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E-government and E-governance – Swedish Case Studies with Focus on the Local Level

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Abstract

The concepts of e-government and e-governance are used interchangeably in most research and there is no single definition of these terms. The objective of this licentiate thesis is to provide a deeper understanding of these concepts through empirical studies in a Swedish context. Further, it aims to analyse whether – and if so in what way – the implementation of local contact centres (CC) affect conditions for local planning. This is reported in three articles. In this thesis e-government is defined to as the use of tools and systems by governmental bodies made possible by ICT that affect the organization of public administration. E-governance is defined as the ICT-based networks of services and administration in New Public Management settings including both public and private actors. Case study methodology is used as research method, including interviews, focus group studies, document studies, and some participatory observations. The analysis is partly built on an inductive methodological approach, since this is a new, emerging field of innovative policy and practice. Based on a theoretical discussion of New Public Management in the digital era, findings show that there is a difference between the concepts of e-government and e-governance from the perspective of e-administration and e-services and that the terms should not be used interchangeably. The study indicates that there are examples of implementation that are referred to the e-governance setting. Further the study indicates that local municipal contact centres may be referred to not only as an implementation of e-government but as a combination of e-governance and e-government. The findings indicate that there is a potential for positive impact on the conditions for local planning through the implementation of municipal contact centres.

Keywords: governance, e-government, e-governance, New Public Management, municipal contact centres, planning, policy entrepreneurship, networks, implementation, translation, Sweden

1. Introduction

Since the late 1990s, we have witnessed an increasing interest in reforming the public sector by using information technology as a platform for communication with and providing services to citizens, a rapidly growing phenomenon which is internationally labelled “e-government” (Ho, 2002; Heeks, 2006; Worrall, 2011; Rabiaiah and Vandijck, 2011). In this e-government era, development and economic growth are considered central terms (e.g. Pierre, 2009a; von Bergmann-Winberg and Wihlborg (2011) as governments seek new ways to control costs and improve organizational efficiencies. It is argued that the public sector has transformed to a networked, open and flexible governance structure (Sorensen and Torfing, 2007; Torfing and Triantafillou, 2011). Different concepts have been used to characterize this era, such as the “information economy” (Heeks, 1999), the “knowledge economy” (Stough, 2006; Westlund, 2006), the “digital revolution” and “information age and network society” (Castells, 2010), or “digital-era governance” (DEG) (Dunleavy et al., 2005). E-government has over the past decade been considered an important managerial public reform (Rose and Grant, 2010; Lee et al., 2011). There are, however, different concepts used in this research field, also including e-governance (Lindblad-Gidlund et al., 2010). Policy translates values into manageable operations by integrating public and private structures and change. Several researchers emphasize that this emerging information society challenges the relations between public institutions and citizens as well as within the organizations in many ways which has led to change in the role, work and function of public administration in recent years (e.g. Bannister, 2001; Beynon-Davies and Williams; 2003 Heeks, 2006; Worrall, 2011). According to Ho (2002) organizational and socioeconomic barriers to transformation remain. Barriers such as the digital divide between social groups are hindering factors (Ho, 2002).

This e-government development is also often seen as a result of the emergence of an ideology in the public sector called New Public Management (NPM), although this reform was already implemented in the late 1980s (Bevir, et al., 2003; Norén Bretzer, 2010). There is a growing recognition that there are demands for improved access, transparency and flexibility in local and regional public administration in the e-government era which is often associated with this reform. However, previous research demonstrates that NPM has been challenged (Christensen and Lagreid, 2007) and that e-government mainly has been used as a tool to enforce the economic values of market-oriented reforms in public administration associated with NPM (Hood, 1991; Homburg and Bekkers, 2005; Heeks (2006); Cordella, 2007; Giritli Nygren, 2009a, Homburg, 2008; Hall, 2011). Heeks (2006) argues that e-government is hard to manage, difficult to implement, and often fails.

Sweden is one of the international leaders with regards to e-government (United Nations, 2012). The Swedish government has had a strong policy aspiration in this progress. In 1999 the Swedish government stated that their ambition was to become an internationally leading information society accessible to all, 24 hours every day and aiming to improve efficiency (Government Bill, 1999/2000). The Swedish government stressed that the needs of the users are to govern the development of e-government (Regeringskansliet, 2008). In 2010 a national policy was proposed under the title, “As simple as possible for as many as possible – from strategy to actions for e-administration” (SOU, 2010:20). The concept of e-government is

here translated as a part of the development activities of public administration that not only benefits from ICT, but also ensures that the development will lead to necessary organizational changes and training of employees within public administration. The key words of the policy are “simple, open, accessible, efficient and secure e-government” (SOU, 2010:9). Sweden today has a relatively high rate of Internet use (Findahl, 2011; 2012) which allows for and thus also demands improved and developed governmental services on-line. The European Union and all other levels of government in Europe form policies, which are translated at the various levels to manage the praxis of e-government. Implementation is the process of turning policy into practice. The top-down approach is one of the common theories (Buse et al., 2005). The concept of translation appears to be a growing approach to make meanings from implementation, as it includes and problematizes the local context as well as allowing for local actors’ interpretations of a policy (Herbert-Cheshire, 2003; Røvik, 2008).

In Sweden, public policies cannot be forced on regional and local public agencies, because public administration relies on the dual governing approach, with strong, constitutionally mandated regional and local autonomy. Instead, European and national policy statements become soft policy instruments in the regional and local context, and their implications rely on regional and local uptake in the specific setting, and on the competencies of the professionals in regional and local public administration.

Research focusing on implementing e-government initiatives is analysed by some studies (Lindblad-Gidlund et al., 2010). However, there is relatively little systematic research undertaken focusing on the local level (Deakins et al., 2010), and Swedish research shows that there is a need for deeper investigation of the consequences for the organizational structure of public agencies when local e-government initiatives are implemented. In a study of two Swedish municipalities with a strictly organizational perspective, the local e-government initiatives appear both as a model for administrative reform and an approach to reach out to communities and improve trust in governmental authorities and local government in particular (Jansson, 2011). Here the relationship between local values in public administration and e-government was in focus and showed the significance of the local institutional setting in defining the process and outcomes. Another case study showed that the prefix “e” as rhetoric has entered and settled within the organization but not yet merged within the whole municipality. Some parts of the concept of e-government have been adopted (Giritli Nygren, 2009a). In a case study of the implementation of a Swedish municipal contact centre, focusing on the social aspects of the public administrators, the results show that there were some negative attitudes from the public administrators at the back office of the municipality (Grundén, 2010). A related study – a case study of the implementation process of a new ICT tool for health information within the e-governance context in a Swedish county council – indicates that this new ICT tool contributes to blurring the line between public and private. Another indication is that introduction of new IT systems has wide importance for the organisation of public organisations (Andréasson, 2011).

1.2 Research objective

As mentioned earlier, there are different terms used in the e-government research field and there is no universally accepted definition of the concept of e-government (Yildiz, 2007). E-government and e-governance are often treated as synonymous in the literature and used interchangeably (Rossel and Finger, 2007; As-Saber and Hossein, 2008) (for a deeper discussion of these concepts; see section 2 below). This thesis includes studies of what may be referred to as e-government as well as e-governance settings. However, the three papers taken together indicate that the research would benefit from a deeper discussion of these concepts in order to achieve a deeper understanding.

The research objective of this thesis is to provide a deeper understanding of the concepts of e-government and e-governance through empirical studies in a Swedish context. The research questions are:

- What category do the cases being studied refer to? Do they refer to e-government or e-governance, or a combination of both? How can the dimensions of e-service and e-administration in the e-government and e-governance contexts be explained?
- Does implementation of e-government and e-governance affect conditions for local planning? If so, in what way?

The focus is at the local level due to the fact that some Swedish municipalities recently have implemented local e-government initiatives in the form of new organizational units called contact centres (CCs), although the study and analysis includes the implementation of a common ICT tool on a regional level. A short summary of the three articles included in the thesis is found in section 4.2.

A deeper discussion regarding related concepts and context for the study as well as theoretical framework and my definitions of the concepts e-government and e-governance will be presented further in the thesis with a description of what has occurred in Sweden. The thesis will then proceed with the research design, discussion, conclusions and a short section with directions for potential future research.

1.3 Delimitations

Although e-democracy tools are supposed to have the advantage of being easily accessible and flexible to individual demands in order to be used to increasingly engage the inhabitants, e-democracy is not in focus in this thesis. This means that the analysis is focused on e-administration and e-services. However, e-democracy, here defined as the relationships between the electorate and the elected, is discussed theoretically but not analysed empirically.

2. Contexts and concepts

Research in e-government can be seen as being at the crossroads between a number of other research domains (Heeks, 2007) and there is a lack of a guiding theory or unifying theoretical

framework for understanding the phenomenon (Grönlund, 2005). One likely explanation for this is the lack of a common definition of e-government. Garson (1999) claims that theories in e-government frameworks involve several theoretical areas such as the potential of using IT in decentralization and democratization processes, theories on two-way interaction of technology and the organizational/institutional environment, as well as theories of global integration. In this study, the research domain e-government overlaps to a great extent between governance, New Public Management, policy entrepreneurship and planning, but also relates to other research fields such as networks, translation and implementation domains. Before describing the transition from government to e-government and e-governance, a contextual description of the Swedish settings and municipal contact centre will follow.

2.1 Swedish settings

In Sweden there are 290 municipalities, and the municipalities in Sweden make up 70% of total public administration. They are considered to be the closest to the citizens in terms of public service as together with the regions and counties they have about 70% of citizen contacts (Regeringskansliet, 2008; SALAR, 2011). This implies that the development of e-government in Sweden is very much a municipal issue. Their condition may be changed by decisions of the Swedish Parliament, although the multilevel governance system with national, regional and local/municipal levels is meant to strengthen the local autonomy of Swedish municipalities. It is often stressed that Sweden has a long tradition of local autonomy (Gustafsson 1999; Peterson, 2001) although it is argued that there has been a development from government to governance (Montin, 2007). Research on municipalities today uses terms such as governance, network communities and network democracy to describe the trends in municipal development (Montin, 2007). Other typical keywords within municipalities in the 2000s are partnerships, networks and regionalization (Montin, 2007:15).

This thesis includes also case studies at the regional level. However, it is not within the autonomous county council level, but instead at a regional level consisting of two networks of municipal associations in two Swedish regions. The county councils are also called secondary municipalities and their main obligations concern health care and regional development, based on the strong constitutional local autonomy given to Swedish municipalities. In contrast to these dominant regional actors, municipalities in most regions have formed alternative regional organizations for collaboration and coordination. These alternative regional associations constitute legal entities wherein the municipalities can form collaborative arrangements and there are ongoing debates regarding their formalization. Both regional settings studied are such self-governing collaborations organized from the bottom up.

2.2. Municipal Contact Centre

The main function of a Swedish municipal CC is to supply services to citizens more efficiently, primarily by using the telephone and ICT (e.g. e-services) to handle citizen contacts (see Figure 1).

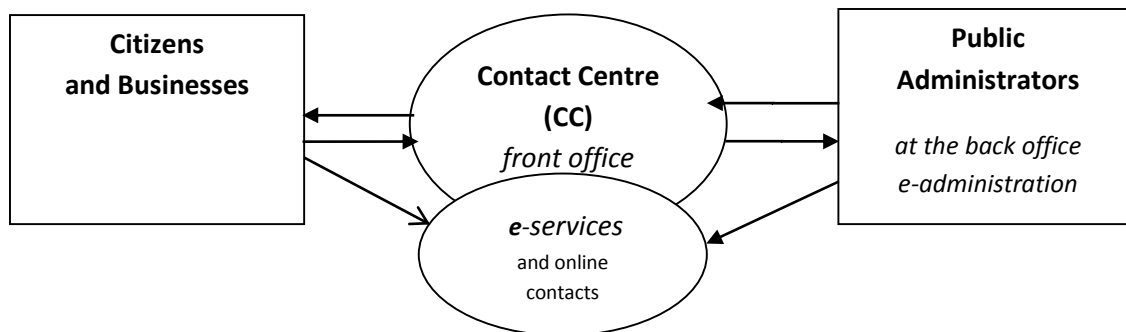


Figure 1: Conceptual model of a Contact Centre in relation to citizens and businesses, and public administrators at the back office

When CCs are implemented in municipalities, the work of the public administrators in the municipality is supposed to become more efficient, as they will not be disturbed by phone calls involving “simple questions” from citizens. The different organizational units (back office) are also supposed to cooperate in resolving citizens’ matters, in order to simplify the citizens’ contacts with the municipality. The CCs aim to contribute to increased citizen access to municipal services through multi-channel service like ICT in the form of telephone, Internet (municipal websites) and Web-based applications (e-services), and generally they are also open for personal visits. The municipal website is a main electronic resource for information to citizens and organizations within the municipality and the municipal e-services are published on the website. The CCs function as gateway to local government, as front offices with extended opening hours and staff with broad competencies to answer, supervise and re-direct citizens to the right section of public administration and/or on the Internet. They also have the competence to reach into back-office functions to resolve standard questions (Bernhard, 2011; 2013). All issues are registered in an information system for internal handling of matters. Employees at the CC also initiate issues, when needed, which are transferred to public administrators at the back office using the IT tool for handling of matters.

The introduction of a municipal contact centre – a new organizational form, new tasks and new technical practices – can be seen as a new phenomenon within the Swedish local e-government context. Public e-services as such may be seen as non-commercial innovations in each new context – even if the service itself existed before – as they are a new way of producing and organizing the service (Potnis, 2010). The term innovation is inherently ambiguous and has been defined differently by a number of research studies (Potnis, 2010). The concept of innovation has developed mainly around private business and is often measured in terms of the number of patents filed. For Schumpeter (1934), an innovation could be a new product, a new production method, a new technology, the opening of a new market or a new organization of existing production factors. The innovation could take many forms. But the premise was that there were one or more contractors who could push the idea forward. Entrepreneurship is thus a prerequisite for innovation, according to Schumpeter. Other scholars argue that innovation in public services is harder to define but may be linked to institutional renewal, new forms of governance, organisational improvements or to digitisation (Koch, and Hauknes, 2005; Cunningham and Karikasidou, 2009; Potnis, 2010).

Thus, I define new public e-services in this context as innovation. They may be referred to not only in the relationships between public administration and citizens but also to e-administration for the internal usage of ICT to provide reports and support for decision making.

3. From government to governance

Since the early 1990s, many researchers claim that a fundamental shift has taken place regarding governing, organization and methods of working in the society and that there is a movement of the regulation and implementation of policies from the central government to other levels and social spheres (e.g. Pierre and Peters, 2000). In certain cases it is argued that this is the result of formal policy decisions, while in other cases it is more the result of an organic and unpredictable development (Elias et al., 2011). A central governmental type of control refers to the formal institutional process operating at the national level to maintain public order and facilitate collective action. Ehn (2001) argues that a traditional hierarchical governing and control will only work in exceptional cases today. However, according to Pierre and Sundström, (2009) and Jordan et al. (2005), governance has not replaced government – rather, government provides the framework within which governance exists.

This change is recognized in the international research and then described as a transition from “government to governance” (Pierre and Peters, 2000; Cars and von Sydow 2001; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Kjaer, 2004; Sørensen and Torfing, 2007; Gjelstrup and Sørensen, 2007; Healey, 2007). The phrase “from government to governance” emphasizes, among other things, that government operations have become more comprehensive and differentiated, and that they connect in increasingly complex ways, not just with each other but also with actors and activities in the surrounding community or society (Sundström and Pierre, 2009).

von Bergmann-Winberg and Wihlborg (2011:5) define governance as steering in cooperation and the network governance that is characteristic of modern societies. Governance opens up new types of behaviour. According to Peters and Pierre, (2006:6) the idea of governance emphasises decentralized processes and networks and is a concept capturing the institutional change from “a government-centred model of governance to a market-based or network-based governance model”. This means that the steering takes place in the interaction of many different actors (Gjelstrup and Sørensen, 2007). Pierre and Sundström (2009) claim however, that the steering does not always take place within networks. From being a top-down activity where government agents have had a clear role and responsibility, a dependency relationship between the public and private has been strengthened. Thus there has been a shift from public bodies to private (Cars, 1992; von Sydow, 2004).

Researchers claim that there are several explanations, which may be seen as macro theories, for the development from government towards governance (Pierre and Sundström, 2009). The current times of increasing globalization, economization, delegation, professionalization, etc. has meant that the idea of hierarchical management ideals have increasingly been questioned. Alternative governance ideals have gained ground. The market, with its strong idea of competition, is one. Policy networks, which are based more on the idea of collaboration and

discussion, are another (Sundström, 2005).

Montin (2007) argues that neither the state nor the municipalities in Sweden have enough resources or expertise to realize their goals on their own. This is one explanation of the formation of networks and partnerships of various kinds within the internal and external public sector and the transition from government to governance (Montin, 2007).

Another theory explaining this development is that today's society is said to be so complex that no single actor manages to steer and coordinate on his own, and therefore governance models that bring together a large number of players on both sides of the border between private and public spheres are sought (Pierre and Sundström, 2009). At the same time trust in politicians is low, which has resulted in a growing interest in forms of governing that are built on acting participants from outside the sphere of politicians. Furthermore it is argued that the turn to a neo-liberal society in many countries, particularly in Great Britain and the U.S., has created a need to find solutions in order to give citizens the same public service as before but with reduced costs for the public sector (Pierre and Sundström, 2009).

The Swedish government emphasized that coordination and cooperation between different actors has become increasingly important and argued that globalization, increased international competition and rapid technological change were factors that contributed to the development from government to governance (Ehn, 2001). This was increasingly important for regions, and according to the government, every region needed better opportunities to stimulate its own economic and social, cultural and environmental conditions/characteristics. Such a development had to be developed in close cooperation among the region's various actors and must therefore primarily be based on the local and regional level (Regeringen, 1998). This changing regional policy, in addition to the economic crisis and unemployment, should partly be seen as a result of and frustration over a failure of the traditional governmental regional policy to achieve growth and a growing political and administrative power at the local and regional level.

EU structural funds have been particularly important for the impact of a partnership model in Sweden (Ehn, 2001). This is mainly because the cornerstone of the system of EU structural funds is work in partnership. Partnership is an arrangement where parties agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests (Cars et al., 2002). Ehn (2001) claims that there are roughly the following two sets of partnerships: partnerships that are primarily of economic, financial nature and other types of partnerships. A common name for the former type is Public-Private Partnership (PPP). PPPs are identified as a particular form of governance. From a public management perspective, Linder and Rosenau have defined public-private partnerships as "the formation of cooperative relationships between government, profit-making firms, and non-profit private organizations to fulfil a policy function" (Linder and Rosenau, 2000:5). Ehn (2001:35) argues that collaboration in the form of PPP is expressed in regular contract between government and one or more private firms. For example, in detailed planning and development projects public-private partnerships and market actors have an active role (Mäntysalo, Saglie and Cars 2011).

The policy networks are forming new alliances and structures to promote policy or organizational changes. Cooperation and coordination in networks are seen as the best way to achieve common interests (Börzel, 1998). The view of the Swedish government in this changing role of government, assumes that the state today is an institution well woven into the surrounding community. The state is often one actor among others, but one of the most important. An important task in this new role is to act in networks and to create venues where both public and private actors can meet (Ehn, 2001). Networks have become an important organizational form both for policy formation issues and implementation practices (Ehn, 2001; Sørensen and Torfing, 2007). According to Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) an important aspect is that network-based forms of governance do not have codified rules and regulations that shape or define participation and identify the exact domain or arenas of power, which is a difference from those associated with egalitarian, pluralist democratic rules and codes. The concept of a network is an example of a term that is interpreted, defined and used differently in different academic disciplines (Ehn, 2001). Some disciplines see the network as only horizontal, while others argue that all organizational structures are indeed a type of network, including vertical organizations (Westlund, 1999). For example, the analyses in the business literature describe various types of the verb “networking”, such as subcontracting, entrepreneurial networking, and network management or governance (Fuller-Love and Kilkenny, 2012). Ehn (2001) argues that there are many definitions of networks. A description, according to Ehn (2001), of what usually characterizes a network is that the networks either can be spontaneously or consciously created. They are characterized by the lack of a formal cohesive structure between the interacting actors, which is perhaps the most important difference compared with traditional organizations. Without a formal unifying structure they are tied together through networks of interdependency. Further, networks are considered non-hierarchies with mutually dependent actors and usually an open exit from a network. Actors participating in networks have to exchange resources and negotiate shared purposes (Ehn, 2001). The networks, according to this definition, are based on voluntary participation and a minimum of formal regulations.

3.1 New Public Management in the digital era

Hedlund and Montin (2009) conceptualize governance in the Swedish settings by gathering its features in five trends towards increased network-governance, one of which is increased elements of market-based governance within public institutions often called New Public Management (NPM). When introducing NPM there are also possibilities for increasing partnerships and collaboration in different forms and the implementation is also referred to as new modes for decision-making: partnerships in a networked governance context (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003). There is no single definition of NPM, although NPM is frequently described “as an umbrella term of management ideas from the business sector implemented in a public sector context” (Persson and Goldkuhl, 2010:52). According to Peters and Pierre (1998) NPM is an organizational theory while Barzelay (2001) refers to NPM as being both a practice and a theoretical conceptualisation rooted in different research fields with diverse directions. In this paradigm, cost effectiveness and applying market principles to enhance

efficiency become the dominant considerations for how the public sector is run (Pollit and Bouchaert, 2004). This leads towards a focus on more efficient public services (Giritli Nygren and Wiklund, 2010; Worrall, 2011; Hall, 2011) and a trend in which citizens get other roles as users and often will be viewed almost as customers of public services in a market rather than as citizens with rights and duties (see e.g. Cordella, 2007; Montin, 2007; Hedlund and Montin, 2009). According to Cordella (2007) this transformation of citizens into customers is problematic and he also criticizes NPM for using a reduced set of values when limiting the scope of the agenda to business-like measures of change. Gjelstrup and Sørensen (2007:22) describe NPM as market-based forms of organizations that enhance competition between producers of public services that contribute to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of public governance. To explain the need for increased citizen perspective by using the metaphor of customer orientation, in line with the New Public Management paradigm (Cordella, 2007), is to mix two perspectives and may therefore be criticised. There is a difference between being a customer and a citizen. Referring to Minzberg (1996), customers buy products but citizens have rights, and the priority for them is more than a customer in the government sector. Therefore, in this thesis the view of the citizen is based on citizens having rights and duties rather than being customers interested in obtaining as much service as possible for the lowest costs achievable.

3.2 Governance opens for policy entrepreneurship

The term entrepreneurship is considered to be multidimensional, although many of the general definitions of the term are centred on the creation or discovery of business opportunities and the gathering of resources to exploit them (Westlund, 2012). Consequently entrepreneurial behaviour has been studied by scholars in a range of contexts across a range of disciplines (Mintrom and Norman, 2009). Entrepreneurship within or connected to the public sector is defined by some as political or policy entrepreneurship (Buchanan and Badham 1999; Harris and Kinney, 2004; Pozen, 2008; Chatterjee and Lakshmanan, 2009). Mintrom (1997) defines policy entrepreneurship as entrepreneurship seeking to initiate dynamic policy change by attempting to win support for ideas for policy innovation. Policy entrepreneurs work in networks and they build networks (Mintrom, 1997). According to Kingdon (1984/1995), policy entrepreneurs are distinguished by their focus on policies – issues or structures – on a more aggregated level. They differ from traditional policymakers, since they act in governance settings rather than government structures. As network builders they are innovative and creative in finding new connections and opportunities. Thus, according to Kingdon (1984/1995) they are neither driven solely by economic profit-making nor individual career focus. When policy-making becomes characterized more by networked governance than strictly governmental steering (Peters, 2007), there are new interfaces between politics and markets, creating openings for policy entrepreneurs (von Bergmann-Winberg and Wihlborg, 2011). The networked governance of New Public Management is formed and developed by entrepreneurial actors in a networked governance context (von Bergmann-Winberg and Wihlborg, 2011). The analysis of policy entrepreneurs is contemporary and related to the shift from government focus to a governance perspective on public policy. However, the role of policy entrepreneurs is becoming more crucial the more policy-making becomes characterized by network governance (Wihlborg, 2000). Policy entrepreneurs can be

said to make governance work in practice. In other words, the more governance settings there are the more space there is for policy entrepreneurs. However, according to Oborn et al. (2011) there is still a need to clarify the definition of the term. Policy makers are most often considered actors promoting conditions for development and structures for change. According to Westlund (2012) political/policy entrepreneurs in the Swedish public sector – as Sweden has such a big public sector, especially on the local level – could exert a positive influence on local/regional development.

3.3 Governance related to planning

This thesis includes case studies at the local level as well as cases from the regional level. This relates to planning or “development” (Healey, 2004:46) in the society, as planning is usually perceived as a key tool for shaping the future society (Johansson and Khakee, 2009). The concept of planning implies a mode of governance articulated by policies (Healey, 2004) and within the field of urban and regional planning theory the focus is between “development” and a focus on “governance processes” (Healey, 2012). Sager (2009) argues that Sweden has been heavily influenced by a shift in political ideology and the emergence of NPM. One policy tool used in detailed planning and development projects is public-private partnerships (Mäntysalo et al., 2011). In the development and planning contexts in Sweden the planning laws require following the rules of inclusiveness and actors outside the government sphere must be involved in the decisions and implementation of decisions (Mäntysalo et al., 2011). This means that governance in a planning context refers to a concept of inclusive government. Recent literature within planning theories highlights the importance of involving different citizen groups in order to plan for a sustainable municipality (Sandercock, 1998; Friedmann, 2011). Healey (2012) states that the idea of planning has a normative dimension and the core of planning is to be seen as a form of collective action or governance and emphasizes e.g. the attribute of liveability for the many, not the few. This is similar to one of the goals of local e-government implementation, that is, to better serve the interests of citizens. It may be related to one of the traditional goals of planning – “serving the public interest”. For democratic reasons the citizens are supposed to take part in the planning within the municipality. Furthermore, Clifton and Díaz-Fuentes, (2010) argue that citizens’ perceptions are important because they constitute the infrastructure necessary for economic and social development.

3.3.1 Governance related to planning and social justice

The development – from government to governance – to be compared with the same development from e-government to e-governance, may in simplified terms be viewed as resulting in radically changing working conditions for the practice of the planners with e.g. more power to private actors and considerably more actors involved in collaboration and discussions. In this context I refer to Healey’s definition of planning as “managing our co-existence in shared space” (Healey, 1997:3) and what it means to manage our co-existence in municipalities with multiple publics to be planned for (Sandercock, 1998; 2000). This means that I ground my research in the normative theory of social justice-oriented planning practice and ethics by referring to Friedmann (2011) in how to communicate with different citizen groups in order to get a broad understanding of justice and that all groups of communities

within a municipality should have equal possibilities of receiving public service although there are differences within groups of citizens.

3.4 e-Government and e-Governance

Putting an “e” as a prefix to both the concepts of government and governance refers to governing with the help of electronic tools. The development in using ICT to provide e-services on the Internet and using other forms of information and communication technologies are basic components of e-government. However, an analysis and comparison of e-government definitions shows that the term e-government is defined in different ways and there is no universally accepted definition of the concept (Yildiz, 2007). According to Giritli Nygren, (2009b), the concept e-government is moving at the boundaries between the public sector, new technology and changed administrative forms (Giritli Nygren, 2009b). Heeks (2006:1) defines e-government as “all use of information technology in the public sector” (Heeks 2006:1).” Heeks’ definition is used here to encompass all use of digital information technology in the public sector, which means that it consists of technology, information and human beings who give the system purpose and meaning, and the work processes that are undertaken.

According to DeBenedictis et al. (2002), e-government can be defined as the use of primarily Internet-based information technology to enhance the accountability and performance of government activities. These activities include a government’s execution of activities, especially service delivery; access to government information and processes; and the participation of citizens and organizations in government. E-government is also expected to have a potential to reduce costs and improve services. Moreover, an important stimulus for e-government is to bridge the gap between government and citizens (Homburg, 2008). There is also a strong emphasis on internal administrative efficiency in the development of e-government (Homburg, 2008). In this perspective Grant and Chau (2006:80) identify three core activities of e-government:

- (1) to develop and deliver high quality, seamless, and integrated public services;
- (2) to enable effective constituent relationship management;
- and (3) to support the economic and social development goals of citizens, businesses, and civil society at local, state, national, and international levels.

E-government in this context is further referred to as the redesign of information relationships between the administration and the citizens, in order to create some sort of added value. Based on this discussion three core types of relationship in e-government among different actors can be identified (see Figure 2).

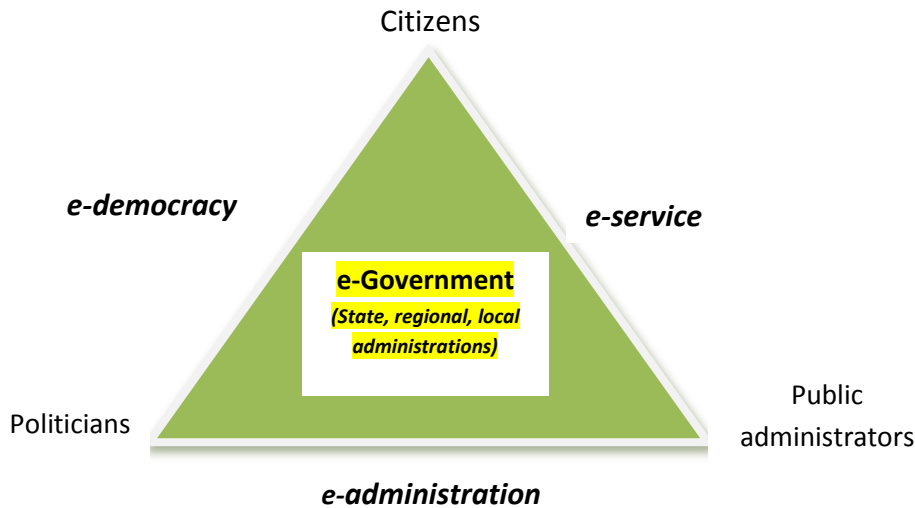


Figure 2: Three relationships in e-Government

Source: Adapted from Wihlborg (2005:7)

These are e-democracy (relationships between the electorate and the elected, i.e., the political interplay of citizens and elected politicians), e-services (the relationship between the public administration and citizens), and finally e-administration for the internal usage of information technology tools within governmental organizations to provide reports and support for decision making (Wihlborg, 2005). This relationship is in line with Grönlund (2005) and Giritli Nygren and Wiklund (2010), who argue that it is possible to distinguish these three dimensions of the term e-government. However, in many definitions e-democracy is excluded from e-government (Jansson, 2011). The main driving force behind e-services is often explained by efficiency, an ambition to decrease costs in public administration and making services more readily available and accessible. E-services are similar to e-commerce in many ways and the same consultants often work in both fields. The supply of private e-services can constantly be adapted to the demands expressed on the market. But public services, with or without the e-, lack such market information structures at the same time as they lack visible prices for the “consumer” (citizen). The supply and mix of public services are instead limited by the public resources available (taxes and fees), democratic decisions (prioritization) and legitimate implementation. Thus digital divides regarding public e-services are the result of divides other than that of economic resources. In Sweden, welfare services are usually provided locally according to the subsidiary principle. E-administration can either be used as an added layer on the ordinary administration or to bring about a radical restructuring of the administration (Vintar et al., 2003:133). This indicates that e-administration could facilitate new relationships within bureaucracy. The technical systems are given power in their relationships with others through the way they are designed and the accessibility of the information they provide. There is potential to make the administration more effective, since there are incentives to save on personnel resources in administration in favour of computerized resources.

E-government is often considered to build on principles of de-bureaucratization, decentralization and marketization which are quite similar to NPM (Cordella, 2007). Thus, by

providing a solution to what has been regarded as the inefficient, bureaucratic structures of public administration, e-government is considered to follow in the footsteps of NPM. According to Norén Bretzer, (2010) this is also the fact in Sweden as the goal of the Swedish e-government policy initiatives is not only to bring about increased IT use in the public sector but also to promote change in the administration and realization of NPM-type reforms.

As mentioned above both the terms e-government and e-governance are often treated as synonymous and used interchangeably in most of the literature (Rossel and Finger, 2007; As-Saber and Hossein, 2008). They provide definitions for e-government that encompass almost the same elements as those argued to be in the realm of e-governance. However, some researchers argue that there is a difference in the perspectives between the two (Saxena, 2005; Michel, 2005; Rossel and Finger, 2007; Collins, 2009). According to scholars such as Grönlund and Horan, (2005), Rossel and Finger, (2007), As-Saber and Hossein, (2008), Collins, (2009) and Jayashree and Martandan (2010), e-governance is a broader, more encompassing concept that involves not only public institutions but private ones as well. E-government is then more limited than e-governance and focuses on resource coordination and distribution in the public sector alone. Following Gjelstrup and Sørensen, (2007), this means that the steering takes place in the interaction of many different actors although with the help of ICT.

Following these discussions three key dimensions of relationship in e-governance among different actors may be identified (see Figure 3).

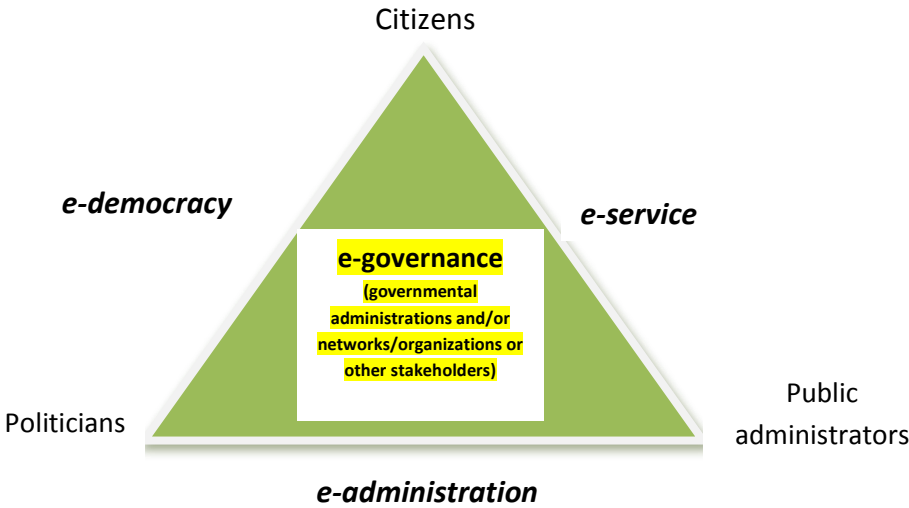


Figure 3: Three dimensions of e-governance
 Source: Adapted from Wihlborg, (2005:7)

In a very simplified form, but useful for this thesis, some characteristics of e-government and e-governance can be shown as in Figure 4:

	E-government	E-governance
Type of organization	Hierarchic	Network
Key actors	Formal policymakers	Policy entrepreneurs
The main view of the individual	Citizen and customer	Customer

Figure 4: Some characteristics of e-government and e-governance settings

E-government is here explained in terms of hierarchic organizations with formal policymakers as key actors and the individual as citizen and as customer. In e-governance settings, characterised by networked governance, the key actors here are policy entrepreneurs and the main view of the citizens is as customers. E-governance may then be viewed as different from e-government. The governance of NPM is formed and developed by entrepreneurial actors in the networked governance context (von Bergmann-Winberg and Wihlborg, 2011). This means that e-governance is related to theories of NPM as it takes place in NPM governance settings.

Researchers in e-government show different views of the individual citizen. Scholars, e.g. Bartot, Jaeger and McClure (2008), Axelsson, Melin and Lindgren (2009) and Alsaghier, Ford, Guyen and Hexel (2009) view the individual citizen more as user in e-government contexts. Michel (2005:216) stresses that e-government reflects “a vision of a relatively passive citizen-agent, who responds to his duties”. In this perspective, electronic voting is the most appropriate tool, she claims. In the e-governance settings, the citizen is considered an active agent of local democracy. The citizen is here considered as a source of ideas and initiatives that provides mutual enrichment (Michel, 2005). On the contrary, as explained earlier, it is argued by several scholars that there is a trend in viewing the citizen in e-government context as a customer which is in line with NPM, (Cordella, 2007; Montin, 2007; Hedlund and Montin, 2009; Hall, 2011; Rövik 2008). Thus, according to these scholars, the view of the citizen in both e-governance and e-government settings is more related to customers rather than citizens having rights and duties.

In terms of this, I suggest that we sort the concepts as follows in this thesis:

E-government refers to as *the governmental bodies’ use of tools and systems made possible by ICT that affect the organization of public administration. It aims to provide improved internal efficiency as well as better public services to citizens and businesses.*

E-governance refers to *the ICT-based networks of services and administration in NPM settings including both public and private actors.*

4. Research design

4.1 Case study methodology

Yanow (2003) claims that how the researcher acts in order to receive results is an important methodological issue. She argues that it is about how to come close to the studied object and let the context-specific social reality speak for itself. Case study methodologies are preferred when you want to come close to the studied object and study an actual phenomenon in its real context. Case study is used as a research method in social science disciplines like public administration, political science, business and marketing and evaluation (Yin, 2009). Case studies are built on direct observations of the phenomenon and on interviews with people who have experience in the actual case. The case study methodology's particular strength is that it allows handling of many different kinds of empirical data such as documents, artefacts, interviews and observations. According to Yin (2009) case studies are classified as a meta-methodology as when studying a phenomenon in its context different methods or techniques are required in order to get a various types of data. In comparison to quantitative studies, qualitative methods are an alternative way of looking at knowledge, meaning, reality and truth in social sciences. According to Kvale (1996), focus is on understanding important relationships in their specific context. Examples of what a case can be is a single organization or a single location (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The criteria for the CCs being chosen in this study was that the municipalities should be forerunners in the development of e-government and the implementing of a CC. They were also members of Sambruk¹.

When designing my study the choice of case study methodology is connected to the aim of the thesis. In the process of gathering empirical case data, I used a qualitative research method approach with interviews, focus group studies, document studies, and some participatory observations. Most of the studies were done during 2009 and 2010 with partly different perspectives due to their aims. Data were re-used in some of the papers. The interviews for studying the implementation of the Common Application e-service to the upper secondary schools in the regional municipal association of ÖSTSAM were done in 2006. The analysis is partly built on an inductive methodological approach, since this is a new, emerging field of innovative policy and practice. This means that theory may be developed on the basis of the cases (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gilham, 2000; Stake 1995, Yin, 2009; Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011). The theoretical framework of policy and technology translation allows inclusion of this broad process of change.

4.1.1. Document studies

Referring to Yin (2009) and the case study methodology's particular strength in handling many different kinds of empirical data, a number of public documents have been studied such as policy documents from regional and local levels, pilot report studies, revision reports and

¹ In 2009-2011 the author studied the implementation of CCs in Swedish municipalities in a project financed by Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems (Vinnova). Swedish Association of municipalities for joint development of E-services (Sambruk) was one of three parts. At the time of the study eighty municipalities were members of Sambruk although just a few of them had implemented CCs (however, more and more municipal CCs are now being implemented or are planned).

results of municipal customer surveys. These analyses served to give an overall understanding before doing the interviews. The documents have been used both as a background study of e-government practice and to get an overview of the background of the implementation of the e-government process. Some of the documents such as results of customer surveys were made by private organisations. When critically examining these documents I had in mind who had written them and for what purpose.

4.1.2 Interviews

One of the main sources of data related to the case study methodology consists of the qualitative research interview (Yin, 2009). Through the interview, construction of knowledge and negotiations of meanings take place between two partners about a topic of mutual interest (Kvale, 1996:42). The questions are more of an open character, e.g. the interviewer can ask key actors both about facts as well as about their opinions regarding these facts (Yin, 2009) and an interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose (Kvale, 1996; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). In some situations, the researcher may ask the respondents to formulate their own opinions and ideas about a particular phenomenon and then use this as a basis for the continued interview. This is in line with using qualitative interviews as they always include some degree of flexibility and thus I used semi-structured interviews as format² – one of mainly three different types of interview methods (Bryman 2008:436). The respondent may also suggest other people to be interviewed and also indicate where additional information, e.g. regarding a particular matter can be found (Yin, 2009). The interviews were planned in accordance with Kvale (1996:88) who highlights seven steps of an interview study – thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting – as these are important to bring up to achieve scientific quality.

4.1.3. Focus Groups

The focus group as a research method is a group interview that usually involves at least four interviewees and typically emphasizes a specific theme or topic that is explored in depth (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The focus group method is based on open-ended group discussions that examine a particular set of relevant issues with an emphasis on the questioning of a particular topic. In some respects they are expected to have characteristics that are similar to spontaneous and informal discussions (Marková et al., 2007). A focus group is effective if there is not much obtainable information concerning a specific phenomenon, so that the interpretations and meanings of the issue come into focus. Focus groups can be combined with other methods, such as interviews, direct observations and document studies (Wibeck, 2000), which are used in this thesis. The focus groups' discussions often take place in cafés, pubs or on the street, as stringent methodological criteria stress the importance of finding a suitable context for the discussion in order for the focus group to become as "natural" as possible (Kitzinger et al., 2004). In my case we met both in public places such as cafés but also at their regional offices and in schools.

4.1.4. Direct observations

A case study should take place in the natural setting of the "case" (Yin, 2009) and some direct

² The questionnaires area available in Swedish from the author

observations, e.g. field studies were made in my study. I observed the work of the public administrators at the contact centres in most of the municipalities although I spent more time observing the social setting and activity in one of the CCs. The observations gave a more direct and unmediated access to local practices and improved the coherency of the ambitions and organisation promoted by policies and described in the interviews (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011).

4.2 Paper summaries

Article 1 stresses that the emerging information society challenges relations between public agencies and citizens in many ways. E-services as such may be viewed as innovations as they are a new way of producing and organizing the service. For secure use and successful implementation of innovations in public contexts, the innovation must be considered legitimate and related to policies. The European Union and all other levels of government form policies, which are then translated among the various levels to manage the useful, secure praxis of e-services. Translation in organisational terms takes place across governmental levels in the multi-level governance chain and secondarily from technical to administrative settings. Since Swedish public administration relies on a dual steering approach, with strong, constitutionally mandated regional and local autonomy, such policies cannot be forced onto regional and local public agencies. Instead, European and national policy statements become soft policy instruments in the local context, and their implications rely on local uptake in the specific setting and on the competencies of the professionals in local public administration. The cases studied indicate that there have been openings for local construction of meanings promoting security and relating to citizens' trust in that context and the specific public e-services. The analysis indicates that the local entrepreneurs within public administration use the opportunities for local translation and adoption into the specific context in which they act. Further, the study indicates that the organizational settings of multi-level governance are greater constraints than new technology for implementation of public e-services. The reformulation and localization of general policies are realized through the praxis. The policy ideas are co-produced through networks of technology, human actors, organizations and governmental structures.

Article 2 demonstrates public e-services as technical innovations which enable organizational changes. The basic pre-conditions for e-services in the public sector differ in several respects from e-commerce in the private sector. When the "customers" are citizens, the distribution of, access to, and use of the services are not based on an open market distribution. Public e-services bring about innovative organizational changes for the new e-society and bridge formerly unseen digital divides. However, such changes demand innovative behaviour among people in professional roles which are usually strictly and formally defined. The conceptual e-governance model developed in this article will discuss the differences of e-services, e-administration and e-democracy. Following this model, an illustrative case of a public e-service on the Internet is presented and analyzed. The e-service extending the geographical reach of public organizations is the Common Application system for upper secondary schools

in two Swedish regions. In the analysis I found that the professionals in public administration acted as entrepreneurs and improved the intended benefits of the e-service.

In article 3, I analyze the implementation of municipal contact centres (CCs) which is a new phenomenon within the Swedish local e-government context which may be seen as a practical result of the Swedish e-government policy. The study includes four Swedish municipal contact centres (CC) with focus on internal organization as well as on citizens. Based on a theoretical discussion of e-government and NPM in the digital era, this study indicates that the implementation of CCs may be viewed as a result of the theories of NPM in the keywords of efficient public services, introducing market mechanisms and customer orientation. Critical aspects related to efficiency are, however, work approaches and competence development possibilities for the public administrators at the CCs, internal anchoring and a need for increased focus on the work of public administration at the back office. The study indicates that there are two main implications of CCs: they localize public services and they combine different services into a one-stop practice striving to provide a “holistic” approach to the individual citizen in her local context. The study implies that efficiency and citizen-centred approaches in this redesign of information relationships between the public administration and citizens to create some sort of added value are critical. The redesign appears e.g. in an ambition to bridge the silos of local public administration and shows that there is a need for a process organization as design of technology and organization are interrelated. Another result is that the registering of all issues from the citizens in a common database may in a sense be viewed as a citizen-centred aspect. This information source implies knowledge about the citizens’ needs for municipal service and can be used for planning purposes.

5. Discussion

Referring to my definitions of the concepts of e-government and e-governance the intention here is to contribute to a clarification of the concepts in order to get a better understanding of what may be referred to as e-government and e-governance respectively in relation to e-service and e-administration. What might the cases studied refer to? Do they refer to e-government or e-governance or are they a combination of both? Do the cases studied show an affect on the conditions for local planning?

5.1 How can the dimensions of e-service and e-administration in the e-government and e-governance contexts be explained?

Article 1 regards translation of policies regarding public e-service in the perspective of trust in secure public e-services. The analysis indicates that local entrepreneurs within public administration use the opportunities for local translation and adoption into the specific context in which they act. The reformulation and localization of general policies are realized through the praxis and the policy ideas are co-produced through networks of technology, human actors, organizations and governmental structures. The translation of European policies was supposed to filter down through nation states into regions and local authorities through the multi-level setting of contemporary European

policy making. This indicates an e-governance setting rather than referring to the e-government setting as the organizational settings of multi-level governance are greater constraints than new technology for implementing public e-services.

Referring to my definition of e-government, findings of this study (article 3 and part of article 1) indicate that the implementation of municipal contact centres may be seen as an example of local e-government. They are hierarchic organisations with formal policymakers as key actors and the implementation of more public e-services in the relationship between the public administration and the citizens refers to the e-government context. A municipal CC with a single telephone number to all municipal services and more public e-services (self-service and more specific information on the municipal websites) indicates increased accessibility for citizens to municipal service. Thus, e-service in an e-governmental context might be viewed as a positive result from the citizens' perspective. This is also indicated by the results of the citizen pilot study. However, a reflection is that in spite of all positive intentions this does not necessarily mean that there is an increased quality of the service. Findings indicate further that a simple touch-tone technique (a digital tool for telephones that may be referred to as a kind of e-service) is something that contributes to access to municipal services for citizens. The touch-tone technique can be problematic for certain groups, especially the elderly, and contribute to less access to the CC. A simplified touch-tone technology contributed to more citizens (for example those who are unwilling or unable to deal with touch-tone technology) being able to easily contact the CC and gain access to municipal services. A similar aspect of including more citizens by increasing their access to municipal services was the establishing of a special CC for issues regarding care of the elderly as shown in article 3. These groups of citizens did not have to use the touch-tone technology in order to contact specialists in elderly issues.

However, in the dimensions of e-services, it may be argued that the implementation of CCs may also refer to the e-governance settings. This is because public e-services are developed in an NPM governance setting. The public e-services are similar to e-commerce in many ways, and the same consultants often work in both fields (both public and private). Besides, it may also refer to the e-governance settings with the main view of the citizen as a "customer" (cf. Figure 4) which refers to the NPM governance settings (Cordella, 2007; Montin, 2007; Hedlund and Montin, 2009). Thus, the implementation of Swedish CCs may be referred to as an example of a mix of both e-government and e-governance.

As shown in article 3 the success of the implementation of the CCs very much depends on organisational settings within the CCs as well as of the e-administration and organization of the work within the back office of the municipalities. The results related to e-administration within e-government settings indicate that initially there were some technical problems at the CCs with the new internal ICT tool for registering all issues, and problems in correctly "labelling" the different issues. There was also an example of a respondent experiencing a certain lack of time to register all issues. The e-administration dimension must also be considered important, as the quality of the service to the citizens depends not only on whether

the CC personnel have a citizen-centric perspective and are service oriented and have enough knowledge to answer the issues. It also depends on the internal usage of information technology tools and the organization of the work and work processes within the back office of the municipalities. Moreover, findings related to e-administration within e-government settings indicate that the registering of all incoming issues at the CCs in a database from the citizens may be a potential tool in municipal planning, which is a result of article 3.

As can be read in article 2, the implementation of the Common Application e-service to the upper secondary schools is an example of regional cooperation and network governance. It is an example of ICT-based networks of services and administration including both public and private actors and thus can be understood as e-governance. The regional municipal associations (ÖSTSAM and Fyrbodalen) had no formal authority to make such a decision. All participating municipalities had to make a formal decision locally and sign a contract on networking and public procurement. The databases had two interfaces: the public one used for applicants (e-service) and the internal one (e-administrative) used by the admissions offices and the schools. The system functioned both as an e-service and as an e-administrative tool. The primary users of the e-service were students. After the first application and the confirmation of their choice, the system was used as a form of e-administration by the guidance counsellors and the professionals in the admissions office.

The guidance counsellors saw this e-service implementation as proof of cooperation and networking within the municipal associations in Fyrbodalen and ÖSTSAM. Their opinion was that previously there had been some difficulties and discussions about how and to what extent they should cooperate within this municipal regional association. The common public e-service implementation became a piece of evidence of the capacity to collaborate and the potential benefits.

Besides networking, the guidance counsellors in both regions functioned as entrepreneurs, promoting and using the common application systems. The emphasis was put on the demands expressed by the students and that this was in the students' interest. They found ways in the process to make the system work and build trust both in the e-service and the regional collaboration. According to the definition of policy entrepreneur by Mintrom (1997), the student counsellors were taking on the roles of implementing and integrating the technical application. This may be explained in terms that as a consequence of the e-governance context there was room for policy entrepreneurs. In these cases the guidance counsellors functioned as policy entrepreneurs. They promoted the application and adapted it to the organizational setting. As entrepreneurs, they had the ability to use the common application systems as an information system, an e-service and an e-administrative tool in order to fulfil the different aims of their duties during the academic year. They acted in a local context where policy-making takes place and integrated ideas in the specific phase of the process.

This complex e-service illustrated the conceptual discussion of e-governance and the entrepreneurial behaviour which occurs when such innovations are implemented in public administration. The systems were developed locally in the region based on Swedish local

autonomy, so even if they have exactly the same approach, the systems as well as their use differ between the two regions.

5.2 Does e-government and e-governance implementation affect conditions for local planning? If so, in what way?

As indicated above the registering of all incoming issues from the citizens, which were then documented in a new digital information system (database) for handling of issues becomes a new source of information that, if used properly, could be new knowledge used in municipal planning. Thus, I argue that in this respect the CC implementation affects conditions for local planning. There might be a potential for the municipalities to use this registered information as one (of several) sources for planning and to provide basis for decisions e.g. when municipalities are creating visions of their cities in order to make a “Good Municipality” or a “Just Municipality” (Friedmann, 2011). This information may be compared with a catalyst in respect of being a trigger or a promoter. It may also be viewed as approaching a citizen-centred approach and a bottom-up perspective which may contribute to citizen impact in municipal management development issues and planning. From the Swedish perspective it might be argued that within the development that we have had in recent decades with NPM and the digital era, there are needs for improved access, transparency and flexibility in local and regional public administration. For democratic reasons the government’s policy is that the citizens – being a heterogeneous group of actors – are supposed to take part in the planning within the municipality. But it is a challenge to develop forms of meaningful dialogue with different stakeholders and multiple publics as part of the move towards local citizen-centred e-government. This may also be viewed as having an impact on the e-governance planning contexts due to the obligation by Swedish planning laws to follow the rules of inclusiveness and involve actors outside the governments sphere in the decisions and implementation of decisions (Mäntysalo et al., 2011).

The implementation of more public e-services in the municipalities should be considered in the light of the digital divide. It is not only the quantity of e-services that matters. It is still a problem that a number of public e-services are used to a low extent (OECD, 2009). Even if one can argue that the lack of access to municipal service was bridged by the increased possibilities to make personal visits to the CCs, I see the relevance to refer to Sandercock (2000) in her arguing of the need to plan for “multiple publics” for e-government as the ambition is to better meet the needs and capabilities of today’s (on-line) citizens and improve the delivery of public services. A parallel to Friedmann, (1992; 2011:7) may be drawn as he describes the concept of poverty not only as citizens being income-poor, but also refers to poverty as a lack of access to a number of identifiable bases of social power, e.g. information and knowledge skills.

6. Conclusion

The contribution of this thesis is a deeper understanding of the concepts of e-government and e-governance through empirical studies in a Swedish context in the perspective of e-services and e-administration. It is also a contribution to the understanding of how the implementation of local CCs affects conditions for local planning.

A first conclusion is that this Swedish case study indicates a difference between the concepts of e-government and e-governance and then disputes the use of the concepts interchangeably as shown in earlier research (Rossel and Finger, 2007; As Saber and Hossein, 2008).

Second, the case studied on the local level indicates a mix of both e-government and e-governance, according to the definitions of the concepts in this thesis. The introduction of a municipal contact centre may on the one hand refer to the e-government context; this consists of local policymakers as the key actors and the municipalities as hierarchic organisations. On the other hand, it may be argued that the implementation may also refer to the e-governance settings, arguing that public e-services are being developed in NMP settings including both private and public actors. Thus the implementation of Swedish CCs may refer not only to an e-government setting but also to a combination of both e-government and e-governance. With this definition of the concepts, the result contrasts the earlier definition of the implementation of CCs (Bernhard, 2013) where the implementation refers only to the e-government context. This result may be seen as an example of how e-government and e-governance in the respect of public e-services are closely intertwined in the Swedish local context and that it is a challenge to define the concepts in order to have universal application.

Third, the implementation of the Common Application e-service to the upper secondary schools in two regions may be understood as an example of e-governance as it refers to ICT-based networks of services and administration in NPM governance settings including both public and private actors. Here e-governance promotes entrepreneurial behaviour in public administration. It illustrates and makes sense of the many complexities involved when implementing a public e-service in a regional context where many actors and users are concerned and different values compete. It also indicates that the policy entrepreneur has to consider the different local conditions within the specific part of the society when implementing successful e-governance. This is in line with earlier research that claims that for secure use and successful implementation of renewals in public contexts, the implementation must be considered legitimate and related to policies (Stoker, 1998).

Further, results in this thesis indicate that policy entrepreneurs in the Swedish public sector have had a positive influence on local/regional development, which is in line with earlier research (Westlund, 2012).

The findings indicate that there is a potential for positive impact on the conditions for local planning through the implementation of municipal contact centres. Implementing municipal contact centres provides a new, complementary source of information for municipal planning

as all issues from citizens were registered. This is in line with earlier research that states that citizens' perceptions are important because the provision of fundamental services is at stake and because they represent necessary infrastructure for economic and social development (Clifton and Díaz-Fuentes, 2010). This highlights the importance for local planners of having a more in-depth view of these data sources that can help reveal valuable knowledge, patterns and needs of the citizens within their municipality in a way that is not overwhelming. It may improve decisions on how to allocate limited resources, improve quality of services and increase awareness of the citizens within their respective municipality. Furthermore it may strengthen citizens' power in shaping future municipal planning. This relates to citizen-centric planning and a source for planning and a basis for decision-making.

A final reflection is that the research would benefit further case studies and maybe also a development of the research methods including not only qualitative case study but also a quantitative study, as there is an ongoing development in implementing more municipal CCs.

6.1 Potential further research directions

The findings indicate that there may be a possible source for planning and a basis for decision-making as well as for citizen impact on the conditions for local planning through the implementation of municipal contact centres. A potential further research direction would then be to further study how the implementation of municipal CCs affects local planning in terms of better serving the interest of the citizens. How may the implementation of CCs contribute to processes used in deliberative attempts to influence spatial planning? This could lead to a possibility for planners to have valuable input from the citizens on decisions e.g. regarding the outdoor environment. This refers to the concepts and norms of Swedish welfare and democracy as well as to so-called neo-liberal development and governance development within the concept of spatial planning (Hillier, 2008) that includes urban and regional planning.

Based on a time-geographical approach, I see the relevance of a potential research direction in arguing that local municipal contact centres could be a tool that improves local contextualisation contributing to potentially citizen impact in the local planning. In what way can local CCs promote a slower approach towards sustainable local development processes both in local public administration and citizen's everyday life?

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