



# DATAFICATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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# AGENDA

The background for digitalization in the public sector – a new governance paradigm?

The new status of data in the public sector

Work with data in practice – an organizational approach

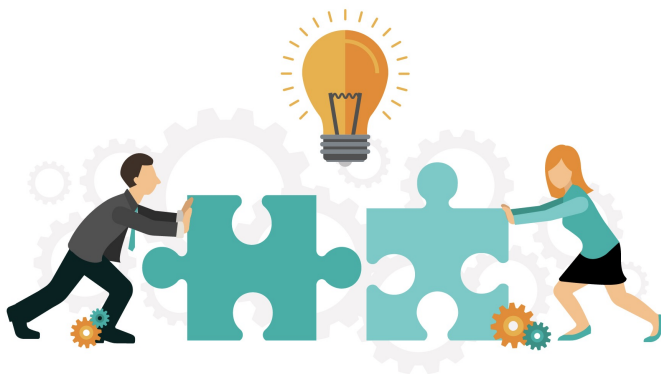


# DIGITAL ERA GOVERNANCE — A NEW PARADIGM?



An alternative to New Public Management, giving digital technologies a central role in the development of governance

- Thoroughgoing digital changes: transformation of paper bureaucracy into the digitized state
- Centralization: reintegration of the public sector and break down of 'silo' organization
- Holistic services based on data about citizens



Want to read more? Take a look at Dunleavy, P., Margetts, H., Bastow, S., & Tinkler, J. (2006). New public management is dead - Long live digital-era governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*.



# DEG – IDEALS AND PROMISES

Increased efficiency

Higher quality – e.g. fewer mistakes and better case handling

Better service for citizens – e.g. less hassle and less time used on interactions with the public sector

Higher transparency

More trust in the public sector

More responsible and empowered citizens



# IDEALS VERSUS PRACTICE

Many states have thoroughly digitized administrations and interfaces vis-à-vis citizens and manage to increase efficiency and quality

But in practice, digitalization has numerous unintended consequences

This is one of the topics of **organizational research** in the digitalization of the public sector

Want to read more? Take a look at  
Plesner, U., Justesen, L., & Glerup, C. (2018). The transformation of work in digitized public sector organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 31(5).



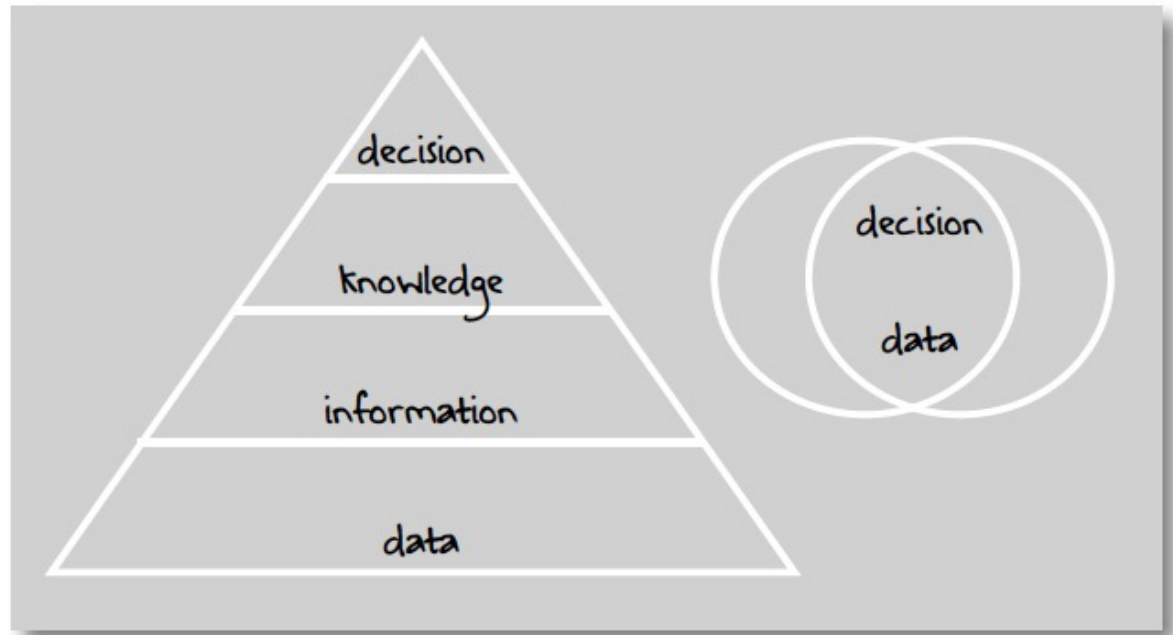
# THE DATA REVOLUTION DISCOURSE



Want to read more? Take a look at  
**McAfee & Brynjolfsson 2012: Big Data: The Management Revolution,**  
*Harvard Business Review*



# THE NEW STATUS OF DATA IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR



Want to read more? Take a look at  
Plesner & Husted 2020: *Digital Organizing – revisiting themes in organization studies*  
(Chapter 7 on Knowledge and datafication)





# WORK WITH DATA IN PRACTICE — AN ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH

**Ambition:** to study how the digitalization agenda is realized in practice in public organizations through a focus on organizational practices relating to data

**Assumption:** policies and practices relating to data are both ‘crosscutting and diverse’

**Applicability:** an organizational approach to work with data in practice can inspire reflections on your own organization’s work with data

Want to read more? Take a look at

Plesner & Justesen 2020: ‘Managerial Work with Digitalization: A multi-sited ethnographic approach to Data and Data-driven Management in practice’ in *The Routledge Companion to Anthropology and Business* (eds) Mir & Fayard

More interested in examples of data work in a public sector context? Take a look at

Møller, Bossen, Pine, Nielsen & Neff 2020: ‘Who does the work of data?’ in *Interactions* 27(3)





# DATA AS A FOUNDATION

## The Danish Agency of Digitization

- "Our entire administration is based on basic data"
- Personal identification numbers since 1968
- Good registries are a foundation for digitalization



# FREE-FLOATING DATA AS A CONNECTOR

The Danish Agency for Digitization:

- Data can float across silos
- Information flows into public IT systems
- Potential for better user experiences



# DATA AS ENTRY-POINT TO THE FUTURE

A municipal center:

- Newly appointed data experts, meetings about data-driven management, experiments with data visualizations, new analyses of organizational data
- A vision of smart shortcuts to the future
- Data as basis for decisions in the future



# DATA AS A PRACTICAL PROBLEM

A municipal center:

- Countless meetings on
  - Data uses
  - Workflow/process descriptions
  - Data security and risk analyses
  - GDPR



# DATA AS OLD NEWS

A municipal center

- Tension between data analysts' ideas for analyses and managers' intimate knowledge of the organization
- Data has been known and used for ages



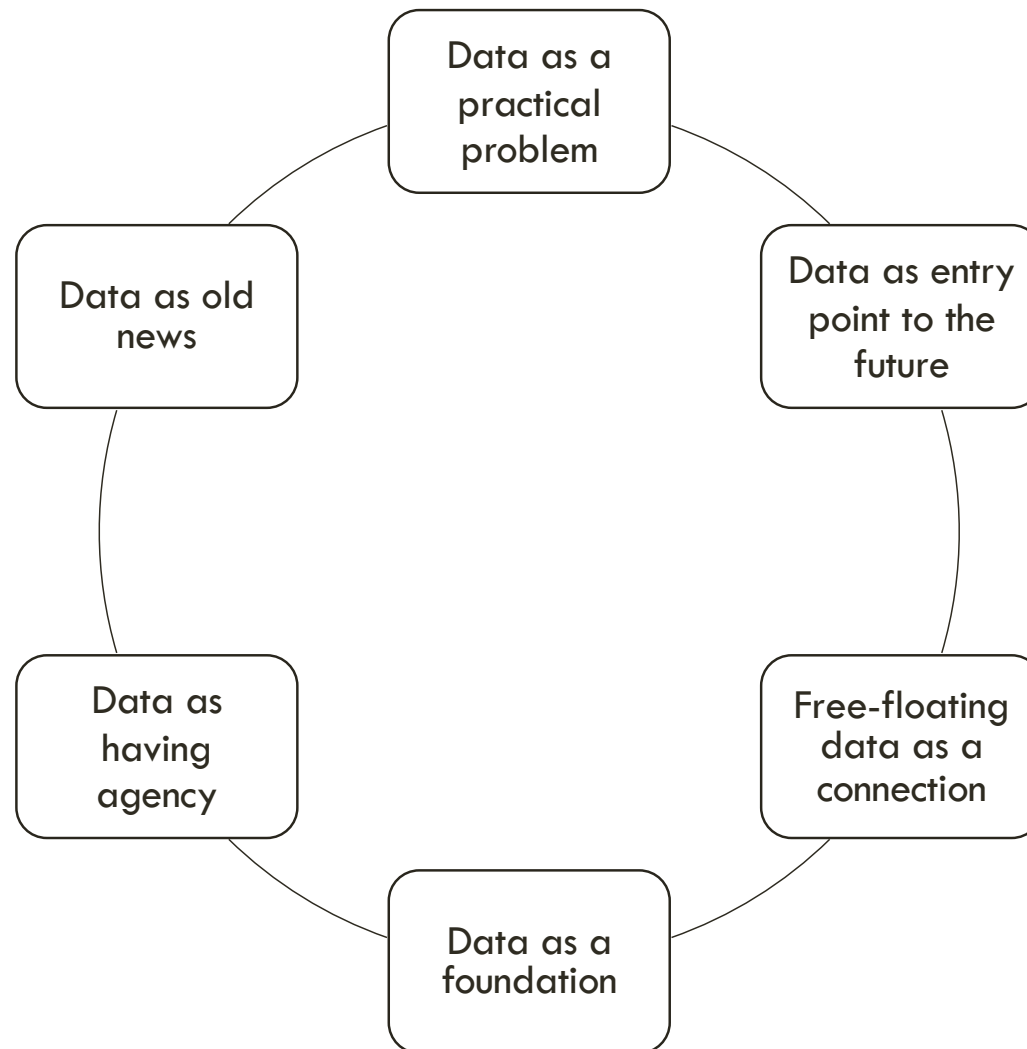
# DATA AS HAVING AGENCY

Local Government Denmark

- Automated decisions as "generated directly from data"



# DATA IN ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES





# CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Data is not just a resource to be harvested and used to produce value or an automatic access to better decisions

Data emerges in numerous ways in organizational settings and need to be handled on a daily basis in many different ways

With the datafication paradigm giving rise to ambitious digitalization agendas in the public sector, it becomes increasingly important to reflect on how data enters the organization and alters the organization's ways of working

In a public organization of your choice, can you find examples of

- 1) Data giving access to the future in new ways?
- 2) Data being hyped, despite being old news to some organizational actors?
- 3) Data contributing to break down silos
- 4) Data being a resource demanding practical and legal issue, demanding extra work
- 5) Low quality data being a barrier for digitalization
- 6) Data as driving decisions and initiatives

