



Civil society and public dialogue in Värmland Region

Idéburna och offentligt dialog i Värmland

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Abstract

The thesis looks at the process of setting up a platform between civil society and public sector where the intention is for stakeholders to have a dialogue around different solutions to societal issues. The second component involves the legal arrangement where government uses public procurement to buy a service from a civil society organisation. The thesis explores what motivates this process and what some of the consequences are for the stakeholders. The discussion takes its stance in the conflict between civil society as a voice bearer of specific societal issues or as a service deliverer towards government. It also looks at whom partake in this process and whom gets left out. The thesis looks at the policy documents at a national and regional level and as well compare two regions with one being considered the “best practice” region. Informants from the Värmland region were interviewed and their impressions were compared to the policy documents and some keywords. The thesis concluded that the stakeholders partaking in general are positive towards the process but that there are institutional setups that could be better dealt with to handle issues of power imbalances and exclusion.

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Introduction

This thesis could be placed within the field of political geography which tends to look at the struggle for power and whom exercise control over people and territories. It also studies where power originates from and how it relates to other dimension of human life such as cultural and economic dimensions. As a field, it saw only one main origin and singular source of political power, the state in its different shapes. It has focused less on defining the political power. This is now changing and broadening and in some sense, it might be driven by reality and how societies within territories are changing. The focus has, as well, more and more moved from a national to a regional level, as the arena where dynamic processes occur (Agnew et al. 2012).

In addition, the study is as well done within the “backdrop” of regional development studies which is in itself is highly political. In regional development much, emphasis is put on economic growth and the decentralization of power. All this is based on the notion that regional, local stakeholders and actors are better at defining which paths to consider in their own development. There is as well another development one which seeks to increase the participation of different stakeholders in the governance of regions. This is as well based on the idea that the private sector not just in the form of private companies but also in the form of civil society should play an increased role in how regions develop. This is supported by the concept of quadruple helix model which emphasises the importance of civil society in the development models being the corner of a four-legged approach of public institutions, private sector, knowledge centres and civil society.

This thesis takes an interest in these stakeholders by mostly focusing on civil society and the public sector and their role in the governance of territories. Governance described as the process through which public and private actions and resources are coordinated and given a common direction and meaning. The means and functions of these stakeholders might sometimes be very clear but sometimes indistinct. Where then does different stakeholders power lay and through who’s mandate?

Stakeholders are entities who have something to gain or lose through the outcomes of a policy shaping, planning process or project and the governance of a region. It could be interest groups with a powerful bearing on the outcomes of political processes. There is a need to as well understand the key inter-related issues to explain how different policies and stakeholders interact as they do. This is the nature of power itself; the normative, moral or ethical politics of policy-making; and the operation of power in the policy process, civil society and private market plays an increasing role in this (Juntti, 2009).

To analyse governance is to look at “the means of calculation, both qualitative and quantitative, the type of governing authority or agency, the forms of knowledge, techniques and other means employed, the entity to be governed and how it is conceived, the ends sought and the outcomes and consequences” (Crampton et al, 2007)

This then as well involves the stakeholders that in different ways partake in governance. There are several immediate implications of this such as “to govern means to order people about or to move things around” and “government here involves some sort of attempt to deliberate on and to direct human conduct. From the perspective of those who seek to govern, human conduct is conceived as something that can be regulated, controlled, shaped and turned to specific ends” (Dean, 2010- 28). This is given new meaning in the meta governance model. In this “dictating of human conduct” one can find layers of networks both formal and

informal where the interaction takes place and platforms that are well established and some that are vaguer or even informal.

Governance is multiscale both international, national, regional and local level but also at more difficult to define levels and its mostly there where the connection between democracy and especially representative democracy becomes more elusive. One of the stakeholders that are increasing their significance in governance is civil society organisations. This thesis studies its place and role in the networks and forms of governance.

The thesis will be mostly descriptive following a process from governance down to civil - public partnership as a form of formalising a governmental engagement with civil society and what types of implications it might have. As an empirical case “the Agreement” in Värmland and its offspring will be analysed as where it stands now. Meta governance being the means to structure networks will be an important theoretical approach.

Research motives and objective of the thesis

The thesis takes its interest with the stakeholders within the meta governance structures and the process of aligning and committing between civil society and public sector. The thesis will describe how the process looks like and what impacts it has on the stakeholders.

My research focus is within a process within representative democracy but also with governance and how it operates since the process that I am looking at might be reflecting what is part of the democratic responsiveness from the government to a societal challenge. Well-developed welfare states that today are struggling in some ways to maintain quality and scope of social services such as Sweden, reasons being an aging population high levels of urbanization the restructuring of their industrial base sectors and pressures on the redistributive systems. This means that they are in need of finding new solutions to maintain their social contract with its citizens. There is as well the idea that civil society should play a greater role in shaping the future of regions maybe legitimating their new role as driver of development.

There are different ways of looking at this, one is that when a government opens up and accommodates more stakeholders and when it engages with the civil society in this way that could mean a more responsive governance and open society. There are elements of direct democracy within the field of the civil society engagements with government but also the social economy can as well reduce the distances between stakeholders and looking at new ways of engagement where the emphasis is not directly on commercial interest.

This could as well be seen as a political response to the persistent critique of both welfare states and neoliberalism. While the neoliberal market ideologies have accused the state of being excessively authoritarian and costly, the neoliberal marketization strategy has failed to alleviate the burden for the state since the creation of well-functioning quasi-markets requires a time-consuming and resource-demanding regulation which is in many ways where Sweden and the debate stand now (Sorensen et al. 2009).

There is also the aspect of the government sharing responsibility or even relieving itself from responsibilities. When it puts out functions that normally would be under the welfare states domain it could be a way of saying that government do not have the capacity to solve these challenges, the end of politics in governance where a neoliberal hegemony exists diminishing government in the long run to a “night watcher” state.

The process and its drivers can be examined from a Gramscian perspective, by reference to the notion of class alliances. It refers to the historical unity, not of structures but of social

forces. A hegemonic bloc is a durable alliance of class forces organized by a class which has proved itself capable of exercising political, intellectual, and moral leadership over the dominant classes and the popular masses alike. Gramsci notes that the historical unity of the ruling classes results from the organic relations between State or political society and civil. Though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, and be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity' (1971: 161) Therefore, one view could as well be that this hegemony of social class and interest is just changing mode of operation and looking at new alliances through meta governance structures. Gramsci argues that 'every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level or type which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes' (1971: 258).

The main aim of the study is to trace the process of structuring the relationship between regional governance and civil society in Värmland Region. This is interesting because of the processes stated in previous paragraph it is an indicative of what this new governance models look like in practice and if or how it might impact democracy, citizen influence in the region, the region as development driver, interaction there in between.

Delimiting the problem

The research focus is with civil society and regional government structures and the stakeholders that in different ways have a relationship to government at local and regional level. The research should identify the processes involved and the stakeholders in this meta system of governance.

One of the approaches to formalise a relation to civil society is through the "civil society and public partnerships" this entails establishing a contract normally between a CBO (Community Based Organization) to carry out a service and exempting it from normal public procurement procedures. This is done basically so that the CBO can see durability in its engagement. Another approach and outcome are to establish a platform for dialogue between civil society and the public sector to be able to identify each other, understand what they do and where they could cooperate.

The purpose of this thesis is to study civil society and public partnerships as a new form of governance and see if it as a model could solve some of the issues around meta governance in term of capabilities from the side of the actor, transparency towards the public and accessibility for end users. It takes its focus in the process itself as indicative of what elements could be found.

Since this process is fairly new in Sweden and at a regional level there are limited data collected and most of the questions this thesis poses are of a nature where perceptions are of more importance than hard facts this than can be difficult to verify. Therefore, the thesis delimitation will be to a policy level and a perceptive level and will not try to quantify any data or take in underlying processes within governance networks or larger societal circumstances.

Questions that this thesis seeks to answer by studying the process are:

1. How does the engagement with government impact the role of civil society as opinion builders, are their voices stronger or do they conform?
2. Who gets left out in this process and dialogue between government and civil society (Accessibility)?

3. Does the process of establishing a platform increase transparency and responsiveness within governance networks and if so, in what ways?
4. Do the organisations (both public and private) gain influence?
5. Is there a process of knowledge sharing - mutual learning (capabilities)?

Definitions

The keywords in this thesis will be:

- *Democracy* defined as a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members
- *(meta) governance*, defined as governance on a higher level of abstraction – governing governance
- *Civil society*, defined as society considered as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity
- *Governance*, defined as the way that organizations or countries and regions are managed at the highest level, and the systems for doing this
- *Government*, defined as the group of people with the authority to govern a country, state or region; a ministry in office
- *Policy and planning* defined as, a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organization or individual and the process of making plans for something.
- *Regional development*, defined as an event or process constituting a new stage in a region economic, social, environmental or cultural path
- *Social economy* defined as organisations and companies operating within in the field of a societal need and not with the main purpose of profit.

This process and its concepts will be filtered with the aim of identifying transparency – meaning that the process is open to the public's scrutiny, *capability* meaning that organisations on both sides gain knowledge and power to influence, *responsiveness* entailing that organisations take action based on the will of their clients and *accessibility* meaning that organisations are available to everyone.

Outline of thesis

The thesis starts by giving a brief introduction and background to why the author finds the topic interesting and researchable. It defines the keywords and possess some of the main question that the thesis seeks to answer. It as well tries to paint a backdrop to the fields that the thesis will touch upon. It motivates and explains the purpose by posing a main aim for the thesis. The first chapters as well try to delimit the areas that will be studied. The methodology chapters describe the tools used to collect data and some of the challenges that possess while doing descriptive research. The selection criteria for which material was used and whom was interviewed is as well motivated. The thesis then moves on to the theoretical approaches taken since the field touches on many different theoretical environments it needs to give brief descriptions on very diverse fields such as power, governance, place importance, regional development, modes of operationality, civil society, social economy and connecting theories. In the empiric section, the findings are presented through the various policy documents that governs this process it starts of at national level then briefly giving the example of Västra Götaland region which is considered best practice in Sweden in terms of this process. It then presents the process in Värmland as where it is standing now. The information's responses are recorded filtered through the keywords to trace the impact has had on their activities and structures. Next chapter seeks to analyse the findings through the questions and theoretical background. Finally, the thesis ends with a chapter giving some conclusions and more importantly posing some new questions to answer.

Background to civil society and public dialogue

This thesis will discuss new governance models often described within the concept of meta governance and more specifically, the involvement of civil society through public partnerships and dialogues. It involves looking at the drivers and institutional landscapes of territorial governance and the social contexts that grapples with the democratic challenges posted by engagements and negotiations at the contested frontier between legitimate democratic decision making and public involvement within advanced capitalist societies and progressive planning and how to anchor this in the governance of territories. The form of territory that it will be looking at are regions and the institutional landscape will be county council and their interactions with civil society.

Regions role, function and responsibilities

The spatial setting for this thesis is the region both in term of administrative unit and an “idea” referring to the process of establishing new functions and roles for the region.

An important role and component of government at the regional level is their mandate to drive developmental issues. This, of course has an impact on the governance models they engage in and who they engage with. Causing an effect on their roles and functions. Regional governance, in this capability, involves the enduring yet adaptable rules, norms and organization of societal functioning at the regional scale, and manifests not just as formal government arrangements; but can be conceptualized more broadly as formal and informal processes of social interaction, negotiation, and contestation across the public, private, and voluntary spheres. It may manifest in the form of the local regime, the local government, the local media, cultural norms such as patron client relationships between government and industry, and the relationships between the civil society actors (Morrison 2014; Ricart and Clarimont 2016).

One of the reasons for regions to engage the stakeholders is that it is believed to create what is called thick governance networks and arrangements which are associated with more resilient regions. In a thick system where responsibilities are very dispersed, new collaborative processes and organizations such as intergovernmental committees or specialized agencies are often set up to steer the system. Vertical coordination networks at the regional level, and cultivation of regionally aware and engaged agency offices and personnel (Brown et al 2005). Non-state stakeholders such as private entrepreneur, or a regional community group or activist group can also play the role of governor. The tools of governance therefore range from the formal strategies commissioned by the central state, to the local practical strategies exerted by regional and local stakeholders, and the hidden strategies often exerted by private stakeholders (Morrison 2016; Sørensen 2006).

Civil society driven change

As emphasised in the previous section the regions have been put in charge of local social and economic development efforts. In this effort, civil society has become more important as a development partner. In this there are different reasons for engaging the civil society and different models where their role is defined. In European union, many of the regions try to identify what their strongpoints are and use these strongpoints to re-invent how and what they do in the region this is often denoted to as innovation. One of the more prominent models of modern governance is the helices model. This model tries to achieve the new economy which is knowledge based and feeds off innovation. The assumption then is that, for innovation to occur there needs to be a strong collaboration between government, private businesses, educational institutions and civil society. This is referred to as the quadruple helix

development model. Below is an attempt to define the forth leg of this approach which is civil society.

“A collective entity formed by individual users living on a territory and interacting with university, industry and government as customers, citizens or members of a community to contribute to build innovation paths which are able to promote the socioeconomic growth of the territory. Civil society demands that innovations are made according to its needs, releases feedback on products and services (and on their innovation value), and provides its own contribution in terms of knowledge, inventiveness and creativity. Civil society is constantly interacting with the other three helices because of enabling technologies for information and communication which make social inclusion possible in real time and at low cost” (Cavallini et al. 2016)

This approach is, of course, very much based on achieving economic growth. There are however movements towards strengthening the social contract in forms of working closer together, civil society and regional, local government. Much of this is done through strategic plans and partnerships which help shape policies. This then means that governments now engage more frequently with civil society and draws on their knowledge. Governance interventions in a region are therefore, no longer only about consolidations of local organizations, or reconfiguration of the boundaries of administrative responsibility, or zones and lines on a map. They are equally about brokering, facilitating and resolving the concerns and ideas together with the stakeholders. To achieve levels of cohesion and a level playing field where communication and exchange of ideas can occur. Governance can, therefore, be understood in a blended sense as both sets of formal and organizational rules and sets of informal rules/norms/values ((Peters 2012; Zirul et al. 2015).

Civil society and public partnerships is a partnership between a municipality, region etc. and a non-profit organization for activities that do not exist in a market. In Sweden, this is a process sanctioned by government and the legal form has been identified. In 2008, the government and SKL (Svenska Kommuner och Landsting) which is the country organization for municipalities and regions, signed an agreement to engage with civil society and as well to encourage and support it. The Swedish government has also changed its view and legal framework in some ways where civil society and civic organizations can be looked upon as service providers. In the following chapter, the thesis will consider this form of engagement and more specifically the one that was signed in Värmland. The process will be analysed based on the following criteria: transparency, capability, responsiveness and accessibility. One of the key aspects of this is the formalization through platforms, agreements, compacts -, signing up to principles, and contracts between the public and civil society.

Historical comparison

Support to civil society has been an important part of governments policies for the past 80 years or so however, in the 1960s they started giving a comprehensive economic support to popular movements, especially their youth organizations. It was considered of great value to society and the state with free and independent organizations. On the other hand, there was no support on the organization's own terms. No proposal aimed at supporting their particularities and ideological profiles, whereas the main aim concerned was the state benefit, and not the association benefit. Contributions increased sharply, even though, they were governed at the same time (Svedberg et al.2006).

Methodology

Descriptive research is used to describe and classify characteristics of a phenomenon being studied. In short, it addresses the "what" question. The characteristics used to describe a situation known as descriptive categories. Descriptive research generally precedes explanatory research which is why I am conducting this study. I will do a literature study and describe a phenomenon within the field of meta governance which is the forming of civil society and public partnerships. The concepts will be explained using literature on the topic and for empirical information the government investigation on the formal requirements and the trial to implement it in Värmland county will be described. The information will be analysed through some of the keywords transparency, capability, responsiveness and accessibility.

The research study tries in some sense to describe how reality is being socially constructed through the process of stakeholders creating and agreeing to a form of reality within the layers of civil and public governance. The processes within this "construction" are in no way given by "nature", the development process of policies, governance and the platforms and where they materialise are in many ways a construction defined by social groups that agrees to them as their description of reality (Sköldbberg, 2009). The study of governance has in some sense been regarded as positivist since it observes formal structures and it is therefore, descriptive. The perspective that I am taking should be regarded as a broader post-positivist perspective since it acknowledges several structures of power and that there are layers that we cannot observe directly but only assume exist in the observable outcomes of processes.

The research will incorporate stakeholder perspectives and will try to include the complexity of the 'whole' situation. It will in some sense use theoretical abstraction forming a concept by identifying common features among a group of individuals and functionalities within governance. The purpose to explore, describe, analyse societal phenomena does not necessarily need to produce a scientific conclusion, it only needs to be able to be replicated by other researches and it needs to verify or falsify the research topic (Sköldbberg, 2009).

Selection criteria

The study involves small numbers of cases and is qualitative. The cases chosen for specific reasons based on a so-called process tracing, examining different pieces of a puzzle to try and identify a pattern. This then entails that I look for observable implications examining at the more detailed level if I can place findings within a larger process of governance reshaping. This would be done through a set of indicators applied to qualitative interviews, reports and policy documents amongst others (Brady, 2010- 227). In my case the indicators are the informant's responses and phrases in the policy documents. The informants were selected based on their role in this dialogue and process with one government representative, one representative which could be described as a hybrid role and two representatives from civil society whom have had experience both through the dialogue and partnerships agreement. The policy documents were selected based on the linear relationship from a government driven directive and policy environment down to regional level implementation of these directives. The theories chosen are based on the current research taking place on these topics.

Interviews:

The process of conducting this type of research involves identifying key informants, clarifying one's findings through formal interviews, and informal conversations, to facilitate the development of a narrative, the stances of the researcher, and information (Jorgensen, 1989) When conducting interviews, it is necessary for researchers to remember that they are there to 'listen' not just speak. In addition, researchers should not only be neutral, but also at

the same time, they should “always seek the particular”. There are three types of research interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews are administered questionnaires, in which a list of determined questions is asked, with little variation and with non-follow-up questions to responses that permit further elaboration this would most likely be of less use in my study since I am interested in the perception and understanding of a particular topic. Unstructured interviews do not reflect ideas and are performed with little or no organisation and will suit my need from the informants better. Unstructured interviews are usually very time-consuming and can be difficult to manage, and to participate in, as the lack of predetermined interview questions provides little guidance on what to talk about and I suspect therefore informants or respondents might be reluctant to sit in with me under those premises. (Hamza, 2014) One as well need to do a discourse analysis when preparing for interviews to understand how I handle language and the built-in structuralism and power relations that comes with this. Discourses are both enabling and disabling. They allow us to construct research projects for example, but they also direct our minds in certain directions. The creation and maintaining of subgroups can become evident when analysing both my language and the respondents. One needs to take a sensitive stance on this. (Sköldberg, 2009-227)

Limitations to studying politics and policies

The assessment of the involvement of governance networks on effective and democratic governance poses an analytical challenge. It is difficult to apply the traditional concepts of efficiency and democracy in evaluating the performance. There might be big differences between policies and what is actually done in day to day businesses because their informal character and the influence from private stakeholders, there is a need to consider the democratic performance of governance networks and the assumption that it is reflecting ideas, values and procedures at government. There is as well a need to shift the theoretical perspective from aggregative theories of representative democracy to integrative to be able to fit the studies of meta governance.

The view that power is transparent and expressed in an unmistakeable and empirically obvious way through the decision-making process is no longer true. Political scientists have today a much more pluralist conception of power. Political scientist views human affairs today as if conflict is the norm. Cooperation is rare and a fragile product, not of cooperative intent, but of a temporary balancing of strategies of narrow self-interest and mutual distrust (Hay 2002-171).

Ethical considerations

Interviewing stakeholders that all have different interest and motivation for participating in the process poses a challenge in terms of filtering out facts, wishes and dependencies. On the other hand, since the thesis seeks to reflect on perceptions this might not impact on the purpose of describing a process.

The informants were informed of the purpose of the interview and also that the thesis in no way was going to be used by any particular interest group. There was a discussion with some of the informants of confidentiality issues. None of the respondents stand any risks with the answers they gave since they expressed views that they shared already in public meetings with the stakeholders. Since the stakeholders are few in Värmland and the positions they are having are unique it would be difficult to hide their identity.

Theory

Connecting the theories

The theories presented takes its starting point in the concept of power and what it entails to possess and exercise power. This serves as a foundation to placing the rest of the theories presented. Traditionally the most obvious expression of power is the government and when it exercises its power through governance. The tools that governments use to exercise power is legislative and through its institutions. But government more and more transpire into governance which consist of networks of influencers and processes of governing the governance. To achieve change normally policies are used, and the policies go through processes of change to adapt to changing realities. These realities and changes occur in both spaces and places which in turn are re-created by internal dynamics and perceptions about what and whom they are. The regions and its developments efforts are prominent in these change processes. This again affects the modes of operation and the organisational structures of governance and its networks. Civil society is one of the stakeholders in these networks of influencers and they can be both a resource and a partner in the change processes. The challenge is how the stakeholders should relate to each other and what happens to the autonomy of each stakeholder when ties gets to close. The civil society is a diverse definition and it can consist of different functions and interests.

Exercising Power

The basic assumption of this thesis is that there is a relational exercise of power between stakeholders and that one must look at power as a process between stakeholders. When studying governance and at the core, power, one needs to look at the stakeholder's strategic relational approach addressing structures and stakeholders at various scales. The idea is that the state can't be studied only through its core structures, but one needs to consider all its networks. The result of interactions by different political forces and societal stakeholders, that pursue their respective interests is equally important because they affect the boundary between the public and the private sphere, between state and economy, and between state and society making it increasingly blurred shifting the centre of power (Verdun et al. 2009).

In terms of governance and the exercise of power, representative democracy forces the ones exercising power to some extent to justify their rule and legitimize the overall system of governance. In the discussion around government, governance and governmentality there is a move towards new form of exercising power. The powers that the stakeholders can have, and the level of influence is to some extent defined by the type of governance that is dominating a political domain. There needs to be both willingness and capacity to be able to deal with pressures from outside the government to policy reform (Bevir, 2010).

Even though most political parties are elected based on programs and agendas most of the influences on government policies are done through different types of networks within government layers at the international arena or through different interest groups. The network stakeholders interact through negotiations that possibly combine bargaining with consensus-seeking deliberation. They in this sense exercise power (Sorensen, 2009).

International cooperation like the European union redistributes power between local stakeholders mostly through resources like financing but also through the ability to talk directly above national governments to the international hierarchy. Exerting pressure from both local and international level on local, regional and national governments.

Governance through policy

This paper takes its starting point in the study of governance since they are at the core of the concept of “civil society and public dialogue”. Studying governance as an approach one not only investigates the how and why certain policies are made but also analyses the institutional setting, the stakeholder constellation, and the following process of coordination among stakeholders. The question focusing on how do state and non-state stakeholders manage to organize their common interests across several territorial levels and/or across a range of functional domains. There are as well problems in terms of the lack of accountability and the privileging of strong and resourceful elites which is an ever-present danger in a networked organisation (Sorensen, 2009).

There is as well a need to discuss what governance entails ““to govern” actually covers a considerable number of different meanings. First, we find the purely material, physical, and spatial meaning, of to direct, move forward, or even to move forward oneself on a track, a road. “To govern” is to follow a path, or put on a path”. Could new governance be said to create multiple tracks or is the approach still a one-way approach or path with superficial options that does not change the core? (Foucault 1977-119)

Today, governance networks are referred to as informal governance arrangements, partnerships, joined-up government, co-governance mechanisms, strategic alliances, deliberative forums, advisory boards, policy task forces or civil society and public dialogue. In the face of hegemonic norms that is prescribing that public governance should be both effective and democratic. Such norms are fundamental to the discourse of liberal democracy and publicly accepted and to some extent enforce through elections disqualifying governments who doesn’t perform. Here as well the process of engaging the civil society as well comes in as a way of comforting and justifying government and policy options (Sorensen, 2009).

When a governance network is first formed, there are no agreed upon norms, procedures, or structure to determine where and how a legitimate decision is to be taken this will however eventually lead to the formulation of a framework of rules, norms, values and ideas that is both precarious and incomplete. The institutionalized interaction facilitates a self-regulated policy-making process this again is something that will be shown in this thesis which is looking at the formalisation and institutionalization of these networks (Sorensen, 2009).

There is of course through any type of governance approach different means to access and push through individual interest. What might differ is the types of platforms that are being used and the level of formality. The different drives that impact policy outputs, exceptional agents such as entrepreneurs and policy brokers manage to leverage political resources and access decision making more easily (Narbutaite - Aflaki 2015-41).

The relatively self-regulated policy-making results not only in concrete policy decisions and policy regulation; it may also change the entire policy discourse, including the identity of the stakeholders, their mutual perceptions of each other, and the norms and values upon which concrete policy decisions and policy regulations build (Sorensen, 2009).

Mark Bevir provides a simplified model to policy reform in public administration, It’s the progressive governance which is empiricist-technocratic its bureaucratic and approaches change via representative democratic pluralism, then we find the neo liberal approach which is rationalist and deductive, market oriented, it approaches change as well through representation but with a strong emphasis on empowered consumers. The community approach is of empirical nature, social theory and works through networks and partnerships.

It is representative but involves state sponsored networks this thesis takes its interest in the last one (Bevir, 2010-230).

Other various classifications of governance can also be found in governance literatures. They are; state-centric 'old governance' and society-centric 'new governance', market model, participatory model, flexible model, and deregulation model, privatization of services, contracting out, and compulsory competitive tendering or the introduction of a contract culture into the world of government, managerial model, corporatist model, pro-growth model, and welfare model state-centric model, market-centric model, and civil society-centric model, procedural model, corporate model, market model, and network model. (Lee, 2003)

Governing a process

Another relevant analytical tool for my thesis is the concept of meta governance and network governance. Meta governance involves the institutionalization and organization among multiple stakeholders across several scales of state organization tied to a territory. The dialogue between civil society and government being studied could be defined as an attempt of meta governance. Meta governance can be defined as an approach which produces some degree of coordinated governance, managing combinations of hierarchical, market, and network governance, to achieve the best possible outcomes from the viewpoint of those responsible for public sector performance. Although traditional forms of top-down government remain in place, public governance increasingly proceeds in and through multilateral negotiations among relevant and affected stakeholders interacting based on interdependency, trust, and jointly developed rules, norms and discourses. Building on horizontal interaction between public and private policy stakeholders. The impact on effectivity is important since the reliance on governance networks is often justified regarding the need for enhancing the effectivity of public governance (Sorensen, 2009).

The types of stakeholders involved in network or meta governance can be defined in different ways. There are often organizations that can act in cooperative ways or alone, it can as well be individuals acting alone or in cooperatives, the interesting part for this thesis is the technical part as of how they interact with bureaucracies and the capabilities that they build up. (Bogason, 00-72)

The negotiators in this system could be defined as political entrepreneurs and they can be a bridge between the politics and the technocrats of governance. If politics is a constant dealing between opposing fronts making compromises and diluted decisions and the technocrat is a stiff and static bureaucrat taking decision not always well nested in the popular opinion then a political entrepreneur can bridge that gap being often well positioned in a network, having the technical know-how and might be raising the relevant and current questions. (Narbutaite-Aflaki, 15- 226)

The network governance has two implications. First, state stakeholders would cooperate as negotiating partners in a complex network, pooling their sovereign authority and other distinctive capacities to help realize collectively agreed aims and objectives on behalf of the network. The formal sovereignty of states could therefore now be the holder of the material resources among others, rather than as the dominant resource of political influence. Therefore, meta governance must also be tiers of networks, where different stakeholder's influences at different scales. This also entails that implementation and results rest with efficient network management. This is in turn dependent on the member's ability to influence each other horizontally, this requires pockets of informality and commitments to each other within and outside the network. The social and political environment is basic to achieve this (Jessop, 2014).

In this process, the representative government with the mandate through public/ popular vote gets blurry and the true power diluted. From a multilevel governance perspective, sovereignty is better interpreted as a series of specific state capacities such as legislative, fiscal, coercive, or other state powers rather than as one overarching and defining feature of the state. The State on the other hand might become less hierarchical, less centralized, and less directive in character. Other stakeholders in turn contribute other symbolic and/or material resources such as private money, legitimacy, information, expertise, organizational capacities, or power of numbers to advance collectively agreed aims and objectives. Which in a specific policy fields could mean greater power sharing and democratic influences. (Bache, 2004)

This entails what is defined as the bottom up approach and the idea is that policies become better when the implementers and to some extent the recipients of policies are involved in shaping policies. Bottom-up approaches have been criticised on two counts. First, policy control should be exercised by stakeholders whose power derives from their accountability to sovereign voters through their elected representatives, but the authority of local service deliverers does not derive from this. Second, this approach tends to overemphasise the level of local autonomy (Matland 1995).

The power balance between and within networks of governance and the setting for their operation and focus of intervention are shaped by the wider political- economic transformations. It would be too early to say that the state in its traditional role has died because of the emergence of these new form of governance. Many of the networked organisations are set up by or directly or indirectly controlled by government and very often articulated by the state There is a transition in socio economic regulation from very linear top down control to a horizontal networked form of participatory governance. The national and local state and its forms of political and institutional organisation is still very important and tend to remain at the centre stage through is regulatory configurations (Swyngedouw, 2005).

“This configuration is directly related to the conditions and requirements of neo-liberal governmentality in the context of a greater role of both private economic agents as well as more vocal civil-society-based groups. Secondly, the non-normative and socially innovative models of governance as non-hierarchical, networked and selectively inclusive forms of governmentality, cannot be sustained uncritically” (Swyngedouw, 2005:2001)

Tensions can arise in this process of re scaling governance when the discrepancies between the promises of enhanced democratisation through participatory governance versus hierarchical government and technocracy still in control is being discovered. Participation as moderately realised in new forms of governance versus the consolidation of beyond-the-state arenas of power-based interest mediation. The improved transparency associated with horizontal networked interdependencies versus the blurry accountability of hierarchically articulated and non-formalised relations to governance. The upscaling, down-scaling and spreading out of functions traditionally associated with the scale of the national state have resulted in the formation of institutions and practices of governance that all express the above contradictions. This has become even more so clear through local development initiatives and experiments in the forming of the necessary institutional and regulatory framework. The processes of forming these new forms of governance are associated with new social actors and the consolidation of the well-established actors that fits into the right profile based on government preferences but also the exclusion or loss of influence of groups that were present in earlier forms of government and continuing exclusion of other social actors who

have never been included. It has also consolidated and enhanced the power of groups associated with the drive towards marketisation (Swyngedouw, 2005).

“New governance is embedded within autocratic modes of governing that mobilise technologies of performance and of agency as a means of disciplining forms of operation within an overall programme of responsibilities, individuation, calculation and pluralist fragmentation The socially innovative figures of horizontally organised stakeholder arrangements of governance that appear to empower civil society in the face of an apparently overcrowded and ‘excessive’ state, may, in the end, prove to be the Trojan Horse that diffuses and consolidates the ‘market’ as the principal institutional form” (Swyngedouw, 2005:2001).

“Space and place” impacting processes

In term of the object of where power is exercised, governments are formed and elected, or governance structures materialise, where civil society plays its role and development strategies takes shape it's all tied to space and as well territories in this thesis the territory is the region both as an administrative unit and as an idea and the space is defined by the process.

The process that the thesis studies is very much defined and to some extent delimited by territories and regions, but these are also spaces at a socio economic cultural, environmental and political level and not fixed but rather constantly in a process of being re-created and defined. Therefore, it makes sense to elaborate on how space is being created by culture, identities and social relations. Our existence, what we do, what we experience, how we interact with the world and people happens and are affected by spaces and where we are. (Holloway, 2001). Similarly, identity and culture can be said to be composed by the places influencing individuals and individuals influencing places through their actions and socio-cultural creation in a broad sense. The individual is always dependent on the social (Arvidsson, 2017: 23) Places are built around people's social actions and interactions, as well as people's relation to the material environment over time and this also involves the process of change. People have different activity spaces with different ranges (Aronsson, 2007: 109).

These activity spaces are built up by a complex mix of living, work, leisure and social relations. This creates a society where people have multiple roots in different spaces such as workplace and sometimes workplaces, recreational areas in the form of holiday homes, social places or spaces such as the internet (Aronsson, 2007: 110).

The physical environment is an important part of a place, but it is constantly open to new interpretation. In addition, a place and its spatial relationships are dynamic and diversified, so some concepts become important. Three important conclusions that can be drawn are that people "create" places and that these places are constantly recreated with an influx of people, at the same time, this influx of people is tied to social relationships elsewhere, and therefore places are linked to each other and become interdependent. A site character constantly changes and creates unique compositions. A place thus becomes a reflection of its unique composition at some point in time. The composition of the social spatial time is always unique to just one place. Similarly, the perception of perceived culture can be created. Cultural identity is a combination of layers of social, spatial relationships that are constantly recreated (Massey, 1995: 210).

Mobility and change processes have always been a human activity and have probably affected the whole world, and this constant blend of social groupings is always creating unique compositions and these unique compositions affect both space and place. Mobility causes hybrid societies to be created by socially mixed similarities and differences, but the same process can also create exclusion and conflict at the same time, affecting places of depopulation of own stigma and marginalization both socially and economically. Uneven development can also be understood in how places are created culturally, socially and economically, and where some things are recreated and characterize places. An important part of understanding this development is through power relations, social and interpersonal positions. There is always an addition between places and therefore places are linked as well, and the failure of one place may be a prerequisite for other places of success, such as depopulation, etc. (Massey, 1995: 210-).

The global and local are not two opposites but are interconnected. Slightly simplified, one can say that the global consists of the local and the local is constantly created by the perception of the global. It creates a local identity or identifies threats. At the same time, local communities can relate to other "local" places and identify common issues. The unique that can be reflected in the global. In all, it must also be described in layers, nothing is entirely local or global, and here too, power relations play a major role. Local is rarely a passive recipient of the global, but is usually transformed and processed globally, locally and recreated or anchored sites. Location, power and identity have a major influence on the creation of places and what relationships they have with their world. The right to a place and the meaning of a place can often lead to fragmentation and conflict. This site's identity can go so deeply that it affects the self-image of individuals. This place creation is an important component of which measures to take to tackle issues. The question is if not those with power and influence become those who create places. There is also an interest in commercializing a place, a form of product creation (Massey, 1995: 210). Space is therefore important in the process that I am studying because of places interaction with other places or spaces the learning from others whom a region identifies with, it is part of the collective identifying of threats which is built upon the perception of a place. It is also part of a place attractiveness to be able to show social cohesion through a well aligned civil society.

Regional Developmentalism

The local government in the forms of regions has received increased responsibilities as the driver of development. Knowledge about development and its practical application in 'management' and 'planning' is very much about control and discipline. From its inception in the enlightenment, development has involved trusteeship, which saw science and government coming together to secure the basis of social harmony through a process of national development. (Pike et al 2010)

One of the key development tools for regions are their regional development plans, they can come with different names, but the purpose is the same, to outline the development path that the stakeholders of the region would like to take. The development plans are normally divided into different areas of interest and sectors as well as approaches.

Today the world consists in parts of global networks and this means that regional development has become more focused on activating and reconvening local and global practicalities. Sometimes regions seek to directly match models elsewhere and sometimes the result is new and innovative modes of organization. This has enabled the scope for more innovative strategies fostering competitiveness and entrepreneurialism. Regions are today much more competing on the market through attractiveness, this creates internal dynamics as well as places regions in international economic regimes. This has as well meant that regions

have received an important role in socially reproducing capitalism. In effect, creation of pools of labour, ideally highly skilled, has always been a basic condition of regional development strategies – and particularly the ability of regions to attract mobile capital (Pike et al 2010)

This entails not only creating skills and knowledge but also innovation and new skills to remain attractive. The regional development plans are a way of communicating these ambitions both to the mobile capital but also to the immobile labour, electorates, institutions, citizens etc. At the centre of this process of conversion of places, community planning and the various tools and methods used to achieve different goals are often based on different development models expressed through policy documents, strategic plans, compacts and engagement plans. The different models have been driven by different ideals, goals and results but the underlaying goal very often is to attract those desired to achieve development, an active and functional civil society is believed to contribute to this. This has had a major impact on how places have been created or what have been preserved.

An important part of this process is to identify places special characteristic to capitalise on it. This then becomes a selective process, highlighting only the positive aspects of a place or if nothing else to try turning challenges into opportunities. One of the driving forces is to attract the "creative class", which can be said to be the highly skilled workforce that is extremely mobile and can contribute to the knowledge-intensive economy that is pursued. The one with high refinement that in some way can cut the ties to the old outdated. A consequence of this competition is that borders and delimitations become temporary social constructions and very weak. (Aronsson, 2013: 184-188). This also leads to the fact that places are tied together by these social relationships and it creates a form of hybrid sites that are constantly recreated through interaction with the outside world and its internal social ties in this the organised civil society will play a bigger role and have greater influence through its networks.

Civil society has been co-opted into the place making and regional development goals and is encouraged to participate in different ways since this is seen as a key aspect of realizing their goals. This place making, and developmental process then benefits from civil society in two ways, through civil societies contributing to creating new connections outward and inward in the region or territory and by in some sense turning challenges into opportunities that are solved through social innovation at least in the environment of policies and interventions.

Changing modes of operationality

Important for the aim of the thesis is the concept of processes and organisational change both within government and civil society and the channels of communication and collaboration. Initiating new processes is challenging when one considers the typical forces that are affecting change such as socioeconomic forces, political system characteristics, elite decision-making tendencies, chance events, and administrative system characteristics. Difficulties in change processes, include issues of trust motivation, sensitive group dynamics resistance to change, and structural factors, to name but a few. Processes closely relates to the "be put on a path" in this case the development of a cooperation or discussion platform or a formal agreement between civil society and government. This entails a restructuring, reorganization of how things are done and by/with or whom. Processes means that things are changing, and it entails something is going through some type of evolution, in this case it is about organisational changes, but it could equally be changes in society or governance since they are intertwined. It could as well involve going from government to governance. It involves a process of going from organizations to organizing, and the conception of the latter as a set of processes for reducing ambiguous characters amongst actors. Organizing consists of reducing differences among actors; it is the process of generating recurring behaviours through institutionalized cognitive representations (Kuna, 2017) (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

For an activity to be said to be organized, it implies that types of behaviour in types of situations are systematically connected to types of actors. An organized activity provides actors with a given set of cognitive categories and a typology of actions. Organizing implies generalizing; it is the process of incorporating under generic categories. However, although the generic categories and the purposes for which they may be used are, at any moment, given to organizational members, they are nonetheless socially defined. Furthermore, those categories are subject to potential change. The organization is both a given structure and an emerging pattern. Institutionalized cognitive categories are drawn upon by individuals-in-action but, in the process, established generalizations may be supplemented, worn, modified or, at any rate, interpreted in oftentimes unpredictable ways. Change is a process and seen as a succession of movements of a recognizable entity over time, and space itself is viewed fundamentally as made up of processes rather than things. In this view, entities such as organizations and structures are no more than temporary externalizations of ongoing processes, continually in a state of becoming. Context is not something that is held constant and outside the changes being analysed but is itself continually reconstituted within and by processes of interaction over time, generating unexpected and largely uncontrollable chains of activity and events in which actors, environments, and organizations are all in constant and mutually interacting fluctuation. From this perspective, the world is composed of events and experiences rather than substantial entities. Each event arises out of, and is constituted through, its relations to other events (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Contracting civil society

What happens to the voice of civil society when it signs contracts with the government. Is there a process of privatization of the third sector limiting its actions by legally binding arrangements or is it creating legitimacy and acknowledging the import role of the third sector through formalising its role and function within the levels of governance? Part of the process of signing agreements between public sector and civil society is the signing of agreements where there is an exemption from public procurement and an organisation delivers a public good to the government at national, regional or local level. There is a process of trying to adapt the law to this setup but there are geographical challenges as expressed through the following paragraph. In this one needs to consider space as and territories since law is geographical. This begs a question of resilience for the law: how can the law open up to this construction of space that destabilizes, shakes up and revitalizes law. The legal framework is one of the stumbling blocks in this process and much of that is the limitations to laws as it limits itself to territories, layers of governance and government. A law that protects but at the same time allows for innovation and development (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 00).

The European union provides a code to give a framework for engaging the civil society. This has been used as well when the Swedish government initiated its process of engaging the civil society. It could be seen as an important reminder to safeguard the autonomy of civil society and to invite them to cooperate on their terms. If this then reflects in reality is a big question.

“To ensure that the indispensable contributions of civil society organizations are included and taken into account without discrimination in the political decision-making process it is necessary to create an environment with the right conditions. These include legal security, preservation of fundamental democratic principles, political willingness, favourable legislation, clear procedures, long-term support and resources for a long-term sustainable civil society

and for common platforms for dialogue and cooperation. These conditions enable a constructive collaboration between civil society organizations and authorities and based on mutual trust and mutual understanding of participatory democracy.” (Överenskommelsens uppföljningskansli, 2011)

Social economy and regionalism

The concept of social economy is important to advance because by definition even though civil society organisations are set up to meet social needs they generate economic value. They might produce a market value or service and employ people. The objective might not be to generate money, but it is the means to carry out its objectives. Therefore, civil society and the social economy are often closely linked. One could organize the social economy as follows: organisations which purpose is to build a social movement, organisations who try to operate alternative form of business, organisations whom have both functions meaning one arm generating an income to support the goals of the other arm. In this thesis, most of the organisations will be within the field of some type of social service they normally operate with a degree of volunteerism but need to cover the hard costs such as administration, facilities, traveling etc. They also serve the purpose of lobbying for the needs of a specific needs of a group in society. They normally work closely with this group and they generate knowledge, skills and methodology that the public sector might not poses. Therefore, they become an interesting partner for local government. There is as well the other aspect of the social economy which might be appealing to government which is that they provide services for free or at a low cost and might help relieve some pressure on the government services. In terms of political influence, the social economy therefore has some strong points which is the organisations have a clear purpose with a level of public support they have some economic impact or potential and at the same time they are normally in parts dependent on government for financial support and normally government does not have any obligations towards them. Therefore, the organisations in the social economy might be the ideal partner for government.

Empirical results – research findings

This chapter will try and put the theories to test applied to the process of engagement between government and civil society. Some of the connecting questions that stands out are. Is there an untangling of the web of different government influencers in this process (Transparency) and do the civil society gain influence or loose autonomy? Do the voters loose influence or are the domain of the civil society organisation maybe outside the broader political spectrum that is decided at the ballot box? Is there a power shift in society and are there new maybe more efficient forms of governance transpiring is the meta governance that occur, becoming more transparent and is civil society taking its place as an equal partner next to government? Is there innovation taking place thanks to the approach of the agreement? These were the questions posed to identify the policy documents and stakeholders relevant to identify the process. A short recap of the theories involved while analysing the empirical results are the concept of power and what it entails to possess and exercise power. One expression of power is the government and when it exercises its power through governance this is more and more moving into governance which consist of networks of influencers and processes of governing the governance. The policies at different levels reflects this but policies also go through processes of change to adapt to changing realities. Internal dynamics and perceptions about what and whom the regions and its developments efforts should be and achieve are prominent in these change processes. Civil society is one of the stakeholders in these networks of influencers and they can be both a resource and a partner in the change processes. The chapter starts by describing a bit of the background to the policy documents and platforms set up to host this process. It then moves on to describe the policies at national level and how they then transpire to local level and the regions implementing them. Finally, the chapter presents the informants responses based on the unstructured interviews with the purpose of tracing if the keywords stands out as relevant.

National background

Sweden is in no sense a forerunner when it comes to engaging with civil society and the introduction of the social economy is not as developed as other countries such as France, Spain and Italy on the other hand the support to civil society has been done through at times very generous financial contributions supporting the day to day operation. There has been a will not to politicise that support and there has been little dialogue between government and civil society, but a close proximity and rather seen as opposing fronts needed as counterbalance towards government (Svedberg et al.2006).

The phenomenon of civil society as an “institutions” with a relationship towards government is not really new but the process described in this thesis should be seen as a renaissance for organizations based on specific ideals, goals and built on volunteering and their presence in the government sphere. Historically voluntary and self-governing principles that followed these organisations served the purpose to "educate" adult individuals to full and legitimate citizens and it was therefore encouraged by government. Support was channelled to meet the need for enlightenment, knowledge and to create competent leadership in these movements. For the members of the movements the acknowledgement of their existence and the given public spaces was an appropriate strategy for conquering its rightful power - the power over self and over the distribution of the common resources in society (Nordfeldt, 2012).

The social economy entered Sweden in the 1990s. The term got its impact with the Swedish EU accession 1995 and was adopted by several stakeholders. In the new-cooperative movement that was on the rise, it was perceived as a confirmation and legitimation of their existence. Even among some politicians, interest in the social economy grew, thought of as a handy, wordy interrelation between a private, profit-maximizing part of the economy and the

public tax-financed. The hope was for it to bridge the gap between increasingly tight budget allocation, growing needs and hopes where as well that it could reduce unemployment. Government subsidies were granted to encourage cooperative enterprises to help build this “new” sector (Nordfeldt, 2012). Much of the previous organisations in the social economy historically was made redundant by the welfare state and its expanding responsibilities. That could be one of the reasons why today as a country a very small part of civil society is active within the social economy. However, with the decentralisation and greater autonomy for the Swedish regions the sector is slowly coming back, there has also been money forwarded to regional government to be used in supporting civil society at regional level and also to set up structures that encourage greater diversity within the field of social economy and civil society engagement like project funding vehicles (Svedberg et al.2006).

Background to the Swedish agreement originates from a series of deregulations and increased competition in areas that was previously dominated by the public-sector domain. Regulation had been relaxed and the social sector been opened for alternative actors. Tangible welfare reforms in the form of legislation had created a new arena for civil society organizations in the social field even though at a relatively limited scale. Another development is that the state and municipalities developed new channels for citizenship influence. Representatives of civil society were invited to comment on policy design. This has, however, been considered both as a new order and a continuation off a tradition of relations between civil society actors and the state which have been characterized by proximity in the past (Nordfeldt, 2012).

The right-wing government started a process in 2006 on the request of the civil society to try and clarify the role of civil society towards government. It resulted in a document motioned in the Parliament these are the main formulations and motivations for the policy:

“Civil society policy covers cross-sectoral issues and people's ability to organize themselves in popular movements and associations as well as the terms and conditions for these associations... Civil society sector policy also includes support for sport, public gathering facilities and organizations. The goal of Civil society sector policy is that people should have the best possible conditions for forming and participating in different types of popular movements and organisations. The goal of Civil society sector policy is divided into four main areas:

- *General questions concerning conditions and regulations for popular movements and non-profit associations,*
- *General questions concerning contributions to popular movements and non-profit organisations*
- *The government and its administrative authorities' dialogue with the associations,*
- *statistics, research and other knowledge about the community and its activities.”*

(Skr. 2008/09:207)

They as well make a strong connection between civil society and the social economy and the following paragraph define how they see it.

Because the Civil society sector policy covers the general conditions and the regulations of civil society it is also relevant

for the actors within the social economy. Social economy refers to organized activities which primarily has societal purposes, and which is based on democratic values and is organizationally independent from the public sector. Such activities are primarily conducted in associations, foundations and cooperatives. The actors have public or private benefits and are not profit-oriented...The social economy contributes to growth in all parts of the country, creating jobs, diversity and freedom of choice. One of the purposes of civil society sector policy is to create a collective approach and action from the state's side regarding both relations with popular movements and associations of various kinds and establish conditions and regulations for their activities. Another purpose is to make visible and highlight the civil society important democratic role” (Skr. 2008/09:207).

Finally, they state that:

“The relationship between the non-profit sector and the state needs in accordance with the 2006 Declaration of Government to be highlighted, clarified and developed. In the social area, there are several organizations with large experience in performing service and being a voice carrier. Within this area there are also actors who have long been asking for a clarification of the relationship between the state and the non-profit sector and they have wanted a framework for the non-profit sector and the government in their interaction. (Skr. 2008/09:207)

On September 6, 2007, the government decided to open a dialogue with the non-profit sector in the social sphere. This process transpired into three main components, one is to identify whom the stakeholders are, to set up formal structures for a “dialogue” which is normal referred to as **the agreement** and as well in some cases to establish a legal framework for the procurement of services from civil society towards government. The latter is referred to as **Civil society public partnerships** (Nordfeldt, 2012).

The process at national level

This process of engagement between government and civil society generated a document which is called “the Agreement” (Överenskommelsen) and it is supposed to draw the framework for this type of cooperation. It is a non-binding agreement that rather serves as a base for a dialogue. Sweden signed the first agreement between government, civil society organizations within the social area and the municipalities and county councils of Sweden in 2008. At national level “the agreement” has its own agency supporting efforts in the regions to establish local agreements between regional and local authorities and the civil society (Nordfeldt, 2012).

There was an evaluation done of these early stages of the process and some of the feedback given was as follows. The stakeholders involved in this process saw the national social agreement as a first step to create a clearer and better relationships between civil society organizations and the public sector in Sweden. The stakeholders expressed that they perceived the completed document as an important tool for raising awareness about civil society organizations, increase understanding of their changing role in society and to

strengthen their position towards public and private actors. The views were not only positive, some expressed doubts about the agreement potential to make a difference because the document did not contain enough mandatory commitments. Others saw the agreement as part of the current government policy towards increased privatization in the welfare sector. However, in one question, supporters and critics were agreeing and that was that at local levels the public sector and civil society organizations got closer to each other through this process and that's also where the approach stood the greatest chance of making a difference (Nordfeldt, 2012). (Portin, 2016)

Representatives from the organizations in the report point out that they have become more obvious and equal parties. The state through the government offices holds, by virtue of being the more resourceful player, the pace of the process. It is the government office that manages recruitment and decision making by being the party that invites to dialogue and consultation (Nordfeldt, 2012).

The agreement produced a policy document and to highlight some of the formulations as indicative of the ambitions it has;

“The Government’s makes visible and reinforce the indispensable role of the civil society organisations in Swedish society. The fundamental values are autonomy and independence for the organisations and in their role of articulating interests both regarding the public sector and the business sector” (Överenskommelsen 2009).

Further the documents states that:

“The Government intends to recognise the important role of the voluntary organisations and their contribution to democracy and social welfare. Hundreds of thousands of people take part in various voluntary activities every day and make indispensable contributions through their commitment and interest”. These organizations empower people, contribute to providing people with knowledge, self-confidence and the strength to exert an influence on society and their own lives. They create paths of influence in a way that increases people’s commitment at different levels of society” (Överenskommelsen 2009).

The government intends to develop the role of civil society organisations on similar conditions as those of other stakeholders so that the growth of a considerably greater diversity of providers and suppliers can be supported (Överenskommelsen 2009).

This could be seen a strong drift to push civil society from opinion creator to service deliverer but the frontier between participatory democracy and social economy seem to be blurry or assumed to serve a similar purpose. It also indicates where civil society should play a role. This then could be read as the co-optation and reduction of civil society to market logics and secondly, the informalization of welfare services, outsourcing of government services to civil society. The document then clearly again shows where it would like to see this dialogue take place.

“...a lack of knowledge about the role of the voluntary and non-profit sector in health- and medical care and social services, on

incomplete official statistics, on deficiencies in the sphere of consultation between public and voluntary organisations and distortions in the terms of competition between public, commercial and civil society-based stakeholders in care and social service” (Överenskommelsen 2009).

This document clearly indicates that there is a mixed agenda between being service providers to public sector or opinion builder the ambition is to map out, connect and also in some sense to celebrate the important functions that civil society have. The challenge is though that the government sits on the resources and therefore is very much in control of what is to be done and by whom. It further states that:

“The removal of obstacles assumes, for example, research and the development of knowledge of how business sector measures and central government development funds affect the voluntary and non-profit sector. This requires procedures for information and provision of knowledge to the public, central and local government authorities about the voluntary and non-profit sector and its activities” (Överenskommelsen 2009).

This then seems to be contradicting some of the motives that are given to establish these relations. The document as well reflects the stance of civil society which very much put emphasis on their independence but how independent can they stay while transforming into service providers or private contractors. This speaks as well to the calculative rationalities that are a corner stone of neoliberal governmentality

“...Public funding of services produced by other stakeholders is not a threat to the welfare state but a basic part of the functioning of society. The voluntary and non-profit sector is a resource to develop welfare – not a potential opportunity for economy cuts” (Överenskommelsen 2009).

Civil society organisations emphasise in the agreement their independent role in society:

“..wish to develop their distinctive character in their assignments and their members providing the population of Sweden or other countries with the ambition of working together with other players without reducing their own independence” (Överenskommelsen 2009).”

According to the statements in the agreement they would like to contribute to developing democracy and welfare even though the central and local government are responsible for welfare policy. They want to contribute by increasing the ability of citizens to participate and understand the democratic processes from the European to the national and local level. They also emphasise that central and local government must be responsive in a structured and consistent way to the non-profit organisations’ experiences of welfare and its deficiencies as well as to actively obtain their knowledge and experience before declarations and decisions. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions provided the feedback in the agreement that

....” civil society is a force for democratic anchoring and vitalisation, for local and regional development and for the renewal of welfare. Interaction between the public sector and

civil society is of key importance for the development of society” (Överenskommelsen 2009).

According to them the civil society organizations are

“social meeting places where interaction and collaboration between people develop and democratic schooling takes place, which in turn provides a ground for a trusting relationship among human beings and a feeling of belonging to the local community”.

They further argue that it is

“...important that civil society is and remains an independent force in the life of the community which mobilises, activates, organises, challenges and debates but also with a geographical and social presence. The national agreement can contribute to the growth of local and regional initiatives to dialogue and agreements, which take into consideration the shifting relationships in municipalities and county councils” (Överenskommelsen 2009).

The agreement at national level formulates visions and principles for future interaction between the parties. The basis for the agreement is that it is the county councils and municipalities which bear the main responsibility for welfare. The parties find a common starting-point in the conviction that good interaction between the public sector and civil society is of key importance for a favourable development of society (Överenskommelsen, 2009).

It is assumed that the Swedish combination of well-based confidence in the institutions of society and a vigorous civil society can be a factor of success for this “new” form of cooperation and its possible impact on social cohesion and economic development.

The agreement intends to clarify the role of civil society organisations in the social sphere in relationship to government. Municipalities and county councils decide within the framework of current legislation whether and to what extent they wish to expose their activities to competition from civil society and the social economy. The aim of this agreement is to at least enable the civil society organisations to compete on equal terms with stakeholder’s active in this sphere (Överenskommelsen 2009).

The agreement concludes that:

“This agreement rests on a common undertaking to make the agreement known nationally and locally, to support initiatives to agreements between parties at the local level and to systematically and continuously follow up the implementation of the agreement and develop its contents. The goal is for the agreement to be a continuously developing document which inspires to further acknowledgement of the sector’s competence and value as well as developing the prerequisites for the civil society organisations’ ability to operate” (Överenskommelsen 2009).

This is in many ways fitting to the development and process oriented new governance model. It's also symptomatic for the political governance which is to "put on a path" left are the policymakers to draw up frameworks for this path but to implement is very much left for regional and local government and governance.

Decisions are taken via the so-called Joint Working Group (GAG), which is the governing body of the National Agreement. GAG meets approximately once a month and has 13 members; two from the government office, two from SKL and nine from the civil society organizations. The decisions are taken by consensus and the dialogue is transposed by the six principles and implemented together with the agreement's office. The civil society organizations included in the national agreement choose their candidates through an annual meeting of a coordination group.

Processes at regional level

As shown in the theoretical chapter the regional level is where most of the policies from national level should be implemented. The thesis now therefore will look at the regional level implementation of the dialog and agreement. In Sweden, the region of Västra Götaland is considered somewhat “best practice” both in terms of extent and implementation of this process therefore the following chapter will briefly describe what is considered successful or what might just be one approach to take since the regions do take their own path to implementation. They started this process earlier and the framework is more mature in that sense, it as well serves the purpose of the thesis to follow a “policy environment trace” from national level down to regional and local level. The purpose is to give a backdrop and comparison to Region Värmland. It fills the comparative in the evidence collection.

The process in Västra Götaland Region



Figure 1

The Region of Västra Götaland is considered in many ways as the best practice in terms of the agreements. This is mostly because of their maturity, that they been “at it” for long and the number of members in their dialogue and the number of partnership arrangements they have signed. The region itself has been going through a process of change which might have created the right settings for this process to take root.

The Västra Götaland region have existed since January 1, 1999. In spring 1997, politicians in the western part of Sweden were facing one of the largest mergers of public organizations implemented in Sweden. They would create something completely new at that time - a regional self-governing body. The National government agreed to the formation of the Västra

Götaland region on May 15, 1997. After a little less than two years the organisation was up and running. The regionalization involved a merger of organizations, partly the decentralization of power and responsibility from the state level. The regionalization involved the merger of the counties and county administrative boards. On January 1, 1998, Västra Götaland County was formed by Älvsborg County, Gothenburg and Bohus County and Skaraborg County, except the municipalities of Mullsjö and Habo.

A year later, the Västra Götaland region was formed by the County Council Skaraborg, the County Council in Älvsborg, the Bohusland Municipality, the public health services and parts of the culture conservation in the City of Gothenburg, as well as the county administrative units for county planning and development.

Västra Götaland region thus took over responsibility for Västra Götaland's development from the county administrative board. This meant a shift of power from the state level to politically elected politicians at a new democratic level, the regional.

January 1, 2011, the Västra Götaland region's development responsibilities became permanent. It is the responsibility of regional development that makes the Västra Götaland region something more than one big county - a region (Västra Götaland Region, 2017).

Västra Götaland have challenges with employment below expected levels, skills matching and segregation. The region struggles like most of the Swedish regions with demographic change and increased public-sector costs. The development of a strong third sector, socio economic sector is one of the approaches to tackle some of these challenges.

The agreement between the civil society in the County of Västra Götaland and the Västra Götaland Region has been progressing for some time. It was lifted by representatives of the civil society towards the Region and not as will be seen in region Värmland where the initiative came from the county council.

As can be understood by the following policies they have taken a much stronger focus on social innovation and the social economy. It states that the purpose of the agreement is to establish an evenly balanced dialogue between the various representatives from the social economy in the County of Västra Götaland and the Västra Götaland Region and to increase the level of knowledge of each other among the parties concerned.

The Västra Götaland Region uses a definition adopted by the Ministry of Culture,

“Social Economy is an arena separate from the state, the market and the individual household, where people, groups, organizations act together for common interests and where members or the public are the driving force - not the profit interest. In addition, there are a number of forms of association in the social economy, where the most common are non-profit associations, registered religious communities, foundations, economic associations, limited liability companies with special profit distribution” (Västra Götaland Region, 2017).

Social economy representatives wrote in February 2011 to the regional board and suggested that work on an agreement between the region and the civil society sector should be started. The work was led by the Regions administration, with the aim of a formal agreement with the social economy to be adopted by the regional council. They as well organised a committee, which consisted of 16 members; eight politicians from the regional council (one from each party in the regional council) and eight representatives from the social economy.

Today, the agreement between the Västra Götaland region and the social economy is working to increase cooperation between the region and the social economy in the region's areas of responsibilities and concerns; joint service, mainly procurement and procurement issues, healthcare and regional development. The agreement is also involved in collaboration at local and local level as well as national development in the area. On 25 November 2014, the regional council adopted the proposal for an agreement between the Västra Götaland region and the social economy. December 5, 2014, the Västra Götaland region signed it together with 70 organisations. Spring 2017, 104 organizations have signed up to the agreement (Västra Götaland Region, 2017).

From the side of the region the process was motivated through the following statement:

“Västra Götaland as a region is in a rapid pace of change which means that the conditions for public and private sector continuously changes. Therefore, as a region it is important to adopt to these socio-economic changes. Initiatives for the socio-economic organizations are important to increase their chances on the market place. The region aims to be a forerunner in terms of organizational structures work methods and forms of communication. Development of new tools for data collection and collect current data is important to create legitimacy for its activities within the social economy and to increase visibility towards the public, enterprises and decision makers” (Program Social ekonomi i Västra Götaland 2012-2015)

They are actively working on and lobbying towards that rules and regulations needs to be adopted to the conditions within the social economy which tends to be project driven small scale and unable to deal with complicated regulations. They are as well trying to support it through public procurement. They are using public procurement and “innovation” procurement, rural commercial services, small business support and “sustainable” procurement as a way to build capacity. The Västra Götaland approach to social innovation is specified in a strategic document called “Program Social ekonomi i Västra Götaland 2012-2015” and its motivation is as follows:

“The strategy of the program is based on the need for improved cooperation and coordination in order to get the full force for development in the area with a large number of players with limited resources. Skills development should be reinforced, and networking and exchange of experience intensified. Further Specific initiatives in a number of areas to enhance development opportunities for operators in the social economy. Proposed actions, priorities and views to imbued with youth, gender equality, integration, accessibility, and human rights-sustainability perspectives.”

The overall goals in this program are:

To promote the social economy and its stakeholders, and to strengthen its role in growth and development of Västra Götaland. The targeted groups are

- Organizations in the social economy (associations, cooperatives, networks, social enterprises, foundations)

- Public administration and support structure for the social economy

Indirect target group:

Organizations that work closely with the social economy as academia, tourism business, company's in sparsely populated areas and activities in the public sector. There are several projects within the field of social economy currently under way in Västra Götaland.

(Program för social ekonomi Västra Götaland Regionen 2012–2015)

To conclude the process in Västra Götaland is now well established and progressing. It has been used to tackle some societal issues and as a model proved its function. There are however still issues regarding the legal framework that are in some ways tied to a national challenge concerning public procurement and the rules that regulates whom can be contracted and how. This is because government follows a market logic and free and fair competition and making the most of the tax payers money which sometimes means that what might be best for local communities might not always be achievable through financial means. There is as well the issue if one could identify greater transparency in their governance networks through this process in Västra Götaland and if influencers are gaining capabilities this will be analysed in the last chapters.

The process in Värmland Region



Figure 2

Värmland still have three regional government structures which consist of the county council – responsible for health care and public transport and indirectly for regional development through Region Värmland which the county council owns together with the municipalities in Värmland. (Landstinget, 2017)

There is as well the county administrative board responsible for providing advice and information monitor and check that various organisations comply with laws and guidelines they perform duties as an authority – issuing permits, hearing appeals against municipal decisions and compiling information (Länsstyrelsen, 2017).

Region Värmland have different responsibilities with assignments coming from the state and their members – the county council and Värmland sixteen municipalities. They work mainly

with socio economic growth issues, public transport, culture, folk high schools and member support. The “Värmland strategy” is the policy document governing what they do (Region Värmland, 2017).

In Värmland the main driving force in this process has been the County council even though the other (government institutions have agreed to it) and the politicians whom are members of the county board initiated the process. The process started 2016 and did only progress slowly at first with some initial meetings. The politicians did see it as a way to tackle some of the big societal issues in Värmland such as aging population, lack of relevant skills, diminishing tax base and large rural population.

The platforms for cooperation between the county council and different civil society groups is not new in Värmland. The process should rather be seen as broadening the type of and the total numbers of organisations and as a way to structure these types relationships. Its main focus is with organisations within the field of social services even though the long-term ambition is to broaden its scope (Bergenbrink, 2016).

Important to mention is as well that the county council structure and organization is going to change end of 2019 when it is merging with Region Värmland which today is representing the municipalities and is working mostly towards more developmental issues while the county councils main focus is within the health sector. This will broaden the scope of what the organization does and how they do it which adds a bit of uncertainty to the whole process of creating and signing the agreement in Värmland. None of the stakeholders see it as a threat though just as a change of condition.

The agreement at Värmland regional level

The agreement in Värmland comes as a concept originally from the agreement that was adopted between Government, civil society organizations in the social sphere and Swedish municipalities and county councils in 2008. In the agreement, there are six common principles that are the basis for cooperation: the principle of independence, the principle of dialogue, the principle of quality, the principle of long-term commitment, the principle of transparency and the principle of diversity.

The agreement, Värmland, initiated in 2016, engages with a countywide civil society sector that works in the social area. Those included are:

- non-profit and volunteer-driven associations, religious communities and organizations
- adult educational association
- cooperative and social enterprises

The initial ratification was for the general ambition or declaration of intent, to start the process but in this process, they are developing an action plan and a policy document that will lay the foundation for future activities and the implementation phase.

The process has had the following steps:

Pre-phase (vision) → Consultation Gathering phase (big meetings between stakeholders – process leader gets deployed) → Dialogue phase (Gatherings, seminars, work meetings) → Formulation phase (Strategic document, policy proposal, committees, Referrals etc.) → (current phase in Värmland) Anchoring political decisions taken (Council and the boards) → Implementation phase (Bergenbrink, 2016)

In Värmland there are a diversity of organizations and activities in the civil society sector. In this process, it was important for the county council that they should be considered as voice bearers, service providers and implementers acting outside the public sector, business and academy. In terms of the contact points many of them have umbrella organisations and representatives but some are small and local and with very little resources (Bergenbrink, 2016).

According to the initial pillars in the agreement there needs to be a contemplation that the civil society sector is in a transformative process and that there are no permanent and clear-cut definition of what civil society is. It was therefore important to emphasize that the organisations are dependent on the context and that each organization defines itself and its mission in Värmland and therefore this process as well needs to be flexible and accommodative. It further emphasises that the process of identifying, supporting and formalising the relationship between civil society and public sector should strive to achieve a Värmland with an independent, viable and innovative civil society and also allow for an offspring off entrepreneurial activities within the social economy.

To create the enabling environment there needs to be a long-term sectoral cooperation in Värmland through new models for partnership, financing and regulations linked to civil society social work and integration according the county board and its committees. Some of the key aspects pointed out by the County Council in Värmland, County Administrative Board of Värmland and Region Värmland was that to support and cooperate with civil society in Värmland and for a sustainable development of ideas and stakeholders it needs to make sure:

- That the public sector recognizes and strengthens the regional civil society sector as a crucial resource in the fields of social welfare and integration of immigrants.
- That regional stakeholders in the public sector have a uniform approach to the civil society sector in Värmland and a responsibility for its sustainable development.
- That the parties actively seek to enable social, economic and “organic” growth in Värmland through cross-sectoral cooperation and financing models.
- That the agreement Värmland is needed for the regional civil society sector, to be able to in the most appropriate and efficient way possible to meet the expectations, requirements and challenges faced.

This then can be achieved by creating a forum where they can share experiences, thoughts and ideas as well as jointly providing continuing education and knowledge in a regional context. It should as well imply quality assurance both for the one who is active in an organisation and the end user of their services or goals.

The hopes are that for the individual civil society actor, the agreement means partly a long-term perspective linked to one's activities and assignments, partly access to a formalized network for collaboration, competence raising and knowledge exchange (Bergenbrink, 2016).

Interviews

The discourse forming the interviews could be said to be flavoured by the theories presented in this thesis and should be understood in that context.

Informants responses

In 2016, it was agreed that for the process to move forward there was a need to have to full time positions that worked directly with developing the process and its platforms. It was agreed that one position would be responsible to carry the process towards the county council

the administrators and politicians. The other representative would be assigned to the civil society and to organise the effort together with them and in some occasions, carry their voice.

County council representative/ process leader

This is the feedback provided to as how the process was experienced from her side:

The county council have been moving fast the past six months because they hired two process supervisors/leaders. One from the county council side and one representing civil society. This has been key to progress and she feels that the two process leaders are working at an equal footing.

The county council made available funds for these two positions. Her role is to work towards the county council and the representative from civil society works towards the civil society and with outreach. There are resources in forms of the staffing that has been provided at one-year contract but in the long run they would want the civil society to create their own umbrella organisation.

The motivation for starting this process comes from a political decision, in general the purpose is to go through this process and to get closer to the civil society. But it is at this point already processes and concrete activities going on. There have been discussions for a long time even before this process started. Today there are already “end user” organisations such as the one for people with disabilities, elderly people etc. There are therefore experience with dialogues within the county council and the principle of networking through meetings and agreements that are signed through their grant vehicle. For example, “funktionsrätt” and the county council have been in dialogue for a long time now. These platforms should be incorporated in the overall process and part of what transpires out of the process.

They have been in a “writing process” from the start and they set up a group with stakeholders that has been working closely together. The group consists of Studieförbundet vuxenskolan, Bilda, Röda korset, stiftet, kvinnojouren, working out towards other organisations. They have formulated a local agreement and an action plan; the process initial phase is coming to an end and the county council will take a decision beginning of next year if the implementation of this agreement and action plan can start.

Next phase of the process is the implementation phase and that is a lot to do about communication with the surroundings so that everyone can become familiar with the concept. They also want to look at the financial support together with the municipalities and how it can be restructured, the one-year limit is not optimal because the issues that the organisations are dealing with are long term, societal issues, that needs continuity to be addressed.

She feels it's of great importance that all stakeholders get to know each other and to identify what and whom is out there. In some sense, join forces, it's about personal relationships and organisational relationships. In the beginning of the process the civil society was mostly looking for financial means, but she feels that it has changed now, to be more of a discussion which is a sign of maturity and trust. The idea is to identify common challenges and how to solve them together. In the agreement, they have discussed quality and what this entails for the organisations. Now they are looking at the how and when and where. How can they cooperate and get to know each other and to build trust? As well the framework for this discussion where and how should they take place. That's the way forward she wants an overarching discussion on how to move forward. Better way of tackling a societal issue for all citizens. They need to be several parties. This is the future!

They have had a big meeting in September 2017, 40 - 45 organisations participated but that's just some of whom are out there, especially the small local organisations are difficult to reach.

The county council strives to achieve concrete result and an overarching strategy. It's about transparency and to get an understanding for each other. The county council is run by politicians and therefore works in a different way than civil society organisations they need to concretize which forums that are needed to communicate. One reason being to secure the welfare system. They are responsible for the public health but there are plenty of issues that are related but that they don't work directly with but that would be of great importance to achieve their main objectives.

How do they identify each other and to identify the projects that they could do? Their goal is that this will be overall extensive strategy, and they will base the guidelines on the principles from the agreement at national level and the principles formed at the regional level. This will be the platform and the rules for engagement.

There are things that the county council can't get directly involved with, but they can still support it through education or competencies, but they don't know yet what can transpire they are not yet there now it's just a dialogue and discussion forum.

County council give money for projects based on their health strategy one-year financing but in the future, they envision that they instead will sign contracts with an organization that will implement a strategically important task and with longer durations. IOP which is the Swedish name for that type of contractual set up might be the replacement of the project funding they give now, and it should be given to work with challenges that are of great importance for the citizens of Värmland county.

They are looking at the legal requirements in terms of public procurement. They can't buy the service as it is now it needs to be a joint action to meet the legal requirements. The county council will not be able to buy the service from civil society, but very specific tasks could be done as joint effort where civil society organisations fill a specific function based on that they might be closer to the community and better suited to achieve some goals. However, they are working together with SKL and their lawyers whom are giving them advice on how to structure contracts.

In the long run when the work has progressed she see a lot of possibilities where a lot more government offices could get involved such as "Employment Services", the police, County Administrative Board etc.

The municipalities have already started to build up experience Karlstad municipality already have some in place and other county councils have some really tangible results and she believes that maybe in a five-year period they could develop big projects with lots of different agencies both government and civil society.

They have not seen a big dropout of participants on personal level or organisational level but there has been some who choose to leave the process reasons being lack of time and resources to participate in "discussion groups" since they can be very time consuming which is difficult for small organisations to handle. From the county, more or less the same politicians have been part of the process and also the administrators are still the same which means competencies have been maintained and developed.

Key to the process have been the two fulltime process leaders (previously 10%) who can invite to meetings and coordinate efforts continuity has been created and momentum

maintained. They the process leaders have frequent interaction with each other, the politicians, the administrators, the organisations. They draft strategic documents and help formulate the agenda and most important it gives the process some urgency when there are activities and timetables and resources put in.

Outreach is achieved through the process leaders where civil society representative talk to the organisations and the county council representative talks to all her departments, the politicians and administrators in the organisations where she works. The outreach will as well be about educating and informing. She feels a greater need to get outside the county council, so she wants to talk directly to the municipalities. When the agreement is signed by the county council they are going to use the media much more for the outreach since then it's an official plan and process. They also need to find good examples where they have implemented it to show case what they can do so that people can understand how important it is. Key to success again, it's about building trust between municipalities region Värmland the county board and the organisations

She also would like to see more of thematic approaches meeting all organisations with a specific task and talk together what can be done. There are as example 23 local pensioner organisations and it is difficult to reach all of them therefore, it would be suitable to have a thematic platform instead to be able to reach out. She also believes in an umbrella organisation for all CBOs maybe with a common meeting place, where there as well could be a lot of other activities. Today it's a very isolated work being done by the CBOs and they do not talk to each other enough. There is also a fear of the county councils since it's such a huge organisation and that gap needs to be bridged.

Being big also means it sometimes difficult to reach specific groups with very special needs and who might feel isolated. They want to communicate what is out there and help people get into contact with the right organisations suitable for what they need. Today often these people might seek help at the public hospital even though maybe sometimes they don't need the public health care so in the long run it might cause less strain on the public health care.

One of the problems that she feels this process might help lessen is the aging population in rural areas since they can't open a health care clinic in every village they need other solutions and new partners.

They need to show people that the county councils intentions are good and that their purpose is to make life good for everyone in Värmland. They need to listen to everyone and explain their limitations and ambitions

The agreement is going up with the county board end of January 2018 for a political decision to approve it. There is strong political support, so she is sure it will pass the political process. Currently she is anchoring the agreement with the different committees. The official signing is taking place in April and then the document is official. When its signed her job will officially start now she is actually just doing preparatory work. She wants to meet all organisations that today receive support currently 25 organisations to create better understanding for it.

Västra Götaland region is helpful in sharing experiences and also Örebro Region have shared their experiences, they signed the agreement 2010 but it had stagnated because they did not have process leaders, but now it is starting to move forward because they been given that key person to drive the process.

She feels it is important to have a process leader on both sides and in Värmland the civil society process leader is placed at innovation park and hosted by Vuxenskolan, but they meet once a week.

She feels it's important that this process is being studied for it to reach out and inform people and to see how it can move forward collect data and research the field.

They don't think the new organisation being formed will affect the process per se but rather developed it further with new areas of cooperation

Civil society representative/ process leader

This is the feedback provided as how the process was experienced from her side.

She started working on her position in May this year, so she is fairly new at the job. She does not have a long experience from civil society but that was seen as a positive thing when she got hired since she was seen as neutral and not tied to an organisation. Her background is in process leading and analytical studies.

She doesn't feel that the initiative to start this process comes from civil society but from the politicians. However, the ones who are involved from civil society feels it has been a welcomed and accepted initiative. Civil society in general still struggle a bit to grasp what it is and what it intends to lead to. The reference group with members from civil society and the control group members with representatives from politicians, administration at county council and civil society are well informed and involved in the process.

She feels that when the process leaders came into place that the groups could leave some responsibilities and they are now eager to "get going" and for things to materialise.

The civil society though still worry about the practical consequences of this process and how it will affect them. The agreement only talks about the general framework and principles values, but civil society work very practical and its therefore difficult to grasp and see how it will impact their day to day operation This is still unclear on both sides, they will only start looking at it during implementation phase.

Many organisations today receive financial support for their activities and they are worried that the new approach with partnerships agreements will affect whom and how they get funding. County council are also not sure what will happen and how it will impact the funding. There are big changes to county council structures and this also affect their stakeholders.

This is a process of formalising their relationship to stakeholders and therefore the legal framework would also need to be changed. Civil society financing structures are very complex and this adds to the worry about what will develop.

In the reference groups, there have been little discussion about the concrete interest of the groups, so the organisations have mostly been discussing the general agreement. There has been little lobbying for their own causes. In a sense, they have been disciplined taking mainly the sectors needs first.

The organisations participating are mostly well established and with a strong regional presence therefore the smaller organisations have not been represented the county council at this point has been mostly moving in their old tracks. She has raised the issue to involve smaller organisation or organisations with other types of structures, but it has been difficult to formulate how and why it is still a bit abstract to the politicians at county council.

Still the administrators at county council are open to new organisations joining the process but they are stuck to the legislation and framework that has been in place for a long time, so they are not sure how to accommodate new actors that doesn't fit the typical framework in the way these big established organisations do.

This is a regional project but with the new organisation the municipalities presence will be stronger and therefore local actors might get closer.

The politicians and administration are getting a much more matured view of the civil society what they do and what roles they can play. When she started working with this process the relationship between county council and civil society was very uneven or unbalanced, but she feels that these past six months that have changed a lot. This is because knowledge has grown and the fact that in this process the civil society has started to be regarded as a whole sector not small entities which gives them a whole new collective bargain power and influence on the process. The sector perspective has really made the change. Politicians at the county council are very open minded and supportive and really eager to see progress in this process.

The county council doesn't seem to look at this as cost saving or exploiting the volunteerism within civil society but much more as a means to solve big societal issues such as the demographic change to society. They have in the process really put emphasis on the dialogue as a problem-solving forum. Reality is what it is. This sector will have new positions and importance, so they welcome them this is her perception and not something she has followed up on.

Critic is mostly based on the power balance the civil society is dependent on the county council and their rules sets limits to what civil society does tied to and controlled by the financing. Civil society need more resources generally which of course is a dependency problem. She hopes that this process will lead to more cooperation and coordination between the resources that is available.

She hopes that one of the practical outcomes of this process could be that they would be given physical infrastructure such as offices where the sector could share some cost of administration etc.

Also coordinate organisation thematic so that they possibly could work with bigger organisations and bigger problems in society, to take them on with joint forces and shared experiences.

The small local organisation, she can't reach them as it is now she talks to the regional organisations head offices and then they do the outreach towards their local offices.

But they are discussing how they will be able to reach out better in the future. She believes this would happen during the implementation phase. When there is a formal structure behind them. She also believes that they need physical meeting places and she hopes when the municipalities get more involved that it will be easier to set up these meetings with small local organisations. To enable more cooperation, get to know each other and increase the understanding for what they do.

They do not really look at what the organisations do but more that the values are shared with the county council, but if someone uses unconventional methods that might not work well they have not been in that situation, so they don't know how it would be solved. Maybe when its tied to finance it will be filtered out by itself.

System of exclusion they only look at regional organisations, what does this entail it could be local organisation working with a regional perspective, the ones that are organised in different ways, they have some action plans to be able to reach out to the public better for instance are they planning to translate all publications to other languages,

They are aware of the exclusion that there is. They are talking about whom are not represented such as the fact that few young people are engaged, no one from the countryside or organisations for people born in other countries. They need to widen. Main focus on health issues but everything can be connected to health and they want to widen the things put there

They don't have any Civil Society Public Partnership as it is now, but the organisations are interested and have been asking for it.

They formed a reference group during a big meeting and they had a follow up meeting in September this year the group remains the same this might not be good in the long run they should be replaced now and then so that more people are represented, still its good with continuity.

Civil society organisation with signed partnerships agreements

The respondents were asked six questions about how the formal partnership and the agreement has affected the organizations activities.

- Has it affected what the organizations does and how it does it?
- Do you feel that the officials and politicians respond more to your issues?
- Is there any of their organizations main tasks, issues that has been given greater leverage at a political level?
- Has the cooperation given any new capabilities except for financial?
- Has there been an impact on the volunteers versus staff composition/ professionalization?
- What are the downsides to having a contract according to you?

The questions were posed in a unstructured and reflective manner with the aim that the informants should tell their stories and perception of the process.

BILDA

Studieförbundet Bilda was formed in 1947 and has its roots in the Swedish popular movements. They are a volunteer, politically unbound organization with just over 11,000 active leaders. They have operations throughout the country and are organized in six regions. They have a federal chancellor in Stockholm and a study centre in Jerusalem.

"Bilda is a study federation that creates free zones where different perspectives meet and where the interaction releases people's commitment. Creation, participation and life understanding are central to our educational and cultural activities. Our starting point is people's own driving forces"
(BILDA, 2017).

This is the feedback provided as how the process was experienced from their side.

BILDA have been working a lot with the agreement in Värmland being part of the steering committee, reference group which is compiled of politicians, administrators and civil society representatives. It has as well been going through a process of setting up a partnership with Örebro municipality.

He feels that the partnership can make available funds and that it would be a transparent approach to cooperation with government. The civil society doesn't have the same resources as the public sector, but they have the networks and are out in the field meeting people, this he feels civil society brings to the agreement. He has been working with people for a long time but through another organisation

BILDA hired two people to work with social issues and because of increased activities they received attention in media. BILDA sat down to discuss internally what they can do to address some of the social issues in Örebro segregated and exposed suburbs, and they identified an area which have not received a lot of interventions but with problems in terms of exclusion. The staff then met with politicians, administrators at the municipality and the people living in the identified area. They did a situational analysis to map out what should be done and developed a project.

BILDA is part of the agreement process in Örebro and that's where they discussed a partnership. The legal terms were the main issue, they did not know how to deal with public procurement towards civil society at the municipality and the legal aspects. There are many good examples in Europe but fewer in Sweden. In Sweden, its Västra Götaland region which has had the best experiences, they contacted Gothenburg municipality and spoke to civil society and the legal department at the municipality. They asked politicians from Örebro to attend the meetings to get informed and learn from experiences and that helped them a lot. The municipality could learn how to do it. The process got started and they are going to sign a civil society- public partnership next week.

He thinks as well that the fact that they could do this at a reduced cost helped, they are not for profit and therefore attractive.

Civil society is really involved in this project, and thanks to the prospect of this partnership they could hire people locally which makes the project more efficient having people living in the area implementing the project. Other organisation joined the project and at least one will be part of signing the partnership agreement (Sports club).

The fact that BILDA had dedicated staff meant that it could reach out to other organisations and schools etc.

The foundation and idea of the organisation is to educate people in less prosperous areas such as countryside or areas suffering from exclusion. They have not changed what they do because of this partnership or the process of creating an agreement.

The agreement in Örebro has affected the organisation in the sense that more want to volunteer since they can see there is something good progressing. Therefore, he feels it "activates" the traditional popular movements spirit in Sweden. He also feels that in old times people used to be much more engaged even though many are engaged today in different ways such as their children's sports activities.

They are part of dialogue group in Värmland discussing the agreement taking inspiration from the national but adopting it local conditions

They have been taking it forward but the fact that there are process leaders that can drive the process has been a huge change, it levels the playing field, she has a mandate to talk for all of them putting her more on equal footing with county council. It's important for county council to have a counterpart

The small organisations are represented through their regional offices, but they really hope for a shared meeting space like a building where all organisations could sit and share experiences, expenses and talk stronger as a sector.

The dialogue group have been very focused and disciplined the individual organisation has not used it to market their own organisations to gain leverage or access to funds over the others. Very professional meeting they cross lines in a respectful manner it's a good mix of people with different experiences. He feels that the county council would get a too powerful negotiation counterpart if it was not for this setup.

In one case when they wanted to send out invitations the only logo visible was the one for county council and now all they produce falls under the county council under their webpage

They would like to establish a neutral platform but the fact that they have hired someone is at least balancing

Some organisations can't get compensation for travelling to meetings which is a challenge. In Gothenburg, they compensate members for travels and attending so that everyone is at equal footing

They reach out through the big meetings to local organisations. It is purposeful to work through big organisation because this is at a regional level, but the members should anchor everything with the local organisations.

The send out documentations so that everyone can have their say before the big meetings, but it is important that everyone is responsible for their organisation

They always emphasis the need for support on the country side. The public sector is well aware that they need civil society.

In between meetings they communicate via mail they wright up things and send around there is a "writing group" whom produce the documents and they are always sent out before meetings and it is important with the big physical meetings that everyone is well informed, beforehand. The texts are work with thoroughly to cover everything so that they can't be interpreted in un intended way

They want to discuss how many members that actually should be part of the group. Maybe in the future they should have elections where they appoint people. The first group was elected through a big meeting and they have not really changed which is good for continuity

Last meeting, they asked for more people to join the reference group. The sports organisations have not been asked but everyone could potentially join if they feel it's in their interest. He feels that the ones excluded might be based on the values that they share. There is no real exclusion but since this is at regional level and it is difficult for local organisations to join that could be unintentionally excluding. The content of the meetings is open to the public,

They don't really have any system to exclude someone that don't fit into what they want to do or the principles, but he guesses that partnerships would probably not be formed with organisations that don't adhere to the basic principles such as democratic and human values.

They need a board and representative democracy so that everyone can speak through their representatives.

Politics are more limited to what have been previously decided while civil society can be more fluid. Every fourth year they will review the agreement and every year it will be discussed.

Most organisations will probably have traditional structures, the organisations that can't join by themselves could join or partner up with well-established organisations for partnerships and to get their voice heard. That could be the access point for the ones standing outside the agreement but still want to affect the agreement

He feels that some of the smaller towns really could benefit from these initiatives and that more creativity and social activism is necessary to turn around a downward trend.

Women's shelter, Karlstad,

All Women's House is a volunteer, self-governing and feminist association that houses the women's shelter and the girls' shelter in Karlstad. They have the National Association for Women's shelter and Girl shelter in Sweden, as an umbrella organization. They help women and children who are exposed to violence in close relationships. All Women's House is a volunteer organisation that is religious and politically unbound. Their way of working is based on, help for self-help. They register no one and one can be anonymous, and they practice confidentiality. They listen, provide advice and support as well as assist you in what you want to do. All Women's Houses offer, among other things:

- Help and support if you are exposed to threats or abuse in any form.
- Protected accommodation for those who have to flee your home.
- Support and advice
- Self-help groups for women exposed to abuse, incest and sexual abuse
- Support in case of contact with authorities
- Education about men's violence against women
- workshops
- Information to other associations, police, social services and more

(Karlstads kvinnojour, 2017)

This is the feedback provided as how the process was experienced from her side.

Women's Shelter has an agreement with Karlstad municipality it is now the second year that they have this agreement and in general the experience has been positive. It has not affected much of what they do and how they do it yet, they have the same number of volunteers and numbers of beds.

Most of the money goes into administration which is part due to the agreement. They actually don't receive more money than before they had the agreement, but they can now have a two-year budget plus one where they reapply for funding.

Most of the communication they have with the municipality it with administrators. They communicate their activities or issues specific to the agreement not really any broader discussion about their role.

There is a reference group for the partnership which they meet with and they do have discussions with the politicians, but they don't feel that they have influence on the politics in their area. They do feel however that their experiences and feedback is being "received" by the municipality.

The formal agreement has helped concretize what they do as an organization. She feels that with time the relationship will mature and that there will be a lot more knowledge transfer.

It has not affected how many members they are and since their work relies on volunteer work the numbers who sign up to help is always more than what they can accommodate.

The signing of the agreement has not affected their statutes or goals as an organization. The only implication for them is when it comes to the budget cycle since the municipality want their workplan and budget before they actually had the yearly members meeting to decide on it so in this sense it has a negative impact on the internal democratic process and in some ways their autonomy.

In general, she feels that everyone is happy with the setup and there is an active dialogue. In the future, she believes the organization will have a professional component and one based on volunteering.

At this point they receive women from all municipalities, but she suspects in the future social services which are municipal might limit the numbers they can take since there are cost implications that Karlstad municipality might not be willing to take.

The reference group that has been set up is a good way for a lot of different organizations to meet and share their experiences. She feels that to be able to reach this type of agreement there need to be experience within the organization to negotiate which smaller organizations probably don't have.

Analysis

Empirical analysis

This thesis main objective is to follow a process which is part of a larger change in society which is the changing role of government. Following a trace from central government policy environment it is obvious that this new form of governance and engagement with civil society has taken root within the layers of governance. The thesis has shown that it is being used at national, regional and local level and that it has had real implications on the policy environment and governments engagement. This chapter tries to apply the theories and questions to the qualitative data collected.

It is clear that the driving force behind this process is multi faced even though the policy documents highlight the importance of the civil society as a voice bearer and a stakeholder in the democratic process of governing it is equally lifted out as a key role player in solving the government's challenges with providing welfare services. This does not necessarily need to be a contradiction to carry these two roles at the same time but when one formalises and gets financially dependent it is more difficult to contradict the source of that money. On the other hand, civil society as has been shown in the thesis always in some ways received support from government and to some extent still has remained fairly autonomous. It has shown that input legitimacy is advanced through the participation of civil society stakeholders while output legitimacy is enhanced through an expansion of the knowledge basis of public policy-making and the creation of collective programme responsibility (Sorensen, 2009). Civil society participation in public governance is much more associated with the devolution of power to local and regional authorities. This process of diluting, spreading or sharing gas been shown in this thesis.

The agreement can be regarded as a joint declaration of intent from the various parties but there are between and even within the different parties, separate expectations of the agreement and other actors, as well as interpretations of the process. The agreement is not a contract and contains no binding commitments. which means that one cannot claim any liability from any party. There are mostly vague formulations about increased awareness and increased interest in civil society's contribution to social welfare, which could indicate increased legitimacy for these social actors, but still not binding commitments and it follows a governance logic of the new governance models and fits in the "process oriented thinking" rather than central government policy being implemented in a limited time frame and then evaluated. The agreement is a continuous process that doesn't stops but rather evolves organically or that is the intention at least (Nordfeldt, 2012).

The fact that an agreement was signed between the state and civil society as well as representatives of municipalities and county councils are in line with overall national and international trends towards increased market thinking and competition in the social welfare area and a simultaneous process of new forms of citizenship /and end user involvement in policy design. It also happens in line with an international trend of dialogue processes and agreements between the public sector on the one hand and the organizations within civil society on the other (Nordfeldt, 2012). (Portin, 2016)

It is often within networks that ideas can change policies and that individual stakeholders influence the shaping of both the ideas and policies. The networks performance depends on the societal context, the institutional design and the political struggles that determine their form and functioning. This is where the risks of undermining civil society driven change also can occur, becoming diluted or losing traction. When policies are shaped around single

issues relevant to few interest groups one always possesses the risk of missing the bigger picture.

In the case of the provision of networked policy solutions such as this the policy objectives are often changing due to mutual learning and shifting power relations. The need to adjust policy objectives to changing preferences and circumstances is often one of the primary reasons why governance networks are formed, and this thesis has shown proof of this (Sorensen, 2009).

Against the background of the Swedish cooperative tradition, it's hard to say that this dialogue is something new instead, the dialogue can be considered as a step that changes governance stance towards civil society from being more informal and network-like to becoming more formal. This dialogue now takes place in a more institutionalized setting. There is now a formal commitment from the government offices in the agreement and the development of more institutional cooperation between the state / municipalities and civil society organization is a phenomenon that changes and signifies this new form of governance, and that the power of the state is changing rather than weakened. There is nothing in the design or implementation of the agreement suggesting that power relations change between government and civil society. One can instead imagine that the power of the state can be strengthened by increasing collaboration, one can more clearly give legitimacy to the policy pursued and embrace a higher level of citizenship and "end user" involvement in its political configuration (Nordfeldt, 2012).

The two regions presented in this thesis have chosen two different focus areas with Västra Götaland much more focusing on creating social entrepreneurs through social innovation and Värmland, where they are standing now, in the process is focusing on the dialogue, establishing communication and identifying whom, the stakeholders are.

The regional structures of Västra Götaland and Värmland are different where as of now Värmland still have three different structures of Regional Governance which might imply that the broad developmental approach that Västra Götaland is taking is much more based on their organisational composition covering more areas of governance and of having access to much more resources, while Värmland county council focus on social services and health which is also the main responsibility of the county council. Based on the discussions this might also change when they merge with region Värmland and the county administrative board.

At national level, the agreement states that the main focus is not the economic opportunities but rather to strengthen the voice of civil society and acknowledge the effort that is being done so in that sense Västra Götaland could be said to be operating a bit outside the framework. On the other hand, the Region is really regarded as a best practice in terms of quantity and outreach they have used it as an effective tool for development efforts especially towards their peripheral areas like the rural and suburbs. That might be a necessity to work together with civil society in those areas since government could be said to have failed with most previous efforts.

To answer some of the questions that the thesis raises these are what the evidence has shown:

1. How does the engagement with government impact the role of civil society as opinion builders? Do the organisation (both public and private) gain influence?

Based on the interviews it does not seem as if there are any change to how they work with their specific issues, but one can assume that fact that they are sitting at the table with government representatives entails that they get their specific concerns acknowledged. The organisations that was interviewed could not really be said to in any way work with

controversial issues. They are all in the field of delivering a function and service that in some sense is sought after.

If one looks at women's shelter one could assume that the big picture for them could be at a legislative level so impacting local government might not have any impact as towards those goals. But in terms of educating the public they in fact gets access to a much larger network through the cooperation with government. The main issue for them at local level could perhaps be resources driven to be able to host and assist as many women as possible and provide them with additional services that might connect to the individual's needs.

In terms of BILDA they again might not have a specific idea that they need to lobby for or to achieve a specific change, their main interest is probably more related to be able to reach out as much as possible again this could be assumed to be achieved both through sitting at the table in the agreement discussions and through their partnership.

2. Whom gets left out in this process and dialogue between government and civil society (Accessibility)?

At national level, the policy seems to be open to any organisation. The dedicated web page has a form that one need to fill in and submit to "sign up" to the agreement. It does not state how the applications is processed but there is a filtering process through the fact that you have to adhere to the basic principles. At national level, the office of "övernskommelse" as well invite organisations to gatherings on Fridays each week. This is an opportunity to meet other organisations and network

In this process it's difficult to talk about exclusion in Värmland region since they are working at a regional level it also makes sense to work towards the organisations that as well are regional there is nothing per se that keeps the municipalities in the smaller towns to do what Karlstad municipality is doing in fact it would probably make a big difference for the rural areas to have a similar setup, the limitations might be resource driven because the smaller towns don't have the staffing or financial means. Until now they have a limited number of organisations onboard, but it is still early in the process and they seem to be aware of that it might be something they would have to work harder on in the future. There is as well the issue around who should be allowed in all respondents clearly states that the basic requirements are that they signed up to basic liberal democratic ideas and human rights. This is not really controversial even though it might hamper the dialogue if this is applied in a too subjective and uncontrolled manner. One could fear that it could be used as a foundation for organisations to keep competition out. This will be discussed more in detail later, but it is a fact that organisations compete for resource and in competition unfair practices sometimes gets applied.

3. Does the process of establishing a platform increase transparency and responsiveness within governance networks?

When contacting the respondents some reacted with surprise that I have heard about this process, one reason perhaps being that this is a pre-phase in Värmland and before the county council have signed off on it, it has not really been marketed. There is however available information on the homepage of the county council and throughout the pre-phase process meetings have taken place and stakeholders have been engaged. It seems then to be a fairly transparent process.

The partnership agreements when signed becomes public information and in some sense, this makes it much more transparent than other public procurement processes where the public counterpart can keep anything relating to their business operation secret as long as it could be relating to intellectual property rights. This would not normally be in the interest of a civil society organisation since they get their support and funding (public and private) through what they do and how they do it.

4. Is there a process of knowledge sharing - mutual learning (capabilities)?

Based on the interview it seems that the organisations involved in partnerships did experience that their experiences and knowledge was being absorbed by the public representatives. This of course would probably need to be studied in a much longer time frame to be verified. The fact that these regions and municipalities have committed resources to this process is in itself an indication that there is knowledge, skills and solutions that they would want to tap into. This is as well indicative that the form of governance this reflects is a much less command driven and more flexible. Or a governance that alleviates itself from responsibilities sharing it or placing it with other stakeholders.

The future of the agreement

The agreement has received a lot of attention within the civil society in Värmland there have been information campaigns, seminars and a lot of dialogue. Consequently, it has created a lot of hopes but as well fear, the opportunity for more people to raise their concerns and as well the opportunity to receive financial support for their qualified efforts, but also a fear of losing previous arrangements with the county council or to be trapped to new financial commitments.

One of the more important ideas raised by the informants is the fact that ideally there should be a new platform created a space where the public sector, the politicians and civil society could meet at more equal terms which are pre-determined by all participants. This then would in some ways level the playing field. If civil society is to be regarded as an equal partner that might be the best way of representation.

The other aspect is that when the social economy grows which is not necessarily driven by only profit maximizing there could be a way of counterbalancing the influences of big business. Typical examples in Sweden is the big venture capital that has flown into public education where it seeks maximum rent before seeking new destinations. If one could be imagining more local cooperatives anchored on local people running these schools, it could in many ways positively impact local democratic institutions in a setup where there are platforms such as the one being created in Värmland.

Discussion

Theoretical analysis

Governance

Based on the statements made in the background sections there is a need to elaborate on the new role of government and governance, as the regions studied are coming from a typical Kenyan welfare state model but moving towards a more neo liberal form of governance and maybe even now into a completely new form of governance. This has forced different forms of welfare reforms which has entailed, instead, of the end of the “social” we are looking at new post welfare regimes of “social” in some regions and practices. (Dean 2010 -10) This

leads us into new forms of governance and today governments new functionality is more as a coordinator between stakeholders in the different sectors, new governance models are evolving to solve different challenges in society. The social economy or third sector is the primary driver of civil society and public partnerships but coordinated by government to solve common issues. This process also displays and involves a modern form of governance where the government has moved from a form of governance where the state and security are the primary functions, towards a state of political economy where it is responsible for all individuals in society and through that the economy became part of the exercise of power and governmentality (Dean 2010 -25)

This new form of governance has new opportunities in terms of impacting the governance of communities both in terms of putting more pressure on government making it more responsive to societal needs. It could also entail a threat to the representative democratic system in the forms of informal or complicated and tangled networks pushing agendas outside what the electorate wished for or supported via the ballot box. The issue here is especially transparency which is one of the fundamentals in the liberal democratic system. Even though the processes are accessible it requires knowledge of it to access the information. There is of course the dealings and dialogues that takes place “off the record” because of the fact that this networks also create social spaces where stakeholders might exchange information or even take decisions in the form of informal and different alliances.

This is part of a process of change and are a repositioning within the governance networks, but it is as well driven by political ideals. One needs to weigh in the impact of political ideas in understanding processes of change and stability in politics and public policy and how are ideas and ideologies institutionalized and how do they define the interests of strategic policy stakeholders (Beland et al. 2016) The ideas of neoliberalism have been deeply entrenched within the state institutions and these ideas of a specific political economy. Within this is the idea that the market should discipline the political. There is a devolution of power through the process of decentralisation and even through volunteerism disarming the state of some of its powers to shape policy through democratic processes and moving that to the rational of market fundamentalism entailing instead of majority decisions at government level it relies on individual actor’s rationality and competitiveness to deliver solutions to the public on a market logic (Sager, 2011).

This thesis has shown some of the actors, and the process and through that describing the different levels of government and actors strategically positioning themselves in the context of region building. This process is politically driven because it is a process where different approaches to governance can be identified and where strategic options are made in relation to other actors in terms of control and positioning.

The meta governance is a good example where “voter verdict” to actions taken by politicians and government institutions, that link is partly broken since many decisions are taken at new or other platforms than what the representative democracy has instituted. The physical and mental barriers to those decisions are much greater the further in the periphery you are standing since it to an even greater extent requires knowledge, social networks and proximity to what could be defined as the mainstream of the moral hegemony and control.

The balance of power is of course relevant for this thesis and is the state diminishing in importance? Although the increased significance of governance typically involves a loss of decisional and operative independence by the state, it can also improve their capacity to project state power and achieve state objectives by activating knowledge and power resources from influential non-governmental partners or stakeholders. As regional and local states are

becoming a partner, facilitator, and mediator in public-private groupings, growth coalitions, etc., they risk losing their overall coordinating role for and on behalf of local community interests and, thereby, a part of their legitimacy (Lauria, 1997).

Changed mode of operationality

The government and in this case the regional government has in many ways then been forced to become the expertise to legitimate its actions in the political – economic arena and to do this one needs to pose knowledge and power that can be accepted by society. This relationship between knowledge and power becomes interesting in the context where government “reaches out” and asks society to participate, stating that they might not possess all the necessary knowledge. Are we then witnessing a new mode of governance or is there a core of untouched government rationality behind this process? The rationality of this also entails that implementation and results rest with efficient network management which in itself requires static government structures. This is in turn dependent on the member’s ability to influence each other horizontally it requires pockets of informality and commitments to each other within and outside the network to manoeuvre. So, one analysis then could be that there are a new layer of government operating on top of a core function that allows for this pocket of informality and the types of outreach that is taking place while reaching out towards civil society.

Exercising power

Another phase of power is exercised by the agents in this process whom could derive benefits from new and multiple layers of governance. They are the ones who exercise hegemony over the ideological structures in society such as the mainstreaming of the economy and how it functions (neoliberal agenda) or how concepts such as liberal democracy is described. These agents could be the media (driven by their owner’s interest) The academia driven by where the funding for research lies or political elites motivated by consolidating their positions in the merging structures. Even when setting the preferences in society, dimension of power one can clearly see that there could be driven by the setting of self-interest and power struggles but there is a danger when you look at individuals, structures, agents etc. as passive recipients of preferences, ideas or actions by others therefore it’s important to acknowledge that there is interaction between those who project their interests and those who accept or acknowledge them. One also needs to reflect upon in a situation where power is exercised that the object is not willingly being submerged or actually agrees there is always multiple layers and pluralism even within individual actors (Hay,2002).

Challenges within the civil society

One of the issues for civil society is that to partake in this dialog that is a component of new governance one requires resources through human capital and know-how and to some extent financial. Does this give a voice and opportunity for all citizen’s and organisations? In some sense, yes because it is possible for a majority of the citizens in regions to join or activate oneself in a civil society organisation or popular movement. It is even possible for smaller organisations in some ways to team up with bigger ones to make their voice heard through them.

The discussion is still there, is this a platform for producing new ideas on how to tackle social challenges or a way of finding cheaper ways of providing services to the public. This as well gets a bit more complicated taking into account the interest of the individuals at the

organisation to grow and employ and provide income security and a purposeful life might overshadow or outweigh their original purpose. There is also the risk or incitement for organisations to move in a direction where the money is and not where they can impact or where the biggest challenges to society might be. Issues in our society tend to shift in terms of how much attention they receive by media and politicians. This then might activate and encourage the political entrepreneurs and consultants who now how to navigate these waters.

According to the agreement there needs to be flexibility in terms of the definition to what the civil society sector is reason being its transformative nature and that there are no permanent and clear-cut definition of what civil society really is. It was therefore important to emphasize that the organisations are dependent on the context and that each organization defines itself and its mission in and therefore this process as well needs to be flexible and accommodative. This then still needs to be clearly monitored to avoid the potential rent seekers the ones who know how to gain leverage and income from these types of processes. Based on the author of this thesis own experiences there are many risks involved when even the process with the best intentions gets hijacked by the ones who know how to position themselves and gain resources.

There are challenges in term of sovereignty and power when engaging in agreement with what is a much larger and stronger counterpart and in term of transparency in between the negotiating parties. On the other hand, if all these transactions between government and stakeholders are always readably available for the public through the different channels of communication there is transparency at another level. One could assume the public could through media and eventually the ballot box expresses their verdict on the dealing taking place. The problem though is that a lot of these exchanges might be in the “fine details” of decisions taken or the issues are so complicated that the public does not have even an educated guess about what they entail.

Relating perspectives, theories and studies

Governance comprises of formal institutions, decisions and influences, as well as informal ones by various participants associated with policy making and implementation processes. Governance is a result of interaction among various actors who want to resolve common public problems under the constraints of both formal and informal institutions. Governance has to do with taking decisions about direction at the societal level. The defenders of traditional governing as the “to be put on a path” emphasizes the role of the state in the process of governance, and warns against the potential danger of interference of private sector values into the public sector, which is recommended by the new public management. Governance also signifies government management capacities, government bureaucracies because it differs from their private-sector counterparts in two important aspects: they exercise monopoly power, and more important, they lack the balance sheet that exposes them to single-issue accountability. The most important nature of public governance is the existence of monopoly status and the lack of clear signals. To overcome the limits of public governance, therefore, there needs to be various policies that can change the behaviours of bureaucrats as well as citizens. To understand that governance is about how stakeholders operate internally and how they deliver services. Broad definitions emphasize that there can be a variety of patterns of governance, that is, a diversity of ways in which government is organized, and government works (Lee, 2003).

A similar study as this thesis has been carried out on a partnership set up to solve challenges with unaccompanied minors that arrived in Sweden seeking asylum and the study concludes

that the partnership impacts and add to the collective value for the targeted unaccompanied minors. It is dependent on what the partners can offer and achieve together rather than by individual services. The partnership initiated new specific services, the coordination and responsibilities for which were placed at different organisations. The partnership as well enabled smoother collaboration around the planning, implementation, timing, tailoring and complementarity of the interventions. Major factors for the partnership success in its policies and their impact so far was that there was a shared understanding and commitment to the challenge at hand. Being a complex challenge required collaboration across organisations and sectors where public sector actors admit their dependency on civil society and where civil society organisations see each other as collaborators rather than competitors. The partnership allowed the civil society organizations to influence in both partnership management tools, sharing public resources and shaping the partnership policy contents and services.

The partnership agreement is an example of collaboration with enabling civil society organizations something that traditional contracts might not offer. The format for this partnership as well legitimised the partnership in the eyes of civil society. The partnership however changed when the policies at national level changed regarding legal framework and costs and this changed the focus from long and midterm engagements to emergency interventions. The study concludes that the partnership was in many ways driven by political will and lacked some clear legal framework which meant that national and local political cultural change hindered it from progressing, therefore, there is a need for favourable legal framework for these types of collaborations (Aflaki, 2017)

The second study used as an example is of a nexus approach which entails management and governance across sectors and scales to dealing with shocks from for instance environmental disasters. The study demonstrates that collaboration and communication between the public sector and civil society play an important role in the effectiveness of decision-making in response to nexus shocks through the provision of information, voluntary action and joint implementation of local projects. There are benefits incorporating cross-sector and stakeholder needs and processes, resulting in the needs of end users to be better considered. However, decisions made to shape responses to nexus shocks formulated at the national level tend to fail when not considering implications at the local level, longer term, or broader sector implications. Challenges involved such as that impacts that will be felt differently in different contexts and by different stakeholders makes them more difficult to communicate. The understanding of risks and knowledge needs of different communities will vary along with their capacities to respond. There is a lack of trust in decision-makers and those informing them therefore the approach with involving civil society has the benefit of both educating about risks finding local solution or broad-based approaches (Brooks, 2017)

The third study comes from a similar approach where one used partnership between civil society, Public sector and a Development bank - to achieve development goals through a joined public-private partnerships (PPPs) the ambition was to reduce poverty and promote local development. As part of the Food Bank South Africa (FBSA) which is a network of food banks, the AFB was created to reduce rural and urban food insecurities. Building on a national system of food banks, they trained small-scale rural farmers to sell their crops to the food banks network of local food organizations which then feed the urban poor. In the case of the AFB, findings suggested that the PPP emerged as a mutually beneficial collaboration between the state and FBSA, as the state needed political power and FBSA needed money.

However, for this PPP to form, FBSA completely transformed its mission and structure to fit the governments preference for rural development projects. This meant that although the AFB formed to empower FBSA, data findings indicated that the AFB increased state control over FBSA. In this way, PPPs need to be understood within the context of local state-civil society relations, as methods of state control reflect South Africa's unique version of neoliberalism. The danger is within the unequal possession of power (Warshawsky, 2015).

Conclusion

The state system has historically been described by political scientist as consisting of utility-maximising rational actors. It was seen as there was only one 'face of power'. The presence of participatory spaces and the majoritarian principle means that the concept of power is contested on the other hand theories of participatory democracy tend to be sceptical about the democratic potentials of governance networks, because they blur the boundary between state and civil society and because of their sometimes-informal character and "difficult to trace" networks. Thereby threaten to subject the debate in civil society to the power games instead of the instrumental logics associated with the traditional state and its over watch the representatives elected through elections (Sorensen, 2009).

In representative democracy people vote on a political idea but even more so on a political program which is a blueprint for political decisions and actions to take place during a period of political mandate. During this time of political mandate there are no guarantees that the program that popular vote placed their trust in will be implemented. This might be due to changes in the world outside the control of politics or parliamentary conditions where negotiations and compromises fails to achieve the expected outcomes. In the new governance, the stakeholders that impacts the political directions multiplies and therefore there is also an opportunity for the public and different interest groups to have a more direct impact on politics because those channels for communication have been opened. This of course entails that these organizations have the capabilities to do so and to be heard. The new governance also entails that more power has been moved towards the regions and locals not necessarily only institutionally but in other ways as well since the power gravity has change. These could be some of the positive implications of new governance. The crucial factor is whom sets the agenda for the political discussions and directions. In an neo liberal agenda big business has the strongest voice and if today we are seeing a reaction to this unfortunately it has not been only directed towards the elitist networks but towards everything that is perceived to be external influences on local issues. This might be a threat to democracy as we know it today.

Studying governance and the fact that the discipline itself tends to reproduce its essence, meaning that, yes there is a shift from government to governance and there are new power relations in these structures but how does one best study these new tiers of power relations? Can we trust our instincts to judge what is reality when we are living in a hegemony of ideas and values, is there a way of separating social studies from political based on the ontological understanding that what we see is what it is and that there is a core of static structures untouched by human interaction and relationships? Are we observing reality in terms of what is observable or when we try, and form theories are we reproducing our own philosophy seen from our purposely build eyeglasses. The process of region building, formulated as a process of both materialistic and social identity building and the study of meta governance need to as

well take into account that governance and actors will be continuously affected by that process and are therefore not ever static. In the approach that was taken it would be pointless to study governance if we did not acknowledge that there is not one truth, but many based on how and where you are affected and stand in these tiers of governance (Rönnblom 2013).

There is no free and open competition among different political elites to represent the relevant and affected citizens, as the participating stakeholder organizations often possess a domination in representing defined groups of people. Finally, democratic control and accountability is weak since the network participants are not elected, but rather self-appointed. On the other hand, the collaboration with stakeholders might help mobilize additional resources, and negotiated coordination might help make better use of the available resources (Abels, 2007).

Some of the respondents emphasised the need for different sectors, institutions and experiences to come together to solve common issues if these platforms are transparent accommodates the views from citizens and end users it might not reflect badly on representative democracy but rather create more representatives.

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Informants

Elisabeth Björk Chariperson, Women's shelter, Karlstad interviewed on the 15th of June 2017

Stefan Lundmark Teamleader BILDA interviewed on the 22th of November 2017

Pernilla Åberg Civil society representative/ process leader interviewed on the 26th of November 2017

Pia Augustsson County council representative/ process leader interviewed on the 29th of November 2017

Captions

Figure 1 Map of Västra Götaland Region

Figure 2 Map of Värmland Region