E-government value priorities of Danish local authority managers

Rose, Jeremy; Persson, John Stouby

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E-Government value priorities of Danish local authority managers

Jeremy Rose

John Stouby Persson

Department of Computer Science, Aalborg University

jeremy@cs.aau.dk, john@cs.aau.dk

Abstract. The management of eGovernment is a central topic in the improvement of public administration, where the underlying values of eGovernment practitioners are an important (but often taken for granted) motivation for strategy and implementation of eGovernment projects. This chapter offers a value analysis of central trends in the public administration literature: New Public Management, the post-Weberian Bureaucracy and the New Public Service. Using the assumption that eGovernment is driven largely by public administrations and therefore shares public management values, we develop a value model for eGovernment. *Administrative Efficiency* focuses on value for money logics highlighted by New Public Management thinking. *Service Improvement*, derived from the tradition of public service, emphasises the value of providing better services to citizens. *Citizen Engagement*, with its roots in liberal democratic arguments, promotes democracy, deliberation and dialogue. A set of *Foundational Values* grounded in the deeply-rooted bureaucratic tradition is also identified. A preliminary study of local authority managers' values shows a heavy bias towards administrative efficiency and an absence of concern for citizen engagement; the implications of these results are briefly discussed.

Key words: e-government, value, local government.

1 Introduction

The concept of value has been used extensively both in research and public discourse about eGovernment. Value represents the 'worth, utility, or importance of an entity' (Esteves and Joseph, 2008) - that which is 'considered a good (worthy of striving after) without further justification or rational argument' (Sikula, 1973). Bannister (2002) distinguishes the concepts 'value' and 'values' where

> "Values may be described as normative characteristics or modes of behaviour that individuals, groups or organisations hold to be right or at least better than other characteristics or modes of behaviour. Values have their visible manifestation in the ways that individuals or groups behave and interact with other individuals or groups... 'value' is defined to be a quality applied to a good, service or outcome which supports, meets or conforms with one or more of an individual or group's values."

Values can be personal (an 'internalised goal or ideal offered without further justification assumed to have universal agreement' (Sikula, 1973)), or social - common values ascribed to groups and communities. In the study of public administration a broader account of public value (Moore, 1994, 1995) is sometimes adopted, referring to:

- "the value created by government through services, law, regulations and other actions" (Castelnovo and Simonetta, 2007), or
- "the value or importance citizens attach to the outcome of government policies and their experience of public services" (Scott et al., 2009), or
- 'government's ability to deliver social and economic outcomes that correspond to citizens' expectations' (Bonina and Cordella, 2009).

Value can be primarily expressed in economic or monetary terms, or can be pluralistic ('values'), including less tangible and measurable attributes:

> 'public value provides a broader measure than is conventionally used within the new public management literature, covering outcomes, the means used to deliver them as well as trust and legitimacy.' (Castelnovo and Simonetta, 2007).

Value studies serve many purposes, which can broadly be described as either summative or formative. Summative accounts serve to form the basis for evaluating past experience (for example to help determine the outcomes of an eGovernment project), whereas formative studies try to establish a basis for future action (for instance in prioritising eGovernment projects

competing for funding). In the latter case, values should be understood as 'broad guides to action' (Sikula, 1973), personal and social, explicit or internalised. Because values consist of 'opinions about what is right, fair, just, or desirable,' they are not necessarily subject to scientific or objective testing and validation (Sikula, 1973). It is possible to build up a series of arguments to support value positions, or to analyse their occurrence in a given population, but it is not scientifically possible to prove the validity or correctness of a given value. It will also become clear in the following discussion of the public administration literature, that research, though methodologically sound, well argued, and reasonably objective is not value-free. Researchers can hold strong value positions, which are the basis for normative accounts of how public administration should develop. Figure 1 shows the dimensions considered in research conceptualizations of value.

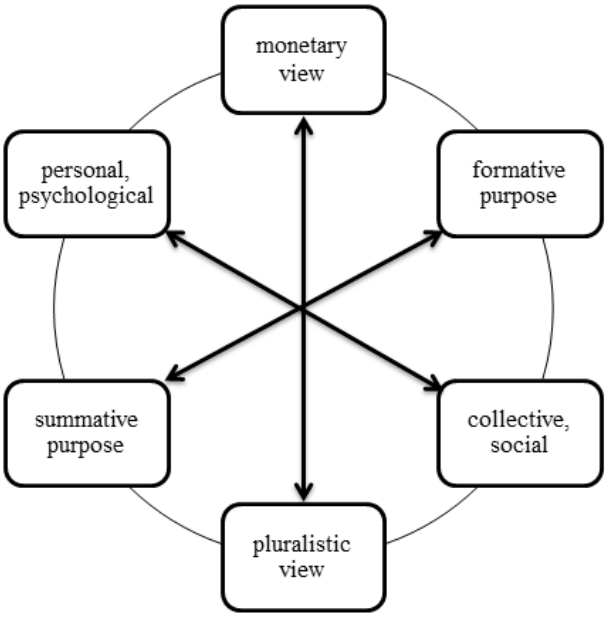

Figure 1. Dimensions in value conceptualizations

Value is an interesting topic in the context of IT management in local government, and the DISIMIT project, because basic values of managers come to affect the decisions they make concerning the prioritisation, funding and execution of eGovernment projects, and their relationships with project partners. These values are partly to do with individual managers' experience and beliefs, and partly a reflection of organisational values projected down through the hierarchy by ministers, politicians and senior civil servants, and up through the hierarchy by street level administrators in daily contact with members of the public. In a time of widespread financial uncertainty, for example, an efficiency (cost saving) value strongly promoted by ministers can come into conflict with ideals of public service held by street level administrators, placing local managers in a difficult value conflict, with tough decisions to make. A long-term mismatch between organisational

values promoted through eGovernment projects and a manager's strongly held personal convictions can cause alienation and stress. Nor is it necessarily the case that values are easily discovered, well-articulated and mutually consistent. They often lie beneath the surface of the managerial discourse, assumed to held by all, or swept under the table to avoid potential damaging conflict. Where they are discernible and articulated, for instance in strategy documents, and managerial statements of intention and purpose, they are not necessarily carried out in practice. As the management theorist Chris Argyris explained, espoused theory (that which managers say they believe) can be different to theory–in-action (what they actually decide to do). Formulated intentions and strategies (according to Mintzberg), can differ from the pattern of decisions which actually emerges. Especially this last problem makes a value discussion between eGovernment researchers and managers interesting and potentially productive. If the values that managers articulate do not result in outcomes consistent with those values, then either the values must change (difficult) or the outcome must. The researcher's role is to delineate choices, trade-offs and paradoxes to help practitioners understand their own value landscape, and to analyses which values are predominant on the outcomes they achieve. We concur with Flak (2009) that that structured ways of defining public sector values make it easier to design effective eGovernment projects that are also assessable. In particular, we address the questions:

- how can the debate about eGovernment value (understood as purpose and motivation for eGovernment initiatives) be summarized in such a way as to make it an effective aid to decision-making? and consequently
- what values do Danish public sector managers espouse (claim that they seek to realise) when they introduce new information and communication technologies (ICT)?

The chapter is structured as follows. There are already several contributions in the eGovernment literature which examine value and we investigate these, delineating the current eGovernment value landscape. We conclude, following Persson and Goldkuhl (2010), that the most promising starting place for a theoretical discussion of value is in the public administration literature, beginning with one of its founding fathers, Max Weber. We take a historical perspective of three trends in this literature which have developed in the last fifteen years and perform a value analysis of each. The first trend is New Public Management, where we also consider its pragmatic wing: the Reinventing Government movement. We then consider two very different reactions to NPM. The first is a restatement of many of the values promoted by the old public administration which build on Max Weber's original formulation of bureaucracy, we call this Post-Weberian Bureaucracy. The second, the New Public Service (NPS), is a reaction to the Reinventing Government movement's depndence on business and management values. NPS values are instead built on public service values and democratic values. We summarize these trends as the public administration value landscape.

Snellen offers a three part taxonomy of eGovernment which provides a good fit with the public administration value landscape, so we combine them to provide a modern, formative framework for eGovernment values. We develop a pilot study analysis of Danish local government managers' espoused values, as revealed in DISIMIT empirical studies, in relation to the framework. Finally we discuss implications for practice.

2 The eGovernment value landscape

Researchers have provided various accounts of value in eGovernment, and in this section we investigate how they do this and the resulting value landscape. Their purposes are both summative:

- evaluation (Castelnovo and Simonetta, 2007, Chircu, 2008, Esteves and Joseph, 2008, Foley, 2005, Grimsley and Meehan, 2008, Liu et al., 2008, Yu, 2007)
- measurement (Steyaert, 2004, Scott et al., 2009, Prakash et al., 2009, Kim and Kim, 2003)

and formative:

- conceptual integration (Bannister, 2002)
- criticism (Bonina and Cordella, 2009)
- understanding (Persson and Goldkuhl, 2010).

We investigate two of these contributions in some detail and summarise the trends in the others. Bannister (2002), grounding his discussion in considerations of IT value and public administration, identifies six categories of value for IS in public administration:

- **foundational:** cost efficiency - three e's of value for money: efficiency, effectiveness and economy
- **policy formulation**: the administration's role in developing policy.
- **democratic**: support for and enhancing of democracy and citizen involvement in the affairs of the state.
- **service**: the provision of service to the citizen as customer, client, claimant or recipient.
- **internal**: values directed towards employees and internal operations of public administration.
- **external**: the state's interactions with external organisations including organisations outside of its jurisdiction.

He identifies values within the categories as:

- **foundational:** positive cost benefit, cost savings/reduced headcount, avoided future costs, positive return on investment, positive net

present value, risk reduction, greater staff efficiency, better control/reduction in fraud and waste, increase in capacity/throughput

- **policy formulation:** better management information, support for decisions
- **democratic:** citizen access to information, transparency, flexibility, policy alignment
- **service:** good service to the customer, good service to the citizen, meeting public demands
- **internal:** improved staff morale, improved internal communications, improved ability to attract staff, better staff retention, more motivated staff, empowering staff, greater staff creativity
- **external:** being abreast of the private sector, having a good public image, being abreast of other administrations, matching other external benchmarks (Bannister, 2002).

In this formative account of eGovernment values, values become synonymous with goals and objectives. The notion of foundational values (values which are common, shared, inescapable, and upon which other values are based) is derived from the public administration literature (see below, the public administration landscape). However Bannister differs from these accounts in assuming that cost efficiency is the sole dominating (foundational) force – an imperative that other values must build around. A more theoretical account of eGovernment values is given by Persson and Goldkuhl (2010). They understand these values as a synthesis of two traditions of thinking in public administration: traditional bureaucracy as articulated by the German sociologist Max Weber (1947 and other writings), and New Public Management as expressed in the Reinventing Government movement (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992, Osborne and Plastrik, 1997). New Public Management is discussed more fully below, but Weber's formal description of bureaucracy deserves a brief introduction here. Weber describes how economic purposive rationality (capitalism) replaces religion as the driving force of society, bringing with it the superior organisational form of bureaucracy, of which the most direct expression is not public administration, but the military. Bureaucracy is characterised by six principles:

- fixed and official jurisdictional areas ordered by rules, laws, or regulations
- the principle of hierarchy whereby structures are established with superior and subordinate relationships
- management of the office relies on written files
- the occupation of offices is based on expertise and training
- full time employment of personnel who are compensated and who can expect employment to be a career

- the administration of the office follows general rules that are stable and can be learned.

It is underpinned in society by belief in legitimate authority (as opposed to traditional or charismatic authority) resting on a belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules, and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands. Such rational-legal authority organised in the bureaucratic state apparatus is the classical civic service. The decisive reason for the advance of the bureaucratic organization is its 'purely *technical* superiority over any other form of organization' (Weber, 1947). Bureaucracy demonstrates 'optimized precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs.' Bureaucracy also offers unparalleled objectivity (discharge according to calculable rules and without regard for person) in the carrying out of administrative functions and thus promotes equity: equality before the law. Dealing objectively with complexity and specialization requires a detached expert, a trained professional official who both can understand the regulations, and administer them in a fair way where there is need for discretion – no system of rules covers every case. Weber described bureaucracy without idealizing it; he recognized many difficulties inherent in state bureaucracies. They tend to expand, and to preserve and extend their own power, making them a form of domination, which turns the public into clients. They do not necessarily recognise or act for the public good, especially where this might conflict with the underlying regulative system. Bureaucracy is naturally secretive, preferring closed groups of high-status officials that are not universally accessible, and the authority of officialdom above public opinion. In fact, the rule of bureaucracy can stand in opposition to democracy (991):

> 'under otherwise equal conditions, rationally organized and directed action is superior to every kind of collective behaviour and also social action opposing it. Where administration has been completely bureaucratized, the resulting system of domination is practically indestructible' (Weber, 1947).

Persson and Goldkuhl analyse the core set of values articulated by Weber, which they term traditional bureaucracy and contrast them with New Public Management values (Table 1):

Traditional Bureaucracy Values	*New Public Management Values*
Legitimacy	Customer orientation
Rule of Law	Decentralization
Application of detailed rules	Mission and goal orientation
Efficiency	Improved accountability for results
Effectiveness	Improved responsibility to address client needs
Equality	Focus on cost-efficiency
Legality	Focus on productivity
Impartiality	Shift from idea of spending to earning
Objectivity	Introducing market mechanisms, competition, incentivization

Transparency	Introducing a higher degree of flexibility and discretion
Accountability	Empowerment of street-level bureaucrats
Specialization	Deregulation as reform strategy
Citizen as subordinate to the administration	Pushing control from hierarchy of bureaucracies to community
	Preventive and proactive approach rather than reactive and curing
	Separating policy formulation from implementation

Table 1. Bureaucratic and New Public Management Values (Persson and Goldkuhl, 2010)

They then suggest that eGovernment values are a dialectic synthesis of the two sets of values, and that aspects of both values sets are evident in the case that they study.

Elsewhere in the eGovernment literature, researchers focus on the service dimension (Castelnovo and Simonetta, 2007, Grimsley and Meehan, 2008, Yu, 2007) and the internal managerial dimension (Esteves and Joseph, 2008). Kim and Kim (2003) add organisational learning and information security considerations, and various ideas of social and political value appear and reappear (Chircu, 2008) Liu (2008). Yu (2007) incorporates elements from Nolan's well-known stages of eGovernment model, including vertical and horizontal integration as desirable value goals. Scott (2009) add a citizen perspective, pointing out that citizens' values do not necessarily correspond with administrational values. Bonina and Cordella (2009) summarize parts of the discussion by identifying two clusters of values: managerial public values (such as efficiency, effectiveness and performance of tasks) and democratic public values (which they characterize as equity, fairness and honesty). Figure 2 summarizes the landscape of recurring eGovernment values, as depicted in this literature.

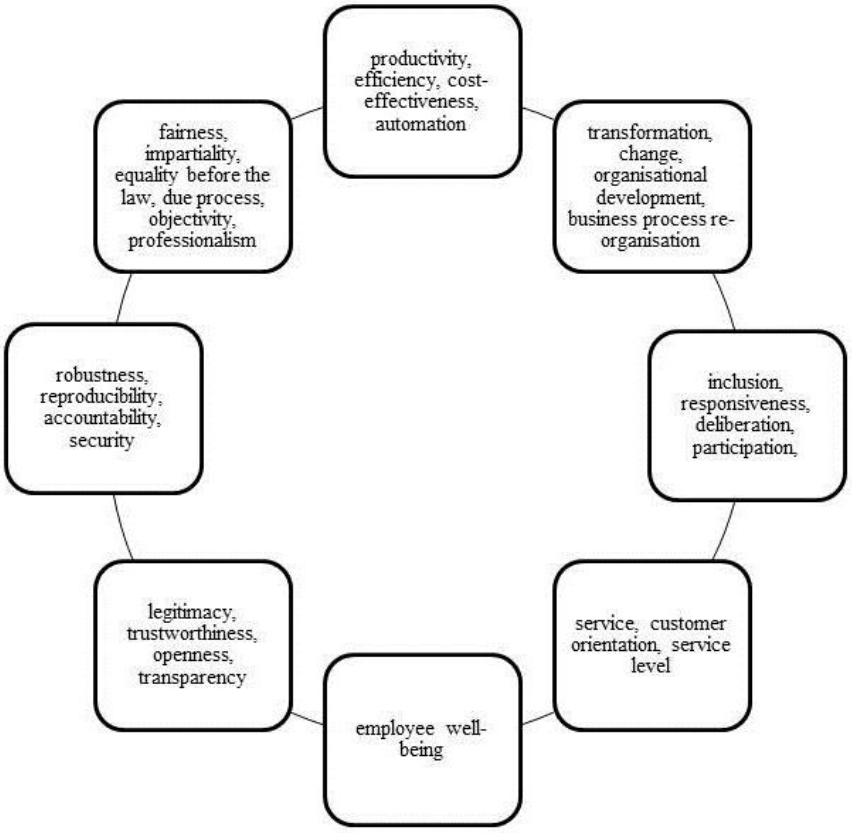

Figure 2. The eGovernment value landscape

A further conclusion that we draw from this short investigation is about process: how to arrive at value models in a convincing way. None of the contributors offer very exhaustive empirical evidence; Persson and Goldkuhl (2010) provide the most convincing theoretical argument.

3 From old public administration to new public management and beyond

The following analysis of value is rooted in the Public Administration literature, as is Persson and Goldkuhl's (2010), but is updated to follow the major elements of the debate through the last fifteen years. New Public Management has been understood as a reaction to Weberian bureaucracy. However New Public Management and its implementation in the Anglo-Saxon democracies (USA, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Canada) and (to a lesser extent) in Scandinavia has itself provoked strong reactions. The first reaction is the reaffirmation of bureaucratic values: a repudiation of the caricature of the old public administration promoted by popularising NPM writers (and prevalent also in the public imagination), and a

restatement of enduring administrative values. This could be called the modern or post-Weberian bureaucracy and the argument for it is eloquently summarized in Goodsell's (2004) 'The Case for Bureaucracy.' The second reaction is a positive affirmation of both public service and liberal democratic ideals; these are summarized, combined and delivered with passion in Denhardt and Denhardt's (2007) 'The New Public Service.'

3.1 New Public Management values

The starting point for NMP is a perception of what Denhardt and Denhardt (2007) call the 'old public administration' (traditional bureaucracy) as

> 'formal bureaucracies plagued with excessive rules, bound by rigid budgeting and personnel systems, and preoccupied with control. These traditional bureaucracies are described as ignoring citizens, shunning innovation, and serving their own needs' (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000).

The old public administration is seen as wasteful, static, overstaffed and unresponsive (the modern vernacular usage of the word 'bureaucratic') – in short 'broken' (Gore, 1993). NPM's response to this perception is grounded in management practice from the private sector. Boston (1991) characterises the central doctrines of NPM as

> [an] emphasis on management rather than policy; a shift from the use of input controls ... to a reliance on quantifiable output measures and performance targets; the devolution of management control coupled with the development of new reporting, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms; the disaggregation of large bureaucratic structures into quasi-autonomous agencies, in particular the separation of commercial from non-commercial functions ... ; a preference for private ownership, contracting out, and contestability in public service provision; the imitation of certain private sector management practices, such as ... the development of corporate plans (and) performance agreements, the introduction of performance-linked remuneration systems, ... and a greater concern for corporate image; a general preference for monetary incentives rather than non-monetary incentives, such as ethics, ethos, and status; and a stress on cost-cutting, efficiency, and cutback management. (Boston, 1991)

Hood (1991) summarizes the value differences between NPM and the old public administration. NPM favours:

- Hands-on professional management
- Explicit standards and measures of performance
- Emphasis on output controls
- Disaggregation of units in the public sector
- Greater competition in the public sector
- Private sector styles of management practice

- Greater discipline and parsimony in resource use

in the context of

- attempts to slow down or reverse government growth, public spending and staffing
- the shift toward privatization
- automation of public services through information technology (Hood, 1991)

Much attention in the public arena was captured by the Reinventing Government movement (Osborne and Plastrik, 1997, Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), which provided much of the motivation behind the American Gore Report (Gore, 1993). Alongside its 'government is broken' headline, the report provided 800 recommendations, many of which were later implemented by President Clinton. In their influential book of the same name, Osborne and Gaebler lay the blame for most of America's internal problems on its governmental institutions and argue that the solution is:

- catalytic government: steering rather than rowing (focusing on leadership rather than service delivery)
- community owned government: empowering rather than serving (transferring power to citizens through public choice)
- competitive government: injecting competition into service delivery (relying on market mechanisms to dive efficiency)
- mission-driven government: transforming rule-driven bureaucracies (focus on proactive improvement of communities rather than passive administration of law)
- results-oriented government: funding outcomes, not inputs (measuring results, rather than distributing budgets)
- customer-driven government: meeting the needs of customers, not the bureaucracy (developing a citizen-centric focus)
- enterprising government: earning rather than spending (focus on entrepreneurial government)
- anticipatory government: preventing rather than curing (antidote to passive and reactive governmental style)
- decentralized government: moving from hierarchy to participation and teamwork (reorganization of traditional bureaucratic organisational forms)
- market-oriented government: leveraging change through the market (change from social program enactors to entrepreneurial brokers, facilitators and seed capitalists manipulating the market) (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992)

The movement emphasized entrepreneurial government promoting competition between service providers, where many services are privatised and citizens (redefined as customers) exercise choices governed by their individual economic well-being, based on market ideals. Government's role is to catalyse all sectors (public, private, and voluntary) through market forces to proactively solve their communities' problems, rather than to enforce the law or to (necessarily) provide services themselves; they are driven by their goals (missions), not by their rules and regulations. Instead of being content with administering budgets effectively, government institutions should actively seek ways of increasing their revenue, and monitor performance outcomes. Government officials become entrepreneurial managers with the freedom to galvanise bureaucracies into action in the same way that managers in industry (supposedly) can. Decentralisation and deregulation are combined with a flavour of participation and citizen empowerment. In summary, the Reinventing Government movement prefers 'market mechanisms to bureaucratic mechanisms' (Osborne and Plastrik, 1997). Persson and Goldkuhl make an excellent summary of Reinventing Government values (already referred to in Table 1).

Frederickson (1996) characterises the Reinventing Government movement as the practical wing of NPM and summarizes the similarities (Table 2).

New Public Administration	*Reinventing Government*
Too much trust in expertise and organizational capability and too little questioning of bureaucratic ways	The bankruptcy of bureaucracy
Flexibility and the routinization of change; adapting to turbulence	Innovation and entrepreneurial activity
Not enough concern for citizens' demands and needs	Customer empowerment
An over-optimistic view of what government can or should accomplish	From bureaucratic service to individual empowerment

Table 2. NPM and Reinventing Government compared (Frederickson, 1996).

The distinction between the academic values expressed in the NPM literature and those of the popularising Reinventing Government is important because it is largely the Reinventing Government movement, and its perceived association with a particular political ideology, which has attracted criticism. Many of the central tenets of NPM are widely accepted today: such as a focus on value for money, professional leadership standards, a more citizen-centric orientation, performance review, a recognition of the importance of the market and some degree of privatisation where appropriate.

3.2 Post-Weberian bureaucracy values

The Reinventing Government movement began to attract criticism almost as soon as it gained political momentum, with one reaction concentrated on defending traditional bureaucratic values. Moore (1994) describes Reinventing Government as 'misinterpreting the problem, misjudging the consequences' and criticises the 'precedence of economically-based values over legally-based values.' Focus on entrepreneurial independence for government officials risks undermining the rule of law, and accountability for actions up through the hierarchy to the president. Privatisation risks eroding bureaucratic values (impartiality, fairness, objectivity) and replacing them with commercial values. Changes to administrative practices which are not rooted in public law, but instead designed to short-circuit rule-based practice which is experienced as bureaucratic in the negative sense (long-winded, pedantic, buried in red tape), eventually undermine the executive branch's function (to execute the law as decided by elected representatives of the people), and thus fundamental democratic values. Though it has become commonplace to observe that government should be run like a business, some commentators reject the Reinvention movement's assumption that

> 'government should not only adopt the techniques of business administration, but it should also adopt the values of business. ……. including the value of competition, preference for market mechanisms for social choice, and respect for the entrepreneurial spirit'. (DeLeon and Denhardt, 2000)

The 'business is best' myth is dismissed by Goodsell (2004) who finds little empirical evidence for the proposition that businesses consistently perform better than government, and demonstrates a only marginal advantage for privatised services, and only in limited areas. Basing public policy on the cumulative market effect of self-interested service consumers requires an act of faith: that the market can come to determine public value better than the elected law-makers and professional executors. Redefining citizens as customers risks creating inequalities based on ability to pay, undermines the public welfare function of government (where bureaucrats step in to help clients in need), and ignores the democratic role of the citizen. Whereas businesses are owned by shareholders, government is owned by citizens (King et al., 1998). Public administrators respond, and are accountable to the political process and a complex set of conflicting demands from their many constituents and stakeholders, not to the market. In addition, the single-mindedness, tenacity and willingness to bend the rules associated with the entrepreneurial spirit are a double-edged sword in government:

> 'On the credit side of the ledger, entrepreneurs create and innovate; on the debit side, they may take excessive risks or run roughshod over people and principles' (DeLeon and Denhardt, 2000) .

Denhardt and Denhardt (2007) also point out that the managerial 'steering not rowing' message is potentially in conflict with efforts to decentralise government and empower citizens.

The post-Weberian bureaucracy therefore reaffirms traditional bureaucratic values such as due process and the rule of law, fairness, objectivity and impartiality, accountability through hierarchy, professionalism, legitimacy, trustworthiness and efficiency. New Public Management values, however, remain a defining part of modern public administration, despite widespread criticism of the Reinventing Government movement. The values identified by Hood (1991) (value for money, professional leadership, citizen-centricity, performance review, a role for the market) are no longer understood as incompatible with traditional bureaucratic values, but as complementary to them.

3.3 New Public Service values

The second reaction to NPM values is located in traditions of public service (which can be traced back to Weber) and the idea of liberal or deliberative democracy.

In the public service tradition, government officials respond to a higher calling to serve the public interest, and to develop public value. Weber argued that, as rationality replaced religion as the driving force of society, a religious calling as a motivation for action was replaced by commitment (service) to the bureaucracy, ultimately to the state. The ethos of office (Du Gay, 2000), understood as the vocation of public service incorporating an ethical commitment to act in the public interest, allows government to act forcefully, morally and accountably, and distinguishes government from politics or business.

In the liberal and deliberative democracy traditions, dialogue between citizens, politicians, and public servants defines and re-defines the public interest. Citizenship entails more than consuming services; it also implies the ability to influence decision-making and policy development, and active involvement in political life. Such accommodations are achieved through discourse, negotiation, the building of shared agendas and consensus between citizens and government. In a liberal democracy, the institutions of government respond to shared popular views of the public interest, whilst respecting fundamental liberties and working to 'block efforts by narrow factions to coerce and tax the public for reasons not warranted by the public interest' (Miller, 1989). The public servant thus has a special responsibility to listen to the voices of citizens, to be responsive to what is said and to 'find and articulate a general or common interest and to cause government to pursue that interest' (Frederickson, 1991).

Denhardt and Denhardt (2007) employ the rhetoric of the Reinventing Government movement to define an alternative set of values which they term the New Public Service:

- *Serve Citizens, not Customers:* public interest as the result of a dialogue about shared values rather than the aggregation of

individual self-interests - focus on building relationships of trust and collaboration with citizens.

- *Seek the Public Interest:* building a collective, shared notion of the public interest - the creation of shared interests and shared responsibility.
- *Value Citizenship over Entrepreneurship:* public servants and citizens committed to meaningful contributions - not entrepreneurial managers.
- *Think Strategically, Act Democratically:* policies and programs meeting public needs through collective efforts and collaborative processes.
- *Recognize that Accountability isn't Simple:* public servants attentive to statutory and constitutional law, community values, political norms, professional standards, and citizen interests as well as the market.
- *Serve Rather than Steer:* value-based leadership to help citizens articulate and meet shared interests.
- *Value People, Not Just Productivity:* success dependent on processes of collaboration and shared leadership based on respect for people. (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2007)

They are critical of the sparse attention to democratic citizenship evident in the Reinventing Government movement, and argue for the 'reaffirmation of democratic values, citizenship and service in the public interest……public servants do not deliver customer service – they deliver democracy'. Government 'shouldn't be run like a business, it should be run like a democracy' (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2007). Table 3 adapts their summary of major value differences between the Old Public Administration, the New Public Management and the New Public Service.

	Old Public Administration	*New Public Management*	*New Public Service*
Conception of the public interest :	Politically defined and expressed in law	The aggregation of individual interests expressed through the market	Result of a dialogue about shared values
To whom are public servants responsive?:	Clients and constituents	Customers	Citizens
Role of government:	Rowing (designing and implementing policies focusing on a single, politically defined objective)	Steering (acting as a catalyst to unleash market forces)	Serving (negotiating and brokering interests among citizens and community groups, creating shared values)

Mechanisms for achieving policy objectives:	Administering programs through existing government agencies	Creating mechanisms and incentive structures to achieve policy objectives through private and non-profit agencies	Building coalitions of public, non-profit, and private agencies to meet mutually agreed upon needs
Approach to accountability:	Hierarchical - administrators are responsible to democratically elected political leaders	Market-driven - the accumulation of self-interests will result in outcomes desired by broad groups of citizen customers	Multifaceted - public servants must attend to law, community values, political norms, professional standards, and citizen interests
Administrative discretion:	Limited discretion allowed administrative officials	Wide latitude to meet entrepreneurial goals	Discretion needed but constrained and accountable
Assumed organizational structure:	Bureaucratic organizations marked by top-down authority within agencies and control or regulation of clients	Decentralized public organizations with primary control remaining within the agency	Collaborative structures with leadership shared internally and externally
Assumed motivational basis of staff:	Pay and benefits, civil-service protections	Entrepreneurial spirit, ideological desire to reduce size of government	Public service, desire to contribute to society
Administrative staff are:	Expert professionals who understand and fairly administer the rules	Entrepreneurial managers with the power to act	Public servants creating shared agendas

Table 3. Adapted from Denhardt and Denhardt (2000): comparison of public administration perspectives.

New Public Service values are derived from the traditions of public service and liberal democracy, and include: dialogue, deliberation, democracy, consensus building, collaboration, service and commitment to the public interest, shared leadership, respect for citizens and participatory policymaking.

3.4 The modern public administration value landscape

In this account of the evolution of the public administration literature, we have described how bureaucratic values as laid out by Weber were seriously

challenged by the New Public Management, with its commitment to managerial values from the private sector and the mechanisms of the market. In post-Weberian bureaucracy, traditional values are reaffirmed, but central values from NPM survive. The New Public Service reaffirms traditional public service and public interest ideals, and adds a democratic dimension.

A summarising discussion by Dobel (2007), which takes into account these three perspectives defines a common set of formative or foundational values, complemented by values associated with NPM, and values associated with liberal democracy. The foundational set recognizes a commitment to:

- recognize public institutions as trusts and managers as stewards (citizen as the owner of government)
- ensure the long-term and the inclusive commons are addressed in deliberations and decisions (commitment to the public interest)
- demand competence to serve those who rely upon public management (professionalism)
- frame decisions by law and authorized policy (the rule of law)
- demand good information for decision (reliability)
- create accurate durable records (resilience)
- build durable and competent institutional capacity (resilience and professionalism)
- impartially serve "all citizens" (fairness, objectivity, impartiality)
- address efficient use and waste as part of stewardship (efficiency).

These values address a wide range of traditional values, and contrast sharply with Bannister's focus on cost efficiency. Additional values are associated with NPM:

- actively seek better means of service performance (customer service)
- respond to citizen concerns with care and timeliness (customer service)
- ensure that equity and long term considerations are addressed in public decision (honesty, fairness)
- work to create organizations that integrate multiple voices in their deliberations (a flavour of empowerment and participation)
- be effective and work within the constraints of law and process to achieve measurable and real outcomes (focus on outcomes, performance measurement)
- gain strong resource and political support for sustainable programs (steering)
- work across sectors to address complex multi-sector problems (steering).

Values associated with liberal democracy include:

- require maximum transparency (openness as the basis for public accountability and informing public discourse)
- require public reasons for actions (commitment to the building of consensus on the public interest)
- seek inclusive participation and engage the diversity of society (commitment to widespread democratic deliberation)
- maximize citizen participation (commitment to citizen influence on government)
- engage and respond to citizen deliberations (commitment to citizen influence on government)
- respect citizens and honour rights in treatment and process (commitment to due process and the democratic rights of the citizen).

The public administration value landscape is complex, as to be expected with such a wide-ranging set of activities affecting all citizens in modern democracies. Those who write about it (and those who practice it) have their own value perspectives, which are clearly reflected in their normative prescriptions. Many values are shared, despite disagreements over emphasis. Nevertheless clear trends emerge: values surviving from the bureaucratic tradition, more recent values emerging from New Public Management, further values associated with liberal democracy. Many similarities with the eGovernment landscape depicted earlier can also be indentified.

4 The public administration value landscape and eGovernment

In this section we breifly define eGovernment, making the assumption that eGovernment values are dependent on public administration values. Local government managers practise eGovernment within the public administration value landscape. They deploy varied information and communication technologies, which support many goals and functions for government. This pattern of functions and supporting technologies constitutes another landscape which is too complex to represent here, but Snellen (2005) identifies:

- *database technologies* – for example as data repositories or for file sharing
- *tracing and tracking technologies* – for example for workflow management and monitoring purposes
- *desk-top technologies* - text processors, personal digital assistants (PDA's), e-mail, and other Internet facilities
- *decision support technologies* – for example spread-sheets, all kinds of task directed computer programs and expert systems

- *network technologies*, such as websites, homepages, call-centres and e-mail.

The bureaucratic foundation of administration (as defined by Weber) are the files; in a modern public administration these records are now predominantly digital, stored in databases, document management systems, case handling systems, customer management systems and email archives. The responsibility for the durability, integrity and security of the files, which form the basis for most forms of accountability, is therefore transferred to the IT manager. Citizens have various privacy rights in relation to their personal files (information) and IT managers assume the responsibility for protecting these rights. In many cases, rules and regulations are incorporated in IT systems; for example tax regulations are encoded in on-line tax services which allow citizens to report their tax liabilities and calculate their tax for them. Such systems are impartial and objective, in the sense that they impose the same conditions for all citizens, as long as they can understand how to navigate the web interfaces. Here the IT manager takes over a responsibility for effective execution of the law, and the bureaucratic value of impartiality. IT - particularly the net - is rapidly becoming the principle vehicle for ensuring transparency in Government; any form of information that can be digitalized can also made available to all citizens with a web browser, from a meeting agenda, to videos of council meetings, to budgets and accounting reports. Politicians and senior administrators alike often see ICT as a way to drive efficiency, to reduce costs and increase productivity, though there is little evidence to suggest that this is an automatic function of the implementation of ITC. Nobel Laureate economist Robert Solow articulated the well-known productivity paradox (Brynjolfsson, 1993): 'we see computers everywhere except in the productivity statistics.' eGovernment evaluation studies typically find it hard to identify cost savings and personnel reductions: 'eGovernment has been adopted by many municipal governments, but it … has not [yet] obtained many of expected outcomes (cost savings, downsizing, etc.) that the rhetoric of eGovernment has promised' (Moon, 2002). Efficiency gains are often devoured by the cost of implementing, maintaining and improving systems. IT systems are central to establishing the statistical foundation for performance review. Some forms of citizen service can effectively be delivered though net-based systems (for instance tax reporting services offer the conveniences of universal access, instant calculation and file storage), but many forms of case-handling (for example child custody cases) require personal contact with citizens. Efficiency values and service values are not necessarily compatible; Hazlett and Hill (2003) report that 'government's two central aims, namely high quality customer service and value-for-money, could potentially be in conflict; ……..[there is a] lack of evidence to support the claim that the use of technology in service delivery results in less bureaucracy and increased quality. ICTs, particularly net-based social networking and collaboration systems, offer huge potential for supporting deliberation, inclusion, participation and local democracy (Rose and Sæbø,

2010). IT is therefore ubiquitous in government and can serve most purposes and underpin the majority of public administration values previously identified.

If we make the (somewhat contentious) assumption that ICTs are value-neutral and serve only to enact the values of government, we may ask the questions: which public administration values can (or should) managers responsible for eGovernment respond to? what should they try to achieve when they initiate eGovernment projects?

Snellen (2005) identifies three principal roles for ICT's in e-government:

- Supporting economy of implementation
- Supporting public service provision
- Supporting democracy

He also aligns them in a chronological perspective

> 'When we look at the deployment of ICTs in public administration, we see that originally ICT applications predominantly played a role in the enhancement of the internal *effectiveness, efficiency, and economy* of the executive functions of public administration especially in the sphere of policy implementation. Only later on the *improvement of the quality of public services* to the citizens, as customers, clients, citizens, and subjects; to businesses and social organizations; and to other branches of the public service itself came into focus. Many governments plan to do an increasingly large amount of their business within a few years via the Internet. More modest, however, are the applications of websites and homepages, which aim to support the *involvement of citizens in democratic policy making*. These include tools such as instant polling, interactive policy making, coproduction of policies, and so forth. The importance of ICTs for democratic purposes is still hardly realized.' (Snellen, 2005)

These three concerns, administrative efficiency, service improvement, citizen engagement, serve as a framework for the following discussion of eGovernment value drivers.

5 Three value drivers for e-government

We make the assumption that eGovernment value landscape (understood as purpose and motivation for eGovernment initiatives) reflects the public administation value ladscape, so we next summarize the value landscape as three value drivers (administrative efficiency, service improvement, and citizen engagement). Complemented by a set of foundational values. The resulting value model is intended to aid the conceptualization of purpose and motivation in decision-making for eGovernment initiatives.

5.1 Administrative Efficiency

Administrative efficiency combines both Weberian and NPM values in the search for value for money expressed by the three E values: efficiency, effectiveness, economy. These represent what Hood (1991) refers to as the core value 'keep it lean and purposeful' and Bannister (2002) deconstructs as: positive cost benefit, cost savings/reduced headcount, avoided future costs, positive return on investment, positive net present value, risk reduction, greater staff efficiency, better control/reduction in fraud and waste, and increase in capacity/throughput. It incorporates the values of cost efficiency and productivity at the centre of the managerial model favoured by NPM, and also the values of performance assessment and accountability through results. It might also incorporate some degree of market orientation, competition and incentivization in pursuit of these values.

Here we should incorporate the understanding of Dahl (1947): efficiency is itself a value and should compete with other values, such as a service ideal or democratic morality. Though Bannister (2002) terms these E values 'foundational' implying that they are central to the pursuit of any eGovernment venture, we cannot see that this is a good reflection of the public administration debate and would rather point to a set of core (foundational) values expressed by Weber, and re-articulated by Hood – we return to this idea shortly.

5.2 Service Improvement

This set of values is derived from public service ideals articulated by Denhardt and Denhardt (2007) and from the customer orientation of NPM. ICTs offer many opportunities to provide better services to the public (citizen, client, customer, claimant, or recipient), though care must be taken to avoid encasing the human side of government behind a digital wall. Service improvements typically include better access, avoiding travel, shorter response times, better access to information, online applications and transactions, special provision for disability, online advice, automated benefits payment, and cost savings for citizens - as well as many other things.

The improvement of services, however, is often confused with administrative efficiency. The provision of a service online in attempt to reduce personnel costs does not necessarily constitute an improved service to the public in itself, but is part of a long tradition of the automation of manual tasks through ITC. Nor does transferring tasks traditionally undertaken by administrative staff to the public (you can find the information you need on our website but our help desk is now closed three days a week).

5.3 Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement combines ideals of citizen-centricity and community empowerment from NPM with the liberal democracy ideals of the New Public Service. Bannister understands the democratic value as citizen access

to information, transparency and flexibility, and further understands policy-making as an internal administrative concern. Liberal democracy advocates would go further and focus on dialogue, deliberation, democracy, openness, consensus-building, collaboration, shared leadership, and participatory policymaking. Citizen engagement is, however, not only a democratic ideal. Online services have little efficiency impact if citizens do not engage and use them. Citizens have a role to play in designing their own services and systems if these are to be appropriate and effective (Olphert and Damodaran, 2007).

Engagement should not be confused with information provision, customer feedback or transparency. Where information and transparency provide the basis for understanding for informed citizen deliberation, citizen engagement is dependent upon the administration's resolve to find out what the public interest is and to act upon it, otherwise there is no incentive for a citizen to engage. As Snellen (2005) remarks, this kind of eGovernment functions are less well-developed. He also provides an explanation for this: the technologies supporting it are newer and their use in government less well-understood.

Both service improvement and citizen engagement are usually dependent on investment and therefore can easily conflict with administrative efficiency, at least in the short term.

5.4 Foundational values

Whereas the three value drivers (administrative efficiency, service improvement, citizen engagement) can represent the motivation for major new initiatives in eGovernment, they are dependent upon the maintenance of many other values, which can be associated with traditional bureaucratic virtues. We use the term foundational values for these and follow Dobel's (2007) public administration tradition manner of formulating them, rather than Bannister's adaptation. These are summarized above by Hood (1991) as the core values:

- keep it honest and fair
- keep it robust and resilient

and elaborated by Dobel (2007)

- frame decisions by law and authorized policy
- demand good information for decision
- create accurate durable records
- build durable and competent institutional capacity
- impartially serve "all citizens"

Foundational values reflect traditional bureaucratic values such as legitimacy, the rule of law, the application of detailed rules, equality, legality, impartiality, objectivity, transparency and accountability. We might also extend them to include internal and external values as defined by Bannister (2002)

- internal: improved staff morale, improved internal communications, improved ability to attract staff, better staff retention, more motivated staff, empowering staff, greater staff creativity
- external: being abreast of the private sector, having a good public image, being abreast of other administrations, matching other external benchmarks.

Translated into the daily work of an IT manager in government, these represent concern for (amongst other things):

- infrastructural integrity for databases and networks
- data security and the privacy of citizens
- access to information for citizens through web-sites
- the accurate representation of legislation and regulations
- the avoidance of features that inadvertently discriminate groups of citizens
- the free availability of reliable services (also to those with disabilities and minority groups)
- the comfort of fellow government employees with the tools and services they work with, and
- access to relevant decision-making information for government managers.

Foundational values motivate the backbone of eGovernment, enabling the modern bureaucracy to retain its professional integrity in the digital age, and providing the platform upon which value drivers build. The eGovernment value drivers are summarized in Figure 3.

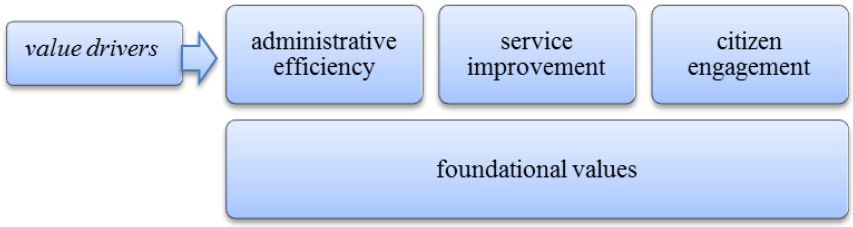

Figure 3. Value drivers for eGovernment.

6 E-Government value drivers and local government in Denmark

In this section, we address the question: what values do (or should) public sector managers espouse (seek to achieve) when they introduce new information and communication technologies (ICT)? We do this through a short informal analysis of the two DISIMIT reports reporting on a large data

collection exercise in 2009 (Nielsen et al., 2010, Kræmmergaard et al., 2010). The national context for local authority managers responses is the Digitalisation Strategy for 2007-2010 (Regeringen et al., 2007). This focuses on three areas:

- Better digital service – one entry point to the public sector
- Digitalisation should facilitate efficiency
- Stronger co-operation should create better digital cohesion

6.1 Administrative efficiency

The two reports show that the DISIMIT local authority managers have a strong concentration on internal organisational efficiency. They understand the need to introduce systems that respond to internal requirements assessments (rather than respond to IT supplier agendas) and to improve IT project leadership using standardised models and portfolio management. Initiatives should have clear objectives and success criteria (expressed as a business case specifying efficiency gains which can be measured) which should later be evaluated. IT projects should not be stand-alone service automations, but should take place together with organisational changes designed to realise concrete benefits (process improvement). Channel reduction is also important: citizens should be encouraged to move to digital channels to maximize efficiency gains from digital services. The means to achieve these things include better budget and payment models for IT services, better management of IT suppliers, better internal financial incentives and raising the status of IT departments. Both top management and political backing is necessary.

6.2 Service improvement

The reports also identified a commitment to service improvement. Particularly important are identifying and prioritising service improvement options, and the planning, initiation, implementation and operation of services. Service quality is also an issue, as is the accessibility, navigability and usability of services

6.3 Citizen engagement

Citizen engagement is mentioned, but primarily in the context of poor take up of digital services, understood as the result of inadequate marketing. This should be understood as part of an efficiency agenda, where efficiency gains are neutralised by citizens' unwillingness or inability to use digital services.

6.4 Foundational values

There is wide commitment to various foundational values. There is concern for the security of personal data, identity issues (digital signature,

identification and authorisation) and respecting access for non-digital citizens. It is recognised that digital systems should complying with complex law demands regarding, for example, case handling. Digital integration of legacy silo systems and across governmental organisations is a priority, as maintaining architectural integrity and the upgrade and life cycle management of systems. Sourcing strategies and the management of systems portfolios are seen as important, necessitating good relationships with IT service providers. Communication and cooperation especially across organisational boundaries are valued. Another concern is for improving the digital competence of employees and attracting new employees with IT skills.

6.5 Summary

A comparative summary of IT managers' commitment to the three value drivers is provided by Nielsen et al (2010) in Table 4.

	To a large extent	*To some extent*	*Rather little*	*Not at all*	*N*
Greater efficiency	88	11	0	1	80
Better service	71	28	1	0	80
Inclusion of citizens in decisions	15	39	44	2	80

Table 4. IT managers' understanding of the purpose of local authorities' use of IT (%)

The studies indicate that:

> 'local authorities have a business-oriented understanding of the use of IT, which focuses on improving efficiency and service. Developing democracy and engaging citizens in political decisions through IT is not a central focus area. In this respect, local authorities' responses match the message of the national eGovernment strategies, where efficiency is the overall goal for digitalisation of the public sector.' (Nielsen et al., 2010)

An impression of the relative weights of values in Danish local authorities is given in Figure 4. A rigorous empirical investigation will be conducted later.

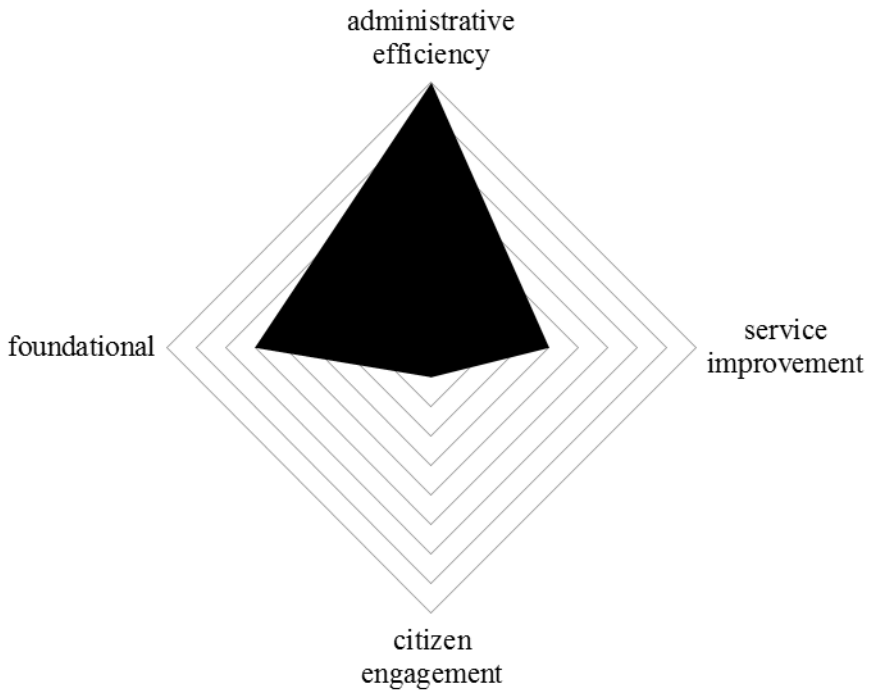

Figure 4. Projected level of concern with values and value drivers in the DISIMIT local authorities.

The polar chart summarizes the relative weight afforded the four different value areas in the two DISIMIT reports studied. The empirical conclusions are therfore rather tentative. They shows a heavy focus on administrative efficiency, some focus on foundation values, less on service improvement and rather little focus on citizen engagement.

7 Implications for practitioners

How should such a value framework be used in practice? In our conversations with DISIMIT managers, we find that it both reflects and clearly delinates their own values. They are not surprised that we find a heavy focus on administrative efficiency, but neither are they proud of it, and often argue that it is a temporary focus, or that it is different in other parts of the organisation, for example amongst street-level colleagues. We argue that this focus reflects a limited and possibly mistaken idea of what IT can do in an organisation. It is limited in the sense that IT can do so many other things (for example underpin innovative services and facilitate dialogue). It is possibly mistaken because research in IT in the private sector shows that IT implementations in themselves seldom provide cost savings or productivity increases. These accompany innovation, organisational development and

work practice re-organisation undertaken together with IT implementation. The simple equation: more IT = more efficiency, as all experienced public administrators understand, does not hold. The only thing that is certain with the introduction of IT is that it is expensive. As researchers we would prefer to see a more balanced use of IT in government, which paradoxically might lead also to better value (in its wider sense) for money. An example might be to explicitly build different kinds of value into business case proposals, and to focus on projects where administrative efficiency can be allied with, or a side effect of other values. An eGovernment project that provides a genuinely improved service to citizens will often generate a cost saving as a by-product. An exaggerated focus on efficiency values makes infrastructure projects difficult to justify, and can encourage the development of piecemeal solutions without consideration of wider architectural design which may underpin future solutions in a defensible and maintainable way. An eGovernment project where the aims (values) are clearly articulated can be the sensibly evaluated and its benefits co-ordinated; not in the sense of retrospective justification and attribution of blame, but in the sense of understanding where a project has supported the values that were in focus and how to build on those improvements through future work. A further use of value studies is in the exposure of humbug. Many fine words are written in strategy documents about citizen involvement and service focus, but these are of mainly rhetorical value if they are not consistently implemented because of a one-sided dedication to efficiency.

8 Conclusions

In this article we posed the questions

- how can the debate about eGovernment value (understood as purpose and motivation for eGovernment initiatives) be summarized in such a way as to make it an effective aid to decision-making? and consequently
- what values do (or should) Danish public sector managers espouse (seek to realise) when they introduce new information and communication technologies (ICT)?

We investigated several prominent strands of the recent public administration and identified some major trends. Whereas the old public administration, with its roots in Weber's account of bureaucracy is to some extent discredited, we found that many of these traditional values are still strongly entrenched in modern government practice. New Public Management refocused the value landscape on professional management, competition, performance measurement and cost control, though without losing sight of traditional values. Reactions to NPM include a restatement of traditional values, and a focus on both democratic and service values. We assume that all these public administration values also hold for eGovernment projects, and summarize this debate in a way that is sharply defined to serve as a

managerial aid for discussion (though some further development is clearly necessary before it can be used in a practitioner context). Foundational values are a central concern and cannot be safely ignored; the three major drivers of eGovernment projects are administrative efficiency, service improvement and citizen engagement.

Our short analysis of the empirical evidence available through DISIMIT studies indicates that Danish local authority managers show a heavy focus on administrative efficiency, backed up by commitment to foundational values. Their commitment to service improvement is rather less and citizen engagement is hardly in focus at all.

The remaining question is whether these prioritisations make sense and are desirable. Our snapshot of Danish local authority managers' values was taken in 2009, after the widespread financial crisis of 2008, but before cutbacks in public spending. Public spending in Denmark continued to rise in real terms until 2010. In this economic climate it can be expected that efficiency is a priority, but it may be that this is a prevailing view of the purpose of IT in local government, independent of these circumstances. A focus on short-term cost saving can risk undermining the foundational value of IT as the primary infrastructure for modern public administration. This means that upgrades of hardware and software, integration of IT services, development of net and mobile architectures, data integrity and security and many other foundational issues are partly neglected. All this leads inevitably to poorer, rather than better service for citizens in the medium term. IT investments do not automatically lead to better productivity unless internal reforms accompany them, so the basic premise that IT delivers cost reductions is possibly flawed. Cost-saving and service improvement are competing values (the easiest way to cut costs is to reduce service levels), so the introduction of technologies which achieve both purposes is not simple. Finally, Danish society prides itself on its homogeneity and commitment to social and cooperative values, but this is hard to see in the values of local government managers. If citizen engagement is not an eGovernment priority in an internet society where the majority connect through social networks, then local government risks losing its immediacy for citizens and, in the longer term, their trust.

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