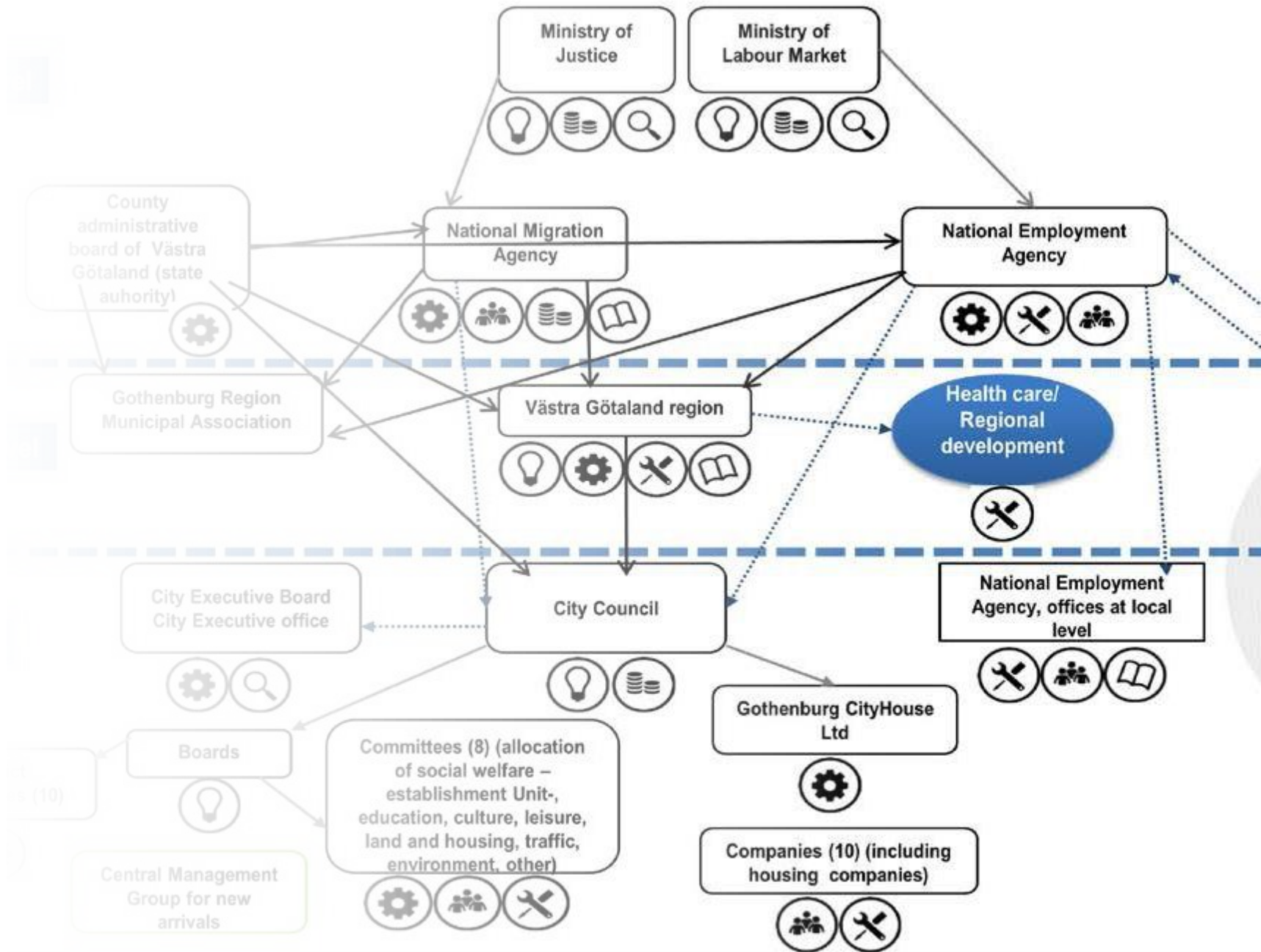


Enacting institutional change at the front lines – from a right to a service

Andreas Diedrich
Professor of Management and Organization Studies
Dept. of Business Administration
University of Gothenburg
Sweden

Integration support in Sweden



How is integration support organized in practice?

- Focus on actions, processes and the complexity of organising practices – not on planning, formal responsibilities and policies
- We went to the places where people told us they work with integration support – companies, events, initiatives, and . . . the PES



HEJ OCH VÄLKOMNA!

Method

- Ethnographically-inspired
- Fieldwork between 2017-2020
- 37 interviews
- 50 observations incl. shadowing
- Document studies

“researchers have no moral right to decide what practical solutions are ‘superior’ to others, that is, to usurp the voice of the practitioners” (Czarniawska, 2001)

YOUTUBE

- Arabiska
- Persiska
- Somaliska

Aktivitetsrapport

informationsmöte om
tableringsprogrammet kl. 13.00

Reforms, changes and other upheavals at the PES

- 2010: Responsibility for integration shifts from municipalities to PES
- 2014: *Förnyelseresan* (Renewal Journey) – digitalisation
- 2015: The refugee “crisis”
- 2016: Temporary residency permits become norm
- 2017: Governmental assignment: “Improve Establishment Plan!”
- 2018: Reform of the Establishment Program (From “Plan” to “Program”)
- 2019: Downsizing and closure of last remaining PES Establishment Office
- 2020: The pandemic

Displacing humans through digitalization

A great thing that is happening at the moment here is that the PES is becoming digitalized - that's great. Because this means that these people (the refugees) will be able to do most of the things on their own. They'll not be dependent on their caseworker or anyone else to get answers to their questions. Everything will be available online. [...]. So, they'll be able to do most things from home via a computer or the telephone. [PES Caseworker INT AF 13]

So, now we're in a bit of a limbo, because the other caseworkers haven't had a chance to get the skills because we haven't really started yet. At the same time, we're involved in a digitalisation but our applications don't always work and we're having problems with our own program support. It's small issues, and many small issues become a huge problem where we maybe feel that we can't offer good service. We have long cues and many people have very...eh basic problems, but because few things work around here these become big problems. For example: "I just want to check if my digital monthly report has arrived" [PES Caseworker CC3 I2: 5-6]



Emptying spaces through standards

I thought the DS [Direct Service] was very hands-on – anything could happen. You could also help people hands-on – it felt like you could really make a difference. Now, everything has been standardized. It's boring to sit in the DS and just do registrations and CSN student loans. Everything is specified and everything works only according to the rule book. In the past, you could have quite exciting encounters with people.
[PES Caseworker INT AF 7].

“High walls” were raised to stop refugees from coming to the EO



Advancing the filters

We've had a Direct Service with lots of spontaneous visits, and we're currently busy trying to get away from unplanned, spontaneous visits to booked visits. [PES Caseworker INT AF 3].

The space of integration support was now *conceived* as a space for orderly and planned interactions where caseworkers could prepare and provide service in the right place to refugees who had the *right* issues to be served



Epilogue

As a concept, I think this [change] is overall pretty good. But, at the same time I can sometimes see that...sometimes it feels like the only service we give is no service. “You shouldn’t be here”. But then why are we open in the first place? [...]. And maybe, that’s where we’re heading more and more...that we’re closing down [the EO]. [PES Caseworker INT AF 20]

Arbetsförmedlingen Etablering i Göteborg stänger 16 april

Du är välkommen att besöka oss på arbetsformedlingen.se
Där kan du bland annat skriva in dig och boka ditt första möte, få inspiration och söka jobb. Webbplatsen finns på flera olika språk.

Du kan ringa oss på 0771-416 416 måndag-fredag 8-17.

AF Angered, Besöksadress: Angeredsvinkeln 27, Angered
AF Centrum, Besöksadress: Järnvågsgatan 3, vån 1, Göteborg
AF Gamlestan, Besöksadress: Gamlestadsvägen 4, Göteborg
AF Frölunda, Besöksadress: Topasgatan 1, Västra Frölunda
AF Hisingen, Besöksadress: Borstbindaregatan 12 A, vån 4

Öppettiderna hittar du på arbetsformedlingen.se/kontakt

 ARBETSFÖRMEDLINGEN
SWEDISH PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICE



Epilogue cont. – old ideas in new clothes?

The PES increasingly focuses on digital services, where participants do not have a personal caseworker. Independent actors furthermore do a larger portion of the work of preparing the jobseekers and of matching them with employment opportunities. Within the Intensive Year, the agency instead focuses on ensuring that each participant has a personal caseworker. The caseworker plans and coordinates the work in the same way as the independent actors are meant to do according to the future direction chartered by the agency. The differences in the ways of working are visible for instance in the fact that each caseworker handles about 10 times as many jobseekers on the Establishment Program in general as compared to the Intensive Year.

(The Swedish Agency for Public Management, 2022: 23-24, own translation).