Abstract

The constitutional local autonomy of Swedish municipalities aims to relate democracy and public administration to local distinctiveness. It relies on the idea of subsidiarity and rests on the idea of a local common and the citizen's own inter-pretation of common problems and activities. This gives a unique opportunity to develop Swedish municipalities as slow cities. In Sweden there are some local food initiatives focusing on local and traditional production, hospitality and delivering. However, to live slow is also about how, where and when everyday life take place. This in spite of that all municipalities have explicit sustainability policies. A reason for this could be the dominating discourse of welfare efficiency, production and growth.

One of the most recent approach to keep up the image as well as the practice of Sweden as a sustainable but still efficient, fast and well-organized state is e-government. The high Internet penetration among Swedes opens for as well as asks for improved and developed governmental services on-line. In Sweden, a recent governmental action plan stresses the importance of using information and communication technologies (ICT) in order to effectively develop the Swedish public administration with the aim to "make it as simple as possible for as many as possible" leading to improved accessibility for all citizens. This has led to that public municipal contact centers have been established. Contacts centers are both physical and on-line. E-government could be considered as fast government, but in this paper we will try to turn that obvious first impression up-side down. We will conceptual argue that municipal contact centers are a tool towards improved sustainability, localism and slowing up administration.

Thus there are two main implications of contact centers, they localize public services and they combine different services into a one-stop practice. This strives to provide a 'holistic' approach of the individual in relation to the governmental administration. The conclusions of the paper are a double modeling. Firstly, we point out the implications of time-geographical modeling of slow processes. Secondly, we place e-government and contact centers in this model. Policy implications relate both to the conceptualization of slow processes and the potential to further develop municipal contact centers.

Keywords: e-government, municipal contact centers, slow cities, participation, sustainability