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## Book

Understanding social impact assessment through public value theory: a comparative analysis on work integration social enterprises (WISEs) in France and Denmark

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# Working Paper

**Understanding social impact assessment through  
public value theory: A comparative analysis on  
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in France and Denmark**

Bryan DUFOUR, Francesca PETRELLA & Nadine RICHEZ-BATTESTI

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**Understanding social impact assessment through  
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## ***Abstract***

Our research focuses on understanding the use that work integration social enterprises (WISEs) make of performance measurement models such as social impact assessment in their relations with public stakeholders. We carry out a comparative study between France and Denmark which are the two OECD members showing the highest level of social spending. Using public value theory as the pivot point of our analytical framework, we identify seven strategic intents that contribute to explain the use of performance measurement by WISEs. The use of Public Value theory shines a light on the unique set of problems that WISEs face when dealing with their public stakeholder, which is absent from the performance models that are promoted by current policy initiatives or by impact investors.

**Keywords:** Social impact assessment, Wise, Public Value theory, public stakeholders

**JEL Codes:** A13, B55, L31, L33, L38, M14

## 1. Context of the research

The late 1960s and early 1970s were marked by the end of the post-war growth era for Western economies and by the rise of unemployment and exclusion of an expanding pool of individuals. In this context, work integration social enterprises (WISEs) came to play a growing role in welfare societies, as mission-driven organisations meant to cater to these individuals by helping them to get (back) into employment.

WISEs are a relatively consensually defined subset of social enterprises focusing on employment-related outcomes (see e.g. Battilana, Sengul, Pache, & Model, 2015; Davister, Defourny, & Grégoire, 2004; Petrella & Richez-Battesti, 2016). Although different approaches to the concept of social enterprise can be found in the literature, a commonly agreed-upon feature is their portrayal as organisations focusing on social value creation (Sagawa and Segal, 2000; Hart, Laville, and Cattani, 2010). Social value creation can essentially be seen as “*the basic and long-standing needs of a society*” (Certo & Miller, 2008, 267). WISEs are therefore characterised by their focus on such needs pertaining to employment and social integration.

Because of their efforts on work integration, WISEs are particularly praised in economies struggling with unemployment issues (OECD, 2013; Sibieude, 2010). Their appeal for policy makers is also often associated to the rise of the New Public Management (Hood, 1991). New Public Management is a public management model that promotes the use of private-inspired management mechanisms in the public sector. New Public Management reforms started developing in the late 1970s, at a time where WISEs began to spread. This is of course not coincidental, as New Public Management paints the backdrop of the welfare shifts that we describe above, together with a growing emphasis on the concept of performance in public management. It is commonly admitted that in this context, and as third-party providers (i.e. external to the state apparatus), WISEs appeared (and still do so) as a good instrument to bear the burden of flexibility and efficiency asked by the New Public Management for the delivery of some welfare services (see e.g. Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Hulgård, 2011; Nicholls, 2010; Nyssens, 2006; Pestoff, 2008).

Beyond this however, we make the observation in our research that public actors maintain collaborations with WISEs outside of pure New Public Management mechanisms. We for instance see these interactions foster in countries like France and Denmark, which are typically portrayed as reluctant to the full implementation of the New Public Management paradigm (Greve, Laegreid, and Rykkja, 2016; Hammerschmid et al., 2016). In these two countries, although we

find some layers of New Public Management reforms (i.e. some components, but not the entire paradigm, Christensen and Laegreid, 2009), we also notice a rooting of social economy in traditions as well as cultural and economic developments anterior to the inception of the New Public Management.

As WISEs gain prominence as key partners in the provision of welfare services, and as they become a topic of interest on the political agenda (see e.g. OECD, 2013; European Commission, 2013; European Commission / GECES, 2016), the questions pertaining to their performance appear of a particular interest (OECD, 2015; European Commission / GECES, 2014). But how does one measure such a performance? What indicators can be used to gauge the effect of an organisation on one's employment track? Can these indicators be detrimental to the broader goal of inclusion? Are they encompassing the value that field actors perceive they bring to the citizenry? These are just a sample of the many questions that the performance of work integration services providers is raising. Our research tackles these interrogations not by proposing an addition to the 124 models proposing their own approach to address these questions (Dufour, 2019) but rather by looking at the way WISEs use existing performance models and develop new ones in strategic ways when interacting with public actors.

The use of performance models typically conveys a risk of performativity. That is to say, in our case, a chance for the considered model to become normative and influence the operations of WISEs in a way that can potentially be detrimental to the outcomes they aim at achieving. These risks are not the object of this paper, which focuses on the use of performance measurement as a strategic tool for WISEs in their relations with public stakeholders. We nevertheless acknowledge the risks pertaining to performativity and propose an extensive analysis of this issue in Dufour, 2019.

## **2. Analytical framework and problem statement**

In this section, we are introducing our analytical framework. It rests on two anchors: (i) public management models to understand the macro environment in which WISEs operate, (ii) public value theory to analyse the interactions between WISEs and public actors. From this analytical foundation, we conclude by presenting our problem statement.

### **i. At the macro level: public management models**

Public management models are broad paradigms, such as New Public Management, that describe the underpinnings of public administrations. These models can be a useful frame of reference to comprehend the overarching

philosophy of a public administration as well as the main instruments it uses to implement this philosophy. In our research, this is particularly informative in order to comprehend the environment in which WISEs must operate. For our purpose, we therefore focus on the New Public Governance (Osborne, 2006), which we ascribe to Denmark, and the Neo-Weberian State (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004), which we ascribe to France<sup>4</sup>.

The New Public Governance proposes a paradigm that draws heavily on network theory (e.g. Powell, 2003), focusing on “*service effectiveness and outcomes*” and “*enduring inter-organisational relationships*” through “*relational capital and relational contracts*” (Osborne, 2006, 384). Rather distinctly, the Neo-Weberian State proposes a model preserving the tenets of the Weberian state (essentially characterised by centralisation, bureaucracy and legalism) while attempting to modernise them through the introduction of mechanisms such as deliberation (e.g. organisation of public consultations) or deconcentration (implementing emanations of the central government at the local level).

While useful in framing an operational context for our research object, these models should not be taken as preceptual. As such, a useful notion to retain here is that of reform layering proposed by Christensen and Lægreid (2009), which suggests that public management models tend to progressively change and sometimes overlap (come in layers) rather than just substituting one to another. This is similar to Pollitt and Bouckaert’s “*dishes and menus*” concept (2017) where distinct models (menus) can propose the same concepts (dishes). For instance, the authors identify performance measurement as a feature of both New Public Management and the Neo-Weberian State, although it is likely to be implemented in different ways in each context.

## ii. At the micro level: public value theory

While public management models help comprehend the macro environment of WISEs, we turn to the concepts developed in public value theory (PVT, Moore, 1995) to understand the interactions at the micro level between WISEs and their public stakeholders. Public value is, in essence, the value generated for the citizenry (Moore says that public value is to citizens what dividends are to private companies’ shareholders). This constitutes an interesting take on WISEs, which as social enterprises, have been identified by some PVT authors such as Bryson, Sancino, Benington, and Sørensen (2017) as co-creators of public value.

Drawing upon our review of Public Value theory (primarily Alford & O’Flynn, 2009; Benington & Moore, 2010; Bryson et al., 2015b, 2017; Hartley et al., 2017;

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<sup>4</sup> For an extensive description of these models, see for instance Politt and Bouckaert (2017).

Moore, 1995, 2014; Moore & Khagram, 2004; O’Flynn, 2007), we focus our application of PVT on the so-called *strategic triangle* (Moore, 1995), which identifies the three dimensions that organisations must align in order to create public value: public value itself, the authorizing environment<sup>5</sup> (where legitimacy and support have to be secured) and the operational capacity (the technical, human, financial or other resources required).

The three dimensions of Public Value Theory suggested by the strategic triangle provide a truly unique lens to capture the strategic issues faced by organisations tasked with the creation of public value. However, they might appear as somewhat too generalist and difficult to leverage for tangible case analysis (Hartley & al., 2017). Based on our review of the PVT literature, and in order to get a more granular understanding of the triangle, we propose to decompose its three vertices into nine key analytical entries, summarised in Table 1 and described below.

*In the public value vertex of the PVT triangle:*

1. The definition of public value, which refers to all the “*co-definition*” processes that can occur between stakeholders, through debate and deliberation, and which ultimately should lead to the emergence of collective preferences.
2. The creation of public value, where we look at how public value is created by WISEs’ activities, and co-created through its network of stakeholders.
3. The recognition of public value, i.e. the evaluation, assessment or measurement of public value, which is the key topic we strive to understand.

*In the legitimacy / authorising environment vertex of the PVT triangle:*

4. The deliberation processes occurring when stakeholders engage in a dialogue, sometimes as part of a democratic process, sometimes simply as part of a negotiation (e.g. Public Private Partnerships-PPPs), which is where influence through discourse and narratives is generated, with the aim of convincing (garnering legitimacy from) the other party.
5. What we call “*legitimacy devices*”: formal or informal mechanisms aiming to assess (*ex-ante*, *interim* or *ex-post*) what happens in the operationalisation and / or public value vertices. Performance measurement models are a good example of legitimacy devices.

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<sup>5</sup> “*Authorizing environment*” and “*legitimacy*” are often seen used interchangeably in the PVT literature. We follow this trend in this paper but often privilege the use of “*legitimacy*”.

6. What we call “*endorsement*”: received from an authoritative, legitimate stakeholder or institution. Endorsement can come from governments, businesses, third sector actors or even a specific group of citizens.

*In the operationalisation vertex:*

7. Agency, as the cooperation or competition strategies that are deployed by actors to secure resources both internally and externally. It is also through agency that government actors and WISEs attempt to co-produce public value.
8. Organisational design, as the creation and articulation of processes to optimise the use of resources and to ensure their acquisition. An example of organisational design would be a WISE setting up different legal entities to tap into specific beneficiary pools or resources.
9. Activities, or what the stakeholders do, and especially how resources are prioritised across the organisation to reach defined ends.

**Table 1: Breaking down the PVT strategic triangle**

	<b>Public value (PV)</b>	<b>Legitimacy</b>	<b>Operationalisation</b>
Main themes	Collective preferences, Collective choice, co-creation, deliberation, evaluation	Discourse, influence, political mandates, democracy	Competition, cooperation, adaptation, processes, activities, resources
General Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the PV of the program</li> <li>- What are the democratic mechanisms behind the framing of PV</li> <li>- Is PV consensual or contested</li> <li>- How can PV be increased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the source of legitimacy</li> <li>- What are the influence strategies</li> <li>- What is the level of acceptance and / or support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How are resources secured</li> <li>- Are resources used purposefully and sustainably</li> <li>- Are stakeholders competing and or cooperating for resources</li> </ul>
Key analytical entries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public value co-definition</li> <li>- Public value co-creation</li> <li>- Public value recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deliberation processes</li> <li>- Devices</li> <li>- Endorsement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agency</li> <li>- Organisational design</li> <li>- Activities</li> </ul>

Source: (Dufour, 2019)

With the framework above, our analysis focuses on what we call the “*strategic interactions*” between WISEs and their public stakeholders. By strategic interactions, we mean all aspects of the relationship developed over time between a WISE and its public stakeholders, which pertains to the co-creation of public value. This encompasses how this relationship materialises (e.g. the nature of agreements passed, the nature of the dialogue, its frequency or the topics covered), what characterises its dynamics (in terms of e.g. bonds, power or agenda) and what is mutually extracted from it (e.g. resource access or value creation). In our research, we focus on the strategic interactions that can contribute to elucidate issues pertaining to performance measurement.

Building upon the observation that WISEs are co-creators of public value (Bryson et al., 2017; Dufour, 2019), it can be argued that assessing WISEs’ performance can consist, amongst other, in gauging the public value they contribute to generate. Following the outline of Public Value Theory, this would equate to assessing WISEs’ “*social performance*” (Gianfaldoni, 2018; Lall, 2017). By trying to evaluate the performance of WISEs and other mission-driven organisations, the practice of social impact assessment<sup>6</sup> is also explicitly interested in gauging such a form of performance (see e.g. Austin et al., 2006; Grieco, 2015; S. Olsen & Galimidi, 2008). On the topic, both the literature on social impact assessment and PVT insist on focusing on outcomes (the longer term, indirect benefits of an intervention, such as the ability to sustain a job) instead of outputs (the immediate consequences of an activity, such as a WISE’s ratio of successful beneficiaries).

### iii. Problem statement

On the basis of the two axes that form our analytical framework, we formulate the following problem statement: how are strategic interactions between WISEs and public actors contributing to frame the measurement of performance in different public management contexts? This question leads us to:

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<sup>6</sup> Here, “*social impact assessment*” encompasses the methods presented as “*social impact measurement*” models. Both phrases are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, while some authors will prioritize the use of one over the other. Either phrases however often refer to the same collection of approaches and models (see e.g. Grieco, 2015 and S. Olsen & Galimidi, 2008). In this paper, our use of the phrase “*performance measurement*” refers generically to approaches used to gauge WISEs’ social performance, although we note that WISEs’ performance extends to considerations other than social (e.g. economic or environmental). We also highlight the caveats associated to the use of the term “*measurement*”, which implies metrological conventions to gauge phenomena that do not necessarily lend well to such approaches (see e.g. Jany-Catrice, 2012; Desrosières, 2012; or De Gaulejac, 2005 on the notion of “*quantophrenia*”).

1. Understand how the public management environment influences the approach to performance measurement;
2. Chart the strategic intents that characterise the way WISEs use performance measurement in their interactions with public stakeholders.

### 3. The design of the research

France and Denmark are the two OECD members showing the highest level of social spending. While both countries aim for a strong welfare state, they implement this vision in contrasting manners, particularly in the way they work with private providers such as WISEs. We therefore carried out a qualitative comparative work with an embedded design (i.e. two countries with two case studies in each country). Each case study was made of two units of analysis: one WISE and their main public stakeholders.

The four cases were selected using a “*purposive sampling*” method (Patton, 2005) where WISEs were identified and approached through national network organisations in both countries. Main inclusion criteria consisted in a confirmation that the considered organisations indeed fit the definition of a WISE and that they should have some form of existing reflexion on the topic of performance measurement. Most selected WISEs have a diversity of activities. France 1<sup>7</sup> specialises mainly in construction and waste management, France 2 in cleaning services, Denmark 1 in IT and clothing, and Denmark 2 in a variety of crafts and farming (as detailed in box 1). Key metrics on our four cases are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Overview of case studies**

Case	France 1	France 2	Denmark 1	Denmark 2
Creation date	1992	1968	1999	1984
Annual revenue*	30.6	1.4	2.7	8.0
Headcount	3,977	388	189	250
Staff on integration scheme	3,857	375	160**	202
Assess impact	Yes	Yes	Yes	No***

Source: Dufour, 2019

\* Million euros

\*\* Some of the management on special flexi-job contracts

\*\*\* But actively investigating the topic

<sup>7</sup> We refer to our cases by France 1 and 2, and Denmark 1 and 2 in order for them to remain anonymous.

### Text box 1: Our four cases

**France 1** is a share-based limited liability company operating primarily in waste management and construction. It is one of France's largest WISE and operates in four of the country's 18 regions. It was founded in the suburbs of a large metropolis as an association, before evolving towards a commercial legal form as a means to carry out its mission and to answer evolutions in its legal environment. The founding association still owns a blocking minority of shares in the commercial holding, as a way to avoid mission drift. Its main clients remain public entities through public procurements.

**France 2** is a much smaller entity, operating in the capital city of an otherwise rural region. Most of its business is derived from cleaning activities (primarily office space, but historically geared towards home owners), with an array of complimentary activities including waste management, logistics, construction, hospitality and child care. Although much older than France 1, France 2 followed a similar trajectory, founded as an association and evolving towards commercial activities to be in tune with its environment.

**Denmark 1** is headquartered near one of Denmark's largest cities and has subsidiaries in five locations. It operates a diverse portfolio of activities including IT hardware retail, communication, arts and craft or metal and woodwork. It was historically founded as an institution providing informal education opportunities and evolved to offer a wider range of work integration services.

**Denmark 2** operates in the suburbs of Copenhagen. It is structured as a foundation, owning one non-profit arm and two private limited companies, one of which is labelled as a social enterprise. Its activities span catering, gardening, blacksmithing, waste management, the operation of a bakery and a café, and others. Founded as a foundation, commercial activities quickly became sensible as the WISE developed a vocational training offering.

All together, we conducted 64 interviews, 33 in France (21 contextual interviews, 6 WISEs and 6 public stakeholders), 29 in Denmark (13 contextual interviews, 12 WISEs and 4 public stakeholders) and 2 European networks. The qualitative data collected from these interviews represent 67 hours of interviews (including 20.5 hours of contextual interviews carried out with actors external to our cases). Case interviews covered senior management (President, CEO), mid-management (project leaders, floor managers), and staff (case workers) levels, as well as beneficiaries. The data gathered was analysed using the software NVivo. Our analysis was done following Miles & Huberman (1994), adopting a semi-structured coding grid in order to identify "*observable regularities*" (Kaplan, 1964). We defined most of our coding nodes before our field research (*ex-ante*), on the basis of our literature review, and out of the analytical framework presented above. Our semi-structured approach however allowed us

to adapt our grid to our findings as patterns emerged during our interviews and as we were parsing through the data.

#### **4. Results: Public value co-production environments and their influence on performance measurement: the role of strategic intents**

This section first presents our findings by introducing the environment in which WISEs operate and how it impacts the question of performance measurement in France and in Denmark. It will then present the strategic intents that we have identified when WISEs measure their performance and interact with public stakeholders on this issue.

##### **i. Public value co-production environments**

In France, our data shows that the Neo-Weberian State paradigm applies surprisingly well to the way WISEs operate with their public stakeholders to co-produce public value. Almost all of their operational vertex (i.e. the access to subsidies, to public contracts or to beneficiaries through referral channels) rests on the securing of a covenant. The covenant is the legal authorisation (it is part of the French labour code) that WISEs must get from a representative of the central authority (the Préfet) in order to operate. It is, in PVT terms, the only way for French WISE to obtain the legitimacy required to operate. It is strongly reminiscent of Neo-Weberian State's legalist and centralist features.

It also comes embedded with potent bureaucratic attributes, chief among which is a performance measurement system based on the number of successful beneficiaries (an output measure), which WISEs must report on in a detailed manner (across a set of target groups that can be defined by a plurality of local and national stakeholders). In our Public Value Theory analysis, this performance measurement appears strongly akin to a legitimacy device, since it is the main way for French WISEs to maintain their covenant (and therefore the legitimacy to operate).

However, this is somewhat mitigated by a degree of deliberation introduced at the local level, which can be tied to the Neo-Weberian State's modernising tenet. We indeed observe that WISEs' main stakeholder at the local level (the Direccte<sup>8</sup>)

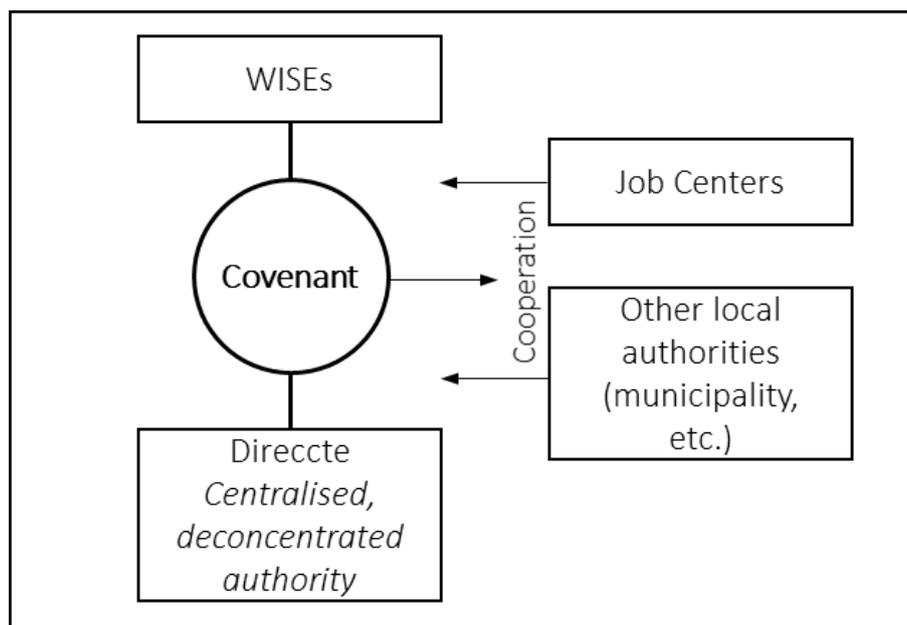
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<sup>8</sup> The DIRECCTE (Regional Directorates for Enterprise, Competition, Consumer Affairs, Labour and Employment) are single points of contact at regional level for businesses and socio-economic players (company directors, employees, social partners, job seekers, consumers). In France, they are the main contact for the WISEs for their agreements, their objectives and support for the jobs.

has implemented a growing number of processes aiming at favouring a dialogue with WISEs and creating opportunities to discuss their performance and the associated challenges. These exchanges are where WISEs are attempting to present their own performance models and where stakeholders can together try to agree on a common baseline for performance, beyond the output-based criteria laid out by the covenant.

For both our French cases, public stakeholders openly admit to WISEs that the covenant’s performance approach (the graduation rates) is ill-fitted and we observe conversations where both WISEs and the Direccte identify shared preferences as per how performance should be gauged with a strong emphasis on outcomes. It is during these conversations that both WISEs use features from their own performance model to advocate for a different approach (e.g. showing the personal trajectories of beneficiaries for France 2 or telling about investments to develop beneficiaries’ soft skills for France 1).

**Figure 1: A representation of the French WISEs’ environment**



Source: Dufour, 2019

In Denmark, we also find that the New Public Governance contributes to define the environment in which WISEs operate, opposing a stark contrast to the French picture. Danish municipalities enter into a commercial relationship with WISEs, through which the latter agrees to provide employment services for a fee. Doing so, WISEs expose themselves to competition, particularly from other public offerings. This initial configuration is not unreminiscent of quasi-markets (see e.g. Bartlett & Le Grand, 1993; Le Grand, 2009; Ranerup & Norén, 2015) and

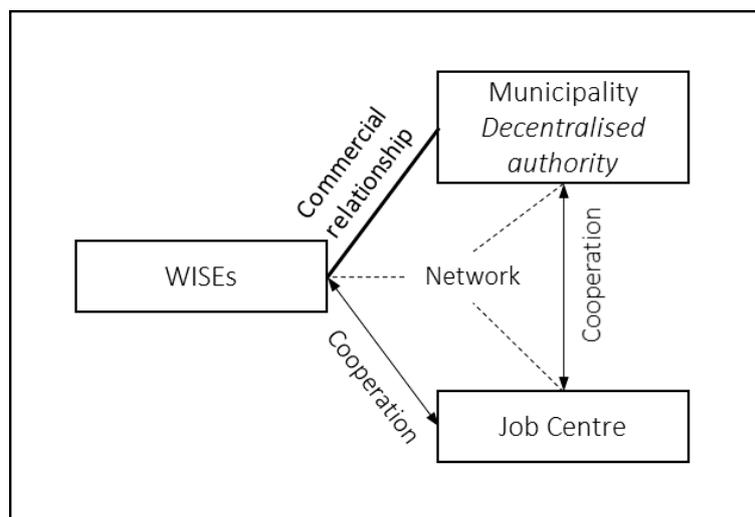
prompts WISEs to capitalise on all three vertices of the PVT triangle in order to demonstrate competitiveness: they have to use their operational resources efficiently in order to create acknowledged public value and leverage it to garner more legitimacy than competing services.

However, we observe that New Public Governance’s features of “*enduring inter-organisational relationships*” and “*relational capital and relational contracts*” (Osborne, 2006, 384) tend to mitigate the harshest aspects of market competition by nurturing a network between WISEs and their stakeholders, favouring exchanges and enabling deliberation. We call this configuration a “relationship-based quasi-market”.

This allows for shared preferences to emerge among stakeholders and is a way to make performance criteria focused towards outcome. These criteria can emerge along market mechanisms but are almost never formally defined and are often evolving throughout the programme that WISEs deliver. For instance, a Job Center and a WISE can agree to reassess an individual’s desirable outcome from securing a vocational education to the acquisition of soft skills as the WISE is getting acquainted with their beneficiary (we observed this in both our cases).

This makes the use of performance models considerably looser than in the French context. There is no national guideline for how performance should be assessed (such as the graduation rate in France) and WISEs are often tempted to come up with their own models, using it with the municipalities they collaborate with and in some instances envisioning to commercialise it to other municipalities. We also observed municipalities attempting to develop their own performance model.

**Figure 2: A representation of the Danish WISEs’ environment**

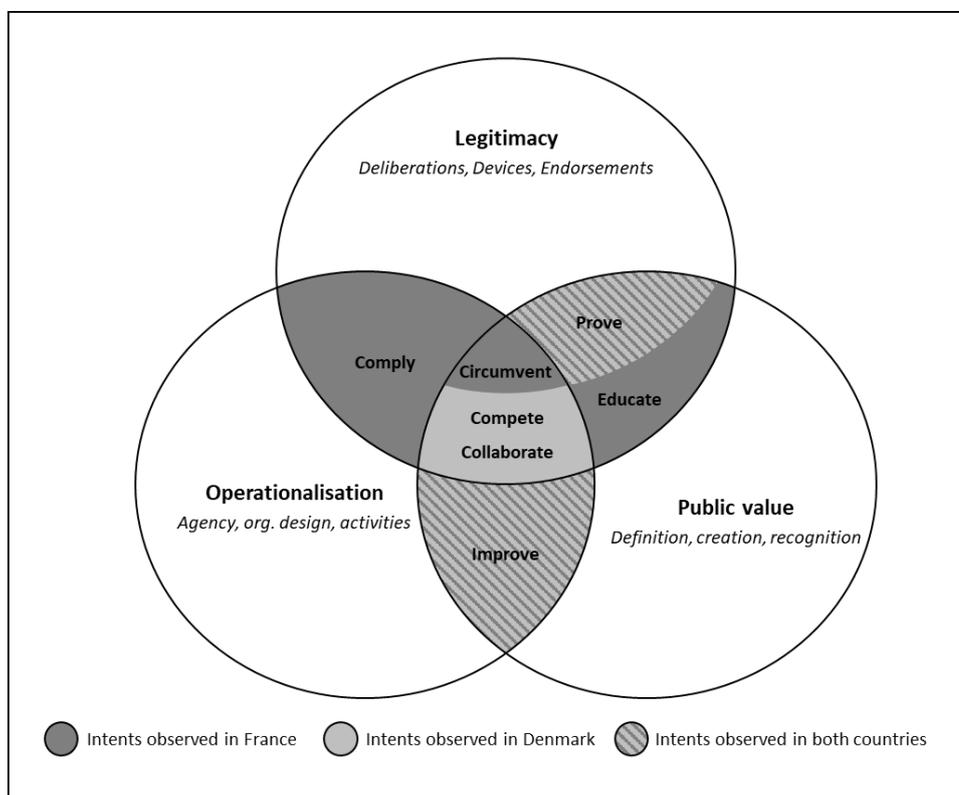


Source: Dufour, 2019

ii. The seven strategic intents for performance measurement

The influence of the public value coproduction environment on the way performance is measured appears clearly when identifying the strategic intents of WISEs that contribute to explain the motivations held by WISEs when measuring their performance as part of their strategic interactions with public stakeholders. Our empirical analysis led to the identification of seven strategic intents. Figure 3 uses the Public Value Theory triangle as a Venn diagram to show how these intents relate more specifically to some aspects of the theory. The first two (*Prove* and *Improve*) are observed both in France in Denmark.

**Figure 3: The seven strategic intents of performance measurement**



Source: Dufour, 2019.

**Prove:** this intent is at the interstice between the social value and the legitimacy vertices, as WISEs seek recognition and acknowledgment on the basis of the value that they generate for the society. With this intent, performance measurement is therefore perceived as a legitimacy device. In both countries, the “*prove*” intent appears rooted in large part in an environment where public budget tightening are creating an increasing demand for accountability from WISEs (see e.g. Borello & Barfety, 2018 for France or Hulgård & Andersen, 2015 for Denmark). We observed this for instance with France 2, where

the WISE uses its impact measurement to justify the subsidies it is granted, or with Denmark 2, where there is hope that impact measurement will help secure further public funding.

**Improve:** this intent is nested in the overlap between the operational and the public value vertices as it aims at bettering the creation of social value by making changes in the operational environment, using performance measurement as a form of management tool. Approaches concerned with improvement appear to seek a mix of quantitative measures and qualitative evaluations, with an incline towards the prominence of the former. We particularly see this intent translating into the use of relatively “actionable” metrics that can be tied very precisely to the activity (i.e. mostly outputs), such as the number of hours spent on training in France 1 or a graduation rate at Denmark 1.

The five other intents are observed in either France or Denmark. *Compete* and *Cooperate* are found in Denmark, while *Comply*, *Circumvent* and *Educate* are observed in France.

**Compete:** this intent is characterised by an equal footing on all three vertices of the PVT triangle, where WISEs have to effectively generate public value through relevant and appealing (to the customers and beneficiaries) activities and capitalise on these two aspects to maintain their legitimacy as work integration services providers. Danish WISEs see performance measurement as a particularly relevant way to differentiate themselves from competing public offerings. While cost-benefit analysis finds its proponents to justify expenses towards the public (e.g. at Denmark 2 interested in gauging the public savings its services allow), we however observe that qualitative-based approaches to document outcome are often favoured for this intent (e.g. at Denmark 2, where the full integration record is documented).

**Cooperate:** the use of performance measurement models also shows that there is a clear intent of establishing more robust cooperation frameworks with municipalities, going well beyond a simple compliance to a demand for performance metrics. Here the performance models offered by WISEs encompasses again all three vertices of the strategic triangle, aiming at a more streamlined cooperation with job centres, with a model that follows the structure and the requirements of the follow-up carried out by public case workers. In Denmark 1, this model is then used to set milestones (e.g. monthly) to interview beneficiaries, to provide progress reports to job centres and to tailor an integration path deliberated among stakeholders.

**Comply:** this intent corresponds to a pattern of disengaged compliance with the devices that are deployed by France’s centralised state to measure WISEs’

performance. It appears to be partly rooted in the WISEs' perception of facing an autocratic performance regime (Jany-Catrice, 2012), which we also tie to Gianfaldoni's idea of WISEs subordination to their public stakeholders (2018). In this configuration, the targets negotiated with the Direccte (often a set graduation rate) become a means to an end: WISEs demonstrate through imposed devices that they comply in order to maintain their legitimacy endorsements (the covenants), which in turn warrants the stability of their operational vertex (the access to beneficiaries and associated subsidies). We observed this detached attitude in both France 1 and France 2, where certain beneficiaries are enrolled primarily in order to "tick the boxes" of the administration.

**Circumvent:** we observed that WISEs attempt to circumvent the performance metrics that are asked for them to observe by developing their own performance model. We noticed this motive through the deliberation processes occurring during the dialogues with the Direccte, where WISEs get a chance to instate a conversation that can lead to the emergence of shared preferences and contribute to form alternative, local framings of performance that can compete with the one promoted by central authorities. The aim is still to maintain legitimacy, but rather through deliberation than through institutional instruments. For this reason, we place this strategy more towards the centre of the PVT triangle as WISEs must hold a fact-based negotiation about the nature of their activities and how they believe their public value should be recognised. This intent was met with a form of success for France 2, where the Direccte overtly sponsored the idea of discussing alternative indicators.

**Educate:** In one case study (France 1 and 2), we identified a clear pedagogical intent attached to the performance model developed by the WISE, concerned with educating all their stakeholders (not only in the public spheres, and including their own staff) about the kind of impact that their activities have on the lives of their beneficiaries. They would do this through case studies made available in a diversity of formats (video, pamphlets, etc.) and broadcast to a wide audience. The "educate" motive could be seen as close to the "prove" intent because of its emphasis on communication. However, we find "prove" to be much more about generating legitimacy whereas "educate" can also have a (marginal and indirect) component of public value creation (through the pedagogical nature of the generated knowledge). We therefore place the two intents at two different locations of our Venn diagram.

## **5. Discussion and conclusion: The use of strategic intents to understand performance measurement**

First, the use of PVT and the unearthing of the strategic intents we present above allow us to establish a clear link between the environment in which WISEs operate and the purpose they associate to impact measurement activities.

In France, the Neo-Weberian state turns WISEs into legitimacy-seeking organisations, where the bureaucratic nature of legitimacy devices threatens to alter the entrepreneurial essence of the organisation (the “comply” intent). This is however balanced by the innovations that WISEs manage to bring about in terms of impact measurement (the circumvent and educate intents), which happen to be conducive to deliberations and, in certain instances, can favour the emergence of shared preferences (e.g. the case of France 2, which develops a shared rejection of the centralised indicators with the Direccte).

In Denmark, WISEs see impact measurement as an opportunity to amplify existing mechanisms of simultaneous competition and cooperation, in full compliance with the “relationship-based quasi-market” we describe above. Both our case studies intend to use impact results to compete against public offerings (e.g. services offered by job centres), in essence showing how money is better spent. At the same time, impact measurement also seems to be an impetus for remedies to these competitive excesses. WISEs use their qualitative results to foster a tripartite conversation with their two clients: the beneficiaries and the municipality.

Contrary to our expectations (Dufour, 2018), social impact assessment does not transform the game of evaluation in public management. Quite the opposite, it seems to act as a catalyst for the features of a given public management framework. In France, it magnifies the excess of the Neo-Weberian State (bureaucracy, legalism, centralisation), and in Denmark the excess of competitiveness. We however observe that for the two countries, social impact assessment is a vector of increased deliberations (e.g. the circumvent intent in the French Neo-Weberian State and the cooperate intent in the Danish New Public Governance).

Second, the identification of strategic intents also represents a relevant contribution to the social impact assessment literature such as Grieco (2015); Maas & Liket (2011) or Olsen and Galimidi, (2008). The strategic intent can bring an additional attribute to the ones used in these publications to classify the models they present, narrowing down the purpose of using one method over another. More fundamentally, the use of Public Value Theory to reach our conclusions shows that the issue of WISE’s performance measurement can raise

specific questions when it is brought in a public context (e.g. the Danish conundrum of cooperating while competing with public partners and the French focus on maintaining institutional endorsements). These questions are left aside when considering performance measurement models from e.g. impact investors.

The use of Public Value Theory provides us with a powerful framework to articulate and map out these elements around issues that matter uniquely in a context of public value creation. It also shines a light on the distinctive set of problems that WISEs face when dealing with their public stakeholders (e.g. the institutional endorsement in France as a vector of legitimacy and the relationship-based quasi-market in Denmark), which is absent from the existing literature on social impact assessment and is not conveyed in most models that are promoted by current policy initiatives (see e.g. European Commission / GECES 2016; OECD 2015).

Furthermore, understanding the strategic intents and how they relate to different entries of Public Value Theory can provide a valuable charting tool when navigating the complex issues of work integration and trying to design and implement meaningful policies in conjunction with actors. As such, our work can be leveraged to propose performance models more prone to avoid the issues of performativity, which we raise succinctly in this paper. For instance, our work shows that policy design favouring a “*comply*” intent is prone to normative occurrences where WISEs simply aim at ticking the correct “*performance*” boxes without considering broader outcomes (e.g. the recruitment of Romani by France 1 or from selected city districts by France 2).

Lastly, we want to highlight a key theoretical contribution of our work, which is an original implementation of Public Value Theory. First, we expand on the traditional presentation of the strategic triangle, proposing nine entries to guide a more granular analysis of case data. Second, we use this augmented framework to investigate a topic not usually covered by Public Value Theory academics (WISEs and their performance) but which complies with the research agenda proposed by authors such as Hartley et al. (2017).

Our research comes with a few limitations. The use of public management models to structure our analysis, and the opposition that we suggest between Neo-Weberian State and New Public Governance, although supported by our data, lays ground for a potential oversimplification in our analysis. As we recall when introducing them, these models are never clear cut templates. And while we do our best to convey this precaution in our work, the “*layering*” of public reforms can render this process hazardous. Additional limitations could come

with the sampling of our qualitative cases, where we perceived that WISEs willing to take part in our research were large and well established (i.e. having resources to “*spare*” in research) and are not entirely representative of the broader WISE population in each country.

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