

Strength in weakness

A new institutional design perspective on the Swedish Trust
Reform

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Abstract

To address the problems that had sprung from the detail management of the welfare sector, a result of control in the vein of New Public Management (NPM), the Swedish government commissioned the Trust Delegation (*Tillitsdelegationen*) to develop a trust-based steering and launched the Trust Reform (*Tillitsreformen*). As this new reform seeks to remedy the failures of the previous system, this thesis sets out to examine what potential for being successful in this it can be said to have. By using a set of principles for good design, derived from a new institutionalist perspective on institutional design, it evaluates the Trust Reform as it emerges in the Trust Delegation's main report. The analysis shows that the reform, by and large, holds potential for success in its original design. There are, however, contradictions and trade-offs that may be in need of solving. The thesis concludes with a discussion serving to indicate where to place the reform in a tradition of public management reform, realising its distinction in doing so. This discussion also includes a call for precision of the analytical framework in future research and for studies of the Trust Reform over time.

Key words: Tillitsreformen, Tillitsdelegationen, public management reform, new institutionalism, institutional design.

Words: 10000

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

As public and academic debate in Sweden (see e.g. Brante 2014 p. 338; Molander 2017; Zaremba 2013) flared up regarding the mounting perceived problems with and critique of the recent trend in public administration, New Public Management (NPM), the Swedish government needed to show that it was addressing the issues that had become apparent. Among these problems was identified a greater steering in detail of the public administration system by the central power. This showed itself through the extensive documentation and follow-up work needed to be conducted by professionals in the welfare sector in order to uphold to the detailed and specified goal and result based management from government on different levels, informed by an NPM organising of the public sector (Montin 2015:58–59). As this took hold within the daily operations of public sector practitioners, they became over-encumbered with administrative burden, greatly hindering them in the performance of their actual duties (Forsell – Ivarsson Westerberg 2014:55–58). Over-relying on quantitative indicators, the central steering gave birth to a culture of distrust, where the goals and heavy result focus seemed to presuppose the misconduct of actors as ever-increasing auditing and monitoring inevitably became a prominent part of the Swedish public administration reality (Forsell – Ivarsson Westerberg 2014; Montin 2015; Molander 2017:151–152).

In response to this emerging problem picture, the Swedish government commissioned a committee, the Trust Delegation (*Tillitsdelegationen*), to try and evolve the existing management of the public administration into becoming more trust based. With it and its directives the Trust Reform (*Tillitsreformen*) was launched. The initiative can be summed up by the following quote:

The government has in its directive [...] to the Trust Delegation, and with the intentions behind the Trust Reform, an ambition to develop the steering of the public sector and its welfare services so that it to a higher degree is characterised by a trust towards the professionals' competency, knowledge and ability. Through this will be achieved a higher quality and efficacy in the interaction with those that these activities exist for: users, patients and students (SOU 2018:47:241, author's translation).

It is this reform that this thesis will put under scrutiny.

1.2 Purpose and research question

Since the Trust Reform's inception came through the perceived partial failure of the previous reform programme within public management, it is of interest to determine what potential for success this new reform holds. If it is conceptualised as being a remedy to the ailments of the current public sector control system, the question becomes how well it can be said to be shaped towards being successful in this prerogative.

This investigation is conducted with the help of the new institutionalist perspective on institutional design. As this theoretical realm specifies principles for a good design of reform programmes, the Trust Reform can be examined using these to establish how well it is constructed to achieve its aims. The research question for this thesis then becomes as follows:

What potential for success can the design of the Trust Reform be said to exhibit?

How this will be answered and exactly how the reform, and its aptitude towards being a good design, are operationalised, will become apparent below.

2 Theory

This section will promulgate the theoretical underpinnings of the research. Firstly, public management reform as a phenomenon will be presented and associated with the Trust Reform, new institutionalism and institutional design. Subsequently, the theory of institutional design is laid out. Lastly, some comments concerning previous research will be given.

2.1 Public management reform and new institutionalism

Politt and Bouckaert define public management reforms as:

Deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organisations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better (2011:2).

NPM reforms sought to make the public sector organisations ‘run better’ by increasing their efficiency through shaping them in the like of private companies, adopting such things as market orientation and managerialism (Christensen – Lægheid 2007:4; Christensen – Lægheid 2011a:2). Economy was the focus (Christensen – Lægheid 2007:15) as these reforms took on the rationality of economic theory and neo-liberal ideology (Christensen – Lægheid 2011a:3).

It is not a difficult task to include the Trust Reform in the above, quite open, definition, establishing it as a case of public management reform. But as such, it spawned out of the problems identified with NPM in the Swedish welfare sector and is presented as a reaction to parts of it (SOU 2017:56:60). It could then be said to align with a wave of public management reforms categorised as post-NPM (Christensen – Lægheid 2011a:13). These reforms are a motley mix, taking various shapes (Christensen – Lægheid 2011b:394-398; Kristinsson et al 2016:157) so to ascribe them some all-encompassing attributes is quite hard. Nonetheless, they do have a contrasting conception of what ‘making public sector organisations run better’ connotes (Politt – Bouckaert 2011:2), illuminating the advantage of the openness of the above definition. The question is posed though whether they comprise something all new or are just supplements to the ruling doctrine of NPM (Christensen – Lægheid 2007:3; Christensen – Lægheid 2011b:402-403; Greve et al 2016:211). Such queries are of relevance in the case of the Trust Reform as well as it is openly supposed to “preserve the positive aspects of NPM” (SOU 2017:56:60, author’s translation).

The collection of theoretical outsets that inhabit new institutionalism hold the importance of institutions in guiding political life in common (Peters 2012:174-176). To establish the connection between new institutionalism, public management reform and, in turn, institutional design, institutions need to be defined. This thesis uses an open definition, catering to a plethora of new institutional theories. This definition will only serve the purpose of elucidating new institutionalism and linking the Trust Reform with institutional design. It explicates institutions by assigning them four traits:

- They make up a structural aspect of politics, both formal (e.g. a government body) and informal (e.g. a mutual array of norms) which organises assemblies of persons in shaped interplay with varying degrees of predictability but always with some measure of regularity.
- They hold persistence over time, with some institutional theories ascribing them more pliancy in face of changes than others.
- They have an influence over the behaviour of individuals, meaning they have to be, to some extent, inhibiting, formally or informally, of individuals' conduct.
- They contain some form of communal body of values and sense of meaning, shared by those included in the institution.

(Peters 2012:19-20).

Identifying institutions as entities holding the above characteristics, the connection can be made to public management reforms. It becomes clear that such reforms seek to influence and shape, in different ways, institutions (Politt – Bouckaert 2011:34), the Trust Reform even more so, in its own specific ambitions. To bring about change in such things could indeed be perceived as its veritable *raison d'être*.

New institutionalism emerges as a feasible theoretical departure point for the study of public management reforms, and, in turn, the Trust Reform. It has been utilised in examination of NPM realities (see e.g. Blomgren – Sahlin 2007; Pierre – Rothstein 2011:409) but as the trend has shifted towards post-NPM a substantial part of the research done on public management reforms has been done with the help of new institutionalism (Barzelay – Gallego 2006). It is in this tradition this study situates itself. Identifying the Trust Reform as post-NPM then further increases the suitability of an analysis grounded in new institutionalism. As the reform seeks to shape and change institutions, it is designing them, forming a case of institutional design.

2.2 Institutional design

Institutional design can be construed as a stillborn project in the face of some new institutional theory, in that the intended results of a reform programme will most likely never come about as the institutions continually evolve and reshape it

(Peters 2012:42). Other theories, however, acknowledge this fact simultaneously as they recognise the ambition to reform institutions as something inevitable, holding additional functions and still being able to be guided by some principles towards being successful (Lowndes – Roberts 2013:185-186). These provide the theoretical anchoring of the analysis and are presented below.

2.2.1 Design as bricolage

First off, we have the idea of design as ‘bricolage’. This idea puts design projects aimed at changing institutions as only reorganising and making a new combination of already existing elements and institutional resources that are available and can be made to benefit new objectives, or again serve old ones (Lanzara 1998:27). Design that follow along such pathways do not only take into account exogenous factors of influence, but also endogenous ones, in that it encourages the uncovering, or rediscovery, of latent and perhaps forgotten potential that is not presently recognised in the already existing institutional frameworks (Crouch – Farrell 2004:33).

Four processes can be identified to help shed light on how this works:

- *Institutional remembering*, where old practices and perspectives are again brought up to address new situations.
- *Institutional borrowing*, where actors who take up multiple positions and functions in several systems transfer institutional resources from neighbouring arenas.
- *Institutional sharing*, where different actors through organised affiliations are able to share and transfer knowledge and resources among each other.
- *Institutional forgetting*, where the maintenance of the design in question is not upheld and its practices dissipates with time and sinks away (this could be perceived as the stage to precede institutional remembering).

(Crouch – Farrell 2004:18,23-24,34; Mahoney – Thelen 2010:15-16)

Remembering can be seen as looking back, *borrowing* as looking to one’s sides, *sharing* as looking outwards (Lowndes – Roberts 2013:184) and *forgetting* as having stopped looking at all. The first three of these processes, the beneficial ones, are the ones one seeks to facilitate, among others, through a design by bricolage.

2.2.2 Design as a normative project

Within new institutional thinking institutional change is acknowledged as something that can be hard to achieve. This is because of the existence of different and diverse power relations found within deeply embedded political institutions. Within these actors can conduct themselves in accordance to informal practices

and narratives to work against the change if it is not by them perceived as working in their favour (Lowndes – Roberts 2013:184, 186). Nevertheless, there is an appreciated worth in designs of change, such as public management reforms, in that they make clear and indicate what social values are currently desirable and sought after (March – Olsen 1989:90-91). Herein lies an additional function with something such as a reform in public management.

Precisely because institutions house values and power relations, and reforms of them are value-exposing, the institutional design project inexorably leads into becoming one of normative nature. From this point of view a good design is one which present clear values which are leading, and in doing so is facilitating the fruitful collection and utilisation of different local actors' knowledge and creativity (Lowndes – Roberts 2013:187). This space for encouragement of adaptability and experimentation within the design is elaborated below.

2.2.3 Design with openness to variation

So, from the bricolage perspective, the aim of institutional design should be to redesign institutions, and from the normative perspective, it should aspire to more indirectly, through values, make change come about. What this means is that a feasible design, must be aware of, take into account and fully integrate how the reform in question might be met, handled, perceived, interpreted and, most importantly, reshaped by many different actors on many different levels and in many different local contexts (Goodin 1996:28). As a consequence, things such as inner constancy or fitting to a certain exterior milieu are not what is pursued. Instead what the design should aspire to do is mantle a character which includes space for adaption and learning.

What becomes paramount is that institutional design, from this point of view, should have a great openness to variation as a way of creating a built-in capacity for innovation and adaptability to changing environments. Reformers should advocate, in the shaping of the design, experimentation with different forms in different localities as well as rumination over what has worked elsewhere and how those lessons could be used in the local context (Goodin 1996:42). This becomes a way in which they might be able to bring the beneficial bricolage processes about, as well as control them to a certain degree.

Institutional design needs to be ready to accommodate a diversity in motivation amongst all different actors. This motivational complexity is not best tackled through attempts to try and govern behaviour or by being suspicious of people but can more effectively be approached by nourishing trust and a collection of moral precepts (Goodin 1996:41). This touches back upon how a design should be based upon a clear, shared and leading assortment of values as a way of creating action space and a seedbed for creativity within the framework that the values provide.

2.2.4 Design with robustness and revisability

The question remains, however, how the theoretical account above can be boiled down into some design principles through which a public management reform can be conceptualised. Two key concepts that emerges from the new institutionalist approach to institutional design, put forth by Lowndes and Roberts (2013:190-192) on basis of Goodin (1996:39-43), are robustness and revisability. These are presented as means for evaluating cases of institutional design, such as reform programmes. They operationalise robustness as:

- The measure to which the design is being guided by values and the clearness of these values.
- The nature and effectiveness of how the institutional design ‘sticks’ and how it shapes actors’ behaviours in a desirable way.

Revisability is operationalised as follows:

- Flexibility; the design’s internal capacity for adaptation over time as well as for a satisfactory take-up of the fruits of ‘learning-by-doing’-processes.
- Variability; to what degree there exists permissiveness and promotion within the design for the use of different practices and different variants of the design in different localities.

The concepts of robustness and revisability, together with the idea of design as bricolage, are what will serve as basis for the analytical framework through which the Trust Reform will be examined.

2.3 Previous research

As this study has already been placed within an established practice of new institutionalist analysis of public management reforms and is below in its evaluative approach related to other research with such ambitions, this section will only serve to handle other studies which have utilised the same, or at least a very similar, analytical scheme.

Robustness and revisability as concepts within the realm of a new institutionalist approach to institutional design have their origin with Goodin (1996:40-41). He draws these from the theoretical implications his given account of new institutionalism has for the ‘good’ design of institutions. These are specified and put into use by Lowndes and Wilson (2003) in their article concerning the Labour Party of Great Britain’s modernisation project of local government. This article serves, to some extent, as a predecessor to the study done here, in that it utilises a very similar, although not identical, theoretical framework for the analysis as well in that the objects of analysis in the two studies holds a certain degree of resemblance. The New Labour initiative in the UK was specifically aimed at local government (Lowndes – Wilson 2003:275-276)

whereas the Trust Reform is designed for the system as a whole, although delimited to the welfare sector (2018:47:68-67). Nevertheless, the local municipalities and regions explicitly constitute an essential sector in this, where a lot of the focus of the intended change can be located. Where the two studies differ is in the scope of the investigation. Lowndes and Wilson study the New Labour reform and its performance over time in reference to the design principles (Lowndes – Wilson 2003), when this thesis' examination solely focuses on the potentiality of the original design of the Trust Reform. In this there are no reform effects over time available to be readily perpended.

Lowndes has also elaborated (2005) on the processes that above have been linked to a design by bricolage, drawn from Crouch and Farrell (2004). In this explication institutional borrowing, remembering and sharing are conceptualised in a local governance context, with different examples of how these phenomena might take form in such surroundings. This article, together with that of Lowndes and Wilson (2003), instructs the analytical tools of this thesis' analysis and how they are employed.

The Trust Reform is in many regards still in its infancy so any substantial research addressing it has yet to appear. The researchers following the different trial projects the Delegation have stakes in – and specifically their evaluations of these projects – could be gestated as research done on the reform. However, these contributions have, by and large, had a profound impact and influence on the outline and content of the reform. In this respect they comprise a part of the material examined, specified below. This study can become a first stepping-stone on which future research on the Trust Reform's performance may be based, an ambition discussed in the thesis' final chapter.

3 Method

In this section the evaluation approach will be elaborated upon, as well as what material will be analysed. Furthermore, it will stipulate what parts of the theoretical framework presented above will be focused on, and how these are intended to be utilised in the analysis.

3.1 Evaluation

The principles of a good design from a new institutionalist perspective, described above, are put forth as a way of evaluating reform projects (Lowndes – Roberts 2013:189) and may be used to “predict conditions for relative success” (ibid:172) of their designs. In such, they are very well suited for this study and its research question. The method for this study then appears to be that of an evaluation. Evaluation is commonly defined as something performed with the effects of the evaluated visible, not something done beforehand (Vedung 2009:21). However, as we shall see, the actual outcomes of the Trust Reform cannot be described from the material perused. Therefore, the evaluation may take on the form of one carried out *ex ante*, an assessment before the fact (ibid:21).

Yet, it cannot be categorised as being fully an *ex-ante* evaluation either. Such evaluations are regarded as to be conducted before the project has been initiated (Samset – Christiansen 2015:3) to discern what policy might be best suited facing a certain situation or how promising current conditions are for a specific measure to reap benefits (see e.g. Niklasson 2015, Tikkanen et al 2017; Hermann et al 2017). In addition, such evaluations are often economic or quantitative in their nature, using sophisticated data models for their analysis (see e.g. Castañeda – Guerrero 2019; Campagnalo et al 2018). The Trust Reform is very much launched in the material read, with its recommendations and proposals, and this study is not an assessment made from economic parameters or grounded in such theory as well as it being rather qualitative in its approach.

The evaluation this study constitutes, resides, as a consequence, in the space between *ex ante* and *ex post*, as it postdates the inauguration of the reform but still is not facing the results of it. Instead this evaluation becomes a systematically conducted investigation of the value and virtues of this particular reform (Karlsson 1999:15) and its design, which is not having to be coupled with a phase before anything has happened or a phase where something is already completely under way or completed (Vedung 2009:34).

Moreover, the evaluation is being done with criteria taken from an origin external to the stated goals of the reform, it is not based in the fulfilment of these

goals. This does not render it invalid (Vedung 2009:32) as criteria theory can be formulated outside the endeavour under evaluation with an externally existing theoretical basis (ibid:44). Nevertheless, the evaluation is staunchly linked to the goals of the reform in the respect that it aspires to, with the assistance of the principles of good institutional design, distinguish its potential to be successful in its undertakings and in reaching its aims. In this ambition, the evaluation is primarily descriptive and not prescriptive, as it seeks to determine and present how well the reform upholds to these criteria (ibid:188). Tentatively prescriptive tendencies may, however, be discernible as the thesis, in its conclusion, discusses the results of the evaluation.

3.2 Material

The text material used to examine the Trust Reform consists of the main report published by the Trust Delegation (SOU 2018:47). The choice of this text as the principal source is based in the fact that it, to a large extent, constitutes what the Trust Reform is meant to be. The report presents the Delegation's recommendations and concrete proposals regarding the implementation of the reform and is also explicitly described as serving the purpose of a handbook in how to approach developing and implementing a more trust-based public administration system (ibid:379). In this manner the text is considered to in effect be where the institutional design of the Trust Reform best can be described.

In addition to the main report other texts produced by the Delegation have been approached. These are the report which more closely deals with the question of audit, monitoring and inspection in a trust-based system (SOU 2018:48), the Delegation's interim report which had a partial focus on compensation models within the health care sector (SOU 2017:56) and the research anthology containing a group of researchers' analyses of the different trial projects the Delegations have instigated (SOU 2018:38). However, after a cursory reading of these texts and the main report, it became apparent that some of the texts were unsuitable as sources of the reform's design, such as the independent analyses made by the researchers in the anthology. Furthermore, the parts of the other texts directly pertinent to the reform and its design were already very much present in the main report. Therefore, the main report has been deemed both sufficient and solely appropriate as material for this study. The parts in it relating to the current situation and the leading up to the commissioning of the Delegation have not been considered, as well as its concluding cost and consequence analyses, i.e. sections not pertaining to the design of the reform have not been read.

The report does not constitute a reality where the reform in itself is implemented, which can be studied. To some degree the trial projects and the description of them could be regarded as examples of the reform in practice, but in large it is not possible through the text to see the reform in actual effect. This does not necessarily have to form any problems for this analysis, as established. It does have implications for how far-reaching conclusions made from said analysis

can be. It also creates consequences for what parts of the theoretical concepts can be drawn from the new institutionalist account of institutional design, and what shape they assume, in constructing analytical tools for the study here meant to be conducted.

3.3 Analytical tools

The analysis which serves as a basis for the evaluation will make use of principles and aspects taken from the above provided account of the new institutional view of institutional design. These will be utilised as analytical dimensions and as such they need to be properly operationalised in this context (Esaiasson et al 2012: 55; Teorell – Svensson 2007:39). Starting off with bricolage, it, together with institutional remembering and sharing, will constitute dimensions. The context in which Lowndes exemplifies institutional borrowing is in that of local institutional entrepreneurship fomented by individual actors (2005:303), not perfectly applicable to the more comprehensive approach of the Trust Reform. It is therefore left out as a dimension to refine the analysis and limit its scope, to allow the investigation of the more relevant dimensions to be more extensive. The dimensions that are retained are operationalised as follows:

Bricolage:

- If the reform means to use what is already there, within what already is, if it means to redesign, rather than design anew.
- If it seeks to use untapped potential it identifies in the system.

Remembering:

- If it aims to bring back things it identifies as forgotten or neglected.
- If it reactivates these old resources in combatting the problems it seeks to address.

Sharing:

- If it actively promotes and encourages collaboration and resource pooling between sectors, levels, enterprises and professions and what part this takes in the design of the reform.
- If it clearly aims to structure relationships, in various networks and on different levels, for this sharing of institutional resources and what examples can be discerned of this in the design.

Returning to the concepts of robustness and revisability, robustness is where this study differs the most from others, such as the one done by Lowndes and Wilson (2003). Robustness for them is clarity of values and how this is maintained over time and the effectiveness and nature of how the design instigates desired behaviours over time (ibid:283). To measure the effectiveness of how well the change intended to take place endures, requires a study over time and data

gathering of effects beyond the scope of and not possible through the text material perused here. Values will be kept as a dimension, but their perspicuity will not be under examination, again in reference to this not being a study conducted over time. Instead they are in this analysis operationalised as follows:

Values:

- If the reform is explicitly said to be guided by values, if the design is led by such and to what degree.
- If value-guidance as a concept is present in the design and promoted, to what extent the design can be said to be normative in its project.

These operationalisations are grounded in the idea of value-guidance as creativity-breeding and managing complexities in motivation among actors. As for revisability, both flexibility and variability will serve as dimensions. Flexibility and variability are operationalised as follows:

Flexibility:

- If there exists an awareness concerning the need for the design to be adaptable over time.
- If there exists efforts and measures in the reform or processes put forth in the design for the inclusion of changes in surroundings in the shaping of practices and operations.
- If learning-by-doing processes are present and promoted in the design, and if it seeks to establish measures to successfully collect the lessons learned from such.

Variability:

- If the design promotes and enables the use of different practices, within the same bailiwick, in different places.
- If it tolerates and encourages the use of different variants of the design of trust-based steering it presents, in different places.
- If testing and pilot schemes are present and promoted in the design.

Furthermore, the analysis aspires to handle how these different dimensions relate to each other. For this no specific operationalisations are given or possible, the way the analysis operates here is through the application of other dimensions' operationalisations in instances where one dimension has already been identified. The aim of this is to capture how they support and enable each other in varying ways, how they mesh and intertwine and how different efforts can give rise to several of them simultaneously. In this analytical ambition conjointly exists the notion of how these dimensions might work against each other, what conflict could emerge between them and what trade-offs, as well as synergies, might appear as the reform tries to cater to several of them at the same time, intentionally and unintentionally.

The above proposed analysis has the potential of bordering on the interpretative at times, in using the dimensions through the operationalisations.

All interpretative endeavours are hazardous in the respect that the interpretation chosen by one reader might be arbitrary, a divergent understanding might be considered just as valid by the next reader. To avoid such perils, the interpretative analysis on these occasions will strive to be as open and clear as possible, to aim towards an ideal of intersubjectivity (Badersten 2006: 189; Esaiasson et al 2012:25-26; Teorell – Svensson 2007: 54, 280-281). No quotations are however included in its presentation, so as not to portray it as a textual analysis.

4 Analysis

Here commences the presentation of the analysis made of the Trust Reform. It will be put forth in a number of sections, each pertaining to a certain theoretical dimension, drawn from the delimited theoretical framework of institutional design. The chapter ends with a short summary.

4.1 Design as bricolage

The idea of bricolage seems to, in varying degrees, permeate the explicit intentions of the reform as a whole as well as exist in the ideas of its implementation. This sort of ambition with the reform, with the design, is evident in the instruction from the government in launching the Trust Reform. Here it is clearly stated that the alterations of the public administration the Delegation is meant to devise are supposed to take place within already existing forms of steering and control (SOU 2018:47:429-430). In this way the reforming is to occur in the confines of the old, making use of what is already prevalent therein. A bricolage perspective of redesign can then be said to saturate the grounds of the reform's overall purpose.

The notion of a bricolage ambition becomes apparent as the reform sets out to bring to surface an underutilised potential it identifies inherent and currently present in the Swedish public administration system (SOU 2018:47:69). The reform seeks to facilitate and expand the action space and discretion of professionals, bureaucrats and supervisors on different levels as it recognises this as an asset and source of resources already readily available throughout the public sector. As it stakes out the public sector employees' competency, the diversity of capabilities to be found therein (ibid:210, 241) and the inner motivation of street-level bureaucrats (ibid:245) as unexploited powers the Swedish administrative system possesses, the reform's design nature quite openly exudes bricolage. Its endeavours to try and unearth and make use of these features of the public sector system are indeed bricolage pursuits.

4.1.1 Institutional remembering

As the reform realises the need for the increased autonomy and discretion of professionals in the Swedish public administration, it also concedes to this being a resurfacing of institutional resources neglected in the previous organisation of the public sector. The enlarged action space can be conceptualised as a vessel for the

reappearance of institutionally forgotten strengths within the system, actively portrayed as the way to refute the problems the reform is seeking to address (SOU 2018:47:178-179). The reform's aims to eliminate what it has christened as 'administrative time thieves' (i.e. the documentation and reporting required by the detailed performance-based management) to refocus and free up the workday of public administrators (ibid 206) constitute examples of how its design means to instigate processes of institutional remembering.

Institutional remembering may also be identified in a different context related to this. This is in the realm of leadership, in the reform's formulations of this. One job assigned to the role of leaders and supervisors is the ensuring of an allowing atmosphere for the expression and input of the employees' professionalism, and the proper take-up of these assets (SOU 2018:47:200). In many regards, then, included in the responsibilities of managers within the new trust-based public sector, aided in the design by processes of institutional sharing comprised of openness and exchange between supervisors concerning methods used and lessons learned (ibid:234), is serving as the enablers of the institutional remembering of the public sector system.

4.1.2 Institutional sharing

A large portion of what the Trust Reform is made up of is a promotion and praise of collaboration and interplay between actors, bodies, professions and operations. The report is riddled with acknowledgements of how this is the road towards achieving a trust-based public administration. Institutional sharing is in this way identified as an essential part of the reform's design, through its endorsement of a comprehensive approach to public administration, and the interaction and exchange between actors that entails (SOU 2018:47:163).

It is continually apparent how the reform seeks to establish clearly structured relationships through which processes of institutional sharing can occur. This emerges, *inter alia*, in the reform actively advocating for the creation of arenas and time for exchange (SOU 2018:47:209) and the building of such things as peer learning and frameworks for continuous knowledge transaction, such as work groups consisting of a wide variety of professions and agencies (ibid:212). Such efforts show themselves in the Delegation's trial projects where such concepts as consultation teams, coordinating the activities of different public service providers, are present (ibid, s. 220) as well as through some trial projects embodying, more or less, pure institutional sharing initiatives, such as one concerning the interplay between different inspection agencies (ibid:276). Furthermore, the reform's conception of auditing can be conceptualised as a platform for institutional sharing as it gathers and consults the inspected actors and operations and is supposed to facilitate dialogue and the swapping of experiences between them (ibid:284). As the reform explicitly proposes the formation of structures for exchange, interplay and collaboration, infused throughout the whole of the public chain of command and between auditing

agencies, the state and different government bodies (ibid:285, 341), institutional sharing can be seen as heavily present in the design.

Knowledge development and the transfer of this knowledge is also something the reform concerns itself with (SOU 2018:47:208). This transfer can be seen as an object of institutional sharing assuming various shapes, such as the call for an advancement in research carried out in close proximity to the operations of the public sector, where the public service activities and academia should inform each other (ibid:214-216). Processes of institutional sharing could also be discerned as being boosted through the reform design's focus on dialogue regarding and cocreation of services, efforts and amendments in the public sector, involving both the co-workers on different levels as well as the citizenry (ibid, p 280). Overall, the design encourages the observation and imitation of successful practices in other municipalities and counties (ibid:314), in essence promoting institutional sharing.

Lastly, something can be noted concerning how this dimension correlates with another in the design of the Trust Reform. This is in how values guiding the reform instigates other processes. An example in the context of institutional sharing is how the principle of openness, one of the design's leading values (SOU 2018:47:228), seems to inevitably provoke a seedbed for intelligence-sharing opportunities within the system. This can be further exemplified through the openness between supervisors already mentioned (ibid:234), and how this evolves into the sharing of institutional resources. The next section will discuss values in the design in more depth.

4.2 Values

Setting out, the Trust Reform is framed as being clearly guided by values (SOU 2018:47:133-134). As the definition of a trust-based management and control of the public sector is left open to interpretation (ibid:131) a design environment of value guidance, which does not decree, is created. The value outset of the design is ostensibly visible through the principles that serve as the basis for the whole reform. These are formulated and specified, with illustrating examples drawn from the trial activities, in a lengthy section of the report (ibid:143-254) demonstrating the substantial part values play in the design. As no unitary model of governance is prescribed (ibid:143) the principles are intended as being precisely leading and in this becomes values to strive towards in the implementation of the Trust Reform. In this they simultaneously become a considerable chunk of the content of the reform as well as the suggested way in which to realise it.

Apart from the principles, values as a guiding concept can be observed as recurring in the design of the reform. It takes pains to highlight the importance of culture and informal praxis, and the importance of change transpiring within these and how efforts need to be directed in affecting culture (SOU 2018:47:170-171). In this, values are singled out as crucial, but also ethics and moral impetuses

(ibid:177-178). The value-guided leadership is recognised as the mode in which to cultivate such things (ibid:323), and in facilitating a desired and shared value system, which is portrayed as essential for the operations (ibid:181, 246-247). In addition, the reform proposes the establishing of a communal value system education for public servants (ibid:334). This, in conjunction with the value-led leadership, forms viable components in the pronounced (ibid:244) normative steering of the public sector.

Institutional remembering reappears in these surroundings. As the professional ethics of public sector employees are again rediscovered, and the set of morals they provide, they are sketched as serving as means for absorbing and clarifying further values of importance to the activities (SOU 2018:47:342). Remembering gives birth to values, as the advocacy of such morality systems, together with the overall notion of trust and not distrust (ibid:240), are ways in which the design can be said to try and manage and be mindful of motivational complexity among actors.

Values, as a dimension, also weaves into the other analytical elements here present in reviewing the Trust Reform. The value guidance of the design is, to some extent, static with the firm basis of the guiding principles, but it is also meant to be complemented by the specific context, agency or profession in question (SOU 2018:47:248). In this way, values and variability are combined. The value system is proclaimed to need to be unambiguous, but, at the same time, space is opened up for local interpretations and priorities (ibid:332-333). As the set of values is described as alive and dynamic, constantly the subject of discussion, its flexibility, specifically its adaptability over time and to changing circumstances, is strengthened, but questions arise as to what this entails for the overall robustness of the design. Herein lies an interesting balance between these different aspects. Avoiding trade-offs here seems quite difficult, as the conflict between concurrently promoting clear, guiding values and fervent experimentation (ibid:377) becomes increasingly palpable. Further interactions between the different dimensions are examined in the two following sections.

4.3 Flexibility

The Trust Reform exhibits an awareness concerning how the design needs to be able to withstand changes in exogenous and endogenous factors and how it needs to be adaptable over time to these inconstant environments. This is evident through expressed requirements for activities to keep up with recent developments and to be flexible and dynamic, through such things as competence provision and reinvention (SOU 2018:47:208-209). The consciousness regarding the necessity of adaptation over time is also shown in the context of peer learning (ibid:338-339) as well as in reference to compensations models, where such models are explicitly staked out as having to evolve as the operations are (ibid:360).

Apart from instances of the report openly stating the reform's sentience regarding the demand for the design's flexibility, this dimension can further be

identified in various parts of the content of the reform and in the outline of its design. One such place is the overall focus on citizens, e.g. users and patients, the Reform seeks to impose on the welfare sector, which should guide its activities, and the participation of these citizens in these activities (SOU 2018:47:151-153, 156). These portrayals can be regarded as ways in which a capacity for adaptability over time is built into the design, as the citizens serve as conduits for the incorporation of change in external surroundings into the development of the public sector. As change shapes their continued input it is included in the forming of new practices. The involvement of citizens, through such things as the co-creation of services (ibid:342) can be perceived as one path towards producing an increased adaptability within the design, enhancing its flexibility.

In relation to this is the bricolage approach of trying to make use of an increased action space and discretion of professionals in the public sector (SOU 2018:47:178-179), within which variability is discernible through context sensitivity and situational adaptability. Here flexibility also becomes apparent as there is space created for the practitioners to react to social and societal shifts and shape their actions and the evolvement of the operations accordingly. Through welcoming innovation and the perpetual developing of welfare services from both professionals and citizens, facilitated through continuous dialogue (ibid:193-194) the design becomes adaptive in the face of changing environments as no universal blueprint has to be adhered to from the get-go and the evolving input and creativity, in light of a dynamic world, of these actors can be utilised. Dialogue and co-creation can be conceptualised as clear instances of institutional sharing (ibid:280) but they also constitute forms in which the design exudes a distinct aspiration towards flexibility, and these two dimensions can be seen working in unison in this fashion.

Linked to this can be identified the range of pursuits the reform has in the creation, development and dissemination of knowledge. Dialogue, knowledge distribution and education are held high in the reform (SOU 2018:47:379) and in this its design's flexibility is heightened as the gaining and diffusion of new knowledge in effect equate the gaining and diffusion of means in which to be responsive and resilient to new developments, external and internal. Such processes can be said to be facilitated in a few ways within the design. One of these is through the reform's ambition to establish a professional education programme, specifically designed to change in accordance with society (ibid:213). Another, more prominent, way is through the promotion and fostering of operations-close research the reform suggests (ibid:303, 319). In its aspiration of locating more research very near or directly linked to the activities of the welfare sector and closing the gap between the centres of learning and the public sector (ibid:214) the Reform could be seen as furthering the progress of the production and dispersal of knowledge which entail an adaptability over time. This operations-close research is simultaneously an already brought up example of institutional sharing as well as an occurrence of variability in the design where this research is supposed to take diverse shapes in differing settings (ibid:215-216). Through the combination with flexibility, three dimensions then become, in this context, emergent together in the design.

Another kind of knowledge the Reform and its design is dealing with is that which is drawn from processes of learning-by-doing. Leadership is here seen as paramount in the successful collection of such knowledge, as supervisors within public administration should be the creators of a culture and organisation that both bolster learning-by-doing initiatives and makes proper use of the fruits of these (SOU 2018:47:327-328). Learning-by-doing, and the satisfactory gathering of what it accrues, is in the design of the Trust Reform inextricably linked to variability. The whole notion of the trial projects, which in themselves may serve as visible signs of the design's variability, is to make use of different parts of trust-based control and steering and then take the lessons gained from doing this and learn from them (ibid:144), i.e. learning-by-doing. Furthermore, in the design's upholding of a process-oriented approach to knowledge accumulation (ibid:209) variability is clearly present as new ways of doing things are tested in small scale to then be developed, which constitutes a process of learning-by-doing.

In the area of auditing, variability and learning-by-doing is also promoted together as more trial activities and pilot projects are suggested in this field (SOU 2018:47:261) in which, through evaluation of results and lessons learned (ibid:269), learning-by-doing comprises a ground for improvement. The trial project between the two auditing agencies, previously mentioned (ibid:276), had a clear ambition of using learning-by-doing as a method for discerning both costs and benefits with an increased interplay among these actors. This undertaking set out as an institutional sharing-project which then made use of flexibility, i.e. the insights from learning-by-doing, to establish the variability of the design, i.e. that different degrees of interplay are appropriate and/or possible in different localities and between different actors. In such a way these three analytical dimensions can be combined.

Flexibility intertwine with the other dimensions in more ways than this. Institutional sharing as it appears in the design of the Reform is more than often also the way in which the design can be said to achieve some measure of flexibility, as the exchange of various institutional resources appears as one technique with which the design hopes to develop with the times (SOU 2018:47:341, 381). Here the knowledge aspect can be brought up again, as the knowledge transfer is a case of institutional sharing, and it together with the production of the knowledge is one of the forms of flexibility existent in the design. This, however, is also portrayed as the means towards developing new practices and methods, specific and tailored to local conditions (ibid:208), reinforcing the variability of the design. Variability, as we have seen and shall see, has an inclination towards entangling with the other dimensions in various ways, when one canvasses the Trust Reform.

4.4 Variability

The Trust Delegation seems to purport variability as an essential part of what the reform is. As stated before, a universal and definite definition of trust-based management is not provided with the intentions of enabling local interpretations and applications (SOU 2018:47:131), manifesting an indubitable platform for variability. Accommodation is given for acting on basis of situational aspects and one's own responsibility (ibid:132) and in this the testing of ideas to form new practices is encouraged (ibid:154). As the reform has an approach which refrains from standardisation, sees strength in variation and embraces complexity instead of trying to subdue it (ibid:166) the design is firmly grounded in variability.

Furthermore, variability can be said to show itself extensively in the focus the reform has on context and situation. The freedom which is bestowed upon public officials to handle goal fulfilment (SOU 2018:47:313), the situational conditioning of leadership prescribed (ibid:322), the general government grants, meant to replace the specific and directed ones (ibid:189), leaving opportunity to try new things and formulate locally anchored policies – they all express variability in one way or another.

An additional field where this dimension rears its head is within the design's version of auditing. As inspection is meant to include more qualitative elements it becomes more context sensitive (SOU 2018:47:280) and is in both shape and conduct supposed to adhere to the variation of different subjects, i.e. the varying operations of the public sector (ibid:281-282). The report even puts forth different types of supervision meant to be applicable in different circumstances, which is not in itself an exhaustive account of the models and techniques perceived as possible (ibid:283-285), clearly proclaiming for the use of differing variants of the design in different places and situations. Furthermore, the design also makes clear the ambition that the localities themselves, such as counties, municipalities and agencies, should be the deciders of their own inspection and auditing (ibid:296).

Variability as a dimension becomes increasingly interesting when one veers away from identifying it in the actual content of the measures prescribed by the Trust Delegation, to instead use it in examining how the new features, pertaining more closely to trust-based steering and control, are laid out. What becomes apparent is that the reform, to a large extent, inhabits a consciousness regarding the fact that the new things it means to set in motion may not be suitable for application in their fullest everywhere, and the design reflects this. Time and time again, the report makes concessions that the local context, situation and circumstances have to dictate if or in what degree that which they propose is appropriate or applicable – there exists no overarching template which is presented as omnirelevant (SOU 2018:47:336). This is the case when it comes to discretion and action space (ibid:179), compensation models (ibid:356-357), co-leadership (ibid:182), operations-close research (ibid:340), interplay (ibid:279), inspection and supervision (ibid:281-282, 348, 352), co-creation (ibid:280) as well

as for trust (ibid:252) and steering in general (ibid:358). The design is in this way perfectly mirroring the variability ideal of allowing and being mindful of the need for uses of different variants of the design, the actual design of trust-based steering, in different places.

In the report, the importance of test and experimentation activities is emphasised (SOU 2018:47:318) as the proposals of the Delegation not seldomly are suggested to be tried in pilot form initially (ibid:307) and such concepts as testbeds are brought up (ibid:154). In addition, further pilot projects and test activities related to trust-based steering are proposed in various settings (ibid:361-362) such as the counties and municipalities (ibid:373, 376). The endorsing and encouragement of the establishing of a proper infrastructure for these types of activities within existing frameworks renders the design quite variable in its outset.

The existence of activities such as these within the design also serves to increase its adaptability to changing environments as the continuation of such projects increases absorption and incorporation of exogenous and endogenous changes into new practices. Trial projects are, furthermore, examples of learning-by-doing, where something is tested in practice and lessons are learned from it, and to create structures for the utilisation of such lessons is to, in effect, set up channels through which to reap the benefits of learning-by-doing. These two dimensions surfaces together yet again, as the design's variability can be said to, through such processes, give birth to part of its flexibility. The design is imbued with a synergy of these two.

As the potential conflict between a clear value guidance and a flexible and variable disposition to the value system already has been highlighted, and the intermingled relationship between variability and flexibility already elaborated upon, other combinations between this dimension and the others may be brought up. Here the involvement of citizens and the co-creation of welfare services (SOU 2018:47:342), as examples of institutional sharing, can be lifted again. To establish such things at a local level is to pave way for the inception of locally specific practices and activities, which could look (although not necessarily) dissimilar in different places. Institutional sharing is facilitating variability.

4.5 Summary

The design of the Trust Reform can be said to display all the dimensions of the theoretical framework, in various ways. Bricolage and institutional remembering show themselves through the design's tendency towards redesign and making use of already existing potential, forgotten or previously neglected, such as professionals' discretion. Institutional sharing is apparent throughout the design, in the heavy focus it has on collaboration, exchange and interplay, as it seeks to structure relationships for these between actors in a range of areas. The design can also be identified as clearly guided by values in the principles constituting part of

its content and way of implementation, as well as in how values and a value-guided leadership are continuously described as essential.

The design conveys an awareness regarding the need for a capacity within it to be adaptable over time and to changing environs, and flexibility is mustered through a number of efforts, such as involvement of citizens, increased action space for public sector employees and operations-close research. The will and prerequisites for knowledge created through learning-by-doing, and the proper utilisation of such knowledge, are also very present in these areas, as well as others, such as in the versions of auditing the reform puts forth.

As the design itself is grounded in lessons learned from trial projects, and it aims to instigate new such activities, stressing their importance, its variability is undeniable. The local context rules as definitions are left open to interpretation and the actual components of trust-based steering come with acknowledgements that they may be unsuitable or required to be implemented in varying degrees in different localities – variability in its purest.

In addition to all this, the dimensions relate to each other in numerous ways. Guiding values such as openness enables institutional remembering and sharing, but there seems to exist some conflict or trade-off between having clear guiding values and a context-sensitive and constant evolving approach to value systems. A lot of institutional sharing occurrences in the design are also flexibility-inducing as they facilitate adaptability over time, as well as creators of variability in that they produce locally specific practices. Variability, in turn, intermingles with flexibility as measures to ensure resilience and moldability to tumultuous surroundings and the use of different design variants in different places seems to work together all through the design.

5 Conclusion

This final chapter serves to present the result of the analysis, answering the research question. This then leads into a discussion regarding what concerns the analysis has spawned, as well what function this study fills for the comprehension of the reform. The discussion is infused with remarks regarding avenues for further research and the importance of such.

5.1 Result

What the analysis shows is that the design of the Trust Reform exhibits a potential for being successful. It seems to fill the criteria for a good design of a reform programme upon evaluation made on basis of principles of new institutionalist institutional design. From this perspective the reform, as such, holds great promise in terms of what it is and can achieve as a public management reform. It does so because it aims to use what is already there, promotes a culture of sharing and structures relationships for this, is guided by values, carries a capacity to be adaptable over time and openly encourages the use of different practices and variants of the design in different places. The analysis here conducted portrays the Trust Reform quite favourably and holds it as a reform possessing a variety of preconditions for reaching its goals. This is not to say, however, that it renders it completely unproblematic.

5.2 Discussion

The aspect of the reform and its design, described from the analysis, which is most susceptible to some form of criticism, or at least liable to be brought up for debate, is the aforementioned implicit contention inherent in having clearly stated values as guiding and then introducing variability and flexibility into these. The design never truly admits to housing this somewhat palpable contradiction, that it means to profess these clear guiding values which simultaneously are constantly up for discussion, should change with their environment and be heavily informed by local setting – and therefore never solves it. As the reform is launched and put in motion, social and societal changes together with local informal practices and developments may start to impinge upon these values, disfiguring them and, in doing so, veritably undermining the basis of the reform and its implementation.

Value guidance is, in theory and in this case, a catalyst for variability, as experimentation is enabled and encouraged within the framework the values provide. But, as values constitute such vital part of what the reform is, to impose variability and flexibility on the actual values is perhaps misguided and conveys an overambition which could have dire consequences. Here then perhaps an appreciation of the necessity of a separation of these different aspirations is in order, so as to not thwart either one's potentially propitious outcomes. Such worries and recommendations are substantiated by the fact that similar trade-offs were identified by Lowndes and Wilson in their study of the British Labour Party's reforming of local government in the UK. One such finding they had was that the value base prescribed by central government to help bring about the desired institutional change was continuously weakened as local autonomy and discretion grew (Lowndes – Wilson 2003:295). Comparable dilemmas are echoed in a more general sense in the study of public management reforms (Politt – Bouckaert 2011:193-195).

As the thesis draws to a close, one immensely vital thing to reiterate about this study is that it is not based on an actual reality where a Trust Reform is observable in practice. The results of the analysis suggest a potential for success in the reform, but studies over time are required to discern if this really will turn out to be the case. These can take into consideration the full robustness of the design, if it actually creates the desired behaviours among actors, as well as investigate how the relationship between value guidance, flexibility and variability develops, if the predictions of the above discussion are justified or not. How the clarity of the values survives and is sustained over time is granted as imperative for evaluating if a reform programme actually will be successful (Lowndes – Wilson 2003:283). As such, the study here presented may serve as platform for further research and evaluation of the Trust Reform. Evaluations such as this have been found to be favourably combined or supplemented by ones done *ex post* (Mergaert – Minto 2015).

The need for studies which will look at how well the reform actually does, becomes increasingly apparent in light of such developments as a report published this year concerning the Swedish government's control and steering of counties and municipalities. It covers a time period after the publication of the Delegation's reports but paints a picture of increased supervision, persisting detail management and a heavy administrative burden (Statskontoret 2019:2) – something which is not exactly a strong indication of the success of a Trust Reform in its early stages.

The analysis has, moreover, singled out some theoretical quandaries. As the theoretical concepts on which the analytical framework is based are somewhat vague in their original form it becomes quite difficult to operationalise them in a satisfactory way. It is hard to be precise, as some of the dimensions run the risk of becoming catch-all. In turn, the clarity and transparency of the analysis and its process suffer. Although the ambition has been to strive towards intersubjectivity, arriving in such a place has mayhap not always been the case, because of this ambiguity.

Furthermore, coming out of the analysis of the relationships between the different analytical dimensions, another quibble has cropped up. It concerns the inextricable merging of some of the dimensions, most prominent in the case of variability and flexibility. The purpose of using different practices, variants and experimenting with new things continuously is, to a large extent, to achieve a responsiveness to changes in exogenous and endogenous factors over time, and efforts trying to increase the flexibility of the design tend to, time and time again, inevitably become variability projects. In this manner the two phenomena seem to not only be feeding off of each other but become one another. The relationship is circular to such a degree that a certain measure of inseparability emerges.

Conceptually, it can therefore be called into question if they truly should exist as two distinct operationalisations of revisability. A suggestion, appearing as the most plausible from this research, is that variability is included in flexibility, as the need for variability seems to unavoidably be justified on flexibility grounds. Such propositions are perhaps too bold, coming from this analysis, and might be the result of conceptual stretching (Sartori 1970), particularly in the context of flexibility. The study nonetheless points towards some potential intricacies in the theoretical foundation that may be in need of solving. This constitutes a further area for future research, where such might validate or debunk these theoretical concerns, and serve to perhaps resolve the unclearness of the theory basis of an evaluation such as this. If this is achieved, the construction of more precise analytical tools is highly desirable.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the Trust Reform from this theoretical perspective has been advantageous, both for the research here conducted as well as for the reform itself. The design's somewhat vague or perhaps even bland formulations, its openness to variation and interpretation, as well as its tendency to sometimes lack concreteness, could be gestated as serious flaws. This study has identified them as assets, thanks to the new institutionalist vantage point. Indeed, instead of labelling the design of the reform as confused or hollow, it having these characteristics fills a political function in the fact that it can constitute a strategy for safeguarding against the perceived failure of more specified reform formula (Stoker 2002) and serves to establish an enabling governance in the public sector.

Acknowledging such things, the study has placed the reform in a new tradition of designing for social innovation, moving away from the rational mechanisms of traditional design thinking and towards a designing which is based on in-field experiences and constructs measures of both meaningfulness and functionality to actors (Brown – Wyatt 2010). This actively portrays the reform as a post-NPM development which distinguishes itself from the old dogma, despite it retaining substantial NPM elements and practices. Where some might accredit it weakness, this study has recognised the Trust Reform's potential strength.

6 Bibliography

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