

Governance, rationality and coalitions - analyses and decisions up-front

Tom Christensen, Professor
University of Oslo
Norway



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Governance, Rationality and Coalitions – Analyses and Decisions Up Front

**Professor Tom Christensen, Department of
Political Science, University of Oslo**

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1. Main questions

- **What characterize decision-making processes related to major public projects?**
- **What are the decision logics that one can use to understand these processes?**
- **Empirical study of 23 MPPs the last 10-15 years in Norway: 10 transportation/ communications, 6 military, 7 mixed**

2. Two major decision elements

- **A. Rational calculation**
- **Are goals, problems and solutions clearly defined?**
- **B. Political and administrative control**
- **To what extent are the decisions on MPP controlled by the executive leaders?**
- ***Decision logics have different view on these elements***

3. Decision logics

- **A. Instrumental**

- **Decisions are controlled by executive leaders that score high on rational calculation**

- **Hierarchical and negotiation version**

- **B. Institutional**

- **Historical traditions/cultures, informal norms and path dependency**

C. Environment

- **Technical and institutional environment important for decisions**
- **Instrumental pressure/needs or symbols**
- **D. Garbage can**
- **Unpredictable decisions – complexity, ‘local rationality’ and decoupling/recoupling**
- ***MPP project decisions complex combination of the logics***

4. Main results

- **A. Rational calculation**
- **1/2 of the projects scoring medium/high on unambiguous problem analysis**
- **1/3 add problems during the process**
- **90% start with rather clear solutions, but they are often general with some variety**
- **40% add new solutions during the process**

B. Political and administrative control

- **Central political executives important in 1/3 of the decisions**
- **90% of the projects had strong influence from expert authorities on different levels**
- **Parliament overall little influence**
- **External stake-holders important in 1/10 of the processes**

5. The explanatory power of the logics

- The instrumental logic explain the most, some more in hierarchical than negotiational version**
- Coalitions both make decisions possible, but also potentially undermine executive authority**
- Path-dependency for military projects**
- Technical environment some importance**
- Some decisions related to complexity, 'local rationality' and decoupling/recoupling**

6. Lesson learned

- **Overall both similarity and variety in decisions**
- **Difficult to say what a 'successful' process is**
- **Even 'ideal' processes may lead to increasing costs or public critique**
- **Path-dependency and garbage can features seldom related to success, but it may happen**
- **Coalitions more constructive when political leaders are involved**