The Mediation of Authority

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Abstract

Centralisation of authorities and mandatory virtualization of services, currently being implemented in Denmark, constitute significant changes on the output-side of government - in the way citizens interact with and “encounter” authorities. These changes in the “mediation-matrix” of authority, have the potential to affect the basic relations between citizens and authorities and the way citizens seem themselves in in these “bureaucratic service encounters”. This paper examines the situated experiences of citizens in a municipality, which has recently gone through centralisation and virtualisation in the area of social-security.

The preliminary findings reported here indicate, that issues of potential loss of control and security and perceived threats to the affective aspects of the citizen-authority relation, are significant in citizens reactions to the changes and to their reluctance to fully embrace the new mediation-matrix. These findings points to a need to recognize and attend to the deliberative and “democratic” aspects of the output-side of bureaucracy, in the implementation of e-government, as well as in the literature.

Keywords: e-government, e-governance, citizens, service-encounters, virtualization, re-location, mediation

1. Introduction

A number of significant changes are taking place, in the ways citizen interact with authorities in Denmark: a centralisation of authority for a number of services, and mandatory requirements for citizens to use Digital Self-Service Systems (DSS) for all of the most frequently used applications and filings. These developments are examples of two of the main drivers of change in citizen-government interaction: Shifting locations and virtualisation (Pollitt 2011, 2012; Nordengraf 2012). Such changes are not new in Denmark. Other services have been centralized,

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1 I would like to thank Christian Østergaard Madsen, Jesper Berger and Dvora Yanow for invaluable comments and inputs to this paper.
and use of DSS has been mandatory in some areas for several years\(^2\). What is new is the scale, the scope and the speed with which the changes are implemented.

With the establishment of “Udbetaling Danmark” (ATP 2011a) administration and authority for a number of central welfare-benefits\(^3\) has been transferred from the 98 municipal citizen service centres, to a central authority, which does not give citizens access to face-to-face service.

Instead citizens are expected to use digital self-service systems (DSS), the phone, or, as a last option, get help in the citizen-service centres, where the staff will not have any special competencies or any authority regarding these benefits, but are mainly expected to help citizens use DSS or – if necessary – use a phone to contact the central authority. (ATP 2011b).

Furthermore, a number of municipalities have, on their own accord, removed or greatly reduced the possibility for face-to-face service in other areas, one of these – social security - is the subject of the present paper.

At the same time, the Danish eGovernment strategy (Regeringen, KL of Danske Regioner 2011), and the legislation following up on that strategy, makes it mandatory for citizens to use DSS for a number of applications and filings\(^4\), and to use e-mail for other written communication. The strategy and legislation does not formally cut citizens of from face-to-face contact with authorities in these areas, but the key goal of the strategy is a significant reduction in the cost of service delivery, and the business-case is based on finding much if not most of this reduction in the restriction of access to service on other channels, effectively resulting in a reduction in access to face-to-face and – to some extent – also phone-based service (Boston Consulting Group 2012)\(^5\). Consequently, significant changes in the organization, staffing and focus in the delivery of these services are taking place in the municipalities\(^6\).

\(^2\) Denmark used to have three independent levels of tax-authority which were merged into one state authority in 2006, and application for student grants have only been possible on-line since 2009. But these changes are special for a number of reasons and can not be seen as straight forward templates for what is happening now.

\(^3\) Child-benefits, maternity-leave benefits, housing-benefits, incapacity-benefits and pensions

\(^4\) By the end of 2013 this will include services such as registration of change of address, applications for day-care and for day-care subsidies, application for marriage, for the national health card and more. Planned for 2014 are, among other services, applications for building-permits and a number of other applications in the technical area. Though the intention is to make applications for child-benefits, maternity-leave benefits, housing-benefits, pensions, incapacity benefits and social security mandatory as well, a date has not yet been set for this, but Udbetaling Danmark and the municipalities are to some extent acting as if it were already mandatory, giving citizens the impression that they have no choice but to apply on-line.

\(^5\) BCG distinguishes between three aspects of service: 1) providing information, 2) conducting transactions and 3) guidance and directions. The assumption is that these can be neatly separated, and the expectations are that 70-90\% of information-provision and transactions can be moved on-line and that a significant percentage of guidance and directions (depending on the policy-area and target-group) can be moved on-line as well.

\(^6\) This assessment is based on conversations with heads of citizen-service centres and with representatives of the organization of citizen-service centres (Borgerservice Danmark)
The effect of all this is, that the majority of citizens within a few years, in most of their bureaucratic contacts with authorities, are expected and strongly encouraged (though not formally required) to handle affairs on their own, with little or no contact to authorities, and that the institutional landscape will gradually adapt to make it increasingly difficult to do otherwise. Such changes in what I – inspired by Niels Ole Finneman (2011) – will call the mediation-matrix of authority, have hitherto been largely organic, in the sense that new forms of mediation have been added to old ones, changing the matrix, but by and large leaving the citizens free to continue to choose among all the options. But now, changes in the matrix, are widespread, strategic, systemic and institutionalized and implemented in the short time span of a few years.

Christopher Pollitt (2011) calls for research on the longer term effects of this “virtualisation” of citizen-government relationships; on the way citizen feel about authorities, on how much they trust them, and on possible effects on their perceptions of themselves as “citizens”. This study will attempt to look at some of these issues in the early phases of the transition, hopefully providing directions for research on the possible longer term effects.

More specifically, the paper will look at three aspects of these question:

- What does face-to-face contact with the benefits-centre mean to citizens and to their perception of their relation with the authority.
- How do citizens perceive the effects of the transformation in the mediation-matrix on their relations to the authority and on the way they see themselves in this relation?
- What strategies do they apply to handle the changes?

Finally and more speculatively at this point: what implications might the findings have for the business-case of the digitization-strategy, for the development and implementation of channel-strategies and of new DSS?

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7 There is some discussion as to what extent this is going to happen, as the municipality has the discretion to decide who will be exempt from the obligatory use of DSS and email, and this is interpreted differently in different municipalities. But the guidelines set up by The organisation of Danish Municipalities and the Digitization Agency (xxxx), as well as the practice that is forming in the municipalities, appear to aim for a fairly strict interpretation. Some resources are being spent on assisting those who can’t do it on their own, with the expectation that for the most part, this is merely a question of ICT-skills and habits, that citizens will quickly learn, and that only a small minority – especially elderly people – will need assistance in the long run.

8 Where Finneman uses the term media-matrix, I have chosen “mediation-matrix” to denote the implementation in-action of the particular combination of media (media-matrix) available to citizens for citizen-authority interaction. The matrix is more than the sum of its parts, as each medium and the particular way it is implemented and used, to some extent defines what the other media can do and are used for.
2. Theoretical perspectives

This study takes an abductive, interpretive approach (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012:13, Agar 2010:290, Kelle 2005), and the role of theory is therefore to serve as a sensitizing framework (Blumer 1954, Kelle 2005, Strübing 2007:587) for guiding fieldwork and analysis, not to serve as the basis of hypotheses to be tested. This has lead to the construction of a framework that draws on a number of literatures and traditions. The constraints of the present format means that this framework can only be briefly and sketchily outlined here. Before embarking on this however, we need to define the object that frames the study, the bureaucratic service encounter:

I define the bureaucratic service encounter as interactions between citizens and authority (through any medium or combinations of media) where the goal is for citizens to register information (such as change of address or tax returns) or apply for benefits or services (such as housing benefits or social security) through a relatively fixed procedure (often implying the use of forms and other kinds of formalized bureaucratic instruments) and with primarily rule-based, objective criteria for fulfilment of requirements or evaluation of eligibility. Apart from the formal transaction (delivering the data), they will frequently also seek information about the service or benefit or about the relevant procedures, and get advice and counselling pertaining to their situation. Service encounters range from the very simple, like getting a new national-health insurance card, to the complex, such as the range of services citizens often have to interact with when they divorce, lose their jobs or get a child.

These encounters constitute the contexts for some of the most common interactions between authorities and citizens, and it is in this domain that the majority of government-to-citizen DSS have so far been deployed. Furthermore, such encounters, and public services in general, are not mere delivery mechanisms, but may to some extent constitute parts of transformative experiences as well, especially when they are part of major transitions in life (Heapy & Parker 2006:64)

Encounters between actors and abstract systems can be seen as mechanisms for the production and re-embedding of trust in the authority (Giddens 1984,1990, 1999), and for the coordination

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9 A further discussion of the abductive approach can be found in the methods section

10 A display summarizing this summary of the theoretical framework can be found in appendix 1. It is not the intention systematically to apply all the concepts of this framework to the empirical data, but rather to use the framework as a heuristic to identify salient themes and relations between themes in the participants accounts. The framework informs the thematic template used for the interviews (see appendix 2) and serves as a guide for the initial coding of the material.

11 Weberian bureaucracy can be described as “an administrative organizations based on rules, hierarchy, expertise, the written word and impersonal treatment of individuals”, ideal typically based on rationality (Whimster 2004:407)
of roles and tasks through mutual reflexive monitoring (control) of the content as well as the intention of the activity, through the hints and cues carried by face, body and voice (demeanour). And encounters can be seen as vehicles for the negotiations of face (Goffman 1959), for the acceptance of self as a competent and capable agent, and for the recognition of the actor as a moral and worthy individual (deference) (Honneth 2003, Goffman 1967). This is especially important when there are strong asymmetries of knowledge and power (Mortensen og Thomsen 2003, Foucault 1983, 1994)).

Power is central to the bureaucratic service encounter, as is the legitimacy that makes power acceptable (Rothstein 1998, Kuimlin & Rothstein 2005). This legitimacy does not rely solely on formal structures or the outcomes of policies and decisions, but to a significant degree on affective aspects of encounters and service-experiences (Tyler 1988, Sunshine and Tyler 2003, Blader and Tyler 2003, Tyler & Bladder 2004, Tyler 2006 & 2006b). – on what Tyler calls “procedural justice”13. This includes being treated with respect and politeness, as well as the interactional and procedural discretion that allows citizen to have a voice and a felling of participating in the process. This involves being listened to and taken seriously, not only in relation to the case, but also in relation to the citizens role in the relation and the ability to negotiate roles, relations and the mutual protection of face. What citizen want is not just the exchange of views and information, but a dialogue that includes them as individuals. The reciprocity of this relational discretion, together with the keeping of promises and the impression of the competency of the street-level bureaucrat, also contributes to the production of trust (Levi 1998).

In order to succeed in this negotiation of roles, positions and face, the citizen needs to some extent to understand the authority, its language, culture and procedures, to know his or her needs, to have the resources to engage with the authority and to do this based on a feeling of moral eligibility to the service or benefit in question. (Hoff & Stormgaard 1990 in Uggerhøj 2004)

12 This bridging-capability of access points, have affinities to Weick’s concept of loosely coupled systems (Weick 1976), which are mutually responsive while retaining their individual rationales and organisation. Loosely coupled systems are more sensitive to their environment and allows cooperation across different value and knowledge-regimes and they leave more room for actors self-determination.

13 The literature often distinguishes between three types of justice: 1) distributive justice (the degree to which the outcome is considered fair, also in relation to what others are assumed/perceived to get) procedural justice (perceived fairness of policies and procedures) and interactional justice (fair treatment). (Bloddget, Hill and Tax 1997, Tax et al 1998, Voorhees & Brady 2005) Tyler’s concept of procedural justice incorporates the latter two into one model.
Aspects of the citizens background, history, motivations and personal life, that do not fit the institutionalised categorisations and expectations of the policy-area in question, are excluded as irrelevant (Mik-Meyer & Villadsen :101, Järvinen & Mortensen 2004:12) or quietly and politely marginalised as quickly as possible, unless the client shows him- or her-self to be willing but unable to fulfil the role intended

Procedural discretion is an important part of the affective dimensions of BSEs. Where Lipsky (1980) saw the discretion of street-level workers as a risk to the fair treatment of citizens in the decision-making process, Tyler and others see discretion in the way citizens are treated as necessary to ensure legitimacy and a sense of justice. Power without discretion is, as Giddens argues (1984: 132-139) problematic.

In the literature on commercial service-encounters, these are first and foremost seen as social encounters (MacCallum & Harrison 1985) and not just as a commodity or something that can be “delivered”. Unlike commodities, services are co-produced, often as they are consumed, and the interpersonal aspects of the encounters therefore play a crucial role for the success of the encounters. We find many of the same dimensions – or “soft sides of customer service” (Chase & Dasu 2007) – to be important in the commercial service encounters as we found in Tyler, Goffman and Honnet's work (se for example Parasuraman et al 1990, Bitner & Hubert 1994, Gutek et al 2000, Dasu & Chase 2010, for a comprehensive overview see Stinglingh 2008).

Important factors for the success of the encounter are: courtesy, empathy, assurance, sociability, interactional and procedural discretion, a recognition of the role of emotions and the importance of confirmation of identity, as well as the importance of a measure of role congruency. Also important are dimensions such as reliability, effectiveness, competence and control – active as well as cognitive. Finally, we have indications that we might expect citizens to have rather different ideas of what to expect from digital service-encounters than from face-to-face encounters (Parasuraman et al 1990 vs. Parasuraman et al 2005), and this may affect the strategies they choose to fulfil their needs.

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14 In order to bee seen as one who has legitimate need for help form the system you have to “be willing and do what you can. You do not have to do if you cant, but still be willing to do if you could. And you have to be willing to do what you can to be able to do better” (Carstens 2005: 41, my translation). Not to be willing, exposes a moral flaw, a rejection of the community and its norms.

15 As Imrie, Cadogan and McNaughton (2002) points out, ther is a cultural dimension to service-values and cultural values influence the content and hierarchy of service-dimensions and SERVQUAL and many of the other service-models described here are based on US research.
Guiry (1992) shows how the customers view of the service encounter consist of much more than the commercial transaction itself, but also the roles they play in the service-encounter. What role the customer expects to play depends on the situation and the resources he or she is able to bring to it, but it is important that the roles match: Meeting dependence with cooperation deemphasises power-differences and stresses equality, Meeting autonomy with dominance, or with indifference (or lack of possibility of autonomy), leads to conflict.

In a media-theory perspective, information is not mechanically “transferred”, but to some extent co-constructed and mediated (Ellis & McClintock 1990, Hutchby 2001, Finneman 2011, Gibson 1979) and the choices of how to navigate the mediation matrix is dynamic and contextualised. Many factors may affect the way the mediation matrix is activated in a specific situation: 1) the affordances of media involved (Hutchby 2001, Finneman 2011) – the degree of “metaindexicality” (Henderson 1999), 2) the configuration of the mediation matrix (Finneman 2011, Tække 2006), 3) the goals of the user, 3) the nature of the task – is it data-oriented or relationally oriented, 4) the capacities and resources of the user, 5) the social circumstances of the media use (Kock & D’Arcy 2003), 6) influences from peer groups and networks (Fulk et al. 1990), and 7) previous experience with the situation, the domain and the authority in question (Carlson and Zmud 1999). Also important is the nature of the situation: is it one of high uncertainty and/or high equivocality, does the user require media of high naturalness (i.e. face-to-face or close to it) to solve it, and if media of low naturalness are chosen, or only such media available, what compensatory skills can he or she bring to bear (Daft & Lengel 1986), and are they sufficient to overcome the semantic distances created by virtualisation (Tække 2006). This does not mean that the mediation strategy is wide open every time a citizen wishes to interact with government. Institutional setups strongly influence what is practically possible, and habits (based on experiences of what usually works) initially serves as a guide to what strategy to apply (Pieterson 2009).

In the e-government literature, the role of citizens in relation to government is primarily seen from two perspectives: 1) an e-governance/democracy perspective focusing on democratic

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16 D’arcy and Kock (2003) have found that the use of e-communication tools in group collaboration, instead of face to face, increased cognitive effort by 41%, ambiguity by 80%, message preparation time by 47% and reduced fluency by 77%. At the same time, there were no significant effect on the quality of the outcomes, due to resource-consuming compensation efforts.
deliberation at the input side of policy. 2) an e-government or managerialist perspective, focusing on the output side (Andersen et al 2010, Andersen & Henriksen 2007, Roy 2007, Chadwick & May 2003). In the latter perspective, citizens are often constructed as “citizen-consumers” and focus is on efficiency and the rational use of resources (Graafland-Essers, & Ettedgui 2003, Layen and Lee 2001), generally under the assumption that citizens and bureaucracy shares the same conceptions of goals and rationality (Welch, Hinnant and Moon 2005)\(^{17}\).

Both the e-government and the e-governance perspectives seem to be, as Petrakaki (2012) puts it “surrounded by a rhetoric of citizen-centricity”, driven by what Bekkers & Homburg (2007) considers a myth that technology will automatically foster better government and empower the intelligent citizen. Not surprisingly then, the citizen in the predominant managerial e-government perspective is often seen as a citizen-customer acting like the ideal market actor – rational, intelligent and empowered (ibid. 2007). This as Fountain argues (2001) ignores the public and political nature of service delivery and eliminates some of the key factors we have previously seen may legitimate the practice of authority.

While the literature deals extensively with the democratic potential of e-government on the input-side (influencing politicians and planners, giving input to ploy-development and implementation), there is little focus on the deliberative, affective and legitimacy aspects of the citizen-authority relation on the output side.

The wider literature reviewed above, on encounters in general and BSEs in particular, strongly suggest that a deliberative/participatory perspective on the bureaucratic encounters, could be fruitful, even in cases where the room for discretion in the interpretation of the rules and the law is low. The lack of such a perspective may go some way in explaining why citizens seem to prefer other channels when they have urgent or complex problems (Graafland-Essers, & Ettedgui 2003), even when conditions for using e-government would appear to be favourable (Streib & Navano 2006) (Kanstrup, Nielsen and Nyvang 2009, Kolsaker & Lee-Kelly 2008, MindLab 2011)

Another explanation for the reluctance of some citizens to embrace e-government is the so-called “digital divide” which has often been seen (and is still to a large extent seen by Danish

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\(^{17}\) Paradoxically, judging by the considerable importance put on the affective aspects in commercial service-encounters, if government really viewed citizens as consumers, they would perhaps put much more emphasis on the affective aspects of encounters - Which incidentally is exactly what the Australian Centrelink organisation has done, with considerable success (Skaarup 2008).
authorities) as a matter access, accessibility and/or computer-literacy (Helbig et al 2008) that can be solved by “technical” means (better DSS, training etc. ). Some even argue that it will soon only affect a small minority of the population in advanced industrial countries (Dunleavy & Margetts 2010). But, as Jæger and others show (Jæger 2012, Hines, Tu et. al 2001, Heeks and Bailure 2007, Helbig et al. 2008) things may be considerably more complicated, and the digital divide is a multifaceted phenomenon where skills resources, understandings, capacities to act, and self-image and identity all interact (Grönlund & Anderson 2003, Barnard et al 2003, Stanley 2003). It is indeed as Jæger says, a “wicked problem”. Parallel to the discussion above about capacities to engage authority, having the technical possibilities to use DSS is not sufficient. It is not only a question of the possibility to “chose” or having access to a computer, but also of having the resources, understanding and capacity to act on it and, Jæger adds, it is also a question of the citizens’ conception self. On many dimensions, the digital divide appears then to mirror other societal inequalities.

The literature that has focused on citizens situated output-side experiences (cf. Kanstrup, Nielsen and Nyvang 2009, MindLab 2010), in many way mirrors the wider literature reviewed above, indicating that citizens, based on their specific needs, substantive and affective, the resources available to them in the situation, previous experiences with the situation, with the authority in question and with the mediation-matrix, will apply a mediation-strategy (more or less reflexively arrived at) which they assume will maximize fulfilment of all their needs, with a reasonable investment of time and effort.

An institutional setup that constructs a rigid mediation matrix and significantly constrains what strategies are available to citizens, may be a problem on several accounts: it may prevent some citizens from having their needs fulfilled, especially the affective needs of importance for legitimacy and identity, accentuating existing societal differences and inequalities (Helbig et al 2008). And it may lead citizens to act in ways that are suboptimal seen from the perspective of the authority, resulting in extra use of resources and loss of efficiency.

**4. Methods**

While not an ethnography in the classical sense, this study is, what I would call “ethnographically informed” or “ethnography light” (Lee Ann Fuji in Schatz 2009:18), that is to say conducted with an “ethnographic” sensibility to what constitutes the background for participants thinking and actions – where they are thinking “from” (ibid:7). The empirical focus is on the participants interpretations of their experiences, in their encounters with bureaucratic
authorities, in its mediated forms, and what meaning they ascribe to the transformations of the mediation matrix. For the part of the wider study reported here, this is explored through semi structured face-to-face interviews (Kvale 1997) with citizens in or in close proximity to actual encounters. These interviews are supplemented by initial non-participant observations of actual encounters face-to-face by phone and through DSS, to provide a basis for understanding what is “going on” in the face-to-face interactions between citizens and front-line staff, in order to inform my conversations with citizens in the interviews as well as my subsequent analysis of these accounts.

Ethnography is very much a question of “translation”, of understanding the participants perspective and map between that and a scientific metaperspective with all the interpretations and transformations this entails (Agar 2010:290). This is in essence what constitutes an abductive approach. The scientific metaperspective is provided by the theoretical framework of “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer 1954) which forms the bases of the interview-framework and serves as a non-restrictive guide to the analysis (Layder 1998). In order to highlight the thematic structure of the narratives the interviews are put through a series of condensations: to poetic form (Riessman 1992, Gee 1985, 1986, 1991), or rather “chopped-up-prose”, where all parts of the participants accounts that in any way illuminate aspects of the research-question are extracted, and broken down into stanzas and verses bringing out the underlying prosodic structure of the spoken narrative, defined by rhythm and tempo, intonation, stresses and natural breaks and pauses as well as the thematic structure of the text. The result is a condensed text where the core thematic elements and structures stand out and the non-verbal affective elements of the narrative are profiled, while still retaining the coherence of the whole account and – importantly – the narrator as an individual. These narratives are then coded through a series of stages (Charmaz 2011) and the coding grounded by continuous comparison (Corbin & Strauss 1990) with the full context of the reduced poetic narratives, and with the coding within categories and between categories.

5. Findings
In the course of 26 interviews, I talked to 28 participants. Most of them were young (under 35) and the educational level of most of them was secondary school or high school. 10 were male, 18 female. 18 of them had been on social security before, 10 had never been on social security

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18 Layder talks of “orienting concepts” and his strategy of “adaptive” reasoning are in many ways comparable to Abduction.
before. Participants interviewed before the change were considerably older than the group after the change (mean 41 before, 21 after).

These citizens are in a vulnerable situation, where they are subjected to a fair amount of control and to specific role expectations, that may clash with their own conceptions of self. Many of them, particularly those who have no education after secondary school, may be especially disadvantaged in the face of power and authority. This colours many of the accounts.

The present discussion can only hint at the details and complexities of the participants accounts, and it is only possible to look at some of the theoretical implications. But a few general observation can be made at this point in the project:

The participants appear to have significant needs that are not met, neither by digital or by phone-based mediations, needs that to a large extent have to do with feeling seen and treated as a competent, worthy, individual – as a citizen (cf. Tyler 2006b, Honneth 2003, Uggerhøj 2004)

While the strategic choices of participants appear to some extent to be a consequence of the affordances, strengths and limitations of the mediation-matrix, the mediation – the way these affordances, strengths and limitations are engaged, by the authorities in their implementation and practices, as well as by the citizens themselves, seems more important.

Most of the participants lead otherwise digital lives, using Facebook, e-mail, home banking etc. In so far as there is a divide, its not primarily a “digital” one. Their approach to the mediation-matrix is extremely pragmatic, and – with the needs, knowledge and resources they have – appear quite sensible. One consequence of this is, that their mediation-strategies can and will probably change, as authorities learn to take better advantage of the affordances of the different media, and to combine them in mediations that better accommodate the citizens, and as citizens find new ways to compensate for perceived inadequacies in the mediations, and in their own resources and knowledge. (cf. Pappano 2001 in Zhao & Elesh 2007, Carlson & Zmud 1999, Tyler 2002, Castels 2001)

In the following, I will briefly discuss the most salient themes emerging from the participants accounts.

**Framing narratives**

Most of the participants frame their accounts with a narrative of what kind of person they would like to be seen as, in relation to the authority, and this has significant influence on their mediation-strategy. By far the most dominant theme in these accounts, is the need to be seen,
treated and feel worthy of receiving social security and of not being seen as lazy, not self-sufficient, or like a “freeloader”, but like someone who really wants to do an effort, really wants to work – feeling “morally eligible” (cf. Hof & Stormgaard in Uggerhøj 2004). Several participants found it demeaning to apply for social security, sometimes because of the treatment they expected to received, but mostly because it went against their conception of self and identity. Some felt that having to apply for social security made them feel powerless and stigmatized\textsuperscript{19}.

\begin{quote}
I also feel that I am more sincere when I sign [the application] and hand it in rather than just doing it on the web
it just seems, kind of, not sincere perhaps,
and then they don’t see me and don’t hear me
[It is] REALLY important to me, that they see me
you know – I am applying for social security
and that’s like getting money for something I am not really doing
that’s why I would like to show them that I DO want a job.
I am actually looking for a job,
and I would like to have one tomorrow, if I could
(Lone, 20 years old, dropped out of high school)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
I feel guilty
I SO wanted to have been out working,
like everyone else
and take care of myself
But now I have to apply for all sorts of things
That feels demeaning
at least for me it does
But then I can come here
and someone stands there, smiling
and we have a chat
that fells more comforting to me
rather than just doing it on the web
(Olga, 47, former china painter, suffers from anxiety and is afraid of getting isolated)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
It’s not exactly COOL to be on social security
Not at all!
But it makes it even less cool
If it has to be done without face to face
Then you really feel like NOTHING
(Freja, 46, unskilled)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{19} Space unfortunately only permits inclusion of a few quotes from the very rich empirical material, as a taste of the “flavour” of the participants accounts. The translation from Danish are mine, and regrettably do not quite capture the nuances that are often important in interpreting such material.
The meaning of face to face
Participants find they can best fulfil this need to be respected, valued and treated as a competent individual, through face-to-face encounters, though not necessarily with the benefits-section. Participants interviewed before the change, wanted and expected this from the staff in the benefits centre, a third of the participants interviewed after, were happy to get this from the staff in the Jobcentre who were the first ones to listen to their stories. They where seen as first level gate-keepers to the system, and they instructed participants in how to apply for benefits. However, if things got complicated, most of these participants still found, that the loss of face-to-face access could mean a general loss of control and/or of recognition. This indicates, that proxies can play an important role if they are sufficiently competent in the substantial area in question, and sufficiently empowered to deal with minor issues, or “boarder” issues, that may arise, in their interaction with citizens.

The most important strengths of face-to-face contact were, 1) that it maximized the participants’ feeling of control over the process, because of the establishment of interpersonal obligations, and continuous feedback 2) that it maximized the quality of the communication through its inherently dialogical nature and “metaindexicality” (Henderson 1999), and 3) that it facilitated the display of respect and a degree of mutuality of trust through the negotiation and recognition of roles and perspectives. (Both: cf. Giddens 1984, Goffman 1959, 1963, Zhao & Elesh 2007)

I feel I get a better conversation when I am looking at people, you know!? I feel that I am better understood when I am talking to someone who can really be there and SEE me and say: “Ok, this is how it is” things can easily be misunderstood on the phone (Caspar, 20, can’t find a place as a trainee chef)

Significance of changes in the mediation matrix
The themes emerging here, closely mirror the strengths of face-to-face contact. One theme tells about a feeling of loss of control and/or increased insecurity, another about loss of recognition and appreciation and of a feeling of powerlessness, and finally a theme where the change is construed as OK, as long as the process runs smoothly and/or other avenues are open to maintain control, security and recognition.

Loss of control has several dimensions. One has to do with a feeling that it will be more difficult to keep the people at the benefits office on their marks, making sure what they tell you is correct, and that they keep their promises and don’t hide behind the law and paragraphs, but
takes your situation into account. In the face-to-face encounter, a citizen without many formal resources can to some extent compensate by bringing his or her personality and “social skills” to bear in establishing a strong personal obligation.

> It is mutual, from caseworker to me
> he has something he can put his finger on,
> and so have I,
> rather than on the phone
> where it easy just to snub you
> or say "I don’t believe you"
> so, communication is better this way
> looking
> (Brian, 40, bricklayer, likes computers, doesn’t like the municipality)

Loss of control also entails a feeling that it will be easier for the authority to discard you, cut you of, ignore you or to surreptitiously disrespect you – which is where control meets recognition

Another dimension of loss of control has to do with the quality of communication and a feeling that it will be more difficult to understand things and be certain to have understood them, without face to face contact. This may be due to language barriers, communication-impairments or simply the need for a safe “translation” to and from the participants frame of understanding of the situation, and the authority’s. Often this means having things explained in a dialogue with an “expert” where the whole range of contextual cues (facial expressions, body language etc.) are available. (cf. Goffman 1959, Kock 2005, Kock & D’Arcy 2002)

> that means they can explain it better to me
> I mean, explain it so I can understand it better
> rather than if I have to read it myself
> and don’t understand half of it
> I can have a dialogue with them,
> In stead of with my computer
> You can’t really talk to them there
> (Lone, 20, has just dropped out of high school)

_Loss of recognition_ has to do with the risk of being “side-tracked” as an individual, being reduced to a number or a case. And it has do with the loss of empathy and sympathy, and of the acceptance and understanding of the situation that is important for participants, in order for them to feel recognised as morally worthy to apply for and receive the benefit. Several participants feel very strongly about this as they feel that face-to-face contact is _thee_ medium where they have a chance of asserting themselves, being recognized for who they are and avoid feelings of powerlessness, marginalization or stigmatization.
Loosing face-to-face,
that a serious deterioration of service, I think
that’s for sure
I am going to miss the personal contact
I will feel kind of side-tracked
especially if I have some problem
or am in doubt about something
Somehow it is easier to brush you aside on the phone
than when you look them in the face
(Dan, 39, recently divorced)

face-to-face is more human
I mean, we are not just machines or numbers,
that’s what we are in the governments systems.
my CPR number, that IS me,
But I am a person,
and the personal contact
that’s damned important for all of us
rather than just talking to a robot
(Winnie, 33, unskilled, is here to appeal a decision)

I feel taken more seriously
When I am face-to-face
Than if it is all done by computer
(Cecilie, 19, here first year course was cancelled so she has to find a job)

The changes are OK if ... Not all participants find the changes in the mediation-matrix fundamentally problematic. Three participants before the change and four after, found that changes in the mediation-matrix OK with certain reservations. One found that face-to-face contact would still be necessary if he wasn’t completely sure what to do in the situation and needed the contextualisation and mutual confirmation of “translation”, that face-to-face contact facilitates (cf. Daft & Lengel 1986: “disambiguation”). One would still prefer face-to-face if the matter was personal and sensitive – because of the need for recognition and empathy. Three found that as long as they had the job-advisors to go to, they didn’t need face-to-face contact with the benefits-centre, because the job advisors took care of their affective needs and their needs for security in understanding what to do and how, and because they served as proxies for the benefits centre. One would get her affective needs taken care of by her family, and finally, one found the changes OK, as long as the process ran smoothly and she got her money on time, but she would still contact the benefits centre after she had sent her application electronically, to make sure they understood her situation correctly, that the translation between her situation and frame of reference and the system’s had gone well.
Strategies
Though this is not a study of “channel choice”, it is important to understand how the participants “position” the different mediations in relation to each other and in relation to their resources and needs, in order to understand the strategies the participants apply to handle the changes in the mediation-matrix,

The web and DSS
A few did not use the web at all, or very little and could not imagine using it for government business. One could not use the web because he had severe dyslexia, another because she could not read Danish well enough. The most important challenges with using DSS and finding government information on the web were: difficulties in understanding the rules and what was required of the participants in the situation, difficulties with understanding the way the DSS worked, its structure and functionality, contributing to a general sense of “insecurity” that lead participants either to prefer not to use DSS or only to use it for restricted purposes under specific conditions (cf. Kanstrup et al. 2010, MindLab 2011). Generally this meant using DSS when the business was not very important, personal or sensitive, and reserving it for factual matters that participants felt were reasonably well understood. Within those limits, they found the web practical for finding factual information, and they found DSS practical for example for uploading information they already had in digital form, for making it easier to navigate and focus on the different parts of the forms, and for submitting legible applications. Lack of ICT-skills did not play any role for most of the participants.

The web is fine, for concrete answer in some ways.
but if you are in doubt
then its easier
in a dialogue with a person
(Dan, 39 here to apply for housing benefit)

Its hard to do it on the web
there are so many rules and stuff,
it’s difficult for me to follow, really
all those rules
even what I di just now [on the computer]
I didn’t understand half of it
(Ivar, 27 has had massive problems with depression, substance abuse and death in the family. Finds it hard to keep the deadlines and formalities required top receive social security)

I will apply on-line
But it is important for me that we can see each other
important to have a conversation
and you can see their body language and stuff
that is what you give
so you can form an impression
rather than just having a voice
the phone easily gets kind of hectic,
superficial
when you're face to face
you think of things along the way
because things don't have to go so fast
so you can better remember the questions you forgot you had
On-line is best if they need documents and papers and such
and I have them on my computer
(Martin, 32, lots of half-finished educations behind him,
an avid web-user – but not when it comes to the public sector)

The phone
The phone was generally considered a low-quality and inefficient medium that was mainly
useful for factual, concrete matters, like asking about the status of a case or booking a meeting.
It was preferably used for: 1) cases where participants already had sufficient knowledge to know
what information they needed (low equivocality), 2) things that were not very important to
participants, 3) cases where they had already established a contact with a case-worker, and the
phone was used to follow up on that contact, 4) if they were very busy or to ill to get out. One
participant added that she would not use the phone when feelings were involved, another that
she would prefer the phone when she wanted to scold someone, because that was more difficult
face to face, and one would not use the phone because she was hearing impaired and facial
expressions were an extremely important part of her language. Again most of these
“limitations” in the use of the phone in interaction with authorities, are not described only as a
result of inherent properties of the medium, but in many cases refer to the way these properties –
or affordances – are engaged in the mediation, including the organisational implementation. The
phone is not necessarily a bad medium for control and recognition, but in the participants
experience, it is badly implemented and badly integrated in the mediation matrix.

being on the phone wont do at all
you sit there thinking: ”who am I talking t”?
Do you know anything at all”?
what are you actually doing?
Are you sitting there, eating cookies or what?
Are you even listening to what I am saying?
I can’t se what she is looking at
I have no idea what the lady is doing
What papers she have in front of her
So lets do it TOGETHER, eh?
(Brian, 40, bricklayer, not much trust in the public sector, uses the web for lots of
things, but not for business with government)
**Face to face**

Face-to-face contact was preferred in many cases in order to: 1) disambiguate and clarify the situation when participants had little experience with the situation and/or the authority and were in doubt about many things, had many questions or didn’t know what questions to ask, and therefore needed the full range of sensory and contextual cues (cf. Daft & Lengel 1986, Kock 2005, Kock & D’Arcy 2002). 2) facilitate the dialog and simultaneity nature of the conversation, creating the sense of mutuality that contributed to establishing a shared and confirmed understanding, 3) create the sense of empathy, attentiveness and respect that made participants feel like a person, treated with respect, and recognised as a competent, moral, worthy individual (cf. Honneth 2006, Tyler 2006b), 4) last but not least, give the participants a feeling of some degree of control over what its going on, that the matter is in the right hands, and that it is being dealt with swiftly and correctly.

Not only does this establish trust, it also seems to many participants to be the most efficient way of dealing with all the his or her needs, partly because of the loosely coupled nature of face-to-face interaction (cf. Weick 1976), the low demands it puts on citizens knowledge and qualifications and the high affective potential of co-presence and co-location (cf. Giddens 1984, 1990, Goffman 1959, 1967)

**Strategies**

There is no apparent difference in the mediation strategies reported before and after the change, but the burden of fulfilling the needs that face-to-face encounters are expected to fill, in relation to the social-security application, is now almost entirely on the staff in the jobcentre. This works fine – until things do not go smoothly with the social benefit application, which the job-centre staff does not have the authority to deal with. And consequently can do nothing about. This is clear from the participants that have had trouble with applications before, and are frustrated with the prospects of not being able to deal directly – face to face – with the people responsible, as well and from two of the participants I interviewed again, after their case had been processed and where the process had not gone as anticipated or hoped for.

**General perspectives**

Across the different strategies, mediations and framings, a number of general themes emerge that has to do with the more basic aspects of the bureaucratic service encounters. Most notably the themes of trust, control, recognition (cf. Chase & Dasu 2007 and their dimensions of trust, control and emotions).
Trust
The connection between face-to-face contact and a feeling of self-worth and self-esteem is very strong in the narratives. This is reflected in their accounts of the need for recognition and in their reflexions on the meaning of trust.

With two notable exceptions (both due to poor previous experiences), the participants trust the public sector more or as much as they do strangers in general, primarily because they trust the institutions that select and control the staff and circumscribe their actions, and because they trust the professional expertise and competencies of the staff. When asked what constituted that trust in concrete interactions, three themes emerged (cf. Levi’s 1998: basic trust producing factors, delivering on policy, appearing competent, keeping promises and treating the citizens as trustworthy and with respect):

1) The behaviour of front-line staff, which for participants induced trust, often through recognition: that the staff smile, are courteous and sincere, “do not kick one who is lying down”, and provide a manifest display of interest in helping the participants, understanding their situation, and recognize them as individuals, without prejudices (pertaining to ethnicity, language skills, handicaps or being a social-security applicant). What is important is not just the lack of prejudices or discrimination (which DSS should be perfectly poised to deliver), but the positive affirmation of identity and worth, in spite of those features of the individual that could give rise to prejudices. In other words to be treated as an individual, not as a category, case or type. Much of this trust inducing behaviour, especially in relation to recognition, sincerity and honesty, is displayed or reinforced through body language, facial expressions and tone of voice.

Another important part of the behaviour is the attentiveness to and recognition of participants perspectives and life-experience, and that front-line staff take time to listen, and to make sure that the participant understands, and is involved in the process, making him or her a party in in the decision making process (cf. Tyler 2006b, Uggerhøj 2005)

2) The staff’s confident display of competence and knowledge of rules and regulations. Most participants can not evaluate this objectively, as they do not feel that they know enough about the issues to do so, instead the evaluate it on the appearance of competence, the consistency of

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20 Only the 16 participants in the second half of the study – after the changes in the mediation-matrix – were asked for a relative evaluation of the two.

21 Said by Gorm, a 25 year old man who suffered from severe dyslexia, had had many defeats in his relations with authorities and had a great need for recognition, acceptance and security in his relation to authorities.
the message, the confidence with which it is given, and the way this knowledge is made relevant to and makes relevant the participants own knowledge and experiences.

3) That the front-line staff keep their promises. This is easily assessed after the fact, but in choosing a mediation strategy, it has to be an ex-ante evaluation based on interactional cues like the ones described above, and on the implicit obligations that follows from having “negotiated” matters in conditions of co-presence as well as co-location. Intertwined with this is the control aspect – basically: “I know who you are and what your name is and can get back to you, if things go wrong” – not intended as a threat but in the sense of establishing a strong personal obligation. Trust in the individual may intuitively rest on trust in the institutions, but a personal promise made face to face seems to trump – or rather to actualise, anchor and embody - organisational assurances.

As we have seen, face-to-face contacts facilitates the display as well as observation of the full range of behaviours, and enables the participant to engage all his resources (cf. Goffman 1959,1963, Giddens 1984). It also makes it easier to asses the competency and knowledgeability of the front-line worker and, not least, to establish a mutual and personal obligation regarding the handling of the case including any promises made or inferred. Trust and control, while separate constructs are in many ways intertwined in these accounts.

**Control**

Control, as we have seen, is in many ways a supplement to trust and recognition, and has several dimensions. For some participants, control is the overarching strategy they apply to bureaucratic service-encounters, these are the same participants whose basic attitude to authorities is one of mistrust. For them, control is a matter of keeping the reins on the staff tight, ensure competency, and not being “led up the garden path”.

For most of the other participants, control is more a matter of ensuring trust and recognition: secure mutual understanding, ensuring that the staff feel obligated to my case, ensure sincerity, ensure respect and honesty, ensure co-operation. Turning up in person and presenting oneself as a morally worthy and competent individual, obligates the other party to answer in kind and uphold the “interaction order” trough mutual facework, and display of deference an demeanour (cf. Goffman 1967)

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22 Clear promises are not always given and promises given are not always understood as they were intended. In the absence of clear promises, citizens often infer promises from various cues as well as from general expectations as to what seems reasonable. It is thus important that promises as well as their conditions are explicit and mutual understanding ensured.
Control also has more straightforward instrumental aspects: get to the right person straight away, make sure that all relevant information has been presented and taken it into account, making sure that the citizen has properly understood the procedures and requirements, that the case (and documents etc.) are in the right hands and being taken care of, and knowing who to get back to if necessary.

As Giddens theorizes (1984), faceless commitments in abstract systems may not be sufficient to ensure trust. The knowledge of the fallibility of expert systems, and the awareness of the contingency of knowledge undermines the faceless commitments, especially in situations of vulnerability and insecurity, where a consolidation of the self and identity may be important. At least in the context under study here, faceless commitments needs a foundation – or perhaps more like a safetynet of face-to-face (or at least “person-to-person”) commitments. As one of the participants puts it, “It is hard to trust someone you can’t see”.

Recognition
As Honneth (2003,2006), Tyler (2006a, 2006b) and Goffman (1961,1967) have shown, there are several dimensions to recognition, at least three of which are salient in the present study:

1) Being treated – and consequently see one self – as a worthy, competent individual, with courtesy, dignity, honesty and respect and without prejudice – and not indifferently, as a number, a case, an applicant, an anonymous entity. To be treated as an individual who can be a partner in the solution of the problem, not just a passive compliant subject. As one participant put it: “They have to be professional, but not ‘professional’ ”, constructing here a difference between a competent but empathetic and respectful professionalism and professionalism seen as a narrow focus on rules, regulations and procedures, disregarding the citizens views, experiences and understandings.

2) Having the possibility to show and be seen for “who I am”, and that I am responsible and willing to act to get out of the situation I am in. 3) Being shown respect and understanding (empathy) for the situation one is in and for ones life-experiences and perspectives,

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23 Anna 43, who feels that dealing with authorities is often something of a fight and have high need for controle

24 Said by Paw, a 20 year old university student who’s primary strategy when dealing with authorities is one of mistrust and controle.

25 To participants, empathy has to be ”genuine”, meaning that is has to be extra-role, discretionary and thus something the front-line worker does voluntarily as a personal investment in the encounter. Consequently, empathy and the other affective aspects of encounters may not lend itself well to scripting and automation (cf. Gutek 1999)
This recognition has positive effects on the citizens self-worth and identity as well as on his or her acceptance of the control-regime that follows with social-security and of decisions that may not be all she had hoped for.

Recognition appears to be of special importance to many of the participants in this study, because they are in a very vulnerable situation with considerable uncertainty, which challenges their conception of self and their self-respect, creating a need to balance this feeling with an explicit recognition and affirmation of self and self-worth. This need is further amplified by the limited resources (especially relating to education) of many of the participants.

6. Conclusions and perspectives
Most of the citizens interviewed in Holbæk Jobcentre, like most Danes in general, lead an otherwise “digital life”, using home-banking, face-book, web-shopping etc. Their reservations and worries in relation to the changes in the mediation matrix were not primarily due to insufficient digital skills, though they may well have been in part due to a low level of education. Their reservations were primarily based on the specific needs they felt, to be recognized, respected and involved, to feel a sufficient degree of control, and to trust and be trusted in a situation of considerable uncertainty and equivocality, where their identity and self-image were vulnerable in the face of a regime of control and sanctions and of potential stigmatization. This they felt was best ensured through face-to-face encounters and for many, the loss of that possibility constituted a considerable increase in their vulnerability as well as a significant loss of influence and control over their own situation.

Proxies – in the shape of the job-advisor at the job-centre, were a partial remedy, at least so long as the application for social benefit went smoothly and the advisors appeared competent and confident when talking about social-security. But the possibility that things might go wrong or the real experience that they could or had, often rendered the proxy-solution insufficient. Being able to put a face to authority is important to these citizens.

Some of the participants were very reluctant to use government DSS in general, but most indicated that if their affective needs and the need for security and control, were taken care of, DSS could be OK for the practical submission of forms and documentation, just as the phone, though generally considered a low-quality medium where interfacing with government is concerned, could be used for specific, practical and manageable tasks. The mediation strategies of the participants were generally pragmatic and on the face of it, sensible ways of navigating the affordances and constraints of the mediation-matrix.
The scope of the present study limits how widely the findings can reasonably be applied. Social security is a very specific policy-area, posing very specific challenges to citizens and authorities alike. This is not the easiest place to apply re-location and virtualization. Never-the-less, that is what some municipalities have done. It seems reasonable to assume that the needs for the affective dimensions in the interaction, for recognition, control and trust is greater here than in most other bureaucratic service encounters. Also, a significant number of citizens applying for this benefit probably have less education and less resources than the average citizen, further exacerbating their challenges. Other organisational implementations of re-location and virtualization may yield different results, not – I assume – in the needs of citizens applying for social security, but in their (mediation-) strategies to have these needs fulfilled.

However, with these reservations, if the tentative conclusions presented here hold for a wider set of services, organisations and citizens (and very preliminary work on the other parts of my project indicate that they may indeed hold), that would appear to pose a number of challenges for the way DSS are designed and implemented, not least regarding the remediation of the affective dimensions, which is usually not considered important in digitization processes. It could also potentially pose problems for channel- and digitization strategies, in so far as these are based on one-dimensional ratings of the different forms of mediation, i.e. based on the “price” of the individual channels, seen in isolation.

What has been remediated in government DSS is by and large bureaucracy in its pure form, focusing on data capture for an efficient bureaucratic process. Citizens understand that, and do not go looking online for fulfilment of their affective or identity related needs. Whether government understands that is another matter, that the present study only has circumstantial evidence to address.

“The search for meaning, autonomy and control is a defining part of our collective psyche in the twenty-first century” (Demos p.6). As this quote describes and as Giddens has argued, the need to feel autonomous in a world of increasing interdependence and to be in control in a world of increasingly contingent and compartmentalized knowledge is a basic condition, and not something we only find in bureaucratic service encounters. But, as we have seen, this need is accentuated in the face of authority and power, and even more so when the authority is in some way obscured or black-boxed by re-locations and virtualisations. Fountain’s (2001) warning against the instrumentalizing effects of e-government seems as relevant as ever. Reddick’s system level bureaucracy (Reddick 2005) appears to contain a very real risk of dehumanizing authority, as Petrakaki (2012) described.
One suggestion that might follow from all this is, that deliberative, participatory, and indeed “democratic” considerations and goals should be considered on the output-side of e-government/governance as well as on the input-side. Citizens may not be very interested in having a say on the input side, as Kolssakker & Lee-Kelly (2007) found, but the do appear to be interested in at least having the option of being involved, on the output-side. Also, when evaluating e-government initiatives directed at citizens, it is important to realise that not only are the goals of citizens and bureaucracy different, they are different kind of goals, built on different rationales. In order to measure the quality of e-government from a citizen perspective, it is therefore necessary to apply concepts that are relevant to citizens as well as to measure more than the digital channel itself, but the entire service-experience across the whole mediation-matrix.

**A tentative take on possible practical consequences**

Finally I will venture into advancing a few tentative suggestions as to what actions could be taken by e-government practitioners, if they wished to fully address the issues that arise from these preliminary findings:

1): e-government should be seen in a multi-mediation perspective, where mediations supplement and enforce each other, and where technology is used to facilitate the use of all mediations and the coherence of the mediation-matrix. An e-government solution is never just a self-service system or a website, it is part of an ecology of mediations and should, so to speak, behave like a fish that knows and understand the ocean it is swimming in. Every medium should facilitate involvement of other media, when any of the parties in the interaction feels that the present medium does not suffice. This can be done in a systematic and manageable way, which in many cases can probably solve the issue and meet affective needs, without the need for face-to-encounters.

2): the deliberative aspect – and deliberative potential – of bureaucratic service encounters should be recognized and supported by e-government solutions. Casting citizens more as partners and less as subjects may increase quality as well as efficiency and effectiveness with the considerable added (potential) value of strengthening legitimacy, trust, loyalty and compliance as well as democracy in its broadest sense. However, partaking in deliberation requires the “resources to engage” and not all citizens have those resources in all situations. Therefore DSS should support the involvement of “partners”, helpers and intermediaries in a simple and non-bureaucratic way.
3): business cases should be realistic and holistic: *Realistic* in the sense that real peoples’ real barriers, needs and reservations should be taken seriously, and the cost of meeting citizens needs for security, recognition and trust factored in, even if that means keeping other channels open to a larger extent and to a higher standard of quality than otherwise anticipated. Alternatively, the consequences of not doing so, should be openly addressed. *Holistic* in the sense that all costs as well as all benefits are counted – not only those pertaining very narrowly to the authorities themselves (or even to the single business process or part of a business process, as is often the case), but also those that arise at other authorities, with citizens themselves and along the course of the whole service-journey. What may seem efficient and cost-saving in the narrow perspective, may turn out not to be in a wider, more holistic perspective.

4): Finally, every citizen who really needs to, should have the right to look “authority” in the face. A virtual presence or a proxy may be sufficient in many cases, but the possibility of facing a person with competence and authority regarding your case “in the flesh”, should always be possible. There has to be at least the possibility of a hand to shake and a butt to kick, and this does not necessarily mean that walk-in-service 5 days a week has to be available. That may be the cost of legitimate authority and of inherently democratic administration. My contention will be, that this not only constitutes “good” government, but also that it would turn out to be both efficient and effective government.

**Need for further research**

The present paper of course only reports a part – and the smallest part to boot – of the larger study that constitutes my Ph.D. project. Here the net has been be cast wider, involving more organisations, more policy-areas, fieldwork in call-centres and with citizens using DSS, and including the accounts of more, and a wider variation of, citizens and perspectives. However, the generalizability of results of this explorative, qualitative study should be investigated through other, quantitative methods, and the findings verified in yet other organisational contexts. Further, the Danish context, is special in many ways: with a pervasive and deeply rooted welfare-state, a high general trust in society, a high trust in government, a high penetration of internet access, high level of education and high level of computer-literacy and still in many ways a short distance to authorities, physical as well as cognitively. It would be therefore be interesting to investigate the applicability and relevance of the findings here, and of the wider project, in other countries with a different institutional and cultural makeup.
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## 8. Appendixes

### Appendix 1: Theoretical framework

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1: Theoretical framework applied for initial coding and as an heuristic for analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research questions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meaning of FTF to citizens and perceptions of relation with the authority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>significance of transformations for citizens</td>
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<td>on way they see their relation to the authority handling their case</td>
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<td>on way they see themselves in relation to the authority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies applied to handle the changes?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Motivations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Affective aspects</td>
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<tr>
<td>politeness, courtesy, empathy, assurance, sociability, being listened to, taken seriously, affective outcome, part of transformative experience</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Significance for identity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
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<td>Negotiation of roles and positions, relations</td>
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<td>The mutual protection of face, identity, self-worth</td>
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<td>Competency as an individual</td>
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<td>Questions of moral eligibility</td>
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<td>Handling of role congruency/conflict (also goal/rationality congruence/conflict)</td>
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<td>self-image and identity in choice of mediations</td>
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<td><strong>Deliberative / citizenship aspects</strong></td>
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<td>Reference to (lack of)exit, voice, loyalty, involvement, felling of participating in the process</td>
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<td>co-production/co-construction of meaning/understanding</td>
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<td>deliberation as aspect of citizenship</td>
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<td><strong>Legitimacy</strong></td>
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<td>Legitimacy / what makes power acceptable</td>
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<td>Discretion: Interactional and/or procedural discretion</td>
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<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>production of trust – reciprocity, procedural justice, what is trust?, what is trust in authorities? Affective as well as rational elements of trust.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rational instrumental aspects</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>reliability, effectiveness, competence and control – active as well as cognitive, substantive outcome efficiency, rationality (customer), delivery mechanism</td>
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<td><strong>Mediation</strong></td>
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<td>The effect of mediation</td>
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<td>high/lowlow naturalness</td>
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<td>focus on configuration of the mediation matrix,</td>
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<td>focus on mediation, affordances of the medium –</td>
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<tr>
<td>its degree of “metaindexicality”</td>
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<td>different expectations for digital service-encounters / face-to-face encounters</td>
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<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of the situation/task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific needs, substantive and affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>previous experience with the situation/the domain/the authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nature of the situation: high uncertainty and/or high equivocality, the nature of the task: data-oriented/relationally oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of resources and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semantic distances created by virtualisation/relocation and compensatory skills and strategies necessary to overcome them &quot;technical problem&quot; issues / skills, resources, understandings, capacity to act, resources to engage resources available in the situation, understanding of the authority, its language, culture and procedures, understanding of own needs accentuation of existing societal differences and inequalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of social context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influences from peer groups and networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social circumstances of the media use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy(ies)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service completed in one or several contacts / using several media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on mediation-strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2: Interview template

Table 2: Interview template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Theoretical interest</th>
<th>Template for questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>The reason for the participant being here today. As much background and context as</td>
<td>Why are you here today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the participant wishes to reveal. What is important to him, what stood out?</td>
<td>What is the background for you applying for social security?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This frames the rest of the interview and opens up for the participant's story,</td>
<td>What did you do when you found out that you had to apply for social security?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>its nuances and contrasts.</td>
<td>Tell me what happened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What did you miss in the processes? What surprised you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>What are the participant's experiences with the service, with the authority, with</td>
<td>Have you been in this situation before? What did you do then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the situation, with similar situations and with the relevant mediations and what do</td>
<td>What happened then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>those mean to him in this situation.</td>
<td>What other contacts have you had with authorities in the last year or so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What did you do then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation-strategies</td>
<td>How does the participant see the different forms of mediation? What do they mean to</td>
<td>What do you usually prefer to do when you need to deal with authorities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>him? What experiences does he have? When will he prefer to use which mediations/</td>
<td>Why did you choose to do what you did today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>combination of mediations?</td>
<td>Had you considered alternatives and if so, why did you not choose them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When do you prefer to use which media and for what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The changes</td>
<td>What does the changes in the mediation matrix mean to the participants? What does</td>
<td>What do you think about those changes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he feel about it? How will affect what he does when he needs to interact with</td>
<td>What do the mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>authorities?</td>
<td>What does it mean to what you will do next time you need to interact with authorities?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Trust                      | How much trust does the participant have in other people in general? In the public  | **General trust:** “Mener du i almindelighed at man kan stole på mennesker man ikke kender, eller skal man være forsigtigt når man har med mennesker man ikke kender, at gøre?”[26]
|                            | authorities? Is there a difference and why? What is trust to the participant? What  | - If you had to rate it on a scale from one to ten where 1 is that you have no trust in people you don’t know and 10 is full trust, what would you say?   |
|                            | is it to trust in an authority? What do they have to do in order for the participant  | **Trust in authorities:** Mener du i almindelighed at man kan stole på offentlige myndigheder, eller skal man være forsigtigt når man har med offentlige myndigheder at gøre? [27]
|                            | to trust them? What happened in the present encounter that affected trust – in one   | - If you had to rate it on a scale from one to ten where 1 is that you have no trust in the authorities and 10 is full trust, what would you say?
|                            | way or the other?                                                                    | Why is there a difference?                                                                                                                              |
| Relative importance of     | What is the relative importance of the basic determinants of service quality in    | What is trust to you?                                                                                                                                  |
| main BSE service quality    | BSEs: competency, reliability, procedural justice, substantive outcome               | What is trust in an authority?                                                                                                                          |
| determinants               |                                                                                        | What is it that an authority does that has an effect on your trust in them?                                                                            |
|                            |                                                                                        | What in this encounter had an effect on your trust in this authority and how?                                                                        |

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26 Se below:

27 These questions are slightly modified version of questions about trust form the World Value Survey (xxxx).
| Control and uncertainty | Why is that? Why is that?
 What is it in the interaction that tells you if this is fulfilled or not? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control and uncertainty</td>
<td>What does uncertainty mean to the participant? How important is it for him to be in control, when something is important? How does he keep in control?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographical information</td>
<td>How do you feel about uncertainty in situations where there is something at stake for you? How important is it for you to feel that you are in control of things? What do you do to keep in control?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographical information</td>
<td>Key demographic criteria in order to gauge demographic variation and to elicit any reflections participants might have about age, education occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the internet</td>
<td>What year were you born? What is your education? What do/did you work with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the internet</td>
<td>How much and for what does the participant use the internet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>