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**In  
Focus:**



Hermann Hill

## Transformation of the administration by e-government

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#### **Abstract:**

E-government reinforces other strategies of administrative modernisation such as new public management, public participation and good governance. This is achieved by a development from the customer-oriented front-office to a back-office system which focuses on the overall benefits, and by integrating partners and resources from private enterprise and social participants. The public administration is therefore in a state of transition from the technology-assisted provision of state services to a transformation of the state and administration structures. Used rightly, the new information and communication technology can have a transforming effect on the structures, processes and functions of the state. This article outlines the potential for transformation which arises in the changes in state institutions, the role of the citizens and the joint design of public affairs by the state, business and society at large.

## 1. From technical support to the transformation of the administration



Information and communication technology was initially only used to provide technical support for the work of the administration. This not only led to an over-emphasis on technology in the reform projects, it also tended to focus only on problems which could be solved by technical means (Traunmüller 1999, p. 21 ff.; Schuppan/Reichard, 2002, p. 40). And processes which had been tested in the private sector were almost uncritically transferred to the administration. The solutions offered by industry dominated the thinking and the strategic concepts in the administration. In studies and benchmarking analysis, the best results were obtained by those projects adapted best to the ideas of the manufacturers and consultants (Lenk 2004a, p. 48, p. 61; Bock 2004, p. 240). Today, it is increasingly realised that government and the administration are different in character and need their own concepts and strategies for the introduction and implementation of e-government. The analogy with e-commerce is even regarded as a hindrance to innovative thinking in the administration (Wimmer/Traunmüller 2004, p. 27).

For a long time, the dominant element in the transition towards e-government was the design of the administrative websites and the development of portals (Reinermann/von Lucke 2000; Reinermann 2000a). The question of what services can be offered on-line soon became the major issue. Official statements and benchmarking studies boasted of the number of services that were already on-line and speculated on whether the rest could be put on-line by the magic date of 2005 (Hill 2002a, 2003a). The use of these services, their effects and the cost-benefit ratio only came into play as a secondary consideration, and this also applied to the realisation that the structure and cooperation of the back-offices is a particularly decisive factor for the productivity and customer orientation of the administration (Kubicek etc. 2004; Millard 2004b, 2004c).

It is also increasingly becoming clear that the activity of the state does not only consist of the delivery of services to its customers. For example, [Schedler et al \(2003\)](#) in St. Gallen distinguished four elements in the design of e-government: democracy and participation, production networks, public services and internal cooperation. In their "Lausanne model", [Finger/Pécoud \(2003\)](#), [Zwahr/Finger \(2004\)](#) and [Finger \(2004\)](#) assume that the transformation process in the state leads to an increasingly clear separation of three functions: policy-making, regulation and the delivery of services. In its paper of 26 September 2003 entitled "The Role of eGovernment for Europe's Future" ([Commission 2003a](#), p. 7 of the English version), the European Commission defines e-government as follows: "the use of information and communication technologies in public administrations combined with organisational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes and strengthen support for public policies." This definition specifies three enablers, i.e. information and communication technology, organisational change and personal skills, and if they are used in the right way they can enable three goals to be achieved: an improvement in public services, an improvement in democratic processes and help in the achievement of public policies.

The prospects for the success of e-government are still evaluated differently. Especially when the introduction of e-government began, it was believed to be beneficial for just about every area that involved any activities of the state ([OECD 2003a](#), p. 27 ff.; [von Lucke 2003](#), p. 144 ff.). On the other hand, warnings were issued against exaggerated expectations, the possibility of conflicting goals such as rationalisation and democratisation ([Bechmann/Beck 2002](#); [Petrovic 2002, 2003](#); [Winkel 2004](#)) and barriers to implementation such as law, finance and culture ([von Lucke 2002](#), p. 68 ff.; [2003](#), p. 173 ff.). The organisation of the process of change (change management), in particular, is a perennial and difficult task like every other innovation ([Mehlich 2002](#), p. 306 ff.; [Kraemer/King 2003](#); [Dovifat et al 2004](#); [Pearce 2004](#)).

The new extended view of e-government was also faced with this problem. Information and communication technology can have a reformative or even transforming effect on the structures, processes and functions of the state ([Finger 2004](#), p. 6; On the transformation approach cf. also [Grimmer 1998](#); [Fountain 2001](#), p. 6; [Reinermann 2002c](#); [O'Donnell et al 2003](#); [Swedberg/Douglas 2003](#)). As a result of this ambivalence,

the same article says on the one hand: "So even e-government cannot be expected to contribute to a comprehensive modernisation of the state." And on the other hand: "Perhaps the character of the state in the age of e-government must be reconsidered more fundamentally than in the context of new public management" ([Schuppan/Reichard 2004](#), p. 19, 23). It therefore comes down to what is made of it. But it is not enough to make technical innovations - the overall concept of state and local community action must also be taken into account. The suggestion "Drop the e" ([Lenk 2004a](#), p. 103) is therefore justified, as is the claim: "e-government is more about government than about 'e'" ([OECD 2003a](#), p. 11).

## 2. E-government and other approaches to administrative modernisation



### 2.1 E-government and bureaucracy



When it was first introduced, bureaucracy (in the positive sense used by Max Weber) was understood as a strategy for administrative modernisation, a method to ensure the efficiency and rationality of administrative action. Nowadays, the word bureaucracy is normally used when its negative excesses are being criticised ([Hill 2004a](#)). The new information and communication technology, especially the Internet, is understood as a powerful instrument for the reinvention of the (local) administration. It supports the transformation from traditional bureaucratic paradigms, which emphasise standardisation, departmentalisation and operational cost efficiency, to an "e-government" paradigm which emphasises the creation of networks, external cooperation and customer services ([Tat-Kei Ho 2002](#)). On the other hand, the ambivalent relationship between information and communication technology and bureaucracy is pointed out. It is suggested that the former is an instrument to reform bureaucracy, but that a failure of e-government can often be explained as a result of

bureaucracy. Therefore, it is suggested that bureaucracy must be reformed before e-government initiatives can be successful (Jain 2004; Kraemer/King 2003). This underlines that it is not enough just to transpose existing processes into electronic form and thus "electronify" them. Rather, these processes must be subjected to critical review in connection with the introduction of technology - they must be thought through and remodelled in the light of their goals and the needs of the users (Hill 2004a, p. 724).

At an early stage, Heinrich Reinermann thought about what Max Weber would recommend today, and Reinermann also pointed out the growing functionality of information technology, its possible role as a catalyst for a systematic administrative reform towards a "federated administration", horizontal and vertical reintegration and the growing importance of procedural organisation (Reinermann 1993). Recently, Ignace Snellen has pointed out a different line of development. He suggests that where new public management has created a degree of freedom for street-level bureaucrats (i. e. the administrative staff "on the ground") as a result of contract management, discretionary powers or decentralised responsibility for resources and results, this freedom has then been taken away by the standards, expert systems and prefabricated text blocks developed by the screen-level bureaucrats (Snellen 2004). Thus, in a development which leads from bureaucracy to "infocracy" (Zuurmond 1998; Bovens/Zouridis 2002), he sees the advent of new bureaucratic programmes and control structures. Information and communication technology then not only dictates the scope of activities for the administrative staff "on the ground" - services designed in a bureaucratic spirit by bureaucratic organisations can also force citizens to subject themselves to the logic of bureaucracy. This can give rise to a new and all-pervading e-bureaucracy (Hill 2004a, p. 728; Wegener 2004, p. 295).

## 2.2 E-government and new public management



The relationship between e-government and new public management (known in Germany as the new control model) is evaluated differently by different scholars. In the

main, e-government is regarded as a driving force, a key or a catalyst for the administrative modernisation which is being introduced with new public management (Muid 1994; Schedler/Scharf 2001, Nullmeier 2001, p. 261 ff.; Hill 2002a; Mehlich 2002, p. 19; Reineremann 2000b, p. 119 ff., 2002a, p. 71, 2003; Frick 2004; Schäffer 2004; Bock 2004; Gross 2001, p. 163; 2004, p. 412 ff.; Chappelet 2004). But it is also clear that a combination of the limited perception of two one-eyed observers (narrow e-government on the one hand and narrow new public management on the other) does not produce perspective vision (Lenk 2002, p. 98). In this respect, a distinction is sometimes made between the system-controlling function of information and communication technology and its system-forming function (Budäus 1999). The former applies especially to instrumental applications of information and communication technology, particularly the use of information services both internally, e.g. by finance or management information systems, and externally, e.g. by citizen information systems or benchmarking concepts. The system-forming function, on the other hand, leads to a questioning of the task itself, to completely new ways to process the task or to the integration of users into the process of public services. This then requires a re-engineering of administrative products, knowledge management, administrative cooperation and administrative tasks in the light of information technology (Heckmann 2003, p. 432 f.).

Electronic government and new public management have much in common. Both modernisation approaches have been welcomed as new paradigms, and for each of them this was also accompanied by disappointments. Both of them were too late - or did too little - to involve "politics", both gave rise to various constitutional misgivings or made it necessary to change the law (for new public management cf. Hill 1996, for e-government cf. Britz 2002; Schliesky 2003). Both require a clear strategy and an efficient project or change management (Federal Ministry of the Economy and Technology (BMWi) 2002; Lenk 2004a, p. 110), both are faced with a number of obstacles, especially cultural barriers, and both have difficulty in drawing up a cost-benefit analysis (Nullmeier 2001, p. 263; Kubicek/Wind 2003, p. 42; Wolf/Krcmar 2004). Both concepts aimed to increase the efficiency and power of the administration and improve its service quality and customer orientation (OECD 2003a; von Lucke 2003, p. 144 ff.).

But there are also differences, although some of them are overemphasised slightly, probably to highlight the contours of the argument. Therefore, the concepts of the two approaches have not yet been brought together sufficiently ([Schuppan/Reichard 2004](#), p. 18). It is probably true that the new public management approach focused mainly on using goals as a way to achieve control, and especially as a way to change the structural organisation. On the other hand the procedural organisation, i.e. a change in the processes, did not play a major role. A major conflict is seen in the fact that new public management involves decentralised responsibility for resources and results, but e-government requires centralisation, e.g. in the form of standards, to ensure interoperability. E-government therefore aims to restore the "unity of the administration" which has been lost as a result of the fragmentation of the organisation in new public management (by decentralisation and outsourcing), at least at the level of information ([Wulff 2001](#); [Landsberg 2004](#), p. 9; [Lenk 2004a](#), p. 69). However, this contrast can be alleviated in several respects. Firstly, even in new public management it is necessary to achieve at least comparability of information in the financial control and benchmarking concepts, and even in e-government the processes are broken down into information modules or individual process parts, then integrated again in a similar way to the financial control process. Secondly, in spite of the decentralised responsibility for resources and results in new public management, centralistic tendencies are still apparent in the guiding principles, corporate identity, financial control and agreed goals which define the general requirements such as social standards. Thus, in both cases it is probably more accurate to speak of centralised decentralisation ([Weiss, Juri 2003](#), p. 149) or (in an enabling and guarantor state) regulated decentralisation.

Another contrast which is often emphasised relates to the "production blindness" of new public management, which is alleged to focus mainly on control processes and less on the operational processes of actually dealing with cases ([Brüggemeier/Röber 2003](#); [Lenk 2004b](#), p. 39). There is a grain of truth in this, in that the management philosophy of the new control model has hardly given any consideration to individual processes, although products and indicators are often defined in practice at the lowest level, and even the new local community accounting model gives intensive consideration to individual accounting questions. Understood correctly, agreed goals in the new control model should draw on exactly this knowledge of the processing of actual cases in contact with the customers and activate the potential of the staff when

processes are being redesigned. On the other hand, e-government does not concentrate solely on local issues of work, production and technology either; instead, it requires a strategic concept and it must be designed by the management. E-government is also a leadership task ([Federal Ministry of the Economy and Technology \(BMWi\) 2002](#); [Landsberg 2004](#), p. 43 ff.; [Lorse 2004](#)).

Other differences or contrasts which are pointed out in comparisons ([Schuppan/Reichard 2004](#), p. 18) are also largely soft in character. For example, new public management is considered to be largely inward-looking in many countries (especially the German new control model), whereas e-government often begins with an outward-looking perspective (on-line contact between citizens and the administration). However, the new control model also emphasises the concept of service. It defines products not only from the point of view of control but also from the outside looking inwards, i.e. from the perspective of the customer. This approach is reinforced by surveys of citizens and customers and by public consultation in the definition and development of services. On the other hand, e-government cannot stop at the walls of the town hall or the administration's website. Instead, the processes must be redesigned throughout; in recent discussions, the redesign of back-offices has been assigned special importance ([Kubicek et al 2004](#); [Lenk etc. 2004](#)).

It is also alleged that new public management deals mainly with questions of institutional organisation and that e-government is usually biased towards data and information. This, too, is only true to a limited extent. On the one hand, the new control model in particular consists of control by information (with products, indicators, benchmarking and competition), and on the other hand e-government increasingly leads to new forms of institutional organisation ([Brüggemeier 2004](#)). Finally, it is suggested that new public management focuses mainly on vertical control relationships (via the hierarchy or performance contracts) whereas horizontal networking options (within the organisation and across organisational boundaries) play an important role for e-government. Here, it can be pointed out that new public management (in the wider sense) also includes outsourcing and competition concepts which are relevant to horizontal relationships ([Schedler/Proeller 2000](#), p. 155; [Reichard 2002](#)), and that vertical integration is increasingly implemented in e-government (e.g. Deutschland Online) (cf. [Wewer 2004](#); [Tiefensee 2004](#)). The two modernisation concepts therefore

have more points of contact than are apparent at first glance. A reciprocal relationship, interaction and use of these reform concepts therefore appears necessary.

## 2.3 E-government and the community of citizens



In the administrative modernisation of the 1990s the following development was often observed: starting from the classical regulatory local community with bureaucratically organised public authorities and bureaucratic actions, first of all a service community arose with institutions which were focused on economic viability and customer orientation, then came a community of citizens which integrated citizens into the political and administrative process and even included independent fulfilment of public tasks by citizens acting on their own responsibility ([Banner 1998](#); [Winkel 2003](#)). At the state level, the community of citizens corresponded to the concept of the empowering state which was also based on the idea of the integration of citizens and shared responsibility ([Hill 2002b](#)). The relationship between e-government and the community of citizens involves two elements: first of all the integration of the users of administrative services into the public service provision process and the cooperative development of quality targets for administrative products ([Budäus 1999](#), p. 155; [Reinermann 2002a](#); [Fischer 2002](#)), and secondly the concept of participation in political and democratic policy formation and in planning and decision-making processes ([Hill 2002a](#); [Heckmann 2004](#)). In a Bertelsmann Foundation study in cooperation with Booz Allen Hamilton, electronic citizen services and information (e-administration) were combined with the strengthening of participative elements (e-democracy) to form balanced e-government ([Bertelsmann Foundation/Booz Allen Hamilton 2002](#)).

But the study also pointed out that compared with the administrative tasks, the political and democratic aspects of e-government are still underdeveloped in practice. The hopes and expectations which were associated with public participation through e-government are also only partly confirmed in more recent studies ([Wind/Westholm 2004](#); [Hart/Pflüger 2004](#)). This was partly due to the lack of a tradition of direct democracy, and partly to the extreme focus on technological issues. In most cases,

these two factors led to projects which were not integrated into existing processes and structures. This led to the insight that new media can support political processes especially by improving the quality of the available information, and that they can simplify the creation of networks over long distances. The Internet is mainly used in the preparation of decisions. But it is (still) not able to motivate uninterested citizens to participate in planning processes.

Ignace Snellen sub-divides the information and communication relationship between politics, the administration and citizens in the democratic process into three phases: policy development and design, policy implementation and policy evaluation and monitoring. He criticises the fact that attention has so far been focused mainly on the application of modern information and communication technology in the second phase, the implementation of policy. He suggests that the first phase includes initiatives towards interactive policy design and a joint development of policy on specific issues, and for the third phase he proposes issues such as administrative complaints, benchmarking, freedom of information laws and petitions to the courts (Snellen 2002). Initiatives towards interactive policy design and electronic consultation and feedback processes also play a major role in the information and communication policies of the European Union (Hill 2002c). The Commission's paper on the role of e-government in the future of Europe therefore emphasises not only productivity, but also the transparency of the public sector and the integration (inclusion) of users and the general public (Commission 2003a, p. 9).

## 2.4 E-government and good governance



The parallel existence of public and private organisational forms in local communities and the state requires a definition of joint goals to ensure the strategic control and coordination of all stakeholders and sectors (Hill 1998). Good governance thus refers to the quality of cooperation and decision-making in the relationship between the state and social groups in affairs of public interest (Hill 2000; in more detail: Hill 2004b). Parallel to this governance concept in local communities and the state, the concept of (public) e-governance has also developed. Reiner mann/von Lucke understand this to

mean that life situations are designed by the state and the administration in the context of the information society ([Reinermann/von Lucke 2002](#); [Reinermann 2002b](#), p. 179 ff.). Jeremy Millard comments: "Governance is not just about services but also about the management and institutions of society and the distribution of power between all legitimate actors and stakeholders" ([Millard 2004a](#)).

Tony Bovaird distinguishes between the "'services improvement' agenda" and the "'relationships improvement' agenda". The former stands for e-government and the electronic provision of public services, but the second agenda stands for e-governance, which is understood to mean electronic provision of all other activities of government (e.g. managing democratic activities, ensuring fairness and transparency in the decision-making process in public institutions etc.) ([Bovaird 2003](#), p. 38). The European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht, in its study "eGovernment in Europe: The State of Affairs" which was presented at the e-government conference of the European Commission in Como (Italy) on 7 and 8 July 2003, also considers that e-government is a key to good governance in the information society. It suggests that the following principles of good governance should be implemented by e-government: coherence in the development and coordination of policy, participative democracy in policy making, consistency, effectiveness and efficiency in policy implementation, transparency and openness in the whole policy development process ([Leitner 2003](#), p. 13 f.).

Governance concepts not only serve for the control and coordination of the various stakeholders in the state, business and society, they also place demands on the ethics and responsibility of state action. For example, in its White Paper "European Governance" of 25 July 2001 the European Union listed the following principles of good governance: openness, participation, responsibility, effectiveness and coherence ([Commission 2001](#), p. 10). The European Ombudsman presented a "European Code of Good Administrative Practice" ([Hill 2002c](#), p. 1318). Especially in the newly acceded member states of the European Union, "Codes of Conduct" have recently been developed which place demands on the self-concept and conduct of public servants ([Palidaukaite/Lawton 2004](#)). The possibilities created by new information and communication technology mean that the concepts of "Good Governance" and "Public Service Ethics" in the electronic age must also be reconsidered ([Lorig 2004](#)).

For example, the OECD "Project on the impact of E-government" explicitly took as its starting point the fact that e-government has the potential to be a major enabler in the adoption of good governance practices. The following good governance practices were mentioned: legitimacy, rule of law, transparency, integrity, efficiency, coherence, adaptability to new challenges, participation and consultations (OECD 2003a; Hill 2002a). In this connection, there are significant projects in various OECD states which aim to regulate issues such as electronic feedback for public servants, public consultation and active participation (OECD 2001a, p. 58 f.; OECD 2003b, p. 69), and there are also important recent initiatives in Spain and the Netherlands which aim to develop an "e-citizens' charter" (<http://www.igsap.map.es/>; Thaens et al 2004). The provisions defining how the administration deals with electronic public participation and the attempts to regulate the rights of citizens in electronic communication can be regarded as attempts to develop good e-governance.

### 3. Approaches to an evaluation



The introduction of e-government is fraught with many difficulties and obstacles. The costs and benefits cannot always be clearly identified. Success is not automatically guaranteed. Therefore it is not surprising that e-government as a modernisation project is accompanied by a wide variety of advice, good practice examples and interim conclusions (Mehlich 2002, p. 294 ff.; Wegener 2004). The demand for the accountability of all governments and administrations, which is made in the name of good governance, is thus bearing fruit. For example, the strategy of the German government for the second phase of the government programme "Modern state - modern administration", which is built on the three pillars of modern administrative management, a reduction of bureaucracy and e-government, demands that modernisation instruments and measures must be evaluated to ensure the effectiveness of administrative action (Federal Ministry of the Interior 2004, p. 16). In the medium-term working programme of the Innovative Public Service Group (IPSG) of the member states of the European Union, three main areas of focus are mentioned for the years 2004/2005: (1.) inter-governmental cooperation, interoperability and pan-

European services, (2.) organisational changes and the skills which are demanded by e-government, and (3.) monitoring and evaluation of the performance and benefits of e-government ([Directors General 2003](#), p. 9). This shows the importance which is assigned to the evaluation approach in the national and European arenas.

The memorandum "Electronic government as a key to the modernisation of the state and the administration" in September 2000 listed the critical success factors for e-government ([Gesellschaft für Informatik 2000](#), p. 30). In the course of the accompanying research for the MEDIA@Komm competition which was sponsored by the Federal Ministry of the Economy and Technology, the German Institute of Urban Affairs developed an on-line guide "The success model of local e-government" which contained ten success factors with good practice examples, questions, answers and recommendations for action ([BMWA 2003](#)). The Bertelsmann Foundation, in conjunction with Booz Allen Hamilton, presented a balanced e-government index (BEGIX) as a questionnaire for self-assessment of the quality of e-government and e-democracy projects, and combined this with a ten point plan for good e-government ([Bertelsmann Foundation/Booz Allen Hamilton 2002](#)). Advice for implementation is also contained in the checklist issued by the OECD for e-government managerial staff ([OECD 2003c](#)).

In St. Gallen, a basic model of e-government was developed which can also be used by the administrations either as a checklist or as a framework for action. On the basis of this self-evaluation tool, a fast e-government test was created ([Schedler etc. 2003](#); <http://www.idt.unisg.ch/org/idt/ceegov.nsf>). In the framework of the programme IST (Information Society Technology Programme) of the European Union there was a project KEeLan (Key Elements for electronic Local authorities' networks) in which Germany was represented by the Joint Communal Association for Administrative Simplification (KGSt). In the first phase of the project a front office maturity assessment tool was developed, and the second phase created an organisation quality assessment tool. The latter is based on the self-evaluation model of the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) and contains management advice and technological advice with various practical examples drawn from Europe ([KEeLAN 2003](#)). The criteria of the EFQM model and the Speyer quality competition were then used as a basis for the European quality assessment system for public administrations

(Common Assessment Framework - CAF) (<http://www.caf-netzwerk.de/>). In addition to these self-evaluation models (EFQM, CAF, BEGIX, MEDIA@Komm success model), another self-evaluation model for local e-government activities was recently presented in the eLoGo project of the University of Potsdam ("eLoGo Assess") ([Scheske 2004a](#), [2004b](#)). In view of this confusing diversity of self-evaluation models it would be advisable to harmonise them, which would improve the comparability of the evaluation results (between local communities).

There are now many such comparisons of local e-government activities, especially carried out by consulting companies. At the European level, three benchmark studies of 20 selected services have been carried out at intervals of six months in recent years on behalf of the European Commission to determine the range of electronic services offered by the public sector in the EU member states ([Hill 2002a](#), [2003a](#)). A further study, which focused especially on the transformation of internal administrative procedures (Re-organizing the back-office for improved service delivery), was presented in February 2004 ([Danish Technological Institute/Institute for Information Management Bremen 2004](#); [Millard 2004b,c](#); [Kubicek etc. 2004](#)). Now, there are already several meta benchmarking studies at the European level which compare the measurement approaches and criteria of different benchmarking studies with each other ([Janssen etc. 2004](#); [Kunstelj/Vintar 2004](#); [Sakowicz 2004](#)).

The benefit of benchmarking lies in the possibility of learning from other administrations. This is also the idea behind another approach, the idea of learning from good practice examples. Such a good practice database at the European level can be found in the Beep Knowledge Map. "Beep" stands for Better e-Europe Practices and was subsidised by the IST programme of the European Commission. The database currently contains 309 detailed case studies on the introduction of information and communication technology with the main focus on work and skills, digital small or medium-sized enterprises, social integration, regional development and e-government ([Beep Knowledge System 2002-2004](#)). The European Commission is currently creating another good practice database of e-government-projects in Europe. Up to now, it mainly contains practical examples of the "e-Europe Awards" issued at the European e-government conferences. In addition, a project of the month is regularly presented in the Internet ([European Commission 2004](#)). The attempts to develop e-citizens' charters

based on the requirements of the citizens also aim to improve the effectiveness of e-government in the administrations.

#### 4. From the customer-oriented front office to the back office focused on the overall benefits



Modernisation concepts such as new public management and the reduction of bureaucracy have focused especially on customer orientation in the administration. In this context, it is not surprising that e-government in was heavily influenced the early days by the mantra of citizen-centricity (Griffin/Halpin 2004, p. 309). Access to public services, the design of life situation portals (von Lucke 2004; Leben et al 2004) and concepts such as customer relationship management or citizen relationship management (CRM) (Bonin 2001; Daum 2002; Weiss/Ematinger 2004; Richter/Cornford 2004; Batista/Kawalek 2004) dominated the discussion on user-friendly e-government. There were projects to make status tracking possible on-line, pro-active services were set up in some countries in which application forms or tax declarations by the citizens were largely prepared by the administration (Kubicek etc. 2004, p. 19; Millard 2004b, p. 559), and even user self-service became possible to some extent, for example a model in which roofing contractors can issue their own special pavement use permit for a specific day depending on the weather (Landsberg, W. 2004, p. 17; Millard 2004b, p. 560). The original vision that all services should be offered on-line has now been set aside; instead, multi-channel access (Hagen/Wind 2002) to suit the qualifications or inclinations of the customer (whether it be in person, by letter, phone or Internet) is now the preferred solution. And the idea that all on-line services should appeal directly to the citizen as the end consumer has also been given up, because it has been recognised that the use of intermediaries (e.g. motor companies for vehicle registration, architects for building applications) is what the citizen actually wants in order to make his life easier, and that this opens the way to more efficient processing for the administration, too, because of the frequency and professionalism of the contacts (Pasic et al 2004; Taylor/Lips 2004; Centeno et al 2004, p. 11).

The customer-oriented design of on-line services is made more difficult by the fact that the respondents in customer surveys can really only select or evaluate the options that they have already experienced or can imagine on the basis of their knowledge and experience ([Kubicek/Wind 2003](#), p. 29; [Millard 2003](#), p. 51). In addition, solutions from the private sector can only be transferred to the public sector to a limited extent. A citizen relationship management which aims to create user profiles is doomed to failure - not only because of the data protection laws but also (at least in Germany) because of the citizens' traditional understanding of administrative activities, which is influenced more by Orwell than by Amazon. The approach of regarding citizens and customers as completely identical also contradicts fundamental e-government principles, which include both the question of who controls administrative action how and the question of who the persons acting in the administration are responsible to ([Millard 2003](#), p. 8). Moreover, administrations cannot select their customers, nor can they simply exclude specific communication channels, and they must also face the risk of a possible digital divide (1) ([Bock 2004](#)).

After the user orientation phase, a new "mantra" is now becoming increasingly apparent in e-government. This new approach claims that genuine cost savings and quality improvements will only occur if there is a re-engineering of the internal structures and processes of the administration (cf. [Millard 2003](#), p. 8). The realisation that the benefits of public services depend on the processes which take place behind the input/output interface and the technical support for these processes, especially in view of their increasing complexity, has largely been stimulated by the last benchmarking study on behalf of the European Commission: "Re-organizing the Back-Office for improved service delivery" ([Danish Technological Institute/Institute for Information Management Bremen 2004](#); [Millard 2004b,c](#); [Kubicek etc. 2004](#)). The aim is therefore to use e-government to redesign processes, not simply to copy the processes electronically. In this respect, again, the reference models from private business cannot be simply taken over because they do not reflect the diversity of administrative work ([Lenk 2004a](#), p. 61). Different process types with different forms of cooperation and different levels of scope for decision-making require different structures ([Traunmüller et al 2001](#); [Meier 2002](#); [Maimer/Prorok 2003](#); [Dovifat et al 2003](#); [Lenk 2004a](#), p. 58 ff.; [Falck 2004](#)). They must be remodelled from the perspective of both the citizen and the administration (bilaterally). In this respect, the

life situation model and the administrative situation model ([Landsberg, G. 2004](#), p. 12) must be combined. This also opens up the processes. Complex administrative processes, for example approval procedures which affect the environment, can be integrated into the value creation chains of private business, or new value creation chains can be created to include the administration, depending on the branch of business and the respective circumstances ([Büllesbach 2004](#)).

A phase-based redesign of processes reveals the different knowledge and communication structures of individual elements of the process. A process-oriented knowledge management system is created ([Wimmer/Traumüller 2004](#), p. 32; [Klischewski/Wimmer 2004](#); [Neuhaus 2004](#); [Gordon 2004](#)). The redesign of processes on a modular basis enables individual sub-processes, data and documents to be reused ([Lenk et al 2004](#); [Klischewski 2004](#); [Hill 2004a](#), p. 724). Semantic, technical and organisational interoperability is necessary to enable modules to be interchanged and combined, ([Commission 2003b](#); Cooperation Committee 2003; [Traumüller/Wimmer 2004](#); [Benamou et al 2004](#)), in other words, consistent standards must be developed. On the one hand such standards lead to a generalisation and simplification of administrative products and thus help to improve efficiency and reduce bureaucracy, but on the other hand they make it more difficult to achieve flexibility of administrative action, adaptation (customising) of administrative services and (because of the level of prior technical programming involved) the autonomy of the user (on similar problems with expert systems in the framework of administrative decisions, cf. [Hill 2003b](#)). As a rule, standards are developed by a central office (which is usually essential), so they actually run counter to the principle of subsidiarity and restrict the freedom of action of subordinate authorities and local communities.

Combined provision of services, division of labour and interaction in the back-office mean that value creation chains develop to become value creation networks ([Schuppan/Reichard 2004](#), p. 15; [Brüggemeier 2004](#); [Lenk 2004a](#), p. 73). These can lead to horizontal integration as a result of cooperation between different authorities and departments, or to vertical integration as a result of cooperation between various levels. Joined-up government ([Lenk 2004a](#), p. 109) thus only becomes possible as a result of the "e". But cross-sector cooperation will also increase, for example by joint value creation processes with business enterprises; this is partly due to e-government

(Eifert/Stapel-Schulz 2002; Lutz 2003). Thought through to its logical conclusion, the "rootedness" of the administration and its territorial identity will thus decline (Lenk 2004a, p. 73). The virtual organisation (Fountain 2001; Bekkers 2003; Lenk 2004a, p. 71) will be electronically coordinated, held together and constituted. It is obvious that this will also lead to problems for the control of such organisational forms, and also for accountability and monitoring (Brüggemeier 2004, p. 199; Meijer 2004; Reed 2004; Turner 2004).

## 5. Potential for transformation



### 5.1 Institutions



As early as 1998, Klaus Grimmer pointed out a development which is only gradually being recognised in its significance. He entitled his article "Public Administration Organizations as Institutions and their Transformation due to Information Technology" (Grimmer 1998). In fact, e-government offers considerable transformation potential for the organisation of the state. E-government changes institutions.

The question of whether it is really necessary for all local communities to produce the same services or whether they could perhaps be centrally produced and merely "marketed" decentrally is increasingly heard, especially in view of the growing shortage of finance (Leitner 2003, p. 34; Lenk 2003; Hill 2003a, p. 743 f.). Many administrative products consist largely of information, so this electronic division of labour is actually possible. Local communities could join in inter-communal cooperation initiatives to produce such services jointly, or they could achieve this by forming "procurement cooperatives" (Lenk 2004a, p. 89) to purchase the products from the federal state or national authorities (e.g. the Federal Vehicle Registration Authority) or the private sector. The same applies in principle to the services provided internally or externally by

federal state authorities or national bodies (for the Federal Administrative Office cf. soldier 2004). In view of the modularisation of processes, partial performance can be purchased from different bodies. Similarly, different service networks or joint associations can be formed for different services (Brüggemeier 2004; Brüggemeier/Dovifat 2004).

It is obvious that this development, which is only possible because of e-government, leads to great changes in the state organisational structure. Questions are already asked about the extent to which the urban or rural administrative district is still an adequate level for the provision of services (Schuppan/Reichard 2002, p. 47; 2004, p. 21). At a conference in St. Gallen, the question was recently asked: "Is electronic government destroying federalism?" (Hess 2004) There are discussions about the concepts of a new federalism (Leitner 2003, p. 15; Centeno et al 2004, p. 12) based on the concepts of FOCJs (functional, overlapping and competing jurisdictions) and functional inter-communal cooperation, which were both developed in Switzerland (Eichenberger 2000; Weiss, Jürgen 2003, p. 238).

Another question is what products need to be produced locally by local communities. The greater the strategic relevance and specificity of the products, the more reason there is to use the producer model (KGSt 2003, p. 4). Conversely, all tasks which are comparatively rigid in their formal structure and involve high numbers of cases can be shifted to central back-offices. This corresponds to some extent to the tasks assigned to local authorities by national or federal state bodies. It is suggested that the local communities should then devote themselves increasingly to tasks which determine the circumstances of life, work and business in the local setting and in which they compete with other local communities (Kubicek/Wind 2003, p. 7). This would then mean that routine services can be produced centrally, but that services which determine the individual profile of the local community are rendered decentrally. There are even suggestions that local communities could concentrate on marketing the centrally developed services in a sort of "service retail system" and otherwise focus more on strengthening local society and the social coherence of the local community (Lenk 2004a, p. 11, 74).

It is commonly stated that e-government does not require any change in the structural

organisation of the state (cf. [Lenk 2004b](#), p. 39). To avoid public disquiet, assurances are given that territorial reforms are not planned, at least not in connection with e-government. It is claimed that the existing organisation can remain as it is and will simply be transformed into electronic format by "virtual" means. Service integration is given as the only aim, to the exclusion of institutional integration ([Hokkeler 2004](#)). Even though this may appear reassuring at first glance in view of the difficulty of carrying out reforms in Germany, it is nevertheless an open question whether it is right to leave the existing organisation as it is, especially in view of the anticipated population development. The long-term result is not only that structural changes at the macro-state level are delayed or even prevented - in addition, existing institutional interests are cemented ([Schuppan/Reichard 2004](#), p. 22; [McLoughlin et al 2004](#)). The existing structures determine the way problems are perceived, and this means that they may make integration more difficult from the outset. Therefore it must be asked whether e-government should really only lead to arrangements between institutions, or whether it should also lead to institutional reorganisation.

It is obvious that such proposals immediately bring up constitutional misgivings and questions ([Schliesky 2003](#)). But even constitutional safeguards for traditional state organisational structures and areas of competence should not be taken as a reason to forbid new thinking or concept development if the circumstances - and the challenges and opportunities to meet the circumstances - should change. Some contributors to the debate even claim that cooperation between responsible state bodies is a constitutional requirement ([Eifert 2001](#), p. 125; [Lenk 2004a](#), p. 109) because areas of competence are an expression of the fulfilment of tasks by a division of labour. This would create an obligation for the bodies with state responsibility to support each other in the fulfilment of their tasks if they are unable to fulfil all tasks adequately on their own. This reflects the principle of mutual support under which the central government, the federal states and the local communities help each other in their tasks in the interest of the functionality of the state as a whole. But another constitutional principle can also be brought up to date, the priority of the best possible solution ([Hill 1987](#), p. 23; [Brüggemeier/Dovifat 2004](#), p. 11: "Let it be done by the one who can do it best"). This principle states that state tasks should be carried out in the best way possible to fulfil their purpose and function. In other words, tasks should be carried out where the desired goals (e.g. efficiency, citizen orientation) can best be achieved. This principle applies not only to tasks as a whole, it also applies to the allocation of individual sub-

processes. However, the efficiency and citizen-orientation of the selected solution must also be brought into harmony with the principles of legitimation, control, transparency and monitoring.

## 5.2 The role of the citizen



In addition to the transformation of state institutions, the extent to which e-government transforms the role of the citizen and the citizen's relationship to the state and the administration must also be considered. Here, e-government offers both risks and opportunities. In an international comparison, historical differences in the administrative culture in different countries again become apparent. In a discussion document of the of e-government working group of the European member states under the Dutch presidency, it was shown that the fundamental elements of e-government services in future will include authentication mechanisms, basic registers and uniform numbers ([eGovernment Working Group 2004](#), p. 2). This will allow the reusability of data and interoperability of processes. If this is linked with the work on citizen relationship management, representatives from Holland, Scandinavia and the UK will quickly reach an agreement, but in Germany, a number of cultural obstacles remain to be overcome in the administrative and citizenship tradition. These cultural obstacles are widespread in administrations and also among the citizens, and this is shown by the slow introduction of the freedom of information laws in Germany. Nevertheless, risks for data security and protection of the rights of personality are also apparent in the new "infocracy" at the European level ([Nullmeier 2001](#), p. 264; [Snellen 2004](#)). Moreover, the increasing professionalisation of the use of data can also reinforce the existing "expert communities" ([Lenk 2004a](#), p. 72; [Mälkiä/Savolainen 2004](#), p. 8).

Other questions relate to whether the administrative knowledge of the citizens ([Budäus 1999](#), p. 154) as a result of e-government increases in the same way as the knowledge of the administration about the citizens, and whether the citizens are able and willing to play a more active role in public affairs as a result of their greater understanding of public issues and the state decision-making processes. The circular e-democracy

process of the OECD (OECD 2001a, p. 23 ff.; Millard 2004a, p. 4) with the stages of information (e-enabling), consultation (e-engaging) and active participation (e-empowerment) advocates this approach. But the freedom of information laws have little effect without additional measures to structure and present the information so that people can find, understand and use it (Lenk 2004a, p. 98). It is therefore right to demand electronic knowledge management for citizens to place them on the same level as the administration and strengthen their position in interactive policy formation, monitoring and control of state decisions (Snellen 2003). Technical information activities alone are not enough to enable citizens to deal with the state on equal terms, to emancipate them in their dealings with the administration or to enable them to act as the owners of government, or at least as partners and not just customers (Slaton/Arthur 2004, p. 111). The focus must be shifted even more strongly from "e" (as in "electronic") to "i" (as in "information") (Taylor/Lips 2004).

### 5.3 Implementing e-governance



The transformation of the state organisation cannot focus merely on the state institutions and the citizens; rather, it must aim for an all-round solution which must be implemented by both sides. In its content, e-government must do more than just products and services and aim to be customer-oriented. Like new public management (Hill 1997) it must shift its focus from the results to the effect, from its internal goals to its external effectiveness. This also means that e-government must give greater consideration to social problems such as demographic developments, urban development, disaster prevention after the 11th of September, combating and overcoming unemployment (Dovifat/Kubicek/Siegfried 2004) and the reduction of bureaucracy (Hill 2004a, p. 724; Arendsen/van Engers 2004) etc. State and social action, shaped and supported by modern information and communication technology, must not be organised around the bureaucratic structures of the administration, the life situations of the citizens or business cases in the business community; instead, it must focus on the effects of state action (policy outcomes). E-government must not limit itself to the production process, it must be embedded into the policy cycle (Lenk

2004a, p. 94 ff.; [Peristeras/Tsekos 2004](#)) and the general fulfilment of state tasks. To achieve this we need "e-leadership for the common good" following the principles of the "Leadership for the Common Good Framework" ([Crosby/Bryson 2004](#), p. 239 ff.).

Here, a mere integration of state data and processes ([Dovifat/Kubisch/Siegfried 2004](#), p. 25; [Klischewski 2004](#)) is not sufficient - political programmes themselves must be integrated and made coherent. In Finland, for example, this is known as "horizontal government" ([Bouckaert et al 2000](#)), and in Australia it is referred to as the "whole-of-government" approach ([Halligan/Moore 2004](#), p. 2; [Croger et al 2004](#)). In Denmark there are attempts to develop an "enterprise architecture for e-government" ([Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation 2003](#); [Gøtze 2004](#); [Hjort-Madsen/Gøtze 2004](#)). Here, a definition is needed of what the term "enterprise" means in the context of government and administration. In the "Future Challenges for E-Government" of the Australian Institute of Public Administration, a "Community Informatics System" ([Taylor, Wallace J. 2004](#), p. 111) is proposed which is based on classical management information systems and includes civic society, private companies and state institutions within the information and knowledge society. The design of such an environment for public information and communication needs the cooperation of all of the stakeholders in various sectors.

But this cooperation must not stop at information and communication, it must integrate all relationships in all public affairs and coordinate these relationships by using modern information and communication technology (e-governance). In the private business sector, Don Tapscott et al introduced the concept of the "business web" ([Tapscott et al 2000](#); [Dwyer 2004](#)), a natural network of the interest groups (stakeholders) which surround most business companies, including suppliers, customers and shareholders. The counterpart to this concept in the public sector is the idea of the "web of governance" ([Northrup/Thorson 2003](#)). The transformation of the new state structure in the information age must therefore aim to accommodate private citizens, private enterprise and society as part of this concept within this "web of governance", with the task of cooperating to achieve the desired effects in public affairs with the aid of modern information and communication technology.

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(1) This term refers to the breakdown of the population into persons who are skilful in using the new technology (and willing to do so) and who draw professional or private benefit from it, and others who are unable to do this and are therefore at a disadvantage. ▲

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Kontakt: [webmaster@difu.de](mailto:webmaster@difu.de) - [Impressum](#)