Manageable IT Projects
– The Owners' Choice

To Inga, Nicolai and Jacob

Ole Lachmann

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– The Owners' Choice

Design *Transformation of an idea or plan into a useful solution and a manageable project.*

Decree *Change in administrative procedures reflecting "the Minister's wishes."*

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Foreword

Two events inspired me to write the book.

First a rare opportunity to observe almost identical IT projects in six national postal services 1996-2000.

The differences in time and resources consumed by the six projects were surprising and clearly connected to the choice of what is here called “project model”.

Second, the appearance in 2001 of a report on IT projects in the Danish public sector (1) followed a year later by a conference on the same subject (2).

The report studied five projects widely published in the media as failures. The conference presented five successful projects.

All the successful projects turned out to be examples of one model for organising and managing projects. The less successful projects were examples of a different project model.

The book is a presentation and discussion of the two project models; how they operate and how the owners select them.

It is a practitioner’s observations and reflections based on 30 years of experience in project management in finance, transport and post.

The contents are in three parts:

- Part 1 is an introduction with a management review.
- Part 2 deals with organisation and management tools.
  This part explains how to best handle administrative projects.

- Part 3 deals with differences in the organisational cultures of projects and administrations.
  This part explains why administrators so often prefer the less efficient of the two project models.

The language is stripped of IT technical terms. Concepts are primarily taken from organisation and management; hopefully offering a common ground for owners and makers of administrative IT projects.

Two major cases are referred to throughout the book. Separated in time by more than 20 years, they illustrate the durability of project models and tools, in contrast to the short lifetimes of rapidly changing IT technologies.

The cases are Danish but they could have been found in any western country.

Most of the content was printed as a private and limited edition in August 2003. This edition is the result of suggestions from various parties for a public edition in the English language.

My sincere thank to a large number of colleagues, friends and students for their important input and questions to presentations of parts of the content.