The Rise of the “New Administration”

- The Transformation of a City Central Administration

PO Norell
Karlstad University
Department of Political Science
651 88 Karlstad
Sweden
p.o.norell@kau.se
+46 54 7001610

Abstract
This paper penetrates the character of today’s central administration in a medium sized Swedish city - Karlstad – and how this administration has been transformed the last thirty years. Several ideal typical models for steering and organizing serve as a point of departure; all these are anchored to the specific Swedish local tradition. The changes are systematically studied with regard to characteristics on an organizational and an individual level. The case proves to be illuminating. In 1975 we find a very traditional, institutionalized bureaucracy. This has gradually been transformed into today’s hybrid form, where parts of various models exist parallel, though dominated by features related to the network or “governance” model. This administration seems to bear the stamp of a “new administrator”. This type differs in many respects from the “traditional one”. Officials associated with this are coordinating activities related to specific values, issues or events of political priority. Some have clearly been recruited with the purpose of bringing in their networks; for a few we find strong connections to specific politicians. To some extent they pose a threat to the administrative hierarchy and confuse relationships. To another they facilitate the handling of wicked issues. Without a doubt, the complexity of local leadership is increasing.
**Introduction**

For centuries, the role of the principle’s advisor has attracted the attention of scholars. This paper to some extent penetrates that same issue but on a more prosaic level: the central administration of a Swedish medium sized city, Karlstad. The purpose is to mirror today’s administration in the light of history: *What is typical for the role and functioning of the Karlstad central administration and where did it spring from?* As the gradual changes are described we shall also touch upon causes: *why has this transformation occurred?* Further, we shall more speculatively discuss: *which are the main challenges that top administrative leadership face?*

This brings two phenomena to our attention: the role of the (central) administration and change. Let us start with the former. The role of a Swedish local administration is only to a very limited degree regulated in law; Norell (1989; 1994) found three more or less comprehensive views of the administration represented in the debate. These views differ concerning the loyalty and function which the administrators are supposed to comprise. The *political attitude* is typically to mistrust these officials; they are considered to be political actors without a political mandate or responsibility. The political leadership needs a staff of party politically loyal advisors; the role of the traditional administration should be reduced to the implementation phase. Others mean that these officials could act as a *balancing force* in the local political system guaranteeing that laws are followed, that professional views are considered in decision-making and that implementation is characterized by neutrality. Politics and administration could and should be separated. The *pragmatic view* is that administrators do influence local politics but that this tendency could be controlled by the politicians. The border-line between politics and administration is not clear-cut. It is up to the local politicians to decide what is of political interest; to give the officials a certain amount of decision-making could help fuel motivation. The politicians should listen to these officials but they could also use other sources. According to law, the leading official should see that all local decision-making is made according to law, that the correct procedures are followed and that the items to be decided upon are properly prepared.

The role of the central administration does not only have a bearing on the relationship to the politicians but also on the internal role towards other departments and towards external actors. Typically, the central administration is responsible for the administrative systems that regulate much of the daily work of the total city administration.

The change of the public sector (or the welfare state) has indeed been highlighted in research the last few decades. Much focus has been on the modernizing or the reform of this sector. Using that perspective we associate with a pronounced ambition of improvement. Pollitt & Bouckaert (2004:8) suggest a definition: “*public management reform consists of deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the object of getting them (in some sense) to run better*” (italicized in original). In some sense an organization is always changing, if we look at daily work of the people involved with some interval we most certainly find minor or major changes; certain issues are being more focused than other, certain contacts and relationships become more important while others fade out. When new people are recruited they bring with them, at least slightly, different skills and attitudes; they do things differently. On the other hand, an official could be staying in an administration for decades; the organizational structure, routines and procedures could be rather long-lived. Further, one should not neglect the ability to learning among officials. We find both stability and change. But, from time to time we expect more fundamental changes to take place. Frequently, reform ambitions are connected with political forces and ideologies and sometimes even with specific individuals.
Consequently, this paper has a few underlying presumptions: institutions matter and so do the people who occupy them (Mouritzen & Svara 2002). In a complicated way institutions and people influence each other. The role of the administration is affected both by institutional features and by the people holding positions there. Institutions and people are affected by history, by experiences and traditions. Not surprisingly, we shall add a third presumption: context matters. Administration is affected by its environment and how this is changing. In focusing the administrative level, politics is part of this context which affects the administration. By looking closer into a specific case, hopefully, we get a better understanding of how these complicated interactions could work.

Let us immediately lay down, the last three decade’s restructuring of the Karlstad Town Hall administration never was an issue of high political priority. Nevertheless, when comparing today’s administration with the one present in the mid 1970s concerning staffing, the carrying out of the daily work and in terms of political role, the changes are remarkable, not to say drastic. “The old administration” was not overthrown in a revolutionary way; rather, the process has typically been incremental. We find certain critical incidents, though. My impression is that most of the changes concerning the organizational structure are adjustments and confirmations of changes that already have been underway; we see few reform initiatives. This is certainly true for the first part of the period we are dealing with. The changes have gradually been speeded up and the leadership seems in later years to be more proactive. Whether today’s administration is more politically influential than the one acting thirty years ago, I am not sure; but the way that it participates in decisive processes is different, as is its relationship to other departments and to external actors of various kind. I see the rise of a “new administration”. This could perhaps be evolved an ideal type – “the new administrator” – compared to other such types.

This central administration has some specific characteristics. On the one hand, in numbers of staff it is relatively modest, about 100 people and this has not changed very much from the mid 1970s. This could be compared to the total city administration which has close to 8 000 employees! We are dealing with slightly more than one per cent of the council employees. On the other hand, these people are involved in the preparation of practically all issues of political influence as these are being transferred into items and formal decision-making in the Executive Committee and in Council. The leading officials are working closely with the leading politicians; some of them have an almost daily contact. They are also in charge of the overall administrative systems regulating the work of other departments.

Why study Karlstad? As regional centre (for Värmland) Karlstad is big enough to have a rather differentiated social and administrative structure, but not “too big” in the sense that it is hard to overview. The City has only about 84 000 inhabitants, but four other local authorities have grown together with Karlstad, which makes the area consist of a bit over 130 000 inhabitants. We find some important institutions and positions here: a governor, a bishop, the central offices of the county council, including the main hospital, a university and some central government authorities; it used to have a regiment but this was closed-down a decade ago. Politically, it is not dominated by either the social democrats or the liberal-conservative coalitions; the majority coalition changes after almost every election. In terms of business, Karlstad is the centre of a paper and pulp cluster of global magnitude, involving research and production; as a consequence the percentage civil engineers, is the highest in Sweden. Socially and culturally we find an opera (very successful), theatres, lots of other music arrangements and not the least sports (especially successful in ice-hockey and athletics); we find an airport, a harbour and
railway connections to Oslo, Stockholm and Gothenburg. The party proportions of votes to the Swedish parliament and to the council of Karlstad have the last few elections been almost totally corresponding; the population of this city is close to one per cent of the Swedish population, so in some sense one could say that our case is a microcosm of the country. (This last remark should not be exaggerated). In addition, I have - due to my earlier career – a rather unique inside knowledge of this case and access to important people and documents.

**Background: Swedish Local Government context and tradition**

Hence, we need to put this specific case into context. This could analytically be related to different levels (cf. Pollitt & Bouckaert 2004). In addition to the local environment, national and international levels need to be taken into account. Changes of a global magnitude affect the national as well as local political and administrative arenas. These changes, sometimes referred to as mega-trends, could include the globalization of the economy, new information and communication technology, the individualization of people, more general awareness of the environmental threats, huge migration, urbanization and an aging population (cf. Klausen 2001). It would be most surprising if local politics was not affected by drastically changing economic conditions for the local business, by new ways of communicating, by changing priorities of the local citizens, and by a new composition of that citizenry. Local politics and administration are of course influenced by national politics. Extensive and comprehensive legislation limits local decision-making. The economic situation in the country and the financial situation of the state clearly affect municipal finance. The party system is another important link; initiatives taken by the party leaderships are expected to have an impact locally. Local administrative leaders are not immune to international or national modes of steering and organizing; there are many occasions when they are exposed to various ideas. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA) has traditionally had the role of adjusting these models into local authority practice and, not least important, to legitimize them.

Today’s Swedish local authorities have two main trajectories: a more or less communitarian one and a state related one. Traditionally, mobilizing the local population with its different assets was a natural way of handling many issues of common interest. To this very day, the administration is almost totally absent in the Local Government Act; this is primarily regulating the political bodies: the council, the executive committee and other committees. Implicitly, from a more or less communitarian presumption: this is where the decision-making takes place, but also the implementation. The last traces of that society probably languished in the 1960s. Connected to the idea of the welfare state, local authorities could serve as suitable implementing bodies of central government initiated ambitious reform programmes. Especially after World War II these political ambitions grew; amalgamations of municipalities was one means of creating strong and professional enough units to carry these into effect. (In the Swedish case, amalgamations took place on two occasions: in the early 1950s and in the early 1970s). Grants were the necessary complementing financial sources. Sweden is probably the most pronounced example of the Scandinavian (or the social democratic) welfare model (see Esping-Andersen 1990). The Social Democratic Party has been the dominant party since the early 1930s and has been out of office less than ten of the last 72 years! Mostly, this party has formed minority governments. Apart from universal rights concerning the social transfer system, rather discretionary local (and county) authorities (see Hansen 2001) providing a multitude of services are perceived cornerstones in this welfare model (Klausen 2001). Strong trade unions and also involvement from other interest groups supplements this model.

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The local administrations grew tremendously during the 1960s and 1970s; the number of employees tripled. The organisational structure was close to a blueprint of the central government sector structure (Strömberg & Norell 1982). The economic crises of the late 1970s put a stop to the drastic increase. Perhaps one could claim that the hierarchical welfare model reached its peak around the year 1980. This state related trajectory has yet another important leg, the system of laws that regulates procedures through which decision-making and implementation should be accomplished: the government by law. In this case we can connect to all the traditional values of the bureaucracy. Whereas in the UK local authorities were heavily criticized and, during the Thatcher regime, challenged by reforms inspired by the market and the private firm as models, the solutions suggested in Sweden were more modest. Legislation opened up for experimenting and finding new ways of organising. The most pronounced change that took place was a wave of decentralizing, in combination with the top level concentrating on setting goals. A “Free Municipal Experiment” was launched, making it possible for local authorities to except from special laws (Strömberg 1990). They could also organize in area committees. Generally, there was a tendency that legislation became less detailed and more focused on what should be accomplished, on goals and aims. Block grants became the totally dominant way of bringing money from the state to the local authorities; also internally decentralization went on. Gradually, a frame budget system gained a footing, later to become dominant, according to which the committees just got one frame appropriation at their disposal, facilitating discretionary action. Practically all restrictions concerning local authority organisation was abolished in the Local Government Act of 1991. Whether this trend was more or less necessary due to “government overload” at the top of the organisations, a consequence of and/or a require from a more professional staff all over, or just a mode, or perhaps a combination of the three, is hard to say. The basic distrust found in the UK did not have its correspondence in Sweden. There was though, a general awareness that a further growth of services and administration would be hard, not to say impossible, to finance. Issues related to organizing and steering started to be on the agenda in the early 1980s; earlier these were more or less taken for granted.

The deep economic and financial crisis of the first part of the 1990s clearly was a reason for the reconsideration of organization and management. Gradually, market-inspired solutions were implemented in local authorities; these were not central government initiatives, they were rather introduced as recommendations by consultants connected to the SALA and others. During the early 1990s some local authorities, especially in the Stockholm area and run by the Moderates, launched more comprehensive models for organizing and steering according to the New Public Management (NPM) ideas. Many a council introduced some of the arrangements that usually are considered to be “NPM”, on parts of their organisation. The purchaser/provider model was widely debated. Step by step, private and other alternative providers have become more frequent.

When Sweden in the mid 1990s entered the EU, the local authorities discovered new ways of financing development projects, through partnerships. Economic development was the issue during the latter part of the 1990s. All Swedish local authorities were involved in the process of creating economic development programmes locally and regionally, these included state and county council authorities, private business and interest groups of all kinds. Concepts like network, social capital, trust, empowerment and governance gradually came into use. Today, it is no exaggeration to claim that co-operation is what is expected. More or less new policy areas were introduced and allowed free scope: issues connected to gender equality, minority rights, integration of immigrants, children’s rights, political participation of the young, international relations, public health and security and safety etcetera.
Reference: models for steering and organizing

So far we have looked upon models for organizing and steering from a historic point of view. The more or less ideal typical models which have been introduced over the years could of course be compared more systematically. The last fifteen years or so, we find extensive research penetrating the differences between hierarchies, markets and networks. John Benington (2001) and RAW Rhodes (2001) are two examples which seem to complement each other by their choice of aspects. Put together these two give a rather good view of what could be associated with these types, more generally. (These two are not, in this example, occupied with the communitarian model and I shall not look that close into that either).

The hierarchic model
we connect to a traditional public administration associated with a stable society of a homogenous population with rather uncomplicated demands and problems, defined by strong professional groups; services are delivered by the local authorities and the steering process is typically hierarchic where rules, command and authority matter. The culture is characterized by subordination and dependence. The NPM or market model is oriented on competition and the citizen as a consumer which expresses his wishes through the market; the population is perceived to be atomized and independent. Relationships are based on contracts and price is the regulating mechanism. The society to which the governance or network type is associated is less easily tangible; it is constantly changing, the population is diversified, needs and problems are complex. Focus is much more turned outward, to initiatives coming from actors in society. Actors are interdependent, resources are exchanged, relationships are built on trust and reciprocity; to be successful you need diplomatic skills. The variant mentioned above, the decentralized welfare model, could as well be discussed more principally. This could be interpreted as a reaction to the hierarchic model, and as such much more focusing flexibility, decentralization and delegation, adjustment to the specific situation; a more trusting model also better suited to a well educated and responsible staff. Here these should be used as a point of departure for the case study, a heuristic device.

Which role does these various models assign the central administrator? More, speculatively we connect the hierarchical welfare model with administrative planning of (new) services; with the coordination of activities, with financing, purchasing et cetera. But we also attach it to the application of law and traditional bureaucratic procedures. In the decentralized welfare model the central administrators are less concerned with details; they see that issues are kept away from the leading politicians, making it possible for them to concentrate on goals and principles. They create administrative routines and systems that facilitate decentralizing. The NPM central administrator is occupied with issues of efficiency and effectiveness, with competitiveness and clarity of responsibility, with systems to measure and assess outputs and outcomes. The network administrator is concerned with creating partnerships. (The communitarian central administrator is absent, or perhaps involved in the mobilizing of the public to solve issues of common interest, in empowering).

In the practical world of politics and/or administration we rarely find “pure” forms of steering or organizing. Layer is put on layer; the newly introduced is adjusted to earlier established forms: various types of hybrids are developed (Klausen & Ståhlberg 1998).

Understanding change: a complementary theoretical approach

This study is more preoccupied with the description of change than with the explanation of it but we shall not totally neglect this last aspect. Christensen et al (2005) provide us with a general approach to public organizing and steering which could serve as a point of departure for a discussion also dealing with causes of change. They focus three (or is it not really four?) per-
spective in their analyses; one (or two) which they consider to be instrumental and two others which they find institutional. The first instrumental perspective is hierarchic and rational in character; this views the public organization as a means for the top leadership to achieve its goals. The second instrumental perspective is concerned with the negotiating parts of the process of change; in an organization we find different views and various interests, all of which have their power resources. The top leadership must take this into account and compromise. The institutional perspective stresses that an organization develops its own values, norms and rules and that it is not at all sure that its members will adjust to the initiatives taken by the leadership. This perspective is divided into a cultural variant and one concerned with myths. The first of these focuses on “informal, internal values and norms within the organization” (Christensen et al. 2005:3); the second one is stressing values and norms in the context of the organization and symbolic values.

These various perspectives and variants could be interpreted as complementary; they have different focus and put together they could help us getting a better understanding of these phenomena. When related to reforms and change they provide us with different predictions or expectations: from the hierarchic instrumental perspective we expect a close connection between reform initiative and change. From the negotiating variant of this instrumental perspective we should not be surprised to see deviations between initiatives and actual change, this due to resistance from various forces inside or outside the organization; change could challenge the distribution of power and relationships more generally. The cultural perspective is occupied with history and tradition, with incremental change and stability; the values and norms of an institution is not easily changed (even if the structure is changed this does not necessarily affect the procedures). From the myth perspective we expect the organization to be susceptible to external forces and modes; to gain legitimacy from external actors – to be considered modern, effective or whatever – the organization is adaptable. As a consequence organizations become more and more similar; we see a process of isomorphism. When it comes to the actual implementation process the presence of someone who “translates” the prescription of (good) steering and organizing is stressed (Premfors 1998). This study is not systematically testing the various hypotheses that could be exerted from these perspectives. Nevertheless, they supply us with more general tools for the understanding of this elusive phenomenon: organizational change.

The empirical study

This study has as a point of departure these ideal typical models. These we shall return to at the end of this paper but the practical empirical study concerns two lower levels of analysis: the organizational level and the individual level. To some extent it is rather obvious what feature on a lower level of analysis is connected to the higher one but this exercise should not be exaggerated; one of advantages of the longitudinal case study is, of course, that we expect to find other aspects filling out the picture.

We shall be specifically concerned with seven aspects connected to the organisational level: 1) the role of the administration; 2) the administrative culture; 3) the character of the administrative systems; 4) the formal structure; 5) forms for coordinating activities; 6) the character of processes of change, and finally 7) the budget system.

Concerning the role of the administration we are more specifically interested in the relationship to politicians, to other departments and to external actors. Is it proactive concerning reforms and/or policies or is it reactive? Does it act as an inspector, controlling other departments or is it promoting processes of learning and development? How active is it in relation to
society? The cultural aspect concerns the values that the administration is maintaining. But it could also cover dimensions such as: formal/informal, openness/closeness, nearness/distance. Dress codes, how to address people, patterns of contacts are examples on indicators. The administrative systems could be assessed according to how flexible they are in the daily practice, but also in terms of centralization/decentralization. About the same dimensions are relevant concerning the formal structure. How stable and detailed are job descriptions? Are salaries fixed in grades and classes or are they individual? This aspect also concerns the division in departments and sections: is the organization comprehensive or scattered? Is the coordination of activities basically vertical or horizontal? What is typical of processes of change? Are they initiated from the top or from below? Are they inclusive or exclusive in character? Do they involve consultants or other external actors? The budget system touches several of the other aspects, such as administrative systems, coordination and the process of change, but here we shall look closer into it in terms of centralist/decentralist and inclusion/exclusion.

On the individual level we concentrate on: 1) positions; 2) individually related features, and 3) careers. Positions could basically be characterized to hierarchical level - heads of departments, other senior officials and clerks – or function: advising politicians, preparing items, coordinating the work of a unit, providing services, doing administrative work or participating in projects on development. We look into basic characteristics concerning the individuals: distribution according to sex, age, education and ethnic background; in other words: the composition of the staff. Careers tie individuals to positions, these could be professionally open or closed; officials could be internally or externally recruited.

In addition, we need to bring in some essential contextual aspects to the story and most importantly: what is happening, more generally, on the national and local party political scenes?

I have been using a mixture of methods and techniques to gain knowledge: from one extreme, the direct (and indirect) participation in the processes involved, to the analyses of documents, and further to questionnaires and interviews with politicians, officials and other societal actors. One of the obvious advantages of studying many different aspects of one case over time (and using several techniques), is that you get rather unique opportunities to widening the contextual understanding; the various studies could be cross-fertilizing each other.

More specifically I focus on the situation at four different times. What characterized this administration in 1975, 1985, 1995 and 2005? This is based on rather robust data: organizational schemes and data concerning the individuals employed at each time. As I, myself, was employed in this central administration 1975, 1985 and 1995, I have a rather good view of the tasks; I have complemented this part with interviews. These have also concerned critical events that have been perceived vital for change. What concerns 2005, I have made much more penetrating interviews with senior officials, using a specific form, to get a good picture of what each official does in his or her daily work. In addition, eight people, considered to be examples of “the new administrator” have been interviewed by one of my master’s students (Söderin 2006). I have also been studying documents concerning organizational change for this period. My interviews with leading politicians (primarily conducted to understand the change of regime, and the dilemmas they face) have been helpful as an additional source concerning the role of the top officials.
Central administration in 1975

The 1970s was a period when services and administration increased drastically. Day-care centres for children were highly prioritized; but all kinds of services were expanded. House-building was extensive; city planning was a key issue. Karlstad politics was occupied with these issues. Never before (and probably never after) have the trade unions been stronger. The law concerning right of participation in decision-making was passed, as were many other laws and agreements strengthening the position of the unions.

The Executive Committee (“the Government of the City” consisting of eleven politicians) had in 1975 three departments to serve and implement: the Finance Department, the Secretary and the Personnel Department. Another political body with an overall administrative function was the Organisation Committee with a subordinated Department of Organisation. These four departments, and a few specialists responsible directly to the Executive Committee, formed the central administration. (The City of Karlstad also had a few auditors employed, reporting to the Audit Committee and further to the Council. With some hesitation these are here included in the central administration). Two of these departments could be traced more than a century back: the Secretary and the Finance Department vi. The heads of departments were peers; the head of the Secretariat was though considered primus inter pares. He had an overall responsibility for the preparation of items. As this was complemented by exceptional professional (judicial) skills and a strong personality, his position was significant.

The central administration of 1975 was an extremely hierarchic one. You could almost never see a head of department walking in the corridor, chatting to the ordinary official; when seen there, he was on his way to a meeting (with politicians and/or other heads of departments); the second tier of the department, the heads of sections, were from time to time contacted. In case of the Finance Department, the head had almost daily contact with the Budget Officer, who was preparing most of the items presented by the Finance Manager to the Executive Committee (as well as items to the Budget Committee). The second tier did not approach the first unless really necessary. The head of department was always polite and rather formal; the female officials were addressed as Mrs. or miss, but males were always addressed by their first names. In return they addressed by job title (“ekonomichefen”; the Finance Manager), when referring to him with others, by family name. The male officials wore suits and ties. When stepping down the hierarchy, to level two and even more so to levels three and four, the form of social intercourse was typically rather informal.

The administration was imbued with bureaucratic values: the important thing was “not to do wrong”. The accountings and the cash book had to be finished every day; salaries and payments should be correct and made in time; the mainframe computer system had exact time limits. (To be processed, the data had to be delivered to Stockholm, where the computer company (KommunData), owned by the SALA, served almost every local authority in the country). Public documents should be dealt with in a proper way: registered, prepared for decisions, decided on, implemented and filed. Items were to be prepared by committees and the central administration before presented to the politicians; budgets must be kept; etcetera. The way the minutes were kept and the sentences used in the formulation of the formal decisions were rather old-fashioned; some of these could be traced back to the mid 1860s, at least! Especially, the Head of Secretariat and the Finance Manager were the guarantors that things were right. They were both veterans and had a very strong position, recognized by everyone vii.
The budget process was strongly centralised and concerned with details; every summer the Finance Manager, the Budget Officer and the leading politician (chair of the Budget Committee as well as chair of the Executive Committee) scrutinized the accountings of every activity in a procedure named “pre-examination of the budget”. The Budget Committee included all parties represented in Council; the process normally had elements both of consensus and conflict. The proposals initiated in the committees were discussed in a rather open manner before the majority and the opposition, respectively, put their proposals.

All items that “concerned money” were prepared by the Finance Department; many of these contained a request for additional funding due to “unforeseeable events”. Decision-making, generally, was extremely centralized. If a committee wanted to install a new position in its department this was investigated by the Department of Organization; the salary was decided by Personnel Manager and the financing of the presumed additional cost was proposed by the Finance Department and all formalities scrutinized by the Secretariat. When this item had passed the initiating department, had been discussed in the Organization Committee, in the Executive Committee, it finally reached the Council. (Probably, it had also passed the Budget Committee before the Executive Committee). (In this perspective, the composition of staff in the Department of Organisation is perhaps not that surprising: all six administrators were engineers, working in the Taylor – scientific management tradition, focused on time and motions studies and administrative rationalization!)

The politically initiated extreme growth of services, which to a large degree was financed by increased taxes, in a strong bureaucratic culture, focusing finances in order and cautiousness, put the Finance Manager and the Budget Officer in a dilemma: what advice should they give in issues of taxes and services? They often chose to advise the Budget Committee to increase taxes to make sure that no budget deficit would appear, but proposed restrained spending at the same time. In fact, Brunsson & Rombach (1982) found a new ideal-typical budget role when studying the Karlstad case: the super-guardian. The leading officials strongly favoured a consensual form of politics. To include not only the leader of the majority but also the leader of the opposition in informal discussions and information was typical of this tradition.

The central administration was to a rather limited degree involved in what could be considered strategic issues; ninety per cent or more of the employees were occupied with internal administrative work, most of which were rather basic and not very qualified; all invoices of the total local administration went through the Finance Department, as was all payments of salaries and wages, the purchasing was also centralized to that department; as mentioned, keypunch operating, the switchboard, printing and messenger work were also concentrated here. Even if computer software was used, there was a lot of manual work needed to prepare the processing, and to deal with the output data (which was not very user friendly). The only further education that occurred was in connection to new legislation or to software changes of the basic computer programmes. Business trips were very unusual.

When looking closer to the staffing, you could only find three positions which were more outturned and expected to act in closer relationship to external actors: the Business Consultant (to promote business establishments), the Information Officer and the Planning Officer. The last of these, coordinated the establishing of state authorities in Karlstad; in the 1970s there was a policy to transfer state authorities to regional centres. Naturally, issues of this kind and issues concerning land use and planning, the establishment of companies could be quite complicated, requiring deep economic, judicial and technical knowledge. The heads of departments and their closest collaborators were involved in items of this kind, but few others.
There were surprisingly few contacts with other departments; to some extent heads of departments were “monarchs” of their own small empires. When issues were considered the least controversial they were brought up the hierarchy and dealt with through official channels. In relation to the sector departments the central administration generally were rather distrustful; if these failed concerning formalities, if they did not keep the budget or did not inform of activities relevant for the central administration, they got a reprimand. Few if any initiatives were taken to co-operate in projects concerning administrative reform. The coordination of activities was made through the hierarchy.

This administration was not only hierarchical but also patriarchal. With few exceptions the most qualified positions were held by men; all heads of departments and almost all on the next level of the hierarchy were male (see table 1). This was a mirror of the labour market in total. The women were office employees dealing with invoices, accountings and salaries; they were keypunch operators or operators at the switchboard; some were secretaries to senior officials. There were also some non-qualified work carried out by male employees, such as printing and messenger work. Positions were ranged in a detailed salary system of grades and classes. Also on the floor the officials were very much aware of “the pecking order”; if someone was promoted or passed others, this could cause reactions. Few people left the City administration for other careers. For those having less qualified jobs the options were probably few; neither did the top echelons leave. The careers were typically internal and lifelong. It was rather unusual to break professional borders and for a clerk to become a senior official, handling more qualified matters.

It is not difficult to find similarities between the ideal type, “the hierarchic welfare model” or “the bureaucracy”, and the Karlstad central administration of the mid 1970s. Lawyers and economists (and more surprisingly: engineers!) had a strong position; very little of the administrative work had been transferred to the sector departments. What concerned the increase of services, other professionals were probably more politically influential, such as social workers and city planners. I think that it would be an exaggeration to claim that the central administration was very efficient; the general workload was not that heavy and it seemed unbalanced: some people had an extreme workload, while others had a rather easy day. Many of the officials on the floor seemed to guard their specific tasks from observation. Neither was it flexible, nor creative, but, it was no doubt reliable. Many of the clerks were more or less captives of rigid IT systems.

In almost any of the senses that Selznick (1957) describes it, the Karlstad Secretariat and the Finance Department, especially, were an institution. They had clear missions, and a widely agreed upon technology to achieve them. Other actors paid much regard to them – in fact they adapted to them. Their leaders had successively strengthened their role and were always prepared to defend the key values that could be at stake. To a large extent these institutions were taken for granted; they acted in a way that was ‘natural’ and ‘right’.

**Central administration in 1985**

The economic crisis of the late 1970s affected the zeitgeist; new ideas clearly emerged. During the first half of the 1980s the credit market was deregulated and other market reforms followed. In Karlstad this was a period of consolidation after the extreme growth of services and administration during the earlier decades.
The Karlstad central administration of 1985 did not differ very much from that a decade before. The organisational structure was almost the same. The Organisation Committee was, though, abolished and its tasks transferred to the Executive Committee. A Planning Department had been established, taking over some of the issues from the removed department (just two of the engineers remaining!), but now recruiting two social scientists and an IT-specialist. The leading politicians were very concerned with the increasing unemployment of the early 1980s; an Employment Unit was established within the Secretariat. The Personnel Department almost doubled its staff compared to 1975; as mentioned, these issues were highlighted. Also other departments had grown, mainly due to an increasing workload as a consequence of the growth of services. Three of the heads of departments had been replaced due to retirement. Still the bulk of activities were rather basic, not very qualified, internal services. The composition of staff did not change very much (see table 1); the paternalistic pattern remained: the senior positions were totally dominated by men. The average employee still was a non-academic woman, working with administrative tasks of a routine nature. Many of which worked part-time. To some extent the climate in administration became less formal; everybody called each other by first name (also heads of departments). Partly, this was due to zeitgeist and partly to a new generation appearing as heads of departments. Information meetings as well as social gatherings, though rare, started to occur.

One major change concerned the budget system and the budget process. A frame budget system was introduced; the pre-examination of the budget disappeared, the occupation with details gave way for a more overall steering philosophy, based on decentralization. Surpluses and deficits were brought over to next year, provided that the committee had achieved what was expected. If a department wanted to install a new position, this was an issue entirely for its committee. This initiative from the new Finance Manager was immediately accepted by the politicians. Step by step some of the basic administrative work was taken over by the sector departments (e.g. dealing with invoices; in 1975 the Finance department almost drowned in invoices). The SALA, which during the 1970s had an extremely strong normative function what concerned organizing, administrative routines – most significantly through “the KommunData” and steering models, to some extent changed its role during the 1980s; their representatives clearly turned more ingenious, now making suggestions for improvements, not just setting the norm. One example, the finance mangers of the bigger cities were invited to participate in a study tour to England, to see what was happening there. For many this was the first real contact with what we later learned to call NPM-strategies. The deregulation of the credit market clearly affected local authority affairs and more specifically the work of the Finance Manager and the Officer of Accountants: taking loans now became a matter of competition; terms could be negotiated.

The experiments that many Swedish local authorities undertook in the first half of the 1980s (“the free municipal experiment”, area committees, etcetera) never really attracted the Karlstad politicians. Neither did the central administration take any initiative to encourage or tempt them. Few, if any, had in her or his task to work with initiatives of this kind; there was clearly a lack of “qualified slack”. A couple of officials had a somewhat freer role, as in 1975: the Business Consultant and the Information Officer. Furthermore, two elderly former heads of sector departments had been transferred to a specific Executive Committee Staff (waiting for retirement); these made some investigatory work (that did not take very much of impression). Most initiatives came from the new heads of departments. The relationship between heads of department and leading politicians was not much changed from 1975, neither was the relationship between central administration and other departments and external contacts were still few.
External forces, to some extent, affected this administration. A few nationally initiated market reforms, like the deregulation of the credit market had an impact. The changes taking place in the UK started to be recognized but had not yet affected decision-making; practically all services were provided by the local authority. The Karlstad administration was still very traditional and had features of an institution. Changes were though approaching. The process of decentralizing had already started.

**Central administration in 1995**

The Karlstad local politics of the 1990s was stamped by the economic crisis of the country and the fiscal crisis of the state. In Karlstad socialist and non-socialist coalitions typically succeed each other. We also experienced a bloc braking coalition. This was a period of consensus; the policies carried through were pragmatic and focused on securing finances.

Clearly, the latter part of the 1980s was a period of change and opening up; the Executive Committee and the Budget Committee (strong personal union with the Executive Committee) started to make study visits. In most cases Swedish cities were visited, but trips were also made to England, Croatia and Denmark. The idea of marketing the City caught the politicians fancy. A starting point was the 400 years anniversary of the town charter; later, specific rather spectacular arrangements were launched both in Oslo and in Stockholm.

The NPM umbrella of ideas, gradually, gained ground; the individual was much more focused than earlier, as was the importance of the leader. From the latter part of the 1980s new heads of departments were offered time-limited contracts (six plus six years). The titles of the most prestigious heads of departments were altered from “manager” to “director”; this concerned all the heads of departments serving the Executive Committee. Step by step, the system with fixed salary grades and classes was abandoned; in 1995 all City employees had individual salaries.

In January 1993, from a Karlstad perspective, a radical reform was launched concerning the central administration, and affecting most other departments as well. The four departments were merged into one. Functionally, the new department was divided into two parts: strategic staff and internal support. Clearly, the politicians wanted a better coordination. For a period of transition, the Head of the Secretariat, now titled Director of Administration was made head of this new department; he was to retire within a year and the process of recruiting his predecessor started. The former heads of departments still had their status and were responsible to the Executive Committee for their respective topics. The Director of Administration had an overall responsibility; he should “lead the daily work”, “take initiatives”, and “handle relationships to business” (Hallström et al. 1992). In the report suggesting these changes, signed by the four heads of departments, much focus was put on the value of teamwork and coordination. For years, the old Head of Secretariat worked for this change, mostly informally, his ambition was to become the head of a unified central administration. Earlier he did not get the sufficient support either from the political leadership, or from his colleagues. Many of the bigger cities had much earlier followed that same trace. The fact that the two leading Karlstad politicians of the early 1990s became members of the SALA board, and there were exposed to discussions concerning “the modern way of organizing”, probably mattered.

The four directors were supposed to form a leadership team. My experience is that this genuinely never functioned; it worked in the sense that a huge agenda of changes in connection to the organizational reform were implemented, but this was done separately by these senior
officials. In practice the new department consisted of rather independent and loosely linked
together parts. The situation improved when the new Director of Administration was installed.

Some of the services earlier provided in the central administration were now transferred to the
real estate department (telephone exchange and insurances) and to the leisure and recreation
department (internal postal services and printing office – a merger with existing activities).
The strategic staff had the following composition: finances and budgeting (five people), per-
sonnel (two people) and planning (two people); a secretariat with the judicial competence and
the Information Officers was also connected to this, as were a few secretaries. The internal
support function had the bulk of the administrators. For some reason, a head of this overall
function never was installed; the section dealing with accountings still was subordinated the
Finance Director; the Personnel Administrative Section was subordinated the Director of Per-
sonnel, etcetera. From a professional point of view this seemed natural; this could also facili-
tate the development of competence, as well as coordination. Keeping these old ties also
brought a feeling of security. All in all, these changes did not drastically change power rela-
tions or responsibilities; the old head of departments were still in charge of their core activi-
ties and the fact that they now had less people to manage could be a relief: now they could
concentrate on the interesting parts of the job (compare Dunleavy 1991). Surely, the changes
could be interpreted as path dependent.

The importance of competence concerning computers and IT grew immensely. The totally
dominant role of “the KommunData” had been replaced by one of hard competition; several
companies appeared on the local administrative market. At the end of the 1980s new software
for the financial and accounting system was purchased; the City left “the KommunData” sys-
tem. The new one was much more flexible and adapted to the local situation. In connection to
the administrative reform of the early 1990s, the topics concerning IT were removed from the
earlier Planning Department and a new separate IT-staff was established. (Accordingly, this
was divided in a strategic staff and a service support unit).

Gradually, the role of the central administration changed during the latter part of the 1980s
and early 1990s. In 1995 most of the dealing with invoices was transferred to the administra-
tions of the departments, and so was the administration of salaries. The process of decentraliz-
ing decision-making took further steps; the support and the competence of the departments
and especially the service producing units had clearly increased. Even the setting of salaries
was now decentralized to the departments and sometimes even further down the hierarchy.
The central administrators had more of a coordinating and specialist function; they were re-
sponsible for the development of the various administrative systems working. This they could
not do unless they worked closely with the main users: the administrators of sector depart-
ments. The teamwork approach seemed necessary: finance and personnel administrators, re-
spectively, had their meetings and projects. This also concerned the top level. At the end of
the 1980s the heads of departments met more frequently and in more institutionalized forms; a
specific leadership education was accomplished involving foreign study visits (provided by a
management institute connected to the University of Gothenburg). A similar initiative was
that all heads of departments now was employed by the Executive Committee, not as before
by the various committees (these had a say in the process though); they were not subordinated
the Director of Administration but their respective committee, as before. A combination of
centralizing and decentralizing took place parallel.

The change of administrative structure was supposed to be accompanied by a change of atti-
tude; the central administrators were not (any longer) supposed to act as an authority in rela-
tion to the departments (judging what is right or wrong), they should rather be supportive and service minded. Internally, the cooperation between departments and between different professional groups was improved. Many administrators still perceived themselves as authority in relation to the departments; if there was a need for a meeting this would likely take place in the Town Hall. The situation was not as bad, as a head of department to be, had described it a few years earlier (a bit exaggerating I think): “they sat in the locked fortress and said no!” Generally speaking, contacts between departments and between hierarchical levels gradually became more relaxed. Integration of activities became more horizontal.

The changes of senior staff that took place in the mid 1990s did facilitate this process. (The old Director of the Administration was retired and the Personnel Director was replaced). Not the least due to the fact that the financial situation was very strained, like in most Swedish local authorities, much focus still was on traditional bureaucratic values: keeping the budget, following the formal rules. In these issues the central administration had a strong position in regard to the sector departments; the leading politicians listened to their staff. Co-operation with external actors (central, regional or local authorities as well as business and interest groups) was rather limited. A few of the leading officials were involved in developmental projects of some scoop, like the establishing of the CCC (Carlstad Conference Centre, a public-private partnership, involving many creative elements) and the establishing of a new airport (a public-public partnership). Still, the perspective was mainly internal.

A closer look into the composition of staff confirms that a qualitative change was under way (see table 1). Half of the staff was no involved in what could be called qualified administrative work; the percentage of academics was doubled since 1985 (now four out of ten) and women were to be established in more senior positions. The number of people involved in developmental work increased substantially, but from a low level.

The central administration of 1995 was clearly more decentralized than the one of 1985; partly, it was influenced by the “managerial” trend but it still showed signs of the old bureaucracy. The process of change involved negotiations; the distribution of power and status was important. In the long run, the old institution could not resist the strong trends for transformation; we see the start of a process of de-institutionalization.

Central administration in 2005

In 1998 the Karlstad leaders of the Social Democratic Party were replaced by more ideologically flavoured people. After the 1998 election a majority was formed by the Social Democrats, the Left Party and the Green Party. In a manifesto, this majority paid attention to aspects that had not been very much focused in Karlstad: gender equality, integration of immigrants, international relations, environmental issues, public health, political participation of young people and support to university students. A number of sub-committees related to, so called horizontal values were introduced. Already during the earlier coalition some more far-sighting initiatives were taken: a vision for Karlstad was formulated; four specific profile areas were pronounced and yearly environmental and social studies were made.

After the election of 2002 these sub-committees were discontinued; they proved to accomplish rather little, mainly due to the fact that they had very little money and staff at their disposal. The new strategy was to employ specialist officials with the task of coordinating these issues. Policy documents were prepared and decided on, saying that the horizontal values should be paid regard to in all decision-making.
As mentioned, Swedish Governments encountering economic challenges choose to change its policies into a more liberal form. In the second part of 1990s the electricity market was de-regulated; the power supply system had to be partitioned from electricity trade. In the Karlstad case these were transferred from traditional administration into two separate companies. Yet some other activities were transferred into companies. A holding company was created to steer and supervise the growing number of companies. All other companies were converted into independent subsidiary companies. Karlstad also sold a stock of shares in nuclear power during this period. A lot of rather sophisticated financial activities took place (Norell 2005).

In 2003 the central administration yet again was re-organized. This was done in connection to a major revision of the organizing of the Executive Committee and of the committee and department structure. A private consultant was commissioned to investigate and propose a change (in close connection to the administrative leadership). He was clearly up to date with “governance” as well as by “NPM” thinking.

The administration was now divided into four main functions: a) the Centre for Economic Development, b) Financial and Activity Steering, c) Employer Policy and Support to Departments and Companies, and d) the Secretariat. In the report we find the following: “The proposed name - The Centre for Economic Development – is chosen with care, to signalize the City’s essential role in a network of many actors, which all are of importance for growth” (Svensson 2003:4). The Centre should have the following functions: contemporary social and environmental studies, international cooperation, regional development issues (in co-operation with regional and central government), market development (in co-operation with business), physical planning and exploitation and communications (marketing, IT, information). Phrases like “work offensively”, “play an active role”, “improve the business climate”, “qualitatively safeguarding processes”, “further develop policy concerning co-operation with other authorities”, “consider tendering” show the ideas behind.

The consultant has observed some of the dilemmas connected to the many various policies and specific goals that the council has decided on: “It is unclear how the different policies and goals are related to each other” (Svensson 2003:10) He also points at the importance of being a good employer “to attract the right people” and “to develop and implement a well functioning incentive system” (Svensson 2003:11).

The leading official, the City Director (as the new title is) is provided a somewhat freer role, to make it possible to concentrate more on relationships to business and others and not to get too much involved in minor issues; she is still also CEO of the holding company. The Personnel Director is made Deputy City Director and the Finance Director, also Deputy CEO of the holding company. In practice these three constitute the inner circle of central administrative leadership. The Director of Economic Development also participates in the leadership group - her focus is to a large degree on business related issues – as is the Information Officer. A new post, Head of the Secretary, is created to relieve the pressure on the City Director concerning preparations of meetings and to better coordinate the central administration as a department (budgets, follow-ups, reports of various kinds etc.).

During the last two electoral periods the political climate in Karlstad, surely, has become more conflicting and less trusting. The situation for the leading politicians has changed in yet another way; two posts as Political Secretaries have been created: one supporting the majority coalition and one supporting the non-socialist opposition. In addition, the two minor parties in the coalition have chosen to use some of their financial party support to create half-time Po-
political Secretaries. Earlier the leading politicians from both blocs met on several occasions every month in preparatory meetings, in the Executive sub-committees etc. This has vanished, now almost every meeting is preceded by an internal pre-meeting, and this applies to both blocs. Consequently, the Budget Committee has been abolished; the majority coalition first presents its budget proposal to the Executive sub-committee and there is no room for compromising. The Finance Director and the Budget Officer serve both the majority and the opposition as before. Every Monday morning, the Commissioners (elected full-time politicians) of the majority coalition and their Political Secretary meet to discuss vital issues. Frequently, senior officials are invited to inform and to participate in discussions concerning specific items. At the same time the leaders of the opposition and their Political Secretary have a meeting. The administrative leadership has also chosen to have their coordinating meetings Mondays; it is suitable to have everyone in the house this day, you could be asked for in short notice. The leading officials become closer involved in the initial stages of political initiative. This put them in a new type of dilemma: how close should they be to the majority and still keep the trust from the opposition, which could be the majority of tomorrow?

The four directors of the central administration and eight other heads of departments, four CEOs of municipal companies and the head of the Fire Brigade (of the Karlstad area, the four suburban local authorities included) constitute the group “heads of departments”. They have nine half-day meetings and a couple of two-day’s seminars per year. These meetings are considered important for the coordinating of activities, for the spread of information and for social reasons (supporting each other). A new thing is that the Commissioners of the majority have chosen to call this group to specific two days meetings to make clear what is expected during the electoral period. The relationships between the central administration and the sector departments are more trusting and based on mutual respect; the central top officials still seem to be dominating the group of head of departments, but this probably mostly due to an advantage in access of information.

The social atmosphere is generally rather informal. Dress codes have step by step become very casual; you find top officials in jeans some days (when working mainly internally) and in a suit another day (when receiving a delegation of visitors from another country). The officials could have their own style; this is accepted, at least to a point.

Gradually, labour market relationships have changed. Partly, the traditional corporatist structures have been dissolved. The role of unions has been diminished, the relationship between the individual and the superior has become more important, as has the relationship between the working team and the superior: career development conversations are part of the established routines. Still, the vast majority of officials are union members. Looking into the City administration as a whole, we find the same development concerning NPM strategies. The number of free schools increases every year; private providers take a larger share of the caring of the elderly. In transportation and in technical services we find an increasing number of contractors. Most of this take place in the realm of the committees and their departments.

The tendency of transferring administrative tasks to the sector departments was in some sense finished at the end of the 1990s. The last few years we can witness the reverse case, concerning IT support; most of the officials involved in these issues have been transferred from the sector departments to the central administration. What was all the fashion a decade ago – the flat organisation – has step by step been abandoned: today we find a four levels hierarchy in the bigger departments.
Administrative reforms of various kinds are constantly being implemented. The last five years several developmental projects affecting all departments as well as the companies have been launched; the three most basic administrative systems – concerning the accountings and the financial system, personnel administration including salaries and the system concerning processing of items (from proposition, registration, preparation, decision to implementation and filing) – have all been renewed in huge projects including all departments and with the support of consultants. The frame budget model has been further developed during the 1990s: social indicators are increasingly being used as means of allocating appropriations; the quality of services is being documented as well as the situation concerning “horizontal values”. The system for further education has been developed; the central administration has e.g. had courses in “how to work in a consultant manner”. An ambitious seminar programme invites external lecturers of various professions. The leading officials participate in leadership and management programmes, including foreign study visits. Today, some study visits go to the US, to China and wherever.

Marketing is considered vital; what is said and written in the mass media is carefully followed-up; the affect of press releases is constantly evaluated (they seem to be very important). Today, most Swedish local authorities are pre-occupied with discussions concerning how to attract business as well as competent people more generally (Montin 2001). They want to establish certain positive images. In the Karlstad case people experts on marketing have been employed; to have web-side editors is considered a necessity.

If co-operation with public and other societal actors earlier were rather scarce, they have almost exploded the last decade. We find new institutions promoting this trend. On street level at the town’s main square a specific service has been established: the User’s Advisory Office. Here you could be advised in issues concerning consumer’s rights, energy-saving and in other fields. In 2005 another coordinated activity was launched to facilitate for the citizens: the Security Centre. The police authority, the fire brigade and the City (traffic wardens, social workers and security officers) share premises to be used by their respective street-level officers. The Centre for Preventing Crime is yet another example of initiatives taken the last few years involving actors from various public authorities as well as voluntary organisations. In areas suffering from crime and other social problems, we find projects involving housing companies, churches, the police, sports organizations and various municipal departments; and these are coordinated by the central administration. A huge number of projects have been launched (Norell 2005). The Directors are also involved in international projects connected to the SALA and to other organizations; they participate and take important roles in professional organizations.

The changes concerning staffing, is perhaps even more radical (see table 1).

The central administration of 2005 is one characterized by well educated people pursuing qualified tasks. Half of the absolute top positions now have women as holders and a woman is the leading official since 1994. (Should we include the Head of the Secretariat in this exclusive group, which is a matter of consideration, the women outnumber the men; the sixth top position, the Information Officer is also a woman. All the Political Secretaries are women (which I have chosen not to include in the central administration, though they formally belong there, because they have been politically recruited and are politically supervised).
Central administration 1975 and 2005: a comparison

A summary of the aspects presented in the beginning of the paper comparing 1975 with the present situations could include the following:

Karlstad politics has changed from traditional bloc politics with strong elements of consensus, to a more unclear situation including negotiations but also conflict. The policies pursued in the mid 1970s very much was an adaptation to mainstream central government initiatives concerning an extension of local services; today we see much more of local political initiatives dealing with the development of the City. New policy areas are focused. The coalition of today is putting much stronger pressure on the central administration to be part of the policy process and the implementation of the coalition manifesto.

The role of the administration in 1975 did not include taking initiatives concerning the development of the City or of organizational change. The leading officials strongly advocated formalities and cautiousness with public spending. The leading politicians held these officials in high regard; they were not only listened to but there advices were followed. In relation to other departments they were an authority, controlling formalities. The central administration was to a large degree occupied with the routine administration concerning all departments. Today, these officials are strongly involved in the strategic development of the City. This is done in close co-operation with societal actors of various kinds. The central administration is still an important actor in relationship to the politicians, but as these have turned much more initiative and also have provided themselves with political secretaries and the advice from other sources, the political role is not that clear. Now, the central officials work in close contact with officials from other departments and on a more equal level; still the former normally play a prominent part. All routine administration has been transferred to the sector departments; the central officials serve as experts and coordinators of teams. The 1975 administration was very predictable; today this is much more contingent.

The organizational structure of the mid 1970s was strongly hierarchical and bureaucratic, but also rather scattered in the sense that several departments served the Executive Committee. The scheme has been changed according to the expectations and political priorities of today. A gradual change of functions has taken place, from time to time manifested in a modestly changes of the formal structure. The central administration is now a comprehensive one, under a City Director.

The organizational culture used to be affected by the hierarchy: formal, distanced and closed. Today it is much more characterized by informality, nearness and openness. This we see in the way officials address each other, which today is very informal. We find it in the dress code which is much more casual than earlier, and adjusted to situation; the male official need not wear a grey suit, you could have your own style. Contacts which in the 1970s very often followed official channels are now much more frequent and less hierarchical. Earlier the virtue of “doing things right” was stressed; today the officials must take initiatives and be politically useful, participating in projects with various other actors. Now you must “do the right things”. Traditional values, concerning formalities and keeping the budget, are still considered vital.

Administrative systems in the mid 1970s were highly centralized and rigid; to a huge degree these affected the daily work of the personnel on the floor. Today these are much more flexi-
ble and they don’t occupy the minds of the average official; he or she is using all the commu-
nication equipments available. Specialists see that these systems are working as expected.

The coordination and integration of the central administration was thirty years ago made ver-
tically, through the hierarchy. The focus of the leader is still there, but these procedures are
much more horizontal today, leadership teams and members of projects meet to discuss, solve
problems and form plans of action.

The process of reform was in 1975 predominantly initiated from central government, from the
SALA or its computer company. The central administration adjusted its organization, its pro-
cedures or administrative systems, accordingly. Today, the initiative most likely comes either
from the leadership team or from the local politicians. Behind these we find more universal
ideas of organizing and management, which these people are exposed to. The preparation and
the implementation of administrative reform are today made in the form of projects, including
all that could be affected.

The budget process used to be extremely centralized and the key actors were occupied with
details. The frame budget system introduced in the mid 1980s, somewhat modified, still
serves. This is a strongly decentralized system were the major, overall priorities are made by
the central actors, but the rest is left to the committees and their departments. The budget
process, as it earlier was conducted in the Budget Committee, used to have elements of con-
sensus and compromising. These have vanished and so has this committee.

The positions of the administration of the mid 1970s were hierarchically ordered and regu-
lated in details; the salary system contained grades and classes; the unions had a strong posi-
tion. Today, the positions are flexible and individually adapted; all salaries are individual and
decided upon by the superior official after an assessment talk with the individual. Earlier the
bulk of positions were concentrated on rather routine internal administrative work. Today the
positions are much more qualified and many emphasizing external developmental issues. The
role of the unions is limited. It should not be neglected though, almost all officials are mem-
bers.

The individuals holding the key positions thirty years ago all were male. The average central
administrator, though, was a non-academic vocationally trained woman in her forties doing
routine work. She was not expected to take initiatives, rather to do what the supervisor told
her to; one day was very much like the other day. She was very much stuck to her workplace.
Her career options were few; she could not expect further training or much development in
work. Probably her mind was somewhere else. (A sign that the less qualified work is fading
out is that the average age of this group of administrators have increased from 41 in 1975 to

Today, the central administration is occupied by well educated people; they are academics of
various professions. The number of positions is about the same, about one hundred; the pro-
portion of women in the staff has not changed very much (about six out of ten) either. But
today more than eight out of ten administrators have what could be considered qualified posi-
tions, compared to three or four thirty years ago. Now, more than half of those are held by
women, compared to less than one tenth in 1975. So, the average central administrator in
Karlstad today is a highly qualified academic woman, running developmental projects in close
contacts with other actors. She works in a complex environment involving many aspects of
politics; she has to deal with an uncertain, ambiguous and dynamic context.
The careers of the old administration were life-long; once you got a position you stayed. Today, the background of the officials differs considerably, and the ambition of many of the newly recruited is probably not to stay in administration for the rest of their working lives; if something more exciting comes up, they go. They are expected to be initiative and take responsibility for their own development. All officials are offered various forms of further education. Probably fifteen or twenty per cent of the staff could be considered “new administrators” (see below).

The 1975 central administration was a bureaucracy; it was hierarchic, centralized, occupied with details and formalities. This was no doubt a conservative force, but a highly respected one. The heads of departments were professionally well qualified veterans that had strong positions; they were not to be questioned when expressing themselves within their respective professional areas. They did not hesitate defending their key values. Clearly, they represented a highly institutionalized organization, which in its core could be traced a century back, or more. It is not surprising that major change was late.

The Karlstad central administration of today is much more characterized by ambiguity and complexity. From the viewpoint of models for steering and organizing it is a hybrid; we find resemblance to the governance/networks model, but also to NPM and to the more traditional welfare model in both of its variants: the hierarchy and the decentralized form. From a Selznick’s point of view the central administration of today is a de-institutionalized organization: it is more of a tool. When top officials act today, they are always considering the political implications. This does not mean that they lack integrity, on the contrary.

The transformation of a central administration: what and why?

The Karlstad central administration has from the early 1970s till today experienced only two major structural reforms, one in 1993 and the other in 2003! Neither of these could be considered very radical. Both reforms, though, brought the organization to the mode of the day. What might seem paradoxical is that today’s administration is in almost any vital aspect radically different from that of 1975! What we have witnessed is essentially an incremental process where the changes concerning processes and procedures seem decisive.

If we try to distance ourselves, on the one hand, it is easy to see strong connections between more general trends of societal change and the changes that has taken place within the Karlstad central administration: decentralization, NPM and governance; the national Swedish economic, social, cultural and political environment and the changes that has taken place there seem essential, like the two economic and financial crises, Sweden entering the EU, etcetera. On the other hand, we cannot neglect the specific tradition of this organization or the importance of the people in Karlstad politics and central administration, both for stability and change. Somebody must be devoted to new ideas; these must be introduced and established, but also transformed and developed in a suitable form, to fit into tradition, or at least be perceived an improvement. Let us return to the case.

The first important change was that of decentralization and of transferring of administrative tasks to the sector departments. This started in the mid 1980s. The change of budget system seems to have been important; the frame budget system made decentralization possible, where the committees only got one appropriation and could do their own priorities as long as they kept the budget and did what was expected, affected profoundly. This change of budget sys-
tem was a general trend, though the Karlstad version was early and radical. From a rational point of view these reforms seem clearly necessary; first, the central administrators on the floor could not cope with all the basic administrative services of the relatively big city; second, the top officials were preoccupied with decisions on details and had little time for more strategic issues – we could speak of government overload. Change in personnel certainly mattered. The technological developments in combination with an increasing market affected the administrative systems in a positive way; the IT systems which were implemented at the end of the 1980s facilitated the bringing down of administrative work to field level. The new systems were much more flexible and user friendly.

The process of creating a more comprehensive central administration, I believe, was prohibited partly by the strong historical institution, and partly by lack of trust within the group of heads of department. Not until the veteran primus inter pares was to retire, this was realized. The wish to have a modern and up to date organization was expressed by the leading politicians as well. An organization more distinctly focused on either strategic issues, or the support of the sector departments also seemed rational; this was one idea of the 1993 reform. To make the central administration work as a unit, more closely together under a coherent leadership was another idea. The strengthening of the role of the leader was accompanied by horizontal coordination: leadership teams and projects. The coordinating and steering of an organization of professionals, of course, differ from that of a bureaucracy. With a few changes of key figures this organization was established.

The central government liberal reforms during the economic crisis of the 1990s indirectly, affected the Karlstad administrative structure. Activities were transferred from traditional departments to companies and a combine with a holding company was launched, administratively run by the top officials in Town Hall. Also in this case Karlstad was early and radical. Some NPM ideas attracted as well: the heads of department were offered time-limited contracts; all salaries became individual; much was focused on role of the leader. No doubt, the Strategic Staff was much more involved in strategic issues than the previous departments. The structural changes of 2003 could be interpreted as yet a step in that same direction, now more clearly demanding offensive strategic administrative action, and thus in co-operation with external actors of various kind. The new structure signalizes a progressive and open administration, focusing on the development of the city as a society and not just as an authority.

It is not just the administration that has changed, so has local party politics, and as a consequence, the interaction between leading politicians and top officials. In the 1970s Karlstad party politics did not stick out; the expansion of services and taxes went on there as everywhere in the country. Bloc politics was typical but with strong features of consensus politics as well; the leading officials were influential what concerned procedures, stressing formalities and the importance of keeping the budget. The economic crisis of the 1990s regained the status of these values. In general, politicians were not very active in administrative policies. The establishing of an Employment Unit in the early 1980s was an exception. The last few years this has changed; the political climate is much more conflicting and the majority coalition seems much more determined to impress the development in specific policies and to see that this is administratively supported.

More tentatively, we have been touching upon causes of administrative change. Returning to Christensen et al. (2002) and their four perspectives on change we find connections to them all. We clearly see rational reasons for change, especially so in the “overload period”, but also later. The last few years we see more of conscious political initiatives affecting the admini-
istration. No doubt, relationships between key actors matter and sometimes block the process of change, this was the case at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. The fact that certain influential senior officials were so strongly identified with their institutions, and that also politicians and other officials took these circumstances for granted, and considered the situation obvious and natural also mattered in the first part of the period we are covering. We see how the administration adapts to trends concerning organizing and management. Symbols matter, as in case of the changing titles from “manager” to “director” in the late 1980s and in the naming of the various centres in the early 2000s. My impression is that the change of holder of key positions have been essential, both for new initiatives, as in case of the new budget system of the mid 1980s, concerning personnel policy of the mid 1990s and the creation of the combine; further for the more general climate of the administration, as in case of the new head of department 1994. The politicians that gained power after the 1998 election clearly differ in ambition and activity compared to their predecessors. In later years a new type of official has entered the Town Hall, a somewhat unorthodox figure, compared to “the traditional administrator”. Let’s take a closer look at “the new administrator”.

The New Administrators

The “new administrator” (NA) is perhaps not a totally new phenomenon even in Karlstad. For a long time we have had (a few) officials with a somewhat freer role. In most cases these people were given a specific organisational status; in the Karlstad case in 1975 and 1985 these positions formed a staff aside the hierarchy, not connected to any department, reporting directly to the Executive Committee; sometimes they were part of a company administration. Earlier these were exceptions, now they seem to be more or less the model for the new and (post-) modern administration?

The issues they are dealing with are not new to them. But they are expected to do this from a somewhat different angle: the security and safety coordinator was earlier a police superintendent; an official working with marketing has a background in the advertising business; people involved in economic development have actually themselves worked in private business (one as a salesperson); the gender equality coordinator has strong connections to the women’s rights movement and to the work with exposed women. These people were not offered jobs because of their good knowledge in local administration. Almost the contrary, they were to bring in something else than traditional local administrative thinking. And, it is not the fact that they have become local authority officials that attract them, but their specific tasks (Söderin 2006). Almost all of these NAs are academics.

Typically, their working instructions are vague, if existing (on paper). Rather, their work depends on the situation; what these officers do depends on what comes up. To some degree this is affected by what politicians and their superiors find important, but mostly on their own initiatives (Söderin 2006). People in their networks – partners, colleagues etc. – also influence their diaries. The NAs are there to see that things happen: to take initiatives, to develop networks, to push the passive and to inform the ignorant. This means that these officials typically are not in the office. We find them in meetings, in seminars and conferences, and on business trips; they host visitors working within the same policy area as they do. They appear on TV and on radio, and sometimes become rather public figures. They typically act in various projects. These could involve actors from other parts of the public sector, business people as well as people from the third sector. Gradually, after the Swedish entry in the EU in the mid 1990s international projects have become something natural. The NAs are also involved in establishing professional networks, with colleagues in other local, in regional or in national authorities. In the Karlstad case, a lot of co-operation involves the suburban local authorities. Many times
these lack the corresponding specialists; the Karlstad NA encounters generalists, more traditional administrators, in these projects. Some of them express the importance of showing a humble spirit. To some extent these NAs become experts on fitting into various settings. They have learned to take various roles; sometimes they act as representatives for the local authority, sometimes (informally) for the City as a society, and sometimes for the Karlstad area. Their directives in different projects could be rather vague; it is not always they have the opportunity to consult superiors or politicians. They need to act according to their “political understanding”. Sometimes they stress financial or economic goals; to use resources in the best of ways; to make things happen; to get additional funding; etcetera (Söderin 2006: passim).

The NA has no or little formal authority. He or she cannot give orders to e.g. officials in other departments. If there is a legislation regulating the specific policy area in which the NA is acting this is formulated in terms of goals and what should be strived for; you seldom find detailed targets. This does not mean that these officials lack power. They could lean against specific policies decided on by the council; in the formulation of this policy, the NA could have played an important role. Perhaps their most important power base is their relationships to specific politicians. Sometimes certain politicians perceive some of these NAs as their allied, working with issues very near their heart. One of them expressed his mission: “…to transfer the ideas, the abstract to practical action” (Söderin 2006:44).

The NA differs in many respects from “the traditional administrator”. We are not penetrating a grey, low-profiled bureaucrat endeavouring neutrality and impartiality. For the NA partiality is not considered a problem; he or she is there to stand up for certain values or for specific groups. The borderline between marketing – giving a positive picture – and informing - seeking the truth and trying to be comprehensive - is not clear-cut; there is always a choice in the selection of data and in the way these are presented. But many of these administrators are clearly part of a marketing project: to enhance attractiveness.

The NA has some similarities with “the street-level-bureaucrat” as we know him or her from Lipsky (1980); they both have a degree of discretion and they act according to circumstances. But the differences are considerable: the NA is not acting as an authority (based on law and regulations), neither is he confronted with the user or with “people in need”; this figure has access to the top level and could influence also the input side of politics. He or she is not at all like “the manager”, another presumable ideal type, confronted with financial and other targets, with the daily supervision of staff and the provision of services. The strong political connection could make us think of a “cadre”, an administration of ideologically convinced people; but that is not really the case here: these officials have different value basis. In some sense they are “zealots” (Downs 1967), but with a certain degree of pragmatism and political understanding: they act in many different settings.

These NAs could be quite a challenge to the top administrative leadership. They have, in many cases, a close relationship to specific politicians; several of these positions have been establish due to political initiatives. This administration does not work in uniformity; various parts and specific officials could very well champion views that are contradictory. Without a doubt, this could pose a problem to the superiors. The top administrative leadership has found strategies to cope with these challenges. The procedure used in Karlstad is that if and when the NAs are to meet politicians they should inform their superiors. To further integrate them in the more traditional hierarchy most of these NAs are administratively placed as subordinates to the Budget Officer! The motive was that most Executive Committee items were prepared at that section and especially the budget document and the Annual Report. In this sense
these officers were integrated into the traditional administration; many items were referred to them for consideration. The Selznick (1957:127) advice in situations where a new type of elite is introduced in an organisation was: “that a new staff unit ought to be attached directly to a top-command echelon – not permanently, but during a period when its basic perspectives are being laid down, its distinctive mission being evolved. Or such a unit might be attached to one quite different in function (but institutionally strong) for the express purpose of offering a haven to an organization charged with defending and developing a precarious value”.

Why has this type evolved and why does it seem to expand? We find several gradual changes taking place, which might facilitate the rise of the NA. First, there is a partly new way of perceiving the local authority, now as an actor competing on a national or even a global market; the name of the place is turned into a trademark or a brand. The administration is participating in a marketing project. (In the Karlstad case, a vision is to grow from 84 000 inhabitants to 100 000 and to promote the specific profile). The advantages expressed are e.g. that this would provide a better foundation for commercial and cultural services, for communications and the tax-base would be better; more generally, the attractiveness would increase. This is a political project, no doubt, but one where there seems to be very little room for the local political debate; implicitly, growth is not only considered good, but a necessity.

Second, the local authority is considered incapable or at least insufficient of solving many of the basic societal problems on its own. To co-operate with other authorities, with private business and with the third sector is not just necessary, it is becoming the obvious means of tackling a problem; you need to pool resources from many different competences and this also facilitate the implementation. This aspect is also consensual in character.

Third, the number of political dimensions or specific target groups, to pay attention to, keeps increasing. Nationally, specific authorities are established heaping upon local authorities recommendations concerning policies. Interest groups as well as mass media attentively follow what is being done. Today, in Karlstad we find several specific coordinators related to these horizontal values. They are there to defend their specific value, to see that others work in accordance to it. This trend can be related to the fragmentation of the state and of the public sector more generally (cf. Rhodes 1997). The mission given to these administrators is clearly a political one: to advocate specific values. Recruiting people who are well known in various communities could help legitimize local authority activity.

Fourth, local politicians seem to be more demanding and impatient. The traditional administrator is perhaps not sufficiently committed, from the politician’s point of view. This tendency is amplified by national party headquarters’ activity (and facilitated by modern information technology), providing the local party representatives with information and ideas. We also find, as in the Karlstad case, a growing number of political secretaries, backing up the leading politicians to take initiatives; they also help scrutinizing the investigations and proposals given by the traditional administration.

Fifth, a more overall remark, the complexity of the environment and the hybrid character of the organization, involving many different forms of principles, also require many types of officials, complementing each other. This is, of course, a challenge to the administrative top leadership. How, indeed, to coordinate activity?
Conclusions

The fact that Karlstad probably has accepted and adapted to the “governance trend” in a more thorough way than almost any other Swedish city make the transition rather elucidatory: from the hierarchy to the network. As we have noticed this change does not mean that one model is totally abandoned for another; on the contrary, today’s procedures still bear traces of a strong bureaucratic tradition, but the administration is also affected, and perhaps even more so, by ideas of decentralization and by NPM thinking. Today, the Karlstad central administration – like many city administrations, I imagine, is affected by a complicated mixture of organizing and steering principles: it is a hybrid. This administration is very responsive to what is happening more generally in society, and specifically in the Karlstad social, economic and political life. It is an extrovert administration, actively participating in projects of all kinds. The NA can be interpreted as both the product of and the symbol for this hybrid. As this type in so many ways differ from the traditional administrator. In the sense that it is so closely linked to specific policies, it is highly politicized, if not party political. But this figure differs also by his strong involvement in various communities.

Organizational change is an elusive phenomenon; we find in the Karlstad case complex parallel processes, sometimes interacting: general trends sometimes provide options (liberalization of markets), change the institutional context (like the EU entrance of 1995) or restrict (like the economic and financial crisis of the 1990s). But we also see clear evidence of agency. In a more abstract way, these changes could be understood as the result of an intricate interaction between contextual or external forces, internal cultural or institutional features and the ambitions of people involved. In the early part of the period we are covering, the key figures were strongly associated with the traditional, hierarchic culture and little change occurred, notwithstanding apparent problems (of government and administration overload). With a changing zeitgeist (the liberal and individualistic 1980s), new modes of steering and organizing being introduced and the exchange of top officials we see reforms of decentralization taking place as well as some inspired by NPM thinking. External forces, the economic and financial crisis of the first part of the 1990s in Sweden, regained traditional values in Karlstad politics and administration (the virtue of keeping the budget and sticking to formalities). A relieved financial situation, in combination with external factors (such as Sweden entering the EU, the focusing on economic development and networking), and new people taking charge in Karlstad politics, emphasizing new policy areas were requirements for further administrative change (as the appearance of NAs). From another point of view, these changes could be interpreted as a process of de-institutionalization: in the mid 1970s the status and role of the central departments were taken for granted; today, this administration is critically examined, these officials have to perform.

Today’s top officials cannot wait for items coming to them; they are expected to initiate projects in co-operation with other societal actors. They are involved in negotiations of a rather complicated nature. And as politics today consists of a multitude of values, sometimes contradicting each other, it takes a lot of political understanding to find suitable solutions. When looking into the dairies of these top officials – which I have done - we find that they have a great number of different external and internal contacts during a month; probably ten times as many as the corresponding official had thirty years ago. Meetings of various kinds occupy the weekday of these people. This complicated situation calls for on the one hand coordination, which to be successful requires many sources of information, not the least informal contacts with leading politicians. This coordination typically takes place when the leadership groups gathers. On the other hand, there is need for relief and personal support; you need to have an
inner circle of people you fully can trust (Norell 2004). The Karlstad Town Hall is an exciting and demanding workplace.

The top administrative leadership of Karlstad is facing, what seems to be, an increasingly demanding situation. The majority coalition definitely is more determined than before (and also impatient) to have its manifesto quickly implemented. This manifesto, which includes 185 proposals of various kinds, was immediately after the 2006 election put to the council and there, this was transformed into a directive saying that these proposals should be included in the plan of action of all committees. The central administration was short ago instructed to follow this up every fourth month: how well are the committees implementing the manifesto?

Returning to the views of administration that historically have been represented in the debate we find that the role of the administration as a (rather conservative) balancing force, which characterized the 1975 situation, has been replaced by one where political receptiveness and even espousal are required as is flexibility and enterprising; these officials are expected to be much more committed to the majority initiatives than their predecessors were thirty years ago.

The Karlstad case illustrates the changes that have taken place in local administration the last thirty years, and more specifically so in the central administration of a medium-sized city. Naturally, it is hard to generalize from one single case and Karlstad has its specific features. One is the very strong bureaucratic or hierarchical tradition. Another one is the unstable political situation: elections are always close races followed by negotiations in which, in later years, the Green Party has had a decisive role. This risk/option the leading administrators always must have at the back of their minds: today’s opposition could be tomorrow’s government.
**Figure 1: Characteristics of 4,5 models**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Communitarian model:</th>
<th>The Governance model:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nearness, participative, mobilizing, identity and consensus; long term, durability; empowerment; <em>a local common interest</em></td>
<td>Cooperation, network, partnerships, enabling, reciprocity, completing resources, complexity, wicked issues, flexibility; <em>various interests working together</em></td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Hierarchical welfare model:</th>
<th>The Market model (NPM):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part of welfare state, public services, sectors, planning, professional groups, political parties, management in details, clear responsibility; <em>public interest</em></td>
<td>Competition, free choice, leadership, efficiency and effectiveness, targets, evaluations, pragmatism; <em>self interest</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Decentralized welfare model:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part of welfare state, public services, policies, goals, frames, decentralizing, delegating, discretion, result units, disparity; <em>public interest</em></td>
</tr>
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Table 1: The Karlstad central administration 1975, 1985, 1995 and 2005 – basic data

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<tr>
<td><strong>Positions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Of which part-time (%)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Officials</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Of which women (%)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Officials in qualified positions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of which held by women (%)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Heads of departments, or the like</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Of which women (%)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academics (%)</strong></td>
<td>18 (20%)</td>
<td>25 (19%)</td>
<td>39 (39%)</td>
<td>69 (68%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Of which women (%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>6 (7%)</td>
<td>15 (26%)</td>
<td>36 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average age: heads of departments</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average age: holder of qualified positions</strong></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average age: holder of non-qualified positions</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Average age: academics</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Officials, senior in central administration – ten years or more (%)</strong></td>
<td>No information</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“New administrators”</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
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</table>
References

(Dagens Nyheter 2006-08-02)…..
Jann, Werner (2003). State, Administration and Governance in Germany - Competing Traditions and Dominant Narratives. Public Administration, Vol. 81, Nr. 1 2003;
Werner Jann (2003) speaks of four different narratives: 1) Demokratischer Rechtsstaat – "Demokratie"; 2) Aktiver Staat – "Planung"; 3) Schlanker Staat – "Management"; and 4) Aktivierender Staat – "Governance". The Jann classification differs mainly concerning the first part “Demokratischer Rechtsstaat”, which seem most relevant to a state perspective, whilst “the Communitarian” or a “Self-governance” model have closer local connections. Eva Sörensen (2005) also penetrates four types; three of which are rather similar: the hierarchy, the NPM and the Governance models. The civil society she calls the fourth type; this has some similarities with the communitarian one. Researchers working in the cultural theory tradition, like Christopher Hood (1998), also penetrate the tensions between more or less ideal typical models. A model developed by Robert Quinn (1988) is rather elucidatory; he discusses: the consensual (or team) approach, the hierarchical (or internal process) approach, the rational goal approach and finally the developmental (or open system) approach. By confronting these, contradictions and tensions could be identified which could help understanding change. Janet Newman (2001) further develops this framework in her analysis of the British case and especially “the Third Way”. The Quinn framework is based on two dimensions of difference: 1) degree of centralisation of power and 2) orientation towards change. Newman penetrates these models or approaches what concerns leadership and coordination, the organizing and implementation of services, tensions within the system, and innovation. It is easy to see a kinship between four of the historic models and the four ideal types developed and discussed by Quinn and Newman.

The role of politics and politicians differ in the 4,5 models here presented. In the communitarian ideal, participation is high and decisions are preferably made in consensus; if there is need for an elected representative this is more of a trustee than a politician; he or she does not represent a political party but the community. In the welfare hierarchy model political parties compete for power to make it possible to implement their programmes; the local political system is similar to the national one. The party politician is a key figure. In the market model politics should play a minor role. The preference of the individual is focused, as consumer and as taxpayer. The local authorities should have an overall responsibility for services but not (primarily) be the provider, but the
The individual should have his free choice; various providers should compete for contracts. The local politician should take the individual citizen’s stand in relation to the administration; he should be critically scrutinizing its performance. In the Governance model, politics is a complex issue involving many actors; fragmentation, the involvement of many levels and the wicked character of issues all end up with the local politicians as bit-players, important one, but still bit-players. They could if they are creative and take initiatives facilitate a positive development of society. It is very much a matter of “power to” according to regime theory, in contrast to “power over” (Stone 1989; Stoker 1995). In the hybrid decentralized welfare model, two types of politicians appear, those acting on the central level and those acting in various neighbourhoods. The latter has the role of counteracting sector thinking and acting, and function as an intermediary between the local people and the administration.

The Karlstad case is one which I have had connections to for more than three decades; during my education in public administration I practiced there; later I served for a short while as deputy head of accounting, and as Budget Officer before I spent sixteen years as Finance Manager/Director (only interrupted by periods of research). After I left (for the university), I have returned for closer analyses of this particular case. I have the last few years been studying this case for various reasons: a) to get a better understanding of mechanisms that influence regime change, as well as the change of steering and of administration; 2) to catch “the rhythms” of conflicts and consensus in budgeting including the culture that characterizes a department considered to be the scapegoat (due to deficits over a long time); 3) as a mapping and penetration of projects concerning co-operation. (In many of these cases I have had master’s students supplying by writing their theses on connected subjects). In this paper I do not discuss the specific problems associated my nearness to the subject. I do this in greater detail in a chapter in a coming book: Observing Government Elites: Up Close and Personal. Editors R A W Rhodes, Paul ‘t Hart and Mirko Noordegraaf. Palgrave Macmillan, to be published.

The name of this department is a real ancient one: “drätselkontoret” or the City Chamber; the head of department was earlier (until 1965) called the City Accountant (stadskamreraren); the Head of the Secretary was earlier called the City Ombudsman (stadsombudsmannen) – always a lawyer. Both these positions had specific instructions connected to them, decided upon by the Council.

After a scandal involving corruption at the end of the 1930s a very strict fiscal regime was introduced. A chartered auditor was recruited as finance manger to personify the change. Only five people held the position as City Accountant/Finance Manager/Finance Director during that century! I think that the number is about the same what concerns City Ombudsman/Head of Secretariat/Center of Secretariat/City Director.

I was in my turn inspired by the budget system of the City of Gothenburg; I visited my colleague there.

Just to take one example, in 1985 I launched a monthly financial report addressed to leading politicians, heads of departments and other senior officials were present.

Just to take one example, in 1985 I launched a monthly financial report addressed to leading politicians, heads of departments, economists and other senior officials. This contained data and comments on the economic situation in the country, in Karlstad as society and as local authority. My idea was to widen the perspective and to make also officials responsible for specific services aware of the whole and of the dependencies in the economic system. This could also serve as an early warning system.

In this case Stockholm was the model, but we also looked into the Jönköping case.

A process in which the number of committees and departments has been reduced has been going on the last decade: the culture committee and the committee for recreation and leisure is now being merged and issues concerning tourism is brought to it; the social committee and the labour market committee have been brought together; the technical committee and the real estate committee will be merged; issues related to water, sewage and refuse removal and waste reclamations have been transferred to the energy company; etcetera. As a consequence all departments are becoming rather huge; they all have their own finance manager and personnel manager with staffs, and on its way – their own information officer.