

# Why Does New Public Management (NPM) Fail in Developing Countries?

By: Budi Kurniawan

Lecturer in Department of Government, University of Lampung

## **1. Introduction**

Most countries' public sectors have been reshaped by reforms under the umbrella of new public management (NPM) over the last four decades (Hood, 1991; Pollitt & Dan, 2011). This market model in public management tries to make the government more efficient by rolling back and reorganizing it through privatization and marketization. NPM attempted to use a market or private model of management. The main goal is to make government more entrepreneurial and dynamic (Bevir, 2010, p. 141-142).

The first NPM reforms took place in Anglo-Saxon countries, particularly the United Kingdom and New Zealand, but they quickly spread throughout the world, most notably in OECD advanced democracies. After the success of neoliberal reform in the UK under Margaret Thatcher administration and in the US by President Reagan administration, the NPM then tried to apply in developing countries as part of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) by International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB). SAP is the main requirement for developing countries if they need financial assistance from the World Bank and the IMF. After the Asian economic crisis of 1997, NPM became popular in many developing countries.

As part of the policy recommendations promoted by international organizations to many developing countries, NPM has not been able to promote development. Some scholars in public administration have conducted some research to prove this failure in developing countries. Lapsley (2009) argued that governments are frequently disappointed by the widespread use of NPM. Sarker (2006) finds that NPM fails to apply in Bangladesh. In the case of privatization as part of the elements of NPM, this neoliberal model caused famines in developing countries. In the case of Malawi (Owusu, et al, 2003) and Pakistan (Gera, 2004), famines occur while the neoliberal prescription of structural adjustment programs (SAP) from the IMF and WTO becomes an obstacle for the government to secure the food. The same findings are also highlighted by Moseley

et al. (2015), when he argues that the neoliberal agenda creates a problem of agriculture in Africa, when the market model is applied in this continent. Furthermore, Abrahamsen (2000) shows that the agenda of good governance (the other name of NPM) has created many development failures in Africa. Using a postmodernism approach, Abrahamsen assesses the neoliberal ideology behind the policy recommendation in the name of good governance in Africa.

Why does NPM fail? This article seeks to investigate this puzzle using the cultural theory approach. This paper will argue that NPM is failing in many developing countries because policy recommendations neglect the cultural context of developing countries. This paper will investigate the theory of origin of public administration institutions based on grid-group cultural theory. This paper will also argue that grid-group cultural theory has a strong argument to explain the origin of institution in public administration theory. In addition, as part policy recommendation grid-group cultural theory can explain why NPM is ineffective to achieve its goals in developing countries.

This paper has been divided into the following parts. First, this paper will trace the rational choice theory as the paradigm behind the NPM. Second, this paper will explore the origin of an institution based on the cultural theory approach. Third, this paper will explain why NPM as the institution model of public administration fails to apply in non-individualist culture. Finally, this paper will discuss the limitation of cultural theory in public management and policy recommendation issues compared to other approaches.

## **2. The Institutional Change from Weberian Bureaucracy to NPM**

Why there is institutional change in western countries from traditional bureaucracy to new public management? To explain this question, some scholars give some explanations.

The first answer is to use the Thomas Kuhn framework as paradigmatic shift. NPM is the answer for an era of technological change, while the old paradigmatic of Weberian bureaucracy cannot answer for this change. Hughes (2012, p.vi) said:

“Over the past 20 years, the public sectors of western countries have undergone major change as governments try to respond to the challenges of technological change, globalization, and international competitiveness. This period saw wider-ranging public

sector reforms than any other period of the twentieth century and with no sign of diminution of change into the early twenty-first century. It is argued here that this period of change represents a paradigm shift from the traditional model of public administration, dominant for most of the twentieth century, to 'managerialism' or public management. The theory of bureaucracy in its governmental context is being replaced by economic theories and practice by markets'

He also said:

The decision to reject one paradigm is always simultaneously the decision to accept another, and the judgment leading to that decision involves the comparison of both paradigms with nature *and* with one another (1970, p. 77, emphasis in the original). Paradigmatic change involves the comparison of theories, neither of which works perfectly. If there are problems with the public management reforms, the response will be further changes in the managerial direction. Public management is argued to be a new paradigm (Hughes, 2012, p.4).

## **2.1 NPM as the policy recommendation of rational choice theory**

This paper argues that NPM is the application of the rational choice approach in public administration. The root of NPM can be traced to the theory rational choice in political science. The paradigm of NPM has a strong relationship with the shift of paradigm from government to governance as the manifest of transformation from old institutionalism to rational choice or public choice theory in political science. The 'Government' paradigm looks at the government or the state as an institution that has monopolistic power.

In contrast, governance views as the arena of interaction among actors, and government is this actor. Governance is viewed as the process of governing the neutral arena (state) when each actor competes about interest to maximize utilities among actors. In this view, a state is a natural and unified expression of a nation based on shared ethnic, cultural, and linguistic ties and a common good. Many of them raised public awareness about the influence of pressure groups, self-interest, and social networks on policymaking. These rational choice theories later inspired attempts to reform the public sector and develop new policy instruments toward the end of the twentieth century. Indeed, rational choice theory is the inspiration the new public management as policy reform recommendation (Bevir, 2010, p.3).

Both theoretically and empirically, governance differs from government. In theory, governance refers to the act of governing. The process of governing does not have to be done by a hierarchically organized group of people. Markets and actor networks have the ability to govern, coordinate, and make decisions. On the other hand, government refers to political institutions, whereas governance refers to rule-making processes in general (Bevir, 2012, p.28).

In addition, a state is a natural and unified expression of a nation based on shared ethnic, cultural, and linguistic ties and a common good. Many of them raised public awareness about the influence of pressure groups, self-interest, and social networks on policymaking. These theories later inspired attempts to reform the public sector and develop new policy instruments toward the end of the twentieth century. Certainly, rational choice theory, particularly principal–agent theory, owed a debt to the new public management.

Some elements of NPM such as privatization, contract system, competition, *user charges*, *accountability* are clearly from the rational choice or public choice approach. However, the aspect of separation politics and administration is the concept of traditional Weberian model (Gruening, 2001, p.16).

The other answer comes from the political theorists, which try to connect the idea of NPM to neoliberal ideology. Some scholars have come up with the argument that NPM is neoliberal or New Right institutions. It has been theorized that NPM is a reflection of neoliberalism, as the New Right's ideology in public administration (Walsh 1995; Diefenbach 2009; Lorenz 2012). After the crisis of Keynesian economy, the popularity of state dominant role also declines. As a result, some scholars promote the idea of market-based reforms referring to NPM. Market-based reforms or New Right reforms were adopted by policymakers in an attempt to shrink government and make what remained more efficient (Bevir, 2012, p. 117). One of the famous books that promote NPM is 'Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector' written by Osborne and Gaebler (1993). This book is a response to the problem of cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability in the public sector. As a result, NPM is considered

an attempt to address the alleged problems of effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability in the mainstream literature (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993).

The connection between neoliberal and rational choice is that they are the same paradigm. As Archer (2000) said; rational choice theory has underpinned the neoliberal reforms of new public management. With these reforms have come the rollback of the traditional social welfare state and withdrawal of its services. The justification for applying Rational Choice Theory to policy-making continues to be the more efficient provision of services. This has resulted in the intended decline of expenditure by the public purse and instead cost-shifting to the grey sector. Therefore, the welfare services which we have come to expect as part of what is provided by the public sector are now increasingly dependent on altruistic acts of charity. The attraction of neoliberal reforms is readily apparent, but so are its problematic outcomes, and this is both the achievement and the threat of unquestioned application of rational choice theory (Archer & Tritter, 2013, p.1). In short, NPM is part of neoliberalism ideology, also the part of rational choice in political science and classical economics, and of course individualist culture, which will be explained in the next subtitle.

### **3. The origin of NPM based on cultural theory**

This paper argue that grid group cultural theory has strong view to explain the origin of NPM. Scholars frequently speak of a shift away from hierarchy and toward markets and networks, which is the philosophy of NPM. Hierarchy here is associated with the old paradigm of Weberian bureaucracy. Deploying cultural grid theory can be beneficial in explaining the institutional change of western countries from the Weberian hierarchy model to the pro market of NPM as the complement of other approaches.

What is the theory of culture grid group? Grid-group theory originated in structural sociology of Emile Durkheim and was developed by Douglas. It has recently been advanced and applied in the fields of political science and related fields (Coyle & Ellis, 1994; Ellis, 1993; Holling, 1979; Schwarz & Thompson, 1990; Thompson, Ellis & Wildavsky, 1990 cited in Lockhart, 1999). According to Mary Douglas, two dimensions of sociality, grid and group, can adequately capture the variability of an individual's involvement in social life. The degree to which an individual's life

is circumscribed by externally imposed prescriptions is called a grid. The less of life that is open to individual negotiation, the more binding and extensive the prescriptions. An explicit set of institutionalized classifications that keeps individuals apart and regulates their interactions characterizes a high grid (that is, a highly regulated) social context (Douglas, 1982, p. 203 cited in Lockhart, 1999). The extent to which an individual is incorporated into bounded units is called a group. The higher the level of incorporation, the more individual choice is influenced by group decisions.

This theory explains how people come up with answers to fundamental concerns such as "How does the world work?" What is it like to be a human? For whom am I responsible? According to grid group theorists, people's responses to these questions establish orientations toward two essential social dimensions: the legitimacy of external prescription and the level of identification with others. Therefore, there are four categorical cultures. First, individualist culture is a culture with a combination of low tolerance to external prescription and reinforced by a lack of belonging to a group. Second, an egalitarian culture is when the society has a low tolerance for external prescription, but this culture has a strong feeling of belonging as a group. Third, a hierarchy is created by strong feelings of group membership combined with views that strong external prescriptions are necessary. Fourth, the fatalist culture is when the belonging feelings as a group are weak combined with the strong acceptance of external prescription (Lockhart, 1999). Figure 1 summarizes these four categories of grid-group theories.

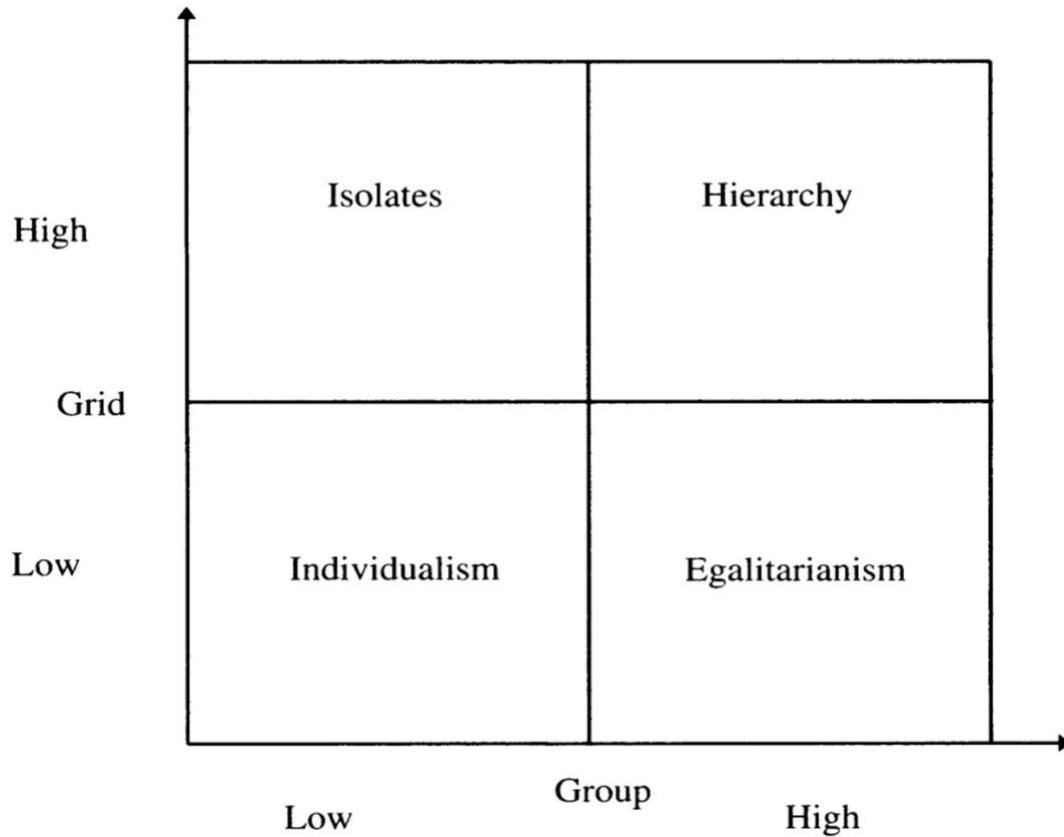


Fig. 1. The typology of grid groups. Source: (Lockhart, 1999, p. 866)

Using this framework, this paper argues that the transformation from Weberian bureaucracy to NPM is the transformation from hierarchy culture to individualist. This is similar to Douglas's and other cultural theorists' perceptions of a cultural shift away from hierarchical attitudes and toward more pervasive individualism in capitalist societies (Douglas, 1986). According to Hood (1996), the erosion of progressivism in many countries, including the United Kingdom and New Zealand, has been spreading from less to more radical assaults, so this transformation can be explained in part by this underlying cultural shift. Dunleavy & Hood (1994) gave a model to explain this transformation with some modification from grid-group theory. Figure 2 describes this transformation.

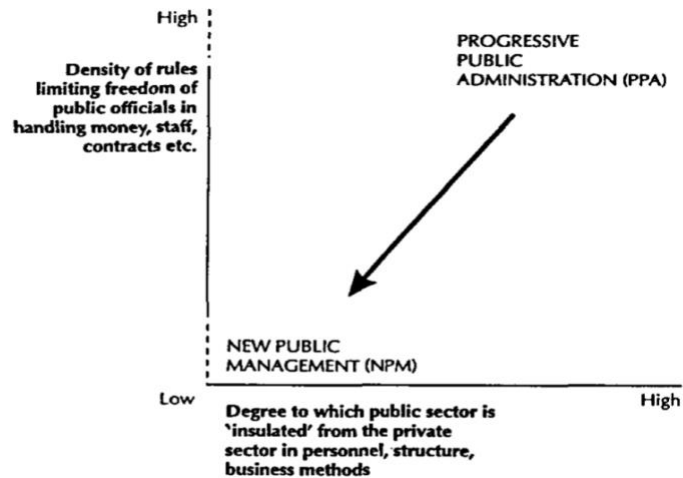


Fig. 2. Transformation from Weberian bureaucracy (PPA) to NPM from the perspective of grid group theory. Source: (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994, p.10).

#### 4. Is this change universal?

Although many scholars who support NPM claim that NPM is universal, this paper argues that what happened in Anglo-Saxon countries when there is transformation of culture from hierarchies to individualist is not universal. As a result, efforts to apply NPM to developing countries are difficult to adapt.

Some scholars who support the idea of NPM argue that NPM is neutral from certain political ideologies. Hughes (2012) and Osborne and Gaebler (1992) for example argue that this transformation is universal due to technological change in global society. The global and inevitable shift to a coherent new paradigm is underway, and the shape of public administration will be multiple rather than a single one. However, according to Hood (1996), this transformation is not universal. He then argues that there are many models of public administration based on the cultural context. He promotes a model to explain this. Figure 3 shows this model argued by Hood.



**Alternative Futures for Public Management**

<b>Degree of generalized rules</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>"GRIDLOCKED CONTRACT STATE"</b>  Private providers, "iron rule book" (juridification), no political mediation  <b>Example:</b> 1980s US healthcare	<b>"PUBLIC BUREAUCRACY STATE"</b>  Extended public provision by distinctive public sector organization  <b>Example:</b> traditional German public sector style
	<b>Low</b>	<b>"MINIMAL PURCHASING STATE"</b>  Maximal corporate presence, state as an "intelligent consumer"  <b>Example:</b> Los Angeles local government	<b>"HEADLESS CHICKEN STATE"</b>  Distinctive but turbulent public sector: "no-one in charge" management  <b>Example:</b> Spanish regional government reform
		<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
		<b>Degree of separation of public and private sectors</b>	

Figure 3: Alternative futures of public management. Source (Hood, 1996, p. 167)

Based on the framework of Hood, we can also create a model to explain Asian countries of public management. We begin with Japan, Japan has previously been famous well known for the hierarchy bureaucracy of developmental state. Johnson (1982) argued that the best success of Japan's industrialization is caused by this bureaucracy. MITI (ministry of International Trade and industry) as the Japan pilot organization applies the Weberian system to affirm the economy plan on Japan implemented as the scheme that has been designed. Johnson (1999) provides the essential features of a developmental state based on the history of Japan. The first component of the developmental state is the existence of a small, inexpensive, but elite bureaucracy staffed by the system's best managerial talent. The second component is a political system in which the bureaucracy is given enough flexibility to act on its own initiative effectively. The third element is the state intervention in the economy. In implementing its industrial strategy, the state must take care to maintain market competition to the greatest extent possible, as is consistent with economic priorities. The fourth element is MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry) as the pilot organization. The development state is the main reason for the successful economic development

in countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. However, Johnson does not provide enough explanation as to where the origin of rational bureaucracy in Japan came from. He only mentions the Meiji restoration, who adapted it from Prussia without considering the same culture of Japan and Prussia.

It is better to understand the success adaptation with the grid group theory. Japan's Weberian bureaucracy is parallel with the hierarchy culture in Japan's society. Japan adopted this Weberian bureaucracy from the German Prussia bureaucracy in the era of Meiji restoration. The important thing from the success of Japan adopting the Prussia bureaucracy is the same culture between Japan and Prussia. Prussia has the same hierarchy culture as Japan. As Hood (1996) mentioned above, Germany has hierarchy culture that is proper with the Weberian model of bureaucracy. What about NPM? I try to use Indonesia as case studies.

## **5. Indonesian case: Patrimonial-Hierarchy Culture**

Several scholars have conducted studies on bureaucracy in Indonesia under new order era. They have described the state-society relationship in a variety of ways, but they all seem to agree on one thing: the state's dominance over society. Most of them use the 'state and civil society' approach to understand Indonesia in the new order era. If we read their studies, there is a similarity between Indonesia and some Asian countries when bureaucracy is more dominant than civil society in the policy making process. For example, we find the same result with South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan when they explained the characteristic of development state in East Asia (Woo-Cumings, 2019).

According to Karl D. Jackson (1978 cited in Emmerson, 1983), Indonesia is a bureaucratic state. Indonesia is an elitist state in the sense that state employees, armed officers and high-ranking civil servants, have policy-making authority over which society has little influence. McVey (1978 in Anderson & Kahin, 2009) emphasizes the importance of the state bureaucracy by referring to Indonesia as a 'beamtenstaat,' or officers' state, in terms of the role of bureaucratic machinery and technical expertise in economic development due to the predominance of bureaucracy. The late NIU Professor, Dwight King, called Indonesia state as bureaucratic authoritarian regime. 'The

ultimate authority in the bureaucratic-authoritarian model is vested in an oligarchy or the military as an institution, rather than in a single ruler (King, 2009, p.110 in Anderson & Kahin, 2009). In short, these scholars argue that state or bureaucracy is more dominant than civil society in Indonesian under the Suharto regime (new order).

In addition, some experts also want to provide a cultural explanation for Indonesian politics. Benedict Anderson (in Holt, 2019) for example, tries to link the Javanese culture, the dominant ethnic in Indonesia, to the Indonesian politics that he calls a patrimonial state, a concept that originally came from Max Weber. According to Anderson, the King of Java kept his power by controlling the financial sources and distributing the spoils to keep his subordinates loyal in bureaucracy. Greetz (1980) also used the patrimonial state approach to explain the Balinese state during the colonial era, in which power was derived from exemplary centers within the power structure, which are frequently in conflict with the Balinese state's class structure. However, the problem with using this culture approach is that culture is dynamic and not static. In fact, culture is a change. Javanese culture evolved from precolonial times to the colonial era, with the former interacting with the Dutch state and the latter being the use of Javanese characteristics in Suharto's government to justify his rule. It showed that the culture was evolving in this case due to interaction with the respective social and political leaders of each era (Pemberton, 2018).

After the economic crisis in 1997, the Indonesian government was imposed on to accept structural adjustment programs (SAPs) by the IMF. NPM is as the bureaucratic reform one of the elements of SAP. However, the biggest challenge in applying NPM in Indonesia is the cultural obstacle. Indonesia is patrimonial and hierarchy culture when the society is a communal society rather than individualist and highly dependent on external prescriptions. In contrast, NPM is based on the individualistic culture of the experience. The question remains: Are there any changes in Indonesian culture from hierarchy to individualist so that they can easily adapt NPM?

As developing countries, Indonesia is open to the idea of western institutions such as democracy and NPM. Instead of applying efficient public management as the NPM has claimed, reform in Indonesia creates a new model of corruption when there is a shift from state to market orientation.

A study by Juwono (2016) in his Ph.D. dissertation in LSE argues that despite all the rhetoric in support of the cause, governance reform was never viewed as a long-term project, and thus was never consistently implemented. As a result, it left the overall political, economic, and social structure, as well as the persistent institutional failure that induced and incubated the wave of corruption. Furthermore, Harun (2019) argues that Indonesia's cultural ecology of the bureaucracy has made it difficult for reforms to achieve their intended goals. Reforms have resulted in serious unintended consequences: the local elite is not acting in the public interest, internal auditing of the local government is weakened, and corruption continues (Harun et al., 2019).

Indonesia case is like Mexico, instead of reforming the public sector, the NPM creates a new corruption problem. Privatization, as one aspect of NPM in Mexico, did not take into account Mexico's cultural and social aspects. As a result, Carlos Slim has created a new monopolistic problem in the private sector. Carlos Slim did not become wealthy through innovation. President Carlos Salinas privatized Telmex, the Mexican telecommunications monopoly, in 1990, and became wealthy as a result. The auction was won by a consortium led by Slim's Grupo Corso, despite the fact that Slim did not place the highest bid. Slim delayed payment by using Telmex dividends to pay for the stock instead of paying for it all at once. Slim had taken over what had previously been a public monopoly, and it was a lucrative one (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012, p.95).

## **6. The Limitation of Cultural Grid-Group Theory in Public Management Discourse**

The important critique when we apply cultural grid group theory in the study of NPM or public management in general is how this theory explain the cultural shift. Is culture influenced by the institution or vice versa? According to grid-group scholars, institutions are viewed as manifestations of social and political relations or orders, which are a component of political culture. Political institutions undoubtedly help in the transmission and maintenance of cultures, but culture also shapes and legitimizes institutions. As a result, cultural theory can become complementary to new institutional approach. Grid-group theory helps us recognize the symbiosis between structure and culture in institutional studies (Lockhart, 1999).

However, if we use this framework in study of public administration, cultural grid-group theory than just to become an apologetic approach for other approaches. The cultural theory will not give his genuine idea in public administration studies. For example, if there is a new paradigm of public administration, the cultural theory then just gives a legalization or apologetic explanation of this new theory to certain cultural context without contributing its genuine idea of public service or public management.

Recently, there has been a paradigm shift from new public management to collaborative government. "Collaborative governance" has become a buzzword in the world of public administration and management in the twenty-first century. It is used both formally and informally to refer to a wide range of activities that involve working on public policy issues outside of government bureaucracies (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). The idea of collaborative government become a popular idea as a new theory or paradigm in public management replacing NPM. Again, cultural grid group theory came late and just try to evaluate this theory by explaining the cultural context of this new theory, whether it is hierarchies, egalitarian, individualist, fatalist, or autonomy?

In contrast, other theories such as rational choice and rational choice institutions can always be a pioneer in promoting new theories or models in public management and public policy. Using mathematic model, they can make prediction model of the kind of policy that governments can apply to change human or society behavior. For the covid 19 problem, for example, rational choice, or new institution, and psychological approach can suggest a policy recommendation to solve the covid 19 problem. Nudge institution for example, can make social engineering manipulate society behavior to mitigate the negative impacts of covid 19. For instance, successful vaccination is related to the contribution of the nudge institution as part of the public policy and public management research center. Studies by Dai et al. (2021) show that using behavioral science in public management and policy can increase the COVID-19 vaccination rates. So, they can be proud that they can contribute to humanity in dealing with the current crisis. The question then, what is the genuine contribution of grid group theory for policy recommendation on Covid 19?

Grid-group theory cannot contribute more to the policy recommendation because it is very difficult to measure culture. Thinking about culture is not binary thinking when scholars consider about “bad and good”, “weak and strong”. As a result, cultural theories cannot build a model as good as rational choice mathematical model. However, it is also a strong feature of cultural theories because cultural theories can look in more detail rather than just seeing the causality relationship. We miss the obvious because we are blinded to the potential of nonmodern, nonformal, non-rule-of-law, and nondemocratic institutions by standard binary labels such as "weak/strong" and "good/bad." Our profoundly ingrained bias that the developed West's norms are universally superior leads us to see any deviation from these norms as a weakness. As a result, in developing societies, institutions are frequently identified by “what they are not” rather than “what they are” (Ang, 2006, p. 244). For example, western scholars always care about how developing countries do not follow the western rational choice style of public management instead of thinking “what is the authentic style of public management in developing countries.

Furthermore, I think grid group theory can contribute more to the society if they can cooperate with the other approach, as Lockhart and other cultural theorists have argued. I agree that for policy recommendation, modifications of a model such as NPM to other cultural contexts are needed. To be assessed by the cultural theorist is one of the many steps before a policy recommendation wants to be applied in other cultural contexts. It is the reason why we need risk analysis based on cultural context. If we use cultural risk analysis based on grid group theory, I am an optimistic that the success of policy recommendations across the cultural context can be more significant. And grid-group cultural theory can fill this gap.

## **7. Conclusions**

This paper argues that NPM is failing in many developing countries because policy recommendations ignore their cultural context. The origins of NPM can be traced back to the theory of rational choice in political science. The NPM paradigm has a strong relationship with the shift from government to governance as a manifestation of political science's transformation from old institutionalism to rational choice or public choice theory. This paper argues that the

origin of cultural theory is the individualist grid group culture. The change from Weberian bureaucracy to NPM is a shift from hierarchical to individualist culture. However, the transformation of culture from hierarchies to individualism that occurred in Anglo-Saxon countries is not universal. As a result, it is difficult to apply NPM to developing countries. Indonesia is one of the examples of this failure.

Because culture is difficult to measure, grid group theory cannot contribute more to policy recommendations. When rational choice scholars can consider "bad and good," "weak and strong," and "weak and strong," grid group cultural theories can not think using this binary model. As a result, cultural theories cannot produce a model that is as good as a mathematical model based on rational choice.

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