005, p. 29) stresses, the new tendencies rather produce "layered realities" for public management actors than clearly demarcated new practices and working conditions. Thus, expanding this research scope of current public sector management changes calls for exploring the co-existing tensions between such variations in local public management realities. This is pivotal to understand the becoming changes and effects in practice as well as theory.

A stream of studies have developed concepts of complexity, paradoxes and contradicting tensions to advance knowledge on the social dynamics of networked and collaborative governance practices alongside other management practices. For example, Christensen and Lægreid (2011a, p. 408) argue that: "The NPM reform wave, seen as a reaction to the challenges and problems of the 'old public administration,' and the post-NPM reform wave, seen partly as a reaction to the negative effects of NPM, are together resulting in a complex sedimentation or layering of structural and cultural features." Following this complexity, they stress that the dynamics of such layering in current management practices needs to be reinterpreted and theorized – to which they offer a transformative approach. O'Leary and Vij (2012) also foreground complexity in a literature review of current collaborative public management theory and practice and argue for future directions. They use a comparative approach to explain the most important concepts and dynamics of, e.g., the collaborative thinker, on-the-ground challenges and paradoxes of collaborating, etc. In conclusion, they argue for aligning concepts and topics to develop complex models of those dynamics applicable to practice.

By contrast, Vangen and Huxham (2011) argue for theory development through a practice-based action research approach to grasp the complex dynamics of hybrid collaborations. They conceptualize a "goal paradox" to grapple with the emerging tensions and patterns of collaborative governance across stakeholders. This paradox entails that both congruence and diversity among various stakeholders and public management actors' goals influence the success or failure of collaborative initiatives. Thus, unfolding how a goal paradox works within collaboration is pivotal. Thereby, they show how a practice-based approach offers theorizing from the local to the general. In the same line of argument, Vangen and Winchester (2013) show how action research enhance collaborative governance theory and practice by conceptualizing "management tensions." This concept explains how collaborations across public, private and non-profit sectors are affected by tensions and may be managed better by acknowledging those tensions. The tensions include the interaction between diverse organizations and actors, the different orientation of participants as well as the amount of cultural diversity apparent between different stakeholders. These tensions are conditions for managers to work through when implementing new cross-organizational collaborations.

Such studies highlight the importance of understanding the complex, contradicting tensions emerging in collaborative governance practices associated with NPG. They demonstrate that the managerialism and marketization associated with NPM is altered by the conditions and discourses of collaboration and the social dynamics inherent in co-creative endeavors. Regrettably, these studies mostly look at tensions between collaborative actors or organizations within collaborations, and less on the tensions emerging from the various, seemingly competing public management discourses like NPM and NPG that emerge both within and between collaborations. Thus, exactly how tensions between practices associated with NPM's marketization collide with the ones

of NPG's collaboration, as well as how they affect and change public management practices, are unexplored in greater detail. To advance further in this regard, this paper argues that a discursive perspective is valuable.

Examining tensions of NPM and NPG from a discursive perspective

Even though discursive approaches are not mainstream in the public management literature, their relevance to understand issues related to changes between NPM and NPG is acknowledged (Pedersen and Hartley, 2008; Griggs and Sullivan, 2014; Purdy, 2012; Plotnikof, 2015). However, discourse is often somewhat implicit; e.g. Pedersen and Hartley (2008) discuss discourse on a policy level and the thought impact on practice but without empirical exploration, whereas Griggs and Sullivan (2014) show the works of NPG discourses by unfolding constructions of necessity for public innovation that legitimize local changes in specific cases, but without unfolding discourse theory. More explicitly, Purdy (2012) theorizes discursive power as a critical influence on collaborative governance, but only as one aspect of power. Most noticeably, Hardy *et al.* (2005) centers a discursive perspective as primary contribution to understand effective collaboration in cross-sector partnerships. However, they do not relate it to public management. Nonetheless, these scholars show the potential of a discourse approach to advance our understanding of public management issues.

Building on this, the paper aims to expand the existing research scope of tensions within and between public management paradigms by theorizing and unfolding discursive tensions in value-laden practices emerging across NPM and NPG. Approaching value-laden practices goes beyond identifying varying, apparently competing management discourses – it elucidates their works and effects in terms of specific changes in, e.g., work ideals, practice conditions or market forces. Taking a discursive approach "highlights the ways in which language *constructs* organizational reality, rather than simply reflects it" (Hardy *et al.*, 2005, p. 60, original emphasis). However, "language" in this sense not only indicates verbal features, but a broader array of communicative interactions and meaning constructions. Thus, discourse is defined as:

> [A] set of interrelated texts that, along with the related practices of text production, dissemination, and perception, bring an object or idea into being […] Discourses therefore help to constitute a material reality by producing identities, contexts, objects of value, and correct procedures (Hardy *et al.*, 2005, p. 60).

Thereby a discursive approach involves studying constitutive processes and effects through the emerging value-laden practices that negotiate the meanings of and form organizational reality. For this matter the concept of text-conversation dialectic is central, because discourse comprises sets of texts, and texts are embodied in various communicative actions including writing, talking, bodily expressions, visuals and other social and material practices that shape meanings (Hardy *et al.*, 2005, pp. 60-61; Koschmann *et al.*, 2012, p. 335):

> What is interesting from a discourse analysis perspective is how [texts] are made meaningful – how they draw on other texts and other discourses, how and to whom they are disseminated, and the ways in which they are produced, received, and consumed – and what effect collections of texts have on the social context in which they occur (Philips and Oswick, 2012, p. 444).

So this is not just a textual analysis, but an analysis of the meaning formations emerging, the values they embody and the tensions between such varying discourses and their effects in dialectics of texts (in all sorts of forms) and practices, in which the

texts are produced, disseminated and perceived. These practices are often considered to be conversational, meaning that they are social interactions, hence the concept of text-conversation dialectic.

In this paper, I explore the discursive tensions of NPM and NPG by examining value-laden practices of public management – to understand how the tensions between NPM and NPG may not just alter each other, but also conflate and constitute local changes – in this case in the marketization associated with collaboration. I do so by unfolding the text-conversation dialectics that negotiate the meanings of NPM practices associated with NPG alongside existing practices related to NPM. This elucidates the discursive tension between value-laden practices and their effects on public sector management. This is based on a case study of the implementation of collaborative practices associated with NPG alongside more NPM-related procedures in two local governments' quality management of the daycare sector in Denmark. Next I present the case, research methods and analyses leading to the findings.

A case from the daycare sector in Denmark

Public sector management in the education area in Denmark has been influenced by reforms associated with NPM since the 1990s in terms of standardization of quality and market-incentives (Jensen *et al.*, 2010; Plum, 2012). This has led to a great increase in quality-management practices across local governments' education departments and centers (schools and daycare) involving paper work such as measurements and ratings from both educators, teachers, children, parents as well as administrators linking local education centers to the administration in the local governments. These standardized measurements are often materialized in quality reports including both theoretical, practical and countable accounts of various contingencies such as education planning, evaluation, teacher education, staffing, children's developmental processes and learning outcomes and financial aspects. Such can be used for performance management within the education departments and for competition between centers as citizens and politicians gain access to certain quality measurements allowing parents to choose freely between education centers and indicating local variations to politicians.

Within the daycare area, this has been the case since the 2004 act of pedagogical curricular (Plum, 2012). The daycare area is a fundamental part of the overall education sector in Denmark, since 90 percent of the one to two-year-old and 98 percent of the three to six-year-old children are enrolled in daycare (www.uvm.dk/Dagtilbud/Love-og-regler/Statistik). Daycare is organized in local groups of four-six centers with local management teams who account to the education department in each municipality. The pedagogical curricular state six themes: the children's personal development, social competencies, language skills, body and motion, nature and natural phenomena and cultural expressions and values (http://eng.uvm.dk/Day-care/Pedagogical-curricula). The educational activities are to be centered, evaluated and quality managed in relation to the themes. Yearly the curricular are to be planned and evaluated in a report sent to the local government, whose managerial consultants then rewrite them into a coherent account and present them to the department head and political committee. They form the informational grounds concerning daycare service quality, on which the political committee base its decision making on issues of development and budgeting.

Alongside such practices associated with NPM, alternating tendencies emerge, e.g. collaborative governance initiatives concerning the improvement of education quality. One of the issues debated is the amounts of paper work involved in quality-management reports in relation to their effects on managerial and political decision making, as well as

the lacking education value, they produce. While there is a demand for measuring and documenting education quality, the stakeholders (including administrative managers and politicians) are questioning if such ratings make sense, or if they can innovate new quality-management methods through collaboration across stakeholders (Jensen *et al.*, 2013).

The empirical case of this paper concerns two local governments' collaborative initiatives to innovate new quality-management methods in daycare by involving politicians, administration, daycare staff, children and parents, as well as union representatives. From 2010 to 2012 the local governments and local unions established an innovation partnership, by which they experimented with new forms of quality management in so-called collaborative laboratories. In 2012 both governments decided to continue their collaborative development of quality management in daycare. Throughout 2012-2014 the education departments developed a daycare "marketplace" for all stakeholders to alter the quality reports with cross-organizational dialogs and presentations of local education activities. The marketplace – a yearly collaborative arrangement for administration, politicians, daycare managers and teachers, union representatives and parents, included both workshops, arranged by daycare centers to present and discuss their use of pedagogic curricula with stakeholders, and booths arranged by daycare centers to show aspects from everyday life in the daycare centers through other communicative modes than ratings, numbers and writing. This new quality-management method was seen as more "meaningful" than existing reports and measurements. The marketplace is not well-established or ready to be implemented; rather it is an example of an emerging collaborative governance practice and product associated with NPG discourses. This will be unfolded and discussed further in the following sections.

Research methods and analysis
This case was selected because the local governments offered free research access to both daycare centers involved in the collaborative initiatives and to the managerial meetings and practices concerning their development of these initiatives. Furthermore, local unions supported the initiatives by joining the partnership, making the case interesting as it gathered stakeholders from government, staff, unions and citizens.

During 2010-2014 data were collected in the two local governments through qualitative methods drawing on discursive approaches (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010). The methods included participant observations, audio and video recording in managerial meetings, organizing meetings, collaborative laboratories and everyday work at both the educational departments in city hall as well as in four daycare centers participating in the initiative. Furthermore, individual and group interviews with managers and teachers were conducted regularly, as well as single interviews and informal conversations with politicians, union representatives, children and parents. Additionally, I collected documents such as meeting minutes, meeting invites, organizational charts, reports and participant written notes throughout the period. This amounted into a data set of participant observations from 16 collaborative governance labs (including all stakeholders); ten public management labs (only managerial participants); four daycare manager labs; two quality management workshops (administrative managers and daycare staff); six partnership conferences; seven collaborative organizing team meetings; two daycare marketplaces; as well as 15 interviews. Also, it included data sources like field notes, audio/video transcripts, photographs; partnership-produced marketplace videos, six partnership articles and newsletters, organizational charts, quality reports, meeting minutes and websites.

Data analysis involved iterations between a chronological event timeline (Hardy and Thomas, 2014) to order what happened where, between whom and with which materials (invites, notes, minutes, etc.), and thematic coding processes of value-laden discourses and practices within and between laboratories (James, 2012). Through an initial analysis I noted that communication about the value ascribed to quality management as well as to daycare were recurring in the data, however, across time, the meanings of such value-laden practices changed. Furthermore, tensions between opposing public management discourses became obvious in the communication, in which one was often negatively connoted, expressed in terms of measurements, control, managerialism, budget cuts and competition all related to national and local NPM practices. The other was often positively connoted in terms of collaboration, innovation, co-creation, value production, core services and citizen-centered initiatives. Through the tensions between these discursive practices, a changing marketization seem to be emerging, namely one that entangles competition with collaboration and dialogs of daycare quality across stakeholders.

Thus, I decided to conduct an in-depth analysis (findings illustrated in Table I) by following text-conversation dialectics in iterations across the data. Thereby I tracked both texts concerning the value of quality management and daycare, and the value-laden practices by which these texts were produced, disseminated, changed and consumed. By reiterative analytical movements, I identified a change in the meanings ascribed to the value of daycare and of quality management over time, and linked to this, the meaning of "market" changed as well. The effects of this is that the value of quality management in daycare changed from negative to positive, when its practices were related to NPG rather than NPM; and that a "marketization" – in terms of changing values for competition and standardization also emerged in the quality-management practices related to NPG. However, this was not negatively connoted anymore, but rather stressed as an alternative to the existing market forces in daycare. As will be elucidated next the development of a marketplace – as an empirical practice, became a central analytical object. This is because the value-laden practices about it and within it embody the discursive tensions between NPM and NPG. During such

Value-laden discursive practices	Meanings	Effects
Daycare quality related to NPM: "children's development is too complex to measure in existing quality accounts"	Daycare is the core service oppressed by managerial logics	Negative connotation of quality-management methods associated with market competition and NPM
Quality management related to NPM: "they are meaningless accounts with no value-production, waste of man hours"	Existing quality-management methods are useless within daycare education	
Daycare quality related to NPG: "daycare managers, teachers and other stakeholders are innovation resources"	Daycare demands qualitative methods to represent its quality	Positive connotation of quality-management practices associated with NPG
Quality management related to NPG: "better methods can be developed by collaboration, e.g. a marketplace for trustful dialogue"	Quality-management methods must be collaborative, dialogic and authentic	Changing market values of collaboration and dialogic accounting

Table I.
Display of analytical findings from the data

practices the actors negotiate values, ideals and problems of the various quality-management methods, including the use of market incentives in terms of stronger competition and the use of collaborative dialogs and their potential as co-creating public value – but also as another force for competition.

Findings
The findings consist of two sections, in which the first unfolds the local emergence of NPG discourses in relation to NPM discourses and associated practices, resulting in a new management practice called daycare marketplace. The second part elucidates the meaning negotiations and practices of the marketplace, and a marketization of collaboration and trust seemingly emerging thereby. As such, the findings show how discourses of NPM and NPG collide in local practices of public sector management in daycare, and thereby elucidate how the tensions between such affect value-laden practices and enable a changing marketization associated with collaboration and trust, but also include aspects of competition – in this case within daycare education. In the following sections, I present examples from these findings.

Value-laden practices: NPG as a better alternative to NPM?
In 2010, two daycare departments established an innovation partnership with the union to improve quality-management methods. The partnership was initiated due to problems described as different languages of many stakeholders, useless measurement and lost information about quality in existing methods such as quality reports, and meaninglessness or lack of authenticity in the communication about quality. The partnership saw such problems as shared between the stakeholders (administrative managers and consultants in daycare departments, politicians, daycare managers and teachers and union representatives). In a newsletter (2010), a head of daycare department outlines his ambitions:

> We want to nuance the dialog about what we spent money on in daycare, and about what the daycare centers, parents, administration and politicians see as quality. We see this as a possibility to contribute to the nationwide political agenda.

Here and elsewhere, the department head refers to a national focus on cost-benefit and standardization, and he argues to nuance the dialog about different quality understandings of stakeholders in daycare. In an interview (2010) he unfolds this:

> I have measured things that did not make sense, it was meaningless. When we started the pedagogic curricular for example. It didn't make sense, and the daycare managers and teachers told us right away, which is why we need to be very critical when developing new quality-management methods. It needs to make sense for all, because they see them as need-to-do. Everything that is about measurements and standardization is a need-to-do task, which they don't like. And what is our role then? Well we are gatekeepers who assure that the managerial practices they are asked to perform are meaningful […] at least we control what and how they are asked to do such things, because of course they need to do some quality management, but I am worried about the micro-management we see both locally and nationally. It's a managerial wave which is worrying, because it is killing a lot of energy in the core services […] and especially the safety and trust.

The department head stresses words like "spent money on," meaningless "measurements," "gatekeeping against micro-management" which indicates a problematization of managerial practices concerned with budgeting, cost-benefit, standardized measurements

and performance management in his talk; such practices are value-laden as meaningless to the stakeholders. Furthermore, he argues that the partnership's collaborative governance initiative is to innovate meaningful quality-management methods opposed to the existing ones, which he hopes will influence the national agenda. As such, he and others in the partnership refer directly to contemporary discussions associated with NPM in the daycare sector – along with other social services in Denmark. The partnership (Jensen *et al*, 2013) presents their work as a way to:

> […] find alternative ways to the current expansion of management approaches, because it is our belief that the public services of the education area are far too complex to be reduced to simple rating, measurements or top-down management. Too much important knowledge is simply lost in the processes of documentation between daycare centers, administrations and politicians.

The partnership see their problems as more general in a broader context of public sector management in the education area, but within daycare these are specifically related to quality-management methods such as pedagogic curricula. Implemented in 2004, the curricula aimed at ensuring a certain quality standard. However, problems of different languages, discrepancy and meaningless measurements have followed, according to the partnership, demanding them to innovate new methods through collaborative governance. Thereby the partnership emphasizes shared problems resulting from quality-management methods related to NPM. In contrast, communication on developing new quality-management methods through collaboration is positively value laden, which a politician stresses after a collaborative governance conference (2012):

> Politician: In the beginning, I thought it was foolish and completely hopeless. That was still my opinion after the first collaborative laboratory. I thought: What is this mess? The chain of command is the way it is, and that's how we do things. But it turned out not to be so stupid. I understood along the way what dialog can lead to if you're willing to think out of the box. We have to think in new ways because those piles of paper we've gotten until now don't enlighten you in what goes on in a day-care center. And that's what matters to both daycare teachers and parents and thus to us, too. Instead of reading and writing big reports, it's better to learn from each other, move each other's boundaries and be inspired by each other. That needs to happen in both the daycare and political arena.

Between 2010 and 2012 the partnership developed new quality-management methods through a range of collaborative laboratories, resulting in the political decision to further enroll dialogic quality inspections and daycare marketplaces from 2013 to 2014 as supplements or potentially alternatives to the pedagogic curricula evaluations and quality reports. This, however, did not lead to a clear-cut change between quality-management methods associated with standardization, cost-benefit and measurements to ones of dialog, trust and collaboration. Rather it involved a process of meaning negotiations through value-laden practices seeking to determine the development of a marketplace, which invoked discursive tensions of NPM and NPG. This will be unfolded in the following section.

The marketplace – a change emerging from discursive tensions of NPM and NPG

In both municipalities, the daycare departments appointed an organizing team to plan and implement the yearly daycare marketplaces. This team consisted of a managerial consultant and a group of local daycare managers. Furthermore, the managerial consultants established a cross-municipal collaborative governance network to share

ideas and strategies with each other. During these meetings the meanings of a daycare marketplace are negotiated recurring. In one network meeting (2013) a managerial consultant says:

A marketplace can both imply a kind of "open space technology" with a committed dialog, or a space to show off and sell stuff, right? The first version assures a collaborative dialog and the other assures a sales presentation, it's like two different purposes [...] In our marketplace it will be a mix of both, right?

However, exactly how this mix is practiced is still discussed a year later at a network meetings (2014):

Managerial consultant A: But I really wanna avoid people at the marketplace thinking: "my kid is to be enrolled in a new kindergarten, let me just check out their service performance", because it's not a presentation that should be used for competition.

Managerial consultant B: But they can get an impression, because some daycare teachers are really good at those professional performances.

Managerial consultant A: Yeah, but that may not be representative for everyday life, you know I don't want it to be a kind of competitive and selling marketplace [...] And that's a balance to strike, because on one hand, we've stressed that the daycare staff shouldn't think about selling themselves and their work with all sorts of gadgets, because that has been a tendency [...] And on the other hand we saw the chair of the political committee, who actually ended up standing in the middle of the marketplace on a stool, you know, very old school marketplace alike [...] It worked well, everybody could hear her [...] but in relation to our discussions and my worries about the competitiveness and "salesman" atmosphere, I don't know. I really think these changes need time, because people don't know how to be in dialog about quality with trust, they are not used to this form of quality accounting, but more a controlling, measuring kind. Still the staff is improving the workshops and booths at the marketplace.

In the extracts the managerial consultants negotiate the meanings of a marketplace in theory as well as in value-laden practices in reality. They acknowledge the double-sided connotation of marketplace – as a potential space for both competition and service sale, and for collaboration and trustful dialogs about quality. In their later discussions, the aspects of the marketplace associated with service sales, performances and competition is clearly negatively connoted. They want to avoid it, and the consultants stress the need to give a more collaborative and dialogic method time, as their experience is that some stakeholders, both teachers and parents, approach the marketplace as a practice related to competition and NPM. The mix of value-laden practices associated with both NPM and NPG is also visible at the actual marketplace (2014), where the chair of committee welcomes by saying:

This daycare marketplace is a replacement of the yearly quality reports sent to us politicians. Previously, every daycare center was required to write a quality report evaluating their work with pedagogic curricula. That report was sent to the administration, and summarized and presented for the committee. This daycare marketplace gives us an opportunity to see with our own eyes, to enter into a dialog, and to hear you talk about what is happening in the daycare centers. It is considerably more interesting for us to experience it this way.

Likewise, the formal press release (2014) states:

The daycare marketplace is an opportunity for dialog at eye level. For the second year in a row we opened the doors to the daycare marketplace. Daycare teachers, parents' committee and politicians were gathered to evaluate the pedagogic curricula at eye level. The place was decorated by impressive booths, which the daycare centers from our municipalities had made.

We have started a new tradition. 550 daycare staff participated in this years marketplace. After our Chair of Committee welcomed everybody, it was time to explore the booths, to see, touch and read about the initiatives and pedagogic efforts with regard to daycare quality.

The committee chair indicates a value-laden distinction between the earlier quality reports and the marketplace implying that the latter is more authentic ("see with our own eyes"), dialogic and a more interesting experience than former methods – namely the report. In the press release, however, the value-laden text is more mixed between both positive connotations of NPG-related practices like dialog, eye level, stakeholders gathered, as well as of NPM-related practices like impressing audiences (in this case politicians and parents), and written accounts of quality efforts.

As such, the value-laden practices of the daycare marketplace entangle NPM and NPG discourses, which creates tensions in the communication. The latter is expressed in the ideals of establishing collaborative governance events, which is seen as more trustful, dialogic and authentic communication about quality as well as enabling learning across different organizational actors without elements of control. The former is however still lurking in the actual practices of the marketplace, because actors see the marketplace as a chance to profile single daycare centers, to "sell" their service and compete with each other. Although the managerial consultants seek to avoid this mix, their efforts embody the discursive tensions between NPM and NPG. This does not remove the existing marketization, but rather change it into one that is positively connoted with value-laden practices related to NPG discourses of cross-organizational collaboration, authentic dialog, trust and learning, but where competitive practices related to NPM discourses are still in play – although in a more subtle way.

Discussion and concluding notes
The findings show that when value-laden practices related to NPG discourses emerge – such as, e.g., collaborative governance initiatives, their realization is not a clear alternative to NPM discourses and related practices. Rather, in the case from the Danish daycare sector discourses of NPG and NPM collide in the formation of new quality-management methods. The effects of this discursive conflation indicates a changing marketization, in which market values of control, measurements and ratings become entangled with collaborative, dialogic and emotional resources – such as trust, authenticity and excitement. These new aspects are evident in both political and managerial practices, as daycare staff is to present and discuss their work's quality by more "authentic" means than a written report. This produces another expectation to all involved actors, namely that they are to engage in social, visual and emotional cross-organizational practices to conduct such new quality-management methods, by which they become new market values. However, the value-laden practices associated with competition is nevertheless yet lurking – collaboration and trust become quality indicators with which daycare centers may compete with each other. Thus, the discursive tensions of NPM and NPG are crucial forces to acknowledge and theorize, as they intersect and change public sector management in local practices and thereby constitute new realities.

Arguably, the empirical findings of such a case study are not generalizable and transferable to all public sector contexts. Yet, some aspects of the empirical findings are worth considering to public management researchers and actors from other sectors interested in NPG tendencies. Many public sector areas (e.g. concerning education, environment, and health care) are struggling with innovating and implementing new practices of collaboration and co-creation associated with NPG alongside existing

practices related to NPM. Scholars researching such processes and actors involved in their realization may well use the findings to reflect upon the effects of discursive tensions on local practice – and to become aware of potential conflation between contradicting discourses and practices that may constitute changes in their own cases.

Furthermore, the theoretical contribution of a discursive approach to public management studies about governance changes goes beyond this case study. Regarding literature on NPG and post-NPM tendencies, this study adds insights to the ways in which discursive tensions emerge and affect governance changes in practice. It supplements the more general discussion of post-NPM tendencies and the potential of a paradigmatic change in public management discourses and related practices (Osborne, 2006; Christensen and Lægreid, 2011a; Hartley *et al.*, 2013). It does so by extending our understanding of the role of discursive tensions during such changes in practice, and offers theorizing to analyze how changes emerge through entangled discourses rather than shifting between them clearly. This not only affirms, but also expands the scope of studies concerned with the "layered realities" of public sector management (Hartley, 2005; Pedersen and Hartley, 2008), which until now have mostly focused on a policy level. To this end, present study offers findings of how such layered realities are constituted in real life – through the discursive conflation that entangles in social and textual interactions and value-laden practices of both NPM and NPG as they form new collaborative initiatives.

Lastly, this study contributes to the studies particularly concerned with exploring the complexity of NPG-related practices and discourses (Vangen and Huxham, 2011; Purdy, 2012; Vangen and Winchester, 2013). These studies argue for theory development to grasp the paradoxical and tensional aspects of cross-sector collaborations in public management. However, whereas they conceptualize by bridging, e.g. governance studies, action research and power theory, this paper adds a specific discourse-based perspective. This unfolds concepts to examine how meanings are negotiated and affect local versions of certain public management discourses – or rather of several contradicting discourses. This is relevant to advance our understanding of the tensions between competing discourses and value-laden practices – as well as how this affects local changes. Thereby, this study is adding to the discourse theorizing initiated by Purdy (2012), but also refining the theoretical exploration of complex tensions in practice called for by Vangen and Huxham (2011) and Vangen and Winchester (2013).

Public management researchers and practitioners are currently much concerned with advancing knowledge of the potentials and challenges of new governance tendencies, may they be seen as NPM-dominated or changing toward post-NPM or NPG. The question of how such tendencies are realized in practice is still a contested terrain, both as practitioners develop new management approaches and as research seeks to theorize their meaning and matter. A changing marketization seems to be emerging in public sector management practices – as shown in the case of the Danish daycare sector, where new market-values intersect collaboration, dialog and trust with competition and service sales. Such changes demand both practitioners' critical consideration, as well as critical scholarly attention and theory development, which this paper endeavors.

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