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**Value Dynamics in the Public Sector:  
A Historical Comparative Analysis of Changes in  
Selection Criteria for Civil Servants.**

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Panel 47 – Researching Public Values: Dynamics and Developments.

## 1. Introduction

The study of public values has become increasingly important in public administration research. While progress has been made in several areas, the study of value *change* has been generally neglected (Beck Jørgensen and Vrangbæk, 2011). The study of values, is plagued by many difficulties, for instance a more generally accepted definition of values - let alone public values - is lacking and the link between values and terms or expressions proves problematic in empirical research. The study of value dynamics faces two more challenges.

First, tracing and explaining change in public values is a complex task. An explanation of value changes is an exciting theoretical playground that seems to oppose any specific theoretical approach. As such it demands to develop new theories and – more modestly - combining various theories. For example, value changes can be explained by combinations of theories on path dependency, pendulum dynamics, fashions, mimetic isomorphism, strategic calculations, and changes in institutional contexts as well as in deeper societal structures (Beck Jørgensen, 2009).

Second, and more problematic, there are difficulties in obtaining data that shed light on value shifts over time. If we want to go back in time more than just a few years, we mostly have to rely on peoples´ biased memories and documentary material. If we move back more than a few generations in history, documentary evidence may be scarce and is usually fragmented. Given that values are intangible phenomena and that values often need context and interpretation to give meaning the empirical study of value dynamics represents a serious challenge.

This paper utilizes one specific source of empirical evidence on public values which allows us to go back in history for some decades and look for changes in public values: *public sector job advertisements*. The logic behind choosing this data source is twofold. First, we expect job advertisements - as formulated by public sector organizations looking for new staff - reflect not only the values and competences actually needed by the organization but also the normative context of the public organization in question or of the public sector as such. In short, we expect that job advertisements present us with the values that are supposed to guide civil servant behavior. Second, this type of data is research cost-effective, i.e. data are quite easy to collect and because of the recruitment context and advertisement costs we expect job advertisements to be rather direct and short. Where most insights into everyday, work floor values are lost or very fragmented, job advertisement may provide a rare insight, even though obviously (also) limited in scope.

Job advertisements were collected in Denmark (1966, 1976, 1986, 1996, and 2006) and in the Netherlands (1968, 1978, 1988, 1998, and 2008). We collected data from two countries for one simple reason: if we can find the same dynamic pattern in the two countries then we may have identified a more general trend. The period chosen circumscribes a) the time of constructing and expanding the welfare state, b) the fiscal crisis in the public sector following climbing oil prices, c) the introduction of NPM techniques and modernisation of the public sector, and d) reactions to these reforms.

About 30 advertisements were picked for each year in each country. Our aim was to establish whether or not this data source is indeed of value in order to research public sector value changes. If so, perhaps more elaborate and detailed study makes sense. The data gathered includes: 1) job advertisements in state organizations (including police, courts, and justice) thereby excluding job advertisements at the municipal and regional level, and 2) academic positions of a general administrative character as we want to focus on public values at a general level, avoiding values for specific professions. It should be noted that values are rarely mentioned directly in the advertisements. We can hardly speak of espoused values in the strict sense. It is better to talk about

values that are reflected in job advertisements and that are implied in the descriptions of organization, the job and wanted qualifications.

## 2. Theoretical points of departure

The starting point for this study was an interest in looking into job advertisements as a possible valuable data source on value change. Consequently, our analysis is to some extent data driven: Given these data, what theoretical questions can be analyzed and which hypotheses can be tested? We have identified three theoretical points of departure as relevant for this type of data. First, we want to look for direct changes in selection criteria, conceptualized as changes in balance between merit bureaucracy, patronage bureaucracy and representative bureaucracy. Second, we explore the agencification hypothesis, i.e. that large public administration systems during the NPM-era have been transformed to smaller semi-autonomous organizations and ask whether and how such a development is reflected in the job advertisements. Finally, we investigate the crowding out hypothesis, i.e. that NPM-values have crowded out old classic public sector values. We will describe the three theoretical points of departure one by one in the following.

### *Merit, patronage, and representative bureaucracy*

As job advertisements are about hiring, looking at selection criteria is inevitable. Peters (2005) differentiates between three systems of administrative recruitment: merit, patronage, and representativeness.

In a *merit* system, civil servants are selected on the basis of neutral competence (Peters, 2005: 87). Expertise - referring to skill, knowledge and experience - is traditionally known as one of the most important competences for civil servants and it is central in Weber's conception of bureaucracy. But other competences than expertise do exist. A person may be selected on the grounds of behaviour such as being cooperative and flexible or - as suggested by Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) - acting with professionalism, integrity, and honesty. Further, a selection criterion within the merit category can be an attribute such as access to an important network.

In a system of *patronage*, civil servants are selected on political grounds. The crucial question is of course what is meant by "political"? At first, we can imagine at least three different meanings: party politics (a civil servant is appointed because of party loyalty), nepotism (a civil servant is appointed because of personal loyalty), and commitment to or interest in a specific policy program (a civil servant is appointed because of an interest in e.g. environmental policies). In this paper we use "political" as commitment to a policy program simply because appointment of civil servants on the basis of party politics is of little importance in the Netherlands as well as in Denmark and because nepotism is not likely to be reflected in advertisements at all.

Commitment to a policy program can exist on the basis of either a political opinion ("environmental policies are much more important than most social policies" or "deregulation is the only way to cope with environmental problems") or on the presence of public service motivation (e.g. a commitment to doing good to society and others; attraction to policy-making).

Finally, the basic idea behind *representative bureaucracy* is that the apparatus should represent the characteristics of the citizens it administers (Peters, 2005: 89). What characteristics are then the

relevant ones? The traditional answer to that are 1) physical characteristics such as sex, race and age and 2) social characteristics such as ethnicity and social-economic background.

These categories are somewhat overlapping (e.g. ethnicity or age can in some instances be a merit) and at least for efficiency reasons it is unlikely that we can find pure systems of recruitment (e.g. often merit is not enough, commitment is also needed).

What sort of change can we expect within this framework? In general, we think it is fair to expect more mixed selection criteria during time as many studies report more complex governance structures and a more differentiated society (e.g. migration) (references). On the other hand, institutional tradition and path dependency suggest that a change will be rather slow and modest. Thus, we formulate the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1: In societies which since long have institutionalized a Weberian bureaucracy in central government such as the Netherlands and Denmark, merit will be the primary selection criterion.*

*Hypothesis 2: In societies with increasing complexity with regard to problems, knowledge, technologies and organization, the understanding of merit will become more complex as well.*

*Hypothesis 3: In societies with increasing complexity with regard to problems, knowledge, technologies and organization, merit bureaucracy will be supplemented by political bureaucracy and representative bureaucracy.*

*A more specific sub-hypothesis reads:*

*Hypothesis3-sub: In societies with an increasing multi-cultural nature, awareness of gender, ethnic and cultural diversity as a relevant value for selection will increase.*

### *The Agencification Trend*

In 1996, Guy Peters and Vincent Wright listed a number of fundamental shifts in thinking about public administration. They formulated “six great truths” about public administration and discussed how public administration in practice drifted away from these “truths”:

1. From self-sufficiency to contracting out, privatization and competition.
2. From direct hierarchical top down control to empowerment of street-level bureaucrats and clients.
3. From national “one size fits all” services to tailor made individualised solutions.
4. From upward accountability to accountability downward to customers.
5. From standardised personnel and budgetary procedures to individual and local solutions.
6. From neutral political service to enthusiastic public managers and the development of organisational value and mission statements.

The essence of these six trends is that public sectors in most Western countries are drifting away from a large and uniform public administration system. But heading where to?

One single trend can possibly be identified: the creation of smaller semi-autonomous organizations, a trend also labelled as agencification (Pollitt et al., 2004; Verhoest et al., 2010). Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2000) analyse this transformation as “the construction of organisations” with a) a marked identity and clear boundaries to the environment, b) internal steering capacity, and c) a focus on organizational goals and results. As a result, they argue, by creating identifiable organizations the public sector is moving away from two types of incomplete or defective organizations traditionally characterizing the public sector: “administrations” with vague identity and little decision making authority (e.g. districts offices tightly controlled by “headquarters”) and “arenas” populated with powerful professionals accountable to professional values and norms rather than to the employer or a specific organization (e.g. hospitals as an organizational field where career patterns criss cross the single hospital). This links with the need to legitimize a public organization and the need to present an organization as an attractive workplace for professionals, as civil servants generally are highly trained professionals.

Following this line of thought we would expect that job advertisements in the beginning of the period reflect a uniform large system and later reflect specific organizational identities and needs. We can thus formulate three hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 4: Over time job advertisements focus less on providing a career in public administration as such and more on a position in a specific sector, organization, and/or agency, i.e., advertisements will be used increasingly as platforms for organizational branding and self exposure.*

As public organizations become identifiable organizations, they tend to see each other as competitors. Thus they try to profile their jobs and their organization as attractive, offering an interesting and appealing way of working and living. This fits with the drifting away from a more classic public administration profile for applicants as bureaucrats.

*Hypothesis 5: Human Relations-related values - such as personal development, good working environment - increase in order to attract the best applicants on the labor market.*

### *The Crowding Out Hypothesis*

As stated before, there seems to be a drifting away from a traditional public administration system or bureaucracy. This is often linked to the rise of New Public Management. Contrary to what might be expected, this may imply not so much an increasing number of values being put forward, but rather values being replaced by other values. With little doubt, the most popular hypothesis on modern value changes is the crowding-out hypothesis launched by Hood (1991) that stipulates precisely this phenomenon. According to this hypothesis old classic values like legality, honesty, integrity, and robustness are replaced or colonized by New Public Management (cf. Lynn, 2006: 129). For instance, Van den Heuvel et al argue that values such as expertise, loyalty, neutrality, and also legitimacy are typically Weberian, whilst other values are characteristic for NPM: efficiency, transparency, acceptability and profit (Van den Heuvel et.al 2002: 154, and Bozeman points at efficiency and performance as central to NPM (2007: 79 – 80). Many more examples can be traced in the literature. In short the core idea of NPM is running government like business, i.e. focusing on efficiency, performance and results as goals and on private managerial techniques as means. It is a

the-winner-takes-it-all-hypothesis, envisaging that all public organizations in all respects are infused with modern efficiency considerations. This hypothesis has been central to debates on New Public Management. Especially during the 1990ies the main question was: How bad is the damage (Rhodes, 1987; Smith, 1991; Stewart & Walsh, 1992; Olsen, 1993; Butler, 1994; Greenaway, 1995; Keating, 1995; Frederickson, 1997)? As NPM refers to specific values that should reflect in functionaries' capacities and behavior, it is to be expected that they will be included in selection criteria (cf. Van der Hoeven, 2009).

Following this line of thought we formulate the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 6: New Public Management values and techniques tend to crowd out classic virtues and practices.*

### **3. Results**

*Merit, patronage, and representative bureaucracy*

#### **Hypothesis 1 & 2**

*1. In societies which since long have institutionalized a Weberian bureaucracy in central government such as the Netherlands and Denmark, merit will be the primary selection criterion.*

*2. In societies with increasing complexity with regard to problems, knowledge, technologies and organization, the understanding of merit will become more complex as well.*

To start with the Danish job advertisements: all have a very strong flavor of merit bureaucracy (see table 1 and 2). The emphasis on merit is not downplayed during the period as merit is present in all job advertisements. However, the character of merit certainly changes. In 1966 merit is coined as a university degree (five years full time study) in law or economy. In a little less than half of the advertisements a degree with distinction is asked for.

A typical phrasing of the 66-merit is:

“A position is open in the Ministry of Finance (Department of Taxation) for a person with a university degree (with distinction) in law.”

In 1996 and 2006 we find a much more nuanced conception of merit. Practical experience and language and communication skills are wanted, and personal competences rise sharply. In 2006 personal competences include social intelligence, independence, result orientation, flexibility, sense of humor, robustness, innovativeness and stress coping.

In 2006 the demanded merits could be phrased this way (for a position in the Ministry of Justice):

“We expect that you have a university degree in law or will get it soon. You must be highly professional and be able to work in an independent and responsible way and have the courage to make decisions of great importance. We further expect that you have good skills in spoken as well as written communication.”

In the Dutch case a very similar pattern can be observed. Merit in the shape of expertise is the prime value. In 1968 it is by far the most important value mentioned in over 80% of the job advertisements. Usually this implies that a university degree (both university and professional universities or 'HBO') is required. As in the Danish case, over the years more competences are mentioned. For instance in 1988, despite expertise being the predominant value other requirements are added such flexibility, efficiency, alertness, effectiveness, being a team-player, possessing management capacities, and/or being result-oriented.

It follows that both hypothesis H1 and H2 can be confirmed in the Danish and Dutch case. Merit continues to be an important, if not the prime selection criterion. Merit has also become much more nuanced over time. Especially, we find much stronger emphasis on informal and personal merits.

### **Hypothesis 3**

*In societies with increasing complexity with regard to problems, knowledge, technologies and organization, merit bureaucracy will be supplemented by political bureaucracy and representative bureaucracy.*

The Danish job advertisements indicate that patronage played some role in 1996 and to a lesser degree also in 2006. As noted, a reference to "politics" can have different meanings. To be sure, we found several references to "commitment to or interest in a policy program". The rationale for this commitment/interest is neither that a political opinion is wanted, nor is the altruistic part of public service motivation mentioned (looking to the needs of the client, being in service of democracy and/or in service of society at large or other public interest related values). The other part of PSM – attraction to policy making - is mentioned several times. Examples are "interest for export and international agricultural problems" and "interest in labor market politics".

However, in the 1996- and the 2006-job advertisements references to politics got an unexpected twist. In five advertisements the notion of "politics" refer to knowledge about the political-administrative decision making process (experience in working in a political context, understanding the political restrictions or simply what politics is about): "... an ability to function and create results in a political environment ..."; "...experience in working in a political system ...". In seven advertisements "politics" refer to the active, interested and even devoted taking part in the political process, i.e. being an actor on the political market place. In four of these advertisements a political flair and/or a preference for influencing policies are requested: "... we are looking for new colleagues with an academic background and an inclination for leaving one's mark on Danish research policies ...". Indeed, three advertisements are tempting potential applicants with jobs offering an opportunity to work with policy making and/or staying close to the political masters: "... We offer you a motivating job close to the political decision making process."

Even with this fairly small number of job advertisements it is interesting to note that politics tend to refer to politics as a handicraft, a strategy or a job, not to politics as substance. What is of interest is not having a political idea or mission but being good at strategizing in a political environment. Finally, it should be added that politics could have referred to the classic neutral and impartial service of the minister. This aspect is never mentioned.



Representative bureaucracy seems to play the least prominent role, though depending on how it is defined and measured. The only example of representative bureaucracy is offering equal opportunities (see also the next section). This can be regarded as an aspect of representative bureaucracy but it needs to emphasize that in no cases it is specified that the hiring organization is looking for applicants reflecting *the composition of the organization's clientele*.

In the Dutch case in the early decades also no evidence of political values can be identified. In 1988 for the first time twice a reference occurs to societal responsibility as a value required of applicants. Only in 1998 values that clearly can be regarded as 'political values' occur. Thus in three cases an applicant is expected to 'have interest in society' and 'endorse a sustainable policy'. What is more, sensitivity for politics and for the relationship between politics and administration is required thirteen times. In 2008 this is still visible in the required job motivation in terms of wanting to make a contribution to society. In fact, no less than 12.5 percent of values in 2008 can be regarded as referring to a Public Service Motivation. It can however, be debated whether PSM is referred to as a means to attract candidates, or as a selection criterion as such.

Though hypothesis H3 can only be partly confirmed it should be noted as highly interesting that all in all job advertisements from the late nineties and early 21<sup>st</sup> century incorporate competences and values that were unthinkable in the beginning of the period. Especially, the requested competences have exploded in many directions. One may even argue that what we have classified as examples of patronage bureaucracy in reality should be interpreted as a new merit: the capacity to act in a political environment and to have a public service motivation. These findings do not seem to be in line with a classical 'weberian' politically neutral civil servant, nor do they fit a NPM, businesslike approach. Although 'political awareness' is of course not the same thing as acting politically, it indicates a political orientation for those working in the public sector and that just 'technical expertise' is not sufficient.

### **Hypothesis 3-sub:**

*In societies with an increasing multi-cultural nature awareness of gender, ethnic and cultural diversity as a relevant value for selection will increase.*

In the Danish case, offering equal opportunities with regard to gender shows up in the 1996 job advertisements in 26% of the cases. In 2006 equal opportunities with regard to gender has changed the much broader category of equal opportunities with regard to gender, race, and ethnicity (and in a few examples also to religion and age) and the appearance has risen sharply to 69% of the advertisements (see table 1). Hypothesis 3-sub is thus confirmed in the Danish case. However, one should note, that most references to equal opportunity are very similar (indicating a central policy on the matter) and that in most cases equal opportunity is motivated as equal treatment, meaning that differences in e.g. gender are not allowed to influence hiring. In other cases, equal opportunities are motivated by referring to the positive consequences of personnel diversity in an organization. Only in 19 % of advertisements in 2006, equal opportunity is motivated by a need to reflect the *social composition of society*.

The Dutch case seems to show some more detail here. In 1968 age is mentioned as important in four advertisements, whilst the applicants sex is mentioned in two cases, i.e., in one instances the function is named both in the masculine and feminine form. Age as a possible criterion is absent in later decades. However, the applicant's sex becomes a more important issue. To start with in 1978 we find the abbreviations for male or female ('m/v'), being added to job titles and the explicit

invitation for both men and women to reflect on the vacancy. In 1988 this is still the case. The order of the abbreviations funnily has changes in all cases from m/v to v/m hinting at prioritizing women. In fact, in several instances it is stated that diversity in personnel is strived for and that women are therefore specifically invited to apply, as are ethnical minorities and cultural minorities. In most cases these three groups are referred to as preferred candidates. In 1998 motives are mentioned in the Dutch advertisement why women are specifically targeted. Thus the department of Justice states: 'Justice helps improve employment chances for women', and 'in light of the configuration of the work force at this division, women are strongly preferred when equally suitable'. Also other ministries point at underrepresentation of women in their workforce (cf. De Best, 2009, p. 30).

Also in 1998 a new category is that also disabled people are specifically included in seven cases out of 22. Interestingly the references to ethnicity, cultural identity or disability vanished in 2008, only gender recurs, be it no longer in all advertisements. A possible explanation is that either this issue has vanished from the agenda, or these values have become so generally accepted that they no longer surface, just as for instance integrity and honesty is never asked for in an advertisement. What seems to support the latter is that were specific mention is made to gender, it is with the explicit argument that 'more women at the top' are required, not in general.

To conclude: Hypothesis 3-sub can be confirmed in as far as, gender, ethnicity, cultural background and/or disability become a topic and seems to vanish into the background in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as possibly having become 'self-evident'.

#### **Hypothesis 4:**

*Over time job advertisements focus less on providing a career in public administration as such and more on a position in a specific sector, organization, and/or agency, i.e., advertisements will be used increasingly as platforms for organizational branding and self exposure.*

There are tremendous differences on all dimensions between job advertisements from the early period and the later period in both the Danish and Dutch case. In 1966/1968 all job advertisements are made in the same minimalist style. They are all small (between 7 and 19 short lines in Denmark, even less sometimes in the Netherlands), they adopt the same layout and the same setup (who can apply, where a position is open, general job conditions, and an address where to send an application; in the Dutch case selection is clearly centralized, always involving the state psychological bureau), they are highly formal (no personal pronouns used), only a few advertisements include a short description of the job, and descriptions of the organization cannot be found in any job advertisement in either country. Over time small changes occur, thus in the Dutch case in 1978 more information is provided on the job, and in 1988 it is no longer the case that selection is centralized, but has become localized, i.e., left to a ministry or agency.

The job advertisements from 1996/1998 and 2006/2008 are much longer (up to two full pages in the Danish case), the typography varies a great deal, visual effects are used of most organizations, and especially logos are used in nearly all advertisements. In the Dutch case, even within one specific ministry different styles and even logos are sometimes used. Descriptions of the organization in the Danish case increases strongly: 1966 and 1976, never, 1986 48%, 1996 and 2006 in 78% of the job advertisements. The organizational descriptions are typically in the "we" and "our"-style: "We do a lot ..."; "Our cash management system ..." An example of branding provides the Ministry of Finances:

“We are a modern and dynamic workplace with high professional standards. We offer you independent responsibility for challenging and varied tasks, nice career opportunities and a flexible and young working environment.”

In the Dutch case, also much longer description become used, including pictures to illustrate the organizations goals and/or style, and references to websites for more information are provided. Especially arguing the special nature of working for government becomes en vogue in 2008. However, there is also a twist in the Dutch case; all advertisement in 2008 again have a similar lay out and one logo is used for all ministries and agencies. This is due to a government wide attempt to get rid of the pluriformity of logo's and styles, the idea being that this will provide government 'again' with a more unified identity for the citizens. The texts however, continue to outline specific ministries, bureaus and agencies.

There is also an interesting catch in the Danish case. The diversity in logo's in 1996 is in 39 % of the cases a variation of the royal Danish crown and 35 % were variations of the national coat of arms (which in some cases include a crown). In 2006 72 % of the used logos were variations of the royal crown and 13 % were variations of the national arms. This remarkable rise in the use of the crown as a symbol - despite organizational branding - signal adherence to a larger system, the state or the monarchy. So again the Dutch and the Danish case show similar trends

To conclude: Hypothesis 4 can to a large extend be confirmed. From uniformity and simplicity, hardly referring to the nature of the organization, to elaborate exposés in the early 21st century. The recent enforcing of a more unified style in the Dutch case and the more voluntary similarities in the Danish case indicate perhaps a growing need to mix highlighting specific government units within the need to distinguish and brand government and public administration from the private sector. This finding seems to be in line with what is sometimes referred to as the post-NPM era in which not the identity, but rather the specificity of the public sector, in particular in terms of public values and attention for Public Service Motivation is stressed.

#### **Hypothesis 5.**

*Human Relations-related values - such as personal development, good working environment - increase in order to attract the best applicants on the labor market.*

The general impression is that 1996/98 and 2006/8 job advertisements are relatively “soft” in tone compared to the brief statements of the 1966/68 and 1976/78 descriptions. The tone is comparatively informal in the latter part of the period. In the Danish case in 1966 and 1976 no personal pronouns were used, in 1986 personal pronouns were used in one advertisement, in 1996 in 43 % of the advertisements and in 2006 the figure was 87 %.

The language is often inviting and constructed as a dialogue. In nearly half of the Danish advertisements in 2006 we can find an active promotion of both job and organization. The Ministry of Finance continues (from the previously cited advertisement): “If you like to become part of this environment and if you like to join us in giving the minister of finance and the government the best possible advice ... your presence is perhaps exactly what we need.” The Danish Competition and Consumer Authority echoes: “Do you find it attractive to advance competition and an efficient energy sector? Then we can offer you an exciting workplace with tasks of great societal

importance.” (No more, no less!) The Agency for Governmental Management asks: “Would you like to join us?”

In the later period advertisements directly highlight a good working environment, opportunities for personal and professional development, and an interesting job (e.g. high-level professional challenges, proximity to the political powers). Also the trend in requested personal competences supports this hypothesis (e.g. being independent, social intelligence, sense of humor).

Similarly in the Netherlands in 1998 applicants are being asked to have affinity with the organizations work, being enthusiastic, and as having an interest in society. In 2008 affinity with the job, working for society, and the like result in 12.5 percent of values mentioned can be regarded PSM values (Van der Hoeve, 2009, p. 32) and seven out of eight advertisements point out that by working for central government implies that someone is contributing to society. In general, between 1968 and 1998 the number of selection criteria continually increased, with a dramatic increase change between 1978 and 1988.

As a consequence, it can indeed be concluded that - looking at the number of values associated with the nature and quality of the work - HRM and PSM related values do increase over time, and may have stabilized in the last two decades.

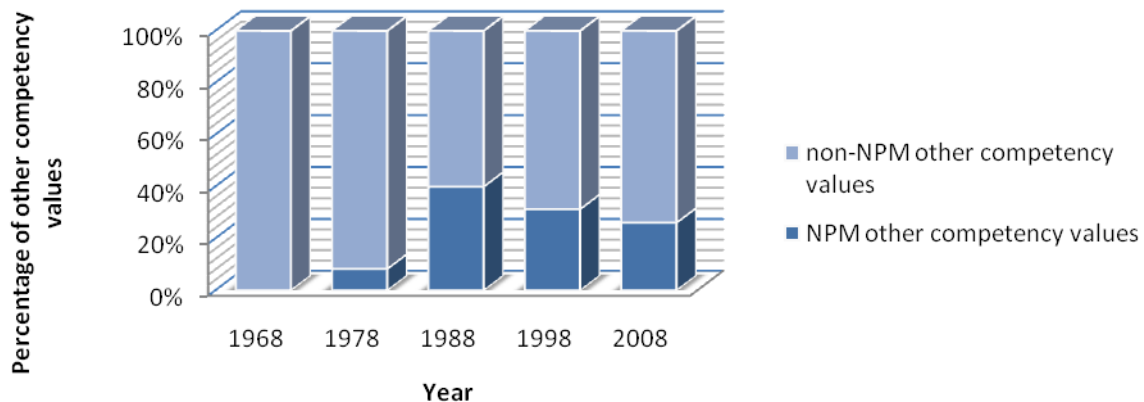
### **Hypothesis 6:**

*New Public Management values and techniques tend to crowd out classic virtues and practices.*

This is the Crowding Out Hypothesis. As we shall see, on the one hand it can be confirmed that the number of NPM values increases, but it can at the same time not be established that this is at the loss of other values.

To start with the Dutch case: in 1968 no NPM values can be identified, but the number of values is very limited anyway. In 1978 we find only references to ‘efficiency’. Then in 1988 a small quantum leaps: 28 NPM values (12.8 percent). They include numerous references to being flexible, efficient, team-player, result-oriented, goal-oriented, dynamic, responsive, management capacities, hands-on approach, and being pro-active. What is more, a ‘business-like vocabulary’ creeps into the advertisements. Thus the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment introduces itself as a ‘holding with five companies’ and points at an annual turnover of 15 billion. One of the job advertisements is actually posed by a private recruitment company on behalf of a ministry; this is fairly clear proof of outsourcing of recruitment itself (Van der Hoeven, 2009). Interestingly, in 2008 the number of NPM values drops again, suggesting that in line with the rise of NPM and the present post-NPM era, we do see a rise and decline of NPM values over time (see figure).

Figure 8: The relative distribution of non-NPM and NPM other competency values for each year.



(Van der Hoeve, 2009, p.39)

In the Danish job advertisements we also find a notable increase (from 0% to 31 %) in references to NPM-words like efficiency, productivity, results, cash-management, contract steering, contracting out, business-like approach, bottom-line etc. (See table 2).

In that way, job advertisements tell us about NPM as a successful intruder in the public sphere. However, in a number of ways this conclusion is debatable. First, we may ask whether NPM-values are demonstrated as core values or whether they are just façade values, i.e. espoused values not taken seriously. For example, NPM-words are often found in the background description of the organization rather than being included in descriptions of central goals and missions and/or requested qualifications. In a few instances, NPM is even deliberately not taken quite seriously. The Danish Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs states in one advertisement that they subscribe to “casual effectiveness”!

Second, it can be argued that efficiency is not necessarily just a NPM-value. Efficiency is also a core value in Weberian bureaucracy relating to legal-rational efficiency and it has been central to administrative reforms in Denmark and Dutch for centuries.

Third and perhaps more problematic is that very few values are directly mentioned at all in the first two periods. The case can be that NPM-values are not mentioned just as other values are not mentioned. In other words, we can be sure that NPM-values have increased, but not that others have diminished. What is more, as soon as we do find NPM values being mentioned next to the others, the *other non-NPM values are always more numerous*. Even if we accept that there has been an increase in NPM-values we cannot argue that NPM-values have crowded out other values. As has already been shown a number of other values can be seen in job advertisements from the later period. What is more, it should be noticed that the so called classic public values (e.g. general responsibility towards society, impartiality, honesty, political loyalty, integrity) are hardly mentioned in job advertisements at all. It is then clearly not possible to argue they have been crowded out. At best it is interesting to note that despite the rise of interest for public integrity since the late 1980, these values have not entered job advertisements as explicit pre-entry criteria.

Finally, it has already been noticed that references to the royal crown in Danish logo's and a Dutch unified government logo (with the national emblem) also seems to suggest an attempt to distinguish public administration from the private sector, i.e., not a development that seems in line with the NPM-era.

In sum, it is difficult either to confirm or deny hypothesis 6, even though the Dutch case indicates a rise and fall of NPM values in advertisements. Perhaps in ten years time we can draw more detailed conclusions.

## **To conclude**

Let us sum up what we have encountered so far and what the possible merits are of analyzing job advertisements for studying value change.

Starting with hypothesis 1 and 2 it is obvious that merit was and is the prime selection criterion, as well as, that over time merit has become more nuanced and detailed. In the sixties and seventies, the prime criterion is higher, university education, later on informal and personal merits are added. This conclusion can be further enhanced by looking at hypothesis 3 and 3-sub.

Hypothesis 3 concerns the rise of values related to political bureaucracy and representative bureaucracy. Although only partly confirmed, it is clearly the case that job advertisements in the two most recent decades incorporate competences and values totally absent in the earlier period. The required competences have multiplied and are very diverse. In particular, awareness of the political environment and a public service motivation stand out.

When turning to personal characteristics such as sex/gender, disabled, ethnicity and/or cultural minority by means of hypothesis 3-sub, it appears that there is not simply an increase. Gender, ethnicity, cultural background and/or disability do become a topic over time in both cases: starting with gender, becoming a broader issue of representation in the 90s. However in the Dutch case, to some extent the issue fades away or, so we can assume, becomes part of the background values (though we do not claim representation has been achieved here). There is also a possible change in nature of the issue in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century for there is a hint that it is not so much a specific entry criterion, but perhaps rather an issue of representation in the top levels. More detailed analysis, over more data, is required for firmer conclusions. It is, however, also clear that a link has to be made between job advertisement and policy developments. A brief study by Eva De Best (2009) shows that in the Dutch context the national policies are indeed fairly accurately reflected in the framing of sex/gender in government job advertisements.

Hypothesis four turns toward the agencification thesis. This can be largely confirmed. Over time the advertisements turn from minimalistic naming of a vacant function, to elaborate descriptions of the organization or organizational unit (agency) and the policy arena the function is related to. An unexpected additional observation is that, be it in different ways, both in Denmark and the Netherlands, there seems to be a strong desire to make it clear that the functions in question are public functions, i.e., to represent the organization as part of government, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is difficult to explain why this is happening. Obviously there is a reason or need to try and make visible that jobs are specifically government related: a branding of the public sector. Distancing

from the private sector fits the recent increase in Public Service Motivation as a topic, also pointing at a different kind of motivation playing a role in job selection.

Linked to the issue of organizational marketing and branding is the question whether or not public organizations also try to present themselves as attractive workplaces, i.e. the rise of Human Relations-related values as captured in hypothesis 5. It is concluded that both the number of values associated with HRM and with PSM do indeed increase over time. To be more specific: there is a rise in Human Relations-related values in the first three decades and then apparently stability in the last two decades.

Finally, we had a look at the (in)famous crowding out hypothesis, i.e. the rise of NPM at the cost of traditional bureaucratic values. It is clear that the number of NPM related values does indeed increase over time. In fact, even the slight decrease in the Dutch case in the two last decades seems to fit nicely a strong rise in the NPM era and a shift in the present post-NPM period. However, it is tricky to confirm or deny hypothesis 6. This is primarily caused by the simple fact that so many values, in particular the so called classic values, never appeared in the job advertisements to begin with.

This brief overview of our conclusions brings us two final topics: first, some general remarks on values and value change based on the previous observations, and second a few more specific remarks on the potential usefulness of job advertisements as a basis for empirical research on value change.

To start with, a whole range of universal, traditional values like honesty, ethical consciousness, integrity, professionalism, legality, and political loyalty as can be encountered in literature on administrative ethics and behavior (cf. Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman; paragraph 3.2), cannot be identified in the job advertisements as a selection criteria. What is more, as we have seen, gender as a value has appeared and in the Dutch case more or less disappeared over time. This suggests that some values are, and can become generally accepted and as such are no longer mentioned explicitly. The disappearance of 'age' as a possible criterion (only encountered in the 60s), also seems to fit this changing of value patterns over time. Nowadays, age – within the limits of adult and pension – is no longer an acceptable criterion for selection (i.e., for discrimination).

This brings us to some final observations on the merits of job advertisements as a resource. There are limits due to changing customs of advertising. Thus the early material provides very limited information. Rather, job advertisements may prove to be a 'separate discipline' itself. It is also a matter of debate how big a percentage of the available functions is advertised for at all externally. It is well known that a large number of vacancies is never advertised for, in particular not in times of reorganization as existing staff is offered a vacant function, which by consequence never becomes publicly visible. The increase of job advertisements via internet will probably result in a slow disappearance of this kind of empirical information. Perhaps the time frame we covered in this research (late 1960s till 2010) will prove to be in hind sight the golden age of job advertisements.

As we hoped for, job advertisements can give insights into values at work in public administration, and into value changes. It can affirm and/or help us to get rid of some hypothesis. Further research may help to pinpoint changes and peculiarities that in turn may warrant further research. In particular linking empirical observations to policy changes, or the other way around, the absence of changed criteria, may prove of interests. Changes in values are difficult to perceive, let alone

explain. Anything that can help us should be of interest. It is obvious that this paper only provides us with very rough data, but it seems to warrant more detailed research, both in the two cases, but also including more countries.



**Table 1. The basic content and style of job advertisements. Denmark.**

	Number of job advertisements	Description of job and organisation	Profile of applicant	Layout	Tone
1966	36	Hardly any	University degree highly important (86%), degree with distinction often wanted (44%)	Very short and very similar ads	Highly formal. No personal pronouns used. The word "applicant" not used
1976	33	Short description of job in 72%	Specific education (33%), specific qualifications (63%)	Very short and rather similar ads	Mostly formal. No personal pronouns used.
1986	25	Rather short job descriptions (52%). Short introductions to the organisation (48%). One ad refers to good working environment	Specific education (64%). General skills like language (24%), it (20%), specific qualifications (32%), practical experience (48%), personal competences like independence (28%), social intelligence (16%)	Middle sized ads (1/4 - 1/2 magazine page)	Relatively formal. One ad only uses personal pronouns. Words like "applicant", "the hired person" etc. used (48%)
1996	23	Job description in all ads. Introduction to organisation in 78%. References to good working environment in 30%. Offering opportunities for personal and professional development in 17%. Equal opportunity mentioned in 26%	Specific education (43%). General skills like communication (48%), practical experience (43%), language (35%), personal competences like social intelligence (52%), independence (43%), resultoriented (26%), flexibility (22%), sense of humour (in two ads)	1/2 page – 2 pages. 48% use one page. Visual effects. Logos (96%), watermarks. Varying typography.	Relatively informal. Personal pronouns used in 43%.
2006	32	Detailed job description in 85%. Introduction to organisation in 78%. Active promotion of job and organisation in 44%. References to good working environment in 31%. Offering opportunities for personal and professional development in 34%. Equal opportunities with regard to sex, race and ethnicity mentioned in 69%	Specific education (31%), general skills like practical experience (53%), communication (38%), personal competences like social intelligence (41%), robustness (25%), innovativeness (22%), coping with stress situations (22%), independence (19%), flexibility, resultoriented, sense of humour (each 16%)	1/3 – 2 pages. 59 use one full page or more. Visual effects. Logos (97%), watermarks, pictures and illustrations. Varying typography	Informal. Personal pronouns used in 87%.

**Table 2. Number of job advertisements with references to merit, patronage, representative bureaucracy, and to NPM-values (in percent)**

	Merit	Patronage	Representative	NPM
1966	100%	3%		
1976	100%			3%
1986	100%			4%
1996	100%	35%		30%
2006	100%	13%	19 %	31%

**Table 3. Number of vacancies advertised in the Netherlands sample, number of values, and number of NPM values identified**

year	Vacancies studied	Absolute number of values	Average number of values	NPM values mentioned
1968	15	36	2.5	0
1978	44	159	2.9	1 (0.6%)
1988	27	219	8.1	28 (12.8%)
1998	22	319	14.5	44 (13.8%)
2008	8	55	6.9	6 (11%)

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