Evidence, Expertise and 'Other' Knowledge

Governing Welfare Collaboration

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2018

Link to publication

Total number of authors:
1

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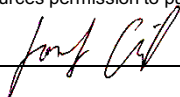
Josef Chaib

Organisation LUND UNIVERSITY	Document name Doctoral dissertation
	Date of issue 12 October, 2018
Author(s) Josef Chaib	Sponsoring organisation Lund university, Malmö university, The Swedish Research Council, Eslövs kommun

Title and subtitle
Evidence, expertise and 'other' knowledge. Governing welfare collaboration.

Abstract
This dissertation analyses how welfare collaboration is governed, focusing on the role of knowledge in government. In the public sector – and in welfare especially – collaboration between agencies, municipal departments and welfare professions is a recurring response to various problems where the traditional public-sector institutions are considered inapt to provide solutions. By studying a specific case of welfare collaboration focusing on children and youth, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore how collaboration is governed. With an explorative approach – drawing upon an ethnographic methodology coupled with a Foucauldian perspective on government – the study focuses on government practices, thus going beyond formal tools and relations of government. The dissertation features practices that govern by drawing upon different forms of knowledge, and the concept of knowledge regimes is used to describe this form of governing. Based on a case study, carried out mainly through observations and interviews, it is shown how different forms of knowledge are enacted within collaboration. In a regime of expert knowledge, researchers are involved to provide their scientific knowledge by participating as evaluators and lecturers. In a regime of standardised knowledge, impersonal and universal knowledge – such as evidence-based instruments and management models – is applied. In a regime of local knowledge, unarticulated knowledge held by different professionals is enacted – often appearing as the 'other' of more established knowledge forms. Different forms of knowledge all govern welfare collaboration through the practices in which they are enacted. A key conclusion and argument is that the diversity of knowledge and the relationship between different forms of knowledge must be taken into consideration in studies of welfare collaboration and within the public sector in general. The study shows a simultaneous presence of multiple knowledge regimes and that different forms of knowledge appear side by side in the same organisation and even within the same collaboration projects. By describing and analysing the role of knowledge in governing welfare collaboration, this study contributes to research on welfare and how welfare is organised and governed. It also contributes to research on the relationship between knowledge and politics and the role of knowledge within public administration more broadly.

Key words
Collaboration, practices, knowledge, government, knowledge regimes

Classification system and/or index terms (if any)

Supplementary bibliographical information	Language English

ISSN and key title 0460-0037, Evidence, expertise and 'other' knowledge	ISBN 978-91-7753-812-7

Recipient's notes	Number of pages 250	Price
	Security classification	

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Governing Welfare Collaboration

Josef Chaib

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Acknowledgements

Erika Hjelm, Johanna Navne and Peter Juterot – you have been especially important to me while we have worked together in Eslövs kommun, as well as outside of work. What I have learned from you – asking the right questions, manoeuvring an organisation – I have brought into this research endeavour. My previous employer, Eslövs kommun, has generously contributed to this research project and I am very thankful to those who helped make that contribution possible.

Most obviously, this dissertation would never have been possible to write were it not for the organisation of Deal. I am immensely grateful not only for you granting me access and sharing your work with me but also for making me feel welcome and showing yourself willing to discuss the things we have in common. I hope that this piece of research will be of some use for you and your colleagues throughout the public sector.

My family – or families, rather – have been important to me in more ways than I could possibly put into words. All of the Karlssons and the Chaibs – you provide security, comfort, and the best company. I value every time spent with you. My beloved parents have helped me realise this dissertation in ways that greatly surpass the role of parenting. I do not know whether my earning a PhD has been part of your master parenting plan, but from a very early age you taught me to really find out about things and not just be curious, and you encouraged me to question things and not just ask questions. The fact that I have spent more than ten years in academia – six of which I have devoted to research the social science of knowledge – is a testament to your importance to me as parents, as academics and as role models in life.

Sandra and Flora, lastly, I depend on you each and every day. There is not a word in this dissertation – not a thought behind these words – that would have been the same if it were not for you. I depend on you to get up in the morning and to get to bed at night because we share a life. Sandra, for over ten years we have sought the strength of each other when needed, and each and every time, strength has been received. Flora, you are a source of inspiration and strength in your own right, and when I say that I depend on you, don't be afraid of the burden: I am sure our dependence will stay mutual for quite some time. I love you both.

Oxie, August, 2018

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1. Introduction

In Swedish public administration, collaboration is all the rage. Collaboration between agencies, municipal departments and welfare professions seems to be an almost standard response to various problems when the traditional public-sector institutions are considered inapt to provide solutions. But collaboration between agencies is not something new; already the Swedish Constitution of 1809 required the state's agencies to 'reach out to one another" in fulfilling their tasks and everything that public service demand of them. And in the contemporary Swedish welfare state, collaboration is not only an organisational trend; it is also a commonplace and a necessity in carrying out the everyday job of caring for people whose needs do not fit within the organisational or professional welfare borders. Welfare collaboration, it seems, is something perfectly ordinary and something very divergent at the same time, and this tension lies at the basis of this dissertation.

From a research perspective, collaboration can be defined as something essentially political, as a form of governing, or as an organisational phenomenon. But it can also be seen as something whose meaning and purpose is not decided beforehand – a social construction that is ascribed meaning by the collaborating parties. As such, collaboration must be empirically investigated and analysed in order to be properly understood. In studies of politics, government and public administration, collaboration is typically seen against a backdrop of politics and organisation – of the past and the present – and it can be seen both as a means of governing and as an organisation that has to be governed.

Over the last one hundred years, the welfare sector has undergone considerable changes. In contemporary studies of politics and public administration, later decades' organisational and managerial reforms are often highlighted. New Public Management (NPM) – coupled with privatisation, marketisation and a general downsizing of the public sector

– is described as thoroughly transforming the organisation and provision of welfare services (e.g. Burnett & Appleton, 2004; Hjern, 2001). In an international context, this development is often broadly seen as an ideological one – prompted by the Reagan and Thatcher administrations in the United States and the United Kingdom, respectively. Before that, the public sector had expanded over the course of many years, reaching farther than before into communities and homes to provide services to the sick, elderly, poor, disabled, and otherwise disadvantaged societal groups. In Sweden, as in other countries, the modern welfare state is often seen as the figurehead of the labour movement and the social democratic party, redistributing wealth and providing social security.

But a century of welfare organisation and transformation cannot be summarised only in terms of political struggles and accomplishments, as if orchestrated entirely by ideologues and strategists of government. The different states of welfare are also based on knowledge and scientific ideas about how welfare services should be provided, organised and realised in the public sector. In the early and mid-1900s, social engineering came to signify the large-scale welfare reforms in Sweden, based on a rational social science and articulated in government-appointed commission reports (e.g. Hirdman, 2000; Lindvall & Rothstein, 2006; O'Connor, 2001). In the 1980s and 1990s, economists and consultants drew from experiences in the private sector to offer their knowledge to remedy the alleged inefficiency of the public sector, calculating means and ends to reduce costs (e.g. Flynn, 1999; Hall, 2012b; Sundström, 2003). Likewise, current organisational features of the welfare state – such as collaboration between different agencies, departments and professional groups – can also be conceived differently. They may be seen as explicitly political or ideological manifestations, but they can also be seen as merely functionalist ones, scientifically based organisational solutions chosen to handle emergent problems.

Time and again, researchers as well as politicians have concluded that collaboration between different professions, agencies and municipal departments is indispensable in in most of the public sector (see chapter two). Within various welfare services – in education, in relation to the labour market and rehabilitation and within health and social services – collaboration is seen as necessary to provide the help and support that people need and to which they are entitled. In regards to children and

youth at risk, politicians have called for closer collaboration, and, despite the long-standing legal requirements, commissions and public inquiries repeat the plea for joint efforts to address problems that span organisational and professional boundaries. Researchers have produced reports, evaluations and textbooks on how to design and organise collaboration in the best possible manner. Agencies provide manuals and step-by-step guidelines for national, regional and local authorities to follow in setting up collaborations and projects.

On the one hand, then, different parts of the welfare state have been involved in collaboration for a long time. On the other hand, different collaborative measures – such as networks, projects and more permanent cross-boundary organisations – have increased in recent years. There is a sense of urgency, or 'buzz', surrounding collaboration, implying that there is a change going on here and now because the welfare state is just not apt to handle the issues, challenges and complexity that it currently has to deal with. It is seen as out of touch with its time, to put it bluntly, and New Public Management seems to have made things worse by fragmenting the traditional institutions into ever-smaller cost-units and specialists.

Whether this representation is accurate, however, is another question. Scholars have argued that the need for collaboration is exaggerated – Huxham (2003: 421) advises practitioners, 'Don't do it unless you have to' – and that public administration still needs a certain degree of bureaucracy and hierarchy to ensure accountability and democratic rule (e.g. Byrkjeflot & DuGay, 2012; Diefenbach & Todnem By, 2012; Hjern, 2001). In this dissertation, my intention has been to study collaboration in practice. I am interested in the very being and doings of collaboration – what it *is* – in order to understand how it is *governed*. Based on an in-depth empirical case study of welfare collaboration, and with reference to previous research, I will situate collaboration empirically as well as theoretically, describing how it is carried out in practice, and I will analyse its governing practices.

Collaboration and the state of Swedish welfare

In Sweden, collaboration between different professions and between different agencies has been called 'the welfare state's new way of working' (Danermark & Kullberg, 1999), and the need for collaboration has been communicated by politicians, researchers and practitioners alike. It is commonly described how the institutions and procedures that previously organised and implemented welfare services have now been fragmented, decentralised, and de-bureaucratised – which has in turn caused a surge of projects, networks, partnerships and other forms of horizontal organisation (e.g. Danermark & Kullberg, 1999; Fred, 2018; Hjern, 2001; Johansson, 2011). Much simplified, it is often described how the greater part of the twentieth century saw an institutionalisation of welfare, while more recent decades have witnessed a de-institutionalisation (Hjern, 2001; Lindvall & Rothstein, 2006; Loader & Burrows, 1994; Åkerstrøm Andersen & Grönbæk Pors, 2016), and that this has resulted in the need for collaboration.

In reality, history is not that unidimensional, of course, and there is reason to question – or to treat with some scepticism, at least – the rather frequent sorting of history into epochs. In this study, I focus on collaboration as an aspect of the contemporary public administration that I – and others with me – consider crucial and possibly also typical for its time. Collaboration within welfare often consist of agencies and professional groups working together around a certain problem, an identified need or a group of citizens. Collaboration is crucial in the sense that it is surrounded by a sense of urgency, attracting attention among leading politicians, agencies and practitioners (e.g. National Board of Education, 2009, 2010; National Board of Health and Welfare, et al., 2007; National Council for Crime Prevention, 2010), and it is typical for its time as it illustrates how the *organisation* of welfare services has become such an important political and managerial tool (e.g. Courpasson, 2006; Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Hall, 2012a). As I will describe, collaboration as a concept is considerably elusive, and it seems closely related to different kinds of horizontal ways of organising work – such as projects, networks and partnerships – which political scientists tend to contrast to previous ways of organising, dominated by vertical and

hierarchical relations. I will argue, however, that collaboration is more equivocal than first meets the eye.

Firstly, the fact that collaboration appears crucial does not mean that it occupies a special position in politics, in public administration or in terms of budget. While collaboration has been labelled 'the welfare state's new way of working', it could also be described as an organisational trend – a 'rationalised myth' whose attention does not reflect actual practice (Johansson, 2011). It could be noted that the greater part of all work within the welfare state – carried out by politicians as well as civil servants – is located within traditional organisations, such as schools, hospitals and traditional municipal political committees. Collaboration may thus represent an organisational shift or merely a rhetorical one. Such a discrepancy, however, does not make collaboration any less interesting or relevant from a political science perspective; its idiosyncrasy rather makes it more intriguing.

Secondly, and in relation to the above, the feature of collaboration that is most typical of its time is not that a horizontal logic has a replaced a vertical one, but rather the complexity that characterises the relation between the two. We could perhaps speak of a 'collaboration paradox', as collaboration almost always appears as a response to the problems that the welfare state's traditional silos and institutions make up, along with their subsequent fragmentation; but at the same time, collaboration requires precisely these silos. The concept of collaboration points to a transgression of institutional and professional borders, not a replacement of one order with an entirely new one.

Purpose and research question: On the government of collaboration

By studying a specific case of welfare collaboration focused on children and youth, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore the government of collaboration. Children and youth are at the heart of public welfare. They are often mentioned in research and policies on collaboration, and they are the target of different collaborative initiatives (see chapter two). The conceptual and organisational tensions and ambiguities described above

serve as the starting point in the present study. Rather than my attempting to capture the 'true essence' of collaboration or ascertaining the extent to which collaboration is actually taking place, the purpose here is to focus on collaboration in the broadest possible sense. My intention is to observe and identify the practices that make up collaboration and from there study the practices that make up the government of collaboration, describing and exploring how collaboration is conceived, performed and effectively governed. In other words, I do not consider collaboration to be a ready-made organisational model but rather something that has to be studied up close in order to be properly understood.

Exploration, in this case, signifies an open-ended approach in which the exact research questions and analytical concepts are not defined beforehand but developed as the research progresses. Following the methodology of ethnographers and interpretive scholars, I adhere to an approach where empirical and theoretical observations and readings are carried out in tandem. It is a process where empirically-based description and theory-driven analysis are undertaken iteratively (see e.g. Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Schatz, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009). Accordingly, the starting point of my research is contemporary welfare practices, where I focus on collaboration on children and youth. The first and overarching question that guides this study is: *How is collaboration governed?*

As already made clear, my intention is to pursue matters through an in-depth empirical study, rather than mapping and investigating collaboration in a general sense. The case that I have chosen, a municipal organisation in the south of Sweden – here called *Deal* – displays several of the characteristics that I consider theoretically and empirically interesting and relevant for studying the government of welfare. Theoretically, this study centres on the role of *knowledge* in government, because this is what I have found to be particularly significant in the case of Deal. As my own empirical exploration begins, in chapter three, I am guided by two more specific questions regarding the government of collaboration: *How is Deal governed?* and, subsequently, *What is the role of knowledge in governing Deal?*

By describing and analysing the role of knowledge in governing welfare collaboration, this study contributes to research on welfare and how welfare is organised and governed. It also contributes to research on the

relationship between knowledge and politics and, more broadly, on the role of knowledge within public administration. In particular, the close empirical observations coupled with theoretic analyses are intended to bring forward nuances and tensions that may otherwise be overlooked. The knowledge described in this dissertation ranges from scientific knowledge that is provided by experts, or delivered in standardised formats and guidelines, to the unarticulated knowledge that is practiced by welfare professionals and by managers and project leaders. Like previous research on contemporary welfare and the public sector, my study indicates that standardised knowledge is much used and that knowledge on form issues – on organisation, management and government – is given a particularly prominent role. Standardised knowledge appears in evidence-based practices, instruments and guidelines as well as in organisation and management models, where organisational knowledge is delivered in a ready-to-use format. As I also describe, through the case of Deal, the role of experts – not least researcher involvement – is also prominent. However, what I refer to as local knowledge is much more subtle in character, and it is often overshadowed by more explicitly scientific knowledge. Despite this, local knowledge, especially the tacit professional knowledge of employees, appears to be an indispensable element in welfare practices.

The study of Deal and the outline of the dissertation

An important task of political analysis is to comprehend and conceptualise the government and organisation of contemporary welfare – analyses that can be done in different ways. While they can be carried out on a macro level, examining the larger tendencies in society and politics (e.g. Lindvall & Rothstein, 2006; Loader & Burrows, 2004), I will argue that we also need to zero in on everyday practices, exploring the *how* of government (e.g. Gottweis, 2003; Nicolini, 2012; Miller & Rose, 2008; Townley, 2008; Triantafillou, 2012). Combined with the explorative approach, I also intend to contribute to a conceptualisation of government in order to

describe and analyse government theoretically. To this end, I propose the concept of *knowledge regimes*.

The explorative and ethnographic approach to politics and public administration, which I follow, requires the researcher to stay open and attentive to what is observed and perceived empirically. Research questions provide guidance but must not limit the scope or close too many doors beforehand. This research began with the overarching question of how collaboration is governed and with the ambition of pursuing the question in an empirical setting that seemed puzzling yet intriguing. This is a methodological approach which has made its imprint also on the outline of this dissertation.

Firstly, in *chapter two*, I describe collaboration broadly, emphasising that collaboration has been researched from different perspectives but that there still is a tendency within the literature to explain, evaluate and improve collaboration rather than to empirically and theoretically seek to examine its practices. Despite repeated calls from politicians at various levels, as well as by managers and staff within the public sector, collaboration seems difficult to achieve. And despite the greater part of research on collaboration being devoted to improvement and the development of guidelines for practitioners, there still seems to be a demand for more knowledge on how to make collaboration work. In relation to children and youth, collaboration typically involves the school, social services, police, health care and other relevant agencies, and the range of desired improvements covers hands-on instruments and tools for dealing with the target group as well as those aimed at more overarching issues of organising and managing collaboration. The description of these issues in chapter two provides general background for the empirical study of the government of collaboration, which I begin in *chapter three*. Accordingly, I will elaborate in due course, starting in chapter three, how this dissertation came to focus on the role of *knowledge* in government, and what implications can be drawn from this.

Based on an ethnographic methodology, I zoom in on what I perceive to be an ambiguous, thought-provoking and particularly enticing aspect of public administration – welfare collaboration, and more specifically, collaboration on children and youth. The case that I focus on is Deal, an organisation and form of collaboration that takes place at the municipal level in the south of Sweden and which involves a range of different

collaboration projects targeting children and youth. Describing this particular case, I focus on how different forms of knowledge play an important role in governing the organisation and affiliated projects.

In Deal, collaboration is governed through *practices* which, in different ways, constitute what collaboration is, how it is done, and what is possible and reasonable to do. The government of collaboration does not primarily consist of explicit rules, restrictions or regulations but of the social construction, which is based on different forms of knowledge, of what collaboration is and how it is performed. This view of government, including the role of knowledge, is inspired by a theoretical perspective on power and government developed by Michel Foucault that has been further elaborated by scholars of politics, organisation and public administration. In *chapter four*, I describe this perspective in more detail, focusing on how knowledge can be conceived from different theoretical perspectives and especially how a Foucauldian conceptualisation of knowledge and power allows us to understand the diversity of knowledge. This perspective enables me to differentiate between various forms of knowledge, how they are related to each other, and how they are enacted in practices that govern the organisation.

Following this, *chapter five* describes the methodological deliberations and choices I have made to carry out the empirical study. The chapter accounts for the explorative approach and how I have gone about to observe, identify and analyse government practices within the case of Deal, and how those practices draw upon different forms of knowledge. In this study, the empirical observations have been carried out alongside the theoretical exploration and analysis, which means that empirics and theory have constantly fed into each other. Chapter five describes in more detail how I have identified the government practices within Deal and how I have analysed them in terms of knowledge regimes.

The different types of knowledge that I identify, and which I describe and analyse in *chapters six through eight*, govern collaboration through the way that they are enacted in government practices. Within the organisation of Deal, researchers from different disciplines and universities are involved, contributing their *expert knowledge* of treatments and prevention within child and youth care, and of the management and organisation of collaboration. But within the different projects, there are also different forms of models and instruments that are

based on evidence or other types of *standardised knowledge*, and these too play a governing role. In addition, the projects and collaboration procedures are largely staffed by professionals who possess *professional knowledge* – knowledge that is often unarticulated but which has a long history within welfare and which also governs the work that is carried out. This form of knowledge often plays the role of 'the other' in relation to more established forms of knowledge such as science; nevertheless, as I will discuss, it is often both influential and important for how welfare practices are carried out.

The government practices work in relation to each other: in some situations, they are complementary; in other situations, they conflict. Expert knowledge works through the involvement of researchers as lecturers, evaluators and project partners; they contribute a certain type of knowledge, but they also exert influence through the authority and status that come from being a researcher and an expert. This kind of government through expert knowledge is described in *chapter six*. In *chapter seven*, I describe how standardised knowledge is used in various standards, models and evidence-based practices. Standardised knowledge often originates in research, and it is characterised by being universal and impersonal; its influence comes from it being untethered to a person or authority and located beyond subjectivity and particular contexts. In *chapter eight*, I describe a form of knowledge that is considerably more elusive and subtle, since it is not always perceived as knowledge. It is the tacit, professional knowledge that welfare professionals often possess: knowledge of how patients, clients and other target groups should be attended to and treated that cannot be written down or translated into lectures or standards. The knowledge originates from research within medicine, social work or education, but it also requires experience and what is sometimes described as care ethics, foregrounding the interpersonal relations of welfare work. A similar form of knowledge exists among managers, and it is applied in the management and navigation of organisational and political complexity. I call this *local knowledge*, since it is always embedded in a local context or situation.

Chapters six, seven, and eight thereby describe my empirical observations as I have seen things from a certain theoretical viewpoint –a practice-oriented perspective that is introduced in chapter two and further elaborated in chapter four. The dissertation thus follows a motion of

zooming in on the practices that I have studied empirically and *zooming out* by theoretically analysing and conceptualising my observations (see Nicolini, 2012, and chapter five).

While I emphasise different forms of knowledge and how they appear in the government practices, knowledge is also directed at different targets. In the case I have studied, there is knowledge of welfare work – dealing with children and youth, how social case investigation should be carried out and what tools to use – and there is knowledge of the surrounding managerial practices, how to lead projects and how to organise the relation between politics and administration. In other words, there is knowledge of the very content and substance of welfare – what welfare work should be undertaken and how – as well as different knowledge of its form and structure, or how that work should be organised.

In the first of two concluding chapters, *chapter nine*, I return to the overarching question about the government of collaboration and the role of knowledge. I summarise the findings of the study and the main conclusions. In particular, I discuss collaboration as an organisational matter and relate this to the prominence of organisational and managerial knowledge within the public sector. In *chapter ten*, I zoom out from the case of Deal to describe how practices of collaboration can be seen historically as both continuous and contingent and to describe how different forms of knowledge have always been present in welfare while also being part of a political and societal context. Knowledge regimes, I argue, must be acknowledged in the government of welfare in general, but the significance of knowledge, especially organisational knowledge, is perhaps especially conspicuous in collaboration, where traditional structures and institutions are downplayed, or seen as outdated.

2. Welfare collaboration – A practice-oriented perspective

Research on the welfare state often takes the state as its point of departure. This seems natural, partly because of the concept itself (the welfare *state*) but also because political science as a discipline has traditionally been devoted to studying the state. Political scientists have described, analysed and compared different states and systems in order to explain and understand welfare's different characteristics and features. But if we instead focus on the very practices of welfare – the hands-on welfare work and surrounding administration that make up the welfare sector – it becomes clear that the state is a less relevant entity. For those who study welfare historically (e.g. Björck, 2008; Ekström von Essen, 2003; Hirdman, 2000; O'Connor, 2001) or who adhere to various critical perspectives on welfare (e.g. Altermark, 2016, Miller & Rose, 2008), the state is not the default starting point. Instead of the state as an actor, organisation, or unit of analysis, it appears as a container for a multifaceted arrangement of practices which, under the government's roof, has been summarised as a welfare state (Miller & Rose, 2008).

In this chapter, I describe welfare collaboration from a practice-oriented perspective. The purpose of the chapter is to introduce collaboration as a scholarly concept and to present the practice-oriented approach to welfare collaboration that has informed my empirical study. When studying the government of welfare collaboration, my focus on practices implies a rather different approach than had a state-centric approach been adopted. As I will elaborate, the practice-oriented approach – which may emanate from historical studies, ethnography or poststructuralist perspectives – does acknowledge that state institutions and organisations matter. However, it does not take them for granted nor use them as a theoretic

point of departure. Instead, various social and political practices are seen to precede, and indeed constitute, the state as such.

> To the extent that the modern state 'rules', it does so on the basis of an elaborate network of relations formed among the complex of institutions, organizations and apparatuses that make it up, and between state and non-state institutions. (Miller & Rose, 2008: 55)

The reason for me stressing this approach is that much research on government and public administration is centred on public sector reform and how these reforms differ over time and across nations (e.g. Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011; Verhoest et al., 2007), and the research on welfare collaboration is no exception. As will be shown in this chapter, empirical as well as theoretical accounts of collaboration are often presented against a backdrop of change and reform of state institutions. I argue that this backdrop must be taken into account when analysing the contemporary conditions of welfare work and especially the government of welfare collaboration.

Perspectives on collaboration and public-sector reform

According to much research on collaboration in the Swedish welfare sector, collaboration between organisations and between professions is commonplace in today's welfare sector. By engaging different institutions and departments and different competences and areas of responsibility, public administration is expected to better address societal and organisational challenges collaboratively compared to separately. Although some form of collaboration has always existed, later years have witnessed an increase in more or less formalised arrangements around particular groups of citizens or clients (e.g. Axelsson & Bihari Axelsson, 2007; Basic, 2012; Danermark & Kullberg, 1999; Hjern, 2001; Löfström, 2010). National, regional and local agencies and institutions partake in collaboration with regard to unemployed citizens, newly arrived immigrants, people with disabilities, and children and youth at risk, to

mention a few. At a general level, these collaborative arrangements – carried out as temporary projects or permanent ways of organising – are supposed to solve problems. There is often a perceived shortcoming in the organisation of the welfare services, or in its policies, that calls for collaboration. But collaboration is also said to bring about new challenges stemming from, for example, managerial, organisational, political and/or judicial issues. The obstacles are often described from a normative standpoint, seeking to improve the management or organisation of collaboration (Johansson, 2011). However, collaboration can also be approached from a political viewpoint, foregrounding the changing conditions and processes of policymaking and governing.

Collaboration in political contexts

Political scientists have pointed to collaboration as part of a new form of governing the public sector – often in terms of *collaborative governance*, *network governance*, *joined-up government* or, occasionally, just *governance*, as opposed to the traditional form of governing that is called *government*. From this perspective, collaboration between different agencies, or between welfare professionals, should be seen against a greater shift in how society and the public sector is governed today: a form of governing that emphasises networking and collaboration between different stakeholders – public and non-public – as well as horizontal rather than hierarchical relations between them (e.g. Jacobsson et al., 2015; Montin & Hedlund, 2009; Pedersen et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2007; Sundström & Pierre, 2009; Torfing et al., 2012).

While political scientists are predisposed to analyse collaboration in terms of politics, this is not necessarily the case in other academic disciplines. Research within sociology, social work, and public health, as well as organisation and management studies, may have points of departure other than the political, which means that collaboration is not necessarily seen as a political undertaking, even if it takes place in the public sector. In other words, different academic and theoretical vantage points inform the way we conceive and theorise collaboration.

But the different conceptions of collaboration – whether as a political phenomenon or an organisational one – vary not only across different

academic disciplines; the various representations of collaboration and, more broadly, of public-sector reform are also contingent upon their different societal and political contexts. As noted by Johansson (2011), in the Swedish context research on collaboration is predominantly functionalist and largely devoid of political analyses. Judging from Haveri and his co-authors (2009), this may be due to a difference in political context in the Nordic countries, compared to the UK, for example. They suggest that the Nordic countries have somewhat different conditions as to why network governance and collaboration emerge:

> Compared to the fund-raising kind of collaboration often described in local governments in Britain (Bassett, 1996; Harding, 1998; Stoker, 1998), for example, collaboration in the Finnish and Norwegian settings is likely to be more strongly centred on solving wicked problems involving a set of interdependent stakeholders, or on raising legitimacy in redistributive policies. This follows from the typical Nordic model, where local governments are responsible for a broad range of welfare services and local development in general, and free also to engage in most kinds of issues affecting their locality. (Haveri et al., 2009: 540)

In other words, whether collaboration is seen primarily in political terms – as a way of governing – or as an organisational and non-political matter, may depend on one's theoretical perspective, but it could also be that empirical investigation reveals whether or not collaboration is a political project.

From a UK perspective, Rhodes (2007: 1247) argues that the term network governance 'always refers to the changing role of the state after the varied public sector reforms of the 1980s and 1990s'. Echoing this argument, case studies from the UK describe how youth policy initiatives from New Labour – which sought to increase efficiency and to reform the public sector – demanded more of partnerships and collaboration between different agencies and organisations (e.g. Burnett & Appleton, 2004; Davies & Merton, 2009). Collaboration, from this perspective, is seen as related to deliberate political strategies. By contrast, the public-sector reforms in Sweden during the same decades have been described as driven by administrative actors, not politicians; such as the agencies themselves and key individuals and professional groups within the public administration (Sundström, 2003; see also Hall, 2012a).

From a political science perspective, and in both Sweden and elsewhere, collaboration is conceived as part of a broader paradigm in public administration, where recent years have seen a vivid theoretical debate on 'government vs. governance', the organisation of the public sector, and the changing role of the state. It has been argued that a traditional top-down government, based on a predominantly hierarchical organisation, has been replaced by a more horizontally structured governance, where different public and non-public stakeholders meet in networks, where they interact in policy-making and implementation. This development is seen as the result of factors that may be politically driven, but are nonetheless exogenous to the government institutions, such as marketization, globalisation and increased competition in different policy areas (see e.g. Bevir, 2013; Montin & Hedlund, 2009; Pedersen et al., 2007; Rhodes, 2007, Torfing et al. 2012).

The research debate centres on issues such as the changing role of the state and its means of governing, how to conceive different institutional logics, such as markets and networks, and how to adequately conceptualise new forms of governing. Rhodes (2007: 1246) adheres to the concept of network governance – to describe a 'public sector change /…/ which sought to improve coordination between government departments and the multifarious other organizations' – whereas Torfing and his co-authors speak about interactive governance. Interactive governance, they say, denote '*the complex process through which a plurality of social and political actors with diverging interests interact*' (Torfing et al. 2012: 2–3, *italics in original*). Others, as mentioned, speak about 'collaborative governance' (e.g. Vangen et al. 2014; Qvist, 2012).

To a large extent, research on network governance is explicitly or implicitly normative. Different forms of networks or interactive governance are seen as necessary in order for the state to govern in a complex society. While this research has been criticised, both for its theoretical premises and for its normative standpoints, Torfing and his co-authors (2012: 32) defend the analytical perspective of governance as well as interactive governing in practice, arguing that it 'carries a great potential for enhancing effective and democratic governance'.

Critics against the normative standpoint argue that different forms of network governance and collaboration have become more common, but that this is problematic, partly because collaboration has a common-sense

appeal that overshadows more important questions such as the fundamental drivers of collaboration (Burnett & Appleton, 2004; see also Burnham, 2001, on depoliticisation as political strategy, and Exworthy & Halford, 1999, on deprofessionalisation as managerial strategy). Based on empirical studies of UK services regarding youth criminality, Burnett and Appleton (2004) point to a perceived discord between the political discourse and ideology of collaboration, on the one hand, and the actual practices of collaboration, on the other. Their critique is not about an implementation failure, where the political aspirations for various reasons do not play out in practice (see e.g. Johansson, 2011; Qvist, 2012); instead, they object to the overarching ideal of collaboration and what they claim is an ideologically driven change in policy:

> Further, it has been suggested that the new inter-agency arrangements for youth staff are instrumental in the systematic de-professionalization of criminal justice staff and have engendered a culture shift from welfare-based, direct work with young people to a more removed managerial system concerned with performance monitoring and cost-effectiveness. (Burnett & Appleton, 2004: 36)

Rather than benefitting the involved professional groups and services in different ways, collaboration initiatives have been imposed from above at the expense of core services: 'There was plenty of caviar but there was insufficient bread', they argue (Burnett & Appleton, 2004: 42).

The critique that the authors convey is directed against collaboration as a supposedly non-political scheme; the idea of joined-up services to combat youth criminality has been part of a political discourse in the UK that seeks to improve and 'modernise' public services. In other words, although Burnett and Appleton (2004) criticise the discourse of collaboration for being politically motivated, their objection is against its apolitical pretence.

In relation to the status, or popularity, that collaboration enjoys among politicians and managers, the concept and the phenomenon are quite poorly covered in Swedish political science. However, collaboration does appear – albeit implicitly – in research on governance. Sundström, Jacobsson, and Pierre have described in several studies how the role of the state has changed in relation to the shift 'from government to governance' (e.g. Jacobsson & Sundström, 2015; Sundström & Pierre, 2009;

Sundström, 2009; Jacobsson et al., 2015). Collaboration between different agencies is seen there as a means of governing a particular policy field – a means that the national government employs in the absence of more direct means of governing. By forming collaborative arrangements, such as networks between agencies and other stakeholders, the national government can keep a certain distance from issues, potentially delegating conflicts to be solved in collaboration (Sundström, 2009; see also Jacobsson & Sundström, 2015; Qvist, 2012). Still, although network governance is seen as increasingly common, many contend that different networks have also historically been part of government practices (e.g. Lundquist, 1996; Montin & Hedlund, 2009; Pierre, 2009).

In order to capture the alleged new role of the state – where it governs networks or collaboration – the concept of meta-governance has emerged. The concept refers to 'the governance of governance' (Torfing et al., 2012: 4), denoting strategies and practices whereby the state governs networks or actors that to some extent govern themselves. Meta-governance thus describes the state's new way of governing, where it can no longer govern by direct regulation and instruction to the same extent it did before. Instead, it has to rely on indirect measures and activities that respect the autonomy of non-public actors or networks of different actors (Qvist, 2012; Sundström & Jacobsson, 2015; Torfing et al., 2012). The use of meta-governance thus represents an acknowledgement of collaboration as a politically-laden practice, as opposed to something merely organisational/functionalist. However, even the research that acknowledges the politics of collaboration describes the Swedish case as rather free from ideological motives and indicates that networks and collaboration were part of Swedish policy and implementation processes well before governance arose as a key concept in political science (e.g. Hjern, 2001; Qvist, 2012; Jacobsson et al., 2015; Montin & Hedlund, 2009; Sundström, 2009; see also Haveri et al., 2009).

The non-political character of collaboration, in other words, cannot really be explained by a reluctance of political scientists to study it because, even when they do, they find that politics is largely absent. As opposed to the situation in the United Kingdom, where reforms towards network governance, joined-up government and collaboration are seen as highly ideological, the Swedish situation seems largely free of political considerations, instead focusing on problem-solving.

Collaboration as organisational problem-solving

In contrast to the political analyses, which emphasise ideology and changing forms of government, collaboration is also described as a way of solving problems that politics or organisations have caused or have not been able to handle through traditional means. Although different organisational theories dominate the narrative, these theories also to some extent underlie the political narrative described earlier. Rhodes (2007: 1245) maintains that 'to this day, exchange theory lies at the heart of policy network theory'. Exchange theory has been seen as a dominant theory in studies of inter-organisational relations, or collaboration, based on the conception of organisations as open systems that are affected by their environment and are influenced by it (Cook, 1977). Inter-organisational relations, such as collaboration, is seen here as fundamentally an exchange of resources, prompted by organisations being specialised and having scarce resources. Exchange theory construes organisations as guided by a means–end rationality, where they take part in networks and collaboration only to the extent that they can benefit from them in terms of resources needed to fulfil their tasks (Cook, 1977; see also Rhodes, 2007). Although this form of rational behaviour does not characterise most contemporary theories on collaboration, it represents a functionalist point of departure that still prevails.

In much organisational theory on collaboration, the means–end rationality of exchange theory is criticised for its instrumental and simplistic assumptions on what guides organisational behaviour. But refuting this rationality is not enough to provide a satisfactory explanation as how to understand collaboration, and researchers admit their puzzlement –with regard to both the popularity of collaboration and its mechanisms. Collaboration has been desired for a long time but repeatedly proven difficult to achieve. Despite this, politicians have not lost interest: 'Indeed, if anything, the pursuit of inter-agency collaboration has become hotter', it has been noted (Hudson et al., 1999: 236). Meyers asks (1993: 548): 'If everyone thinks the coordination of children's services is such a good idea, why has it been so difficult to accomplish?' The answer, she argues, lies partly in previous theorisations of collaboration, or 'service coordination' in her terminology:

Sociologists, social psychologists, and political scientists have all contributed different theoretical perspectives to the study of organizations. These different traditions have helped create a rich literature about organizational characteristics but have failed to produce a single, integrating theory about organizational dynamics. When they have turned to the question of how best to integrate services provided by multiple organizations, theorists have variously framed the issues in terms ranging from political economy, to network analysis, the sociology of organizations, and public policy implementation. (Meyers, 1993: 549)

Meyers (1993) argues that rather than calculating means against an envisioned end, relations within and between organisations are often about reducing uncertainty – creating a work environment where challenges and tasks can be handled (see also Horwath & Morrison, 2007; Johansson, 2011). Where there are competing goals or conflicting norms, staff try to handle these as best they can.

Along the same lines – but across somewhat different theoretical standpoints – the argument has been repeated that collaboration is complex, that it needs to be approached from different theoretical perspectives to be properly understood and, above all, that further research can help improve it (e.g. Danermark & Kullberg, 1999; Forrer et al., 2014; Horwath & Morrison, 2007, 2010; Huxham, 2003). In an oft-cited textbook on collaboration, sociologists Danermark and Kullberg (1999) argue, from a Swedish context, that collaboration is no longer a voluntary undertaking outside the ordinary tasks. Contemporary welfare politics and administration requires agencies and professions to collaborate in order to do their jobs, and collaboration raises organisational issues that have to be addressed. The authors point to the importance of handling inter-organisational collaboration in a strategic manner – not reducing it to personal issues of 'who goes along with whom' (Danermark & Kullberg, 1999).

Earlier organisational theories are thus criticised for their rationalistic assumptions about organisational behaviour –behaviour where actors allegedly calculate means and ends before entering into a collaborative relationship. Instead, collaboration is seen as a response to a significantly changed organisational landscape that requires new ways of organising welfare services. The new ways of organising, researchers argue, demand strategies that truly enable and encourage organisations to collaborate (e.g.

Danermark & Kullberg, 1999). Horwath and Morrison (2007, 2010) describe how organisational factors are not enough, and they aver that the role of employees and managers is especially important. They point to 'a climate of constant new demands' in which 'it is all too easy for members of collaborations to absorb the demands and respond in an automised, procedural way that centres on risk-management and prescriptive approaches' (Horwath & Morrison, 2010: 373). They turn against the overly formalistic and positivist conceptions of organisation factors, instead representing a performative and practice-oriented approach to organisation and management.

In this line of research, collaboration is seen as different from traditional public administration, especially regarding management. Vangen and her colleagues describe the government or management of collaboration as somewhat different than is the case in traditional public administration:

> Public leaders and managers who grapple with the governance of collaborative entities in practice do so without being entirely in control of design and implementation choices and with governance forms that are most likely ephemeral in nature. (Vangen, et al., 2014: 18)

Hence, collaboration differs from the ideal/typical public organisation, where decisions are transferred top-down and the organisation is ideally adjusted to its purpose. Although one should aspire to an organisational structure and culture that is conducive of collaboration, there will always be an element of uncertainty and deviance from the plan, describes Meyers (1993).

Meyers (1993) is one of several who draw upon Karl Weick's concept of 'loose coupling' to describe the challenges of managing collaboration and to prescribe how it may be carried out (see e.g. Axelsson & Axelsson, 2006; Pedersen et al., 2007).

> Organizational goals and objectives are particularly likely to be loosely coupled and poorly or incompletely specified under conditions that characterize many interagency situations: the preferences of decision makers are inconsistent or ill-defined, participation in decision making is fluid, and appropriate technologies or interventions are unclear. (Meyers, 1993: 555)

Similarly, Pedersen et al. (2007: 389) proclaim that 'what is called for in order to coordinate governance in a dynamic environment is an ongoing adjustment and reorganization of the way coordination is brought about'. They continue: 'Besides, it has to be loosely coupled in order to promote transformative dynamics and make way for unpredictable and unknown potentials in the governing processes' (Pedersen et al., 2007: 389).

Among the organisational approaches to collaboration, in other words, there is no theoretical coherence. There are more 'traditional' perspectives, which emphasise formal organisational relations – in terms of resource exchange, for example – and there are practice-oriented perspectives that conceive organisations not as actors themselves but rather as the outcome of practices and relations. This latter perspective, I would argue, is especially noteworthy, for two reasons. Firstly, the practice-oriented approaches to collaboration make it possible to question some of the formal/organisational features of welfare that are often taken for granted. As described in the introductory chapter, the welfare state could be seen as the outcome of welfare practices and social and political relations rather than as a solely institutional or state-produced sector. Secondly, organisational and managerial practices appear increasingly important in the welfare sector, compared to the welfare work dealing with patients, clients, children and youth – at least in the Swedish context (e.g. Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2014; Hall, 2012a). The internal life of organisations thus contains a dynamic that may be overlooked if we study organisations as entities or actors. And the significant public-sector reforms, described by organisational scholars as well as political scientists, have not only brought about new policies and organisations; they have also brought about new knowledge and experts, focusing on organisation and management rather than the key content of the public services such as education, social work, or healthcare. As Hall (2012a) describes, managerial practices are imposed where practices cannot be governed or controlled in detail; the organisational knowledge, or logic, becomes increasingly important in relation to the knowledge and roles of welfare professionals (see also Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Fred, 2018; Lennqvist-Lindén, 2011; Parding, 2007).

Next, I describe the practice-oriented approaches and turn to the dynamics and complexity of collaboration as it is described by researchers and practitioners. I focus on the tensions and ambiguities that surround

collaboration, as these raise important and interesting questions about collaboration, and its equivocal relationship to the 'traditional' ways of organising and carrying out welfare.

Practice-oriented approaches to collaboration: Tensions and ambiguities

In some disciplines and methodological traditions – such as ethnography and anthropology – practices have been a main focus for some time, while others – such as scholars of organisation, public administration, and government – are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits and contributions of practice-oriented approaches (see e.g. Nicolini, 2012; Nicolini, Gherardi & Yanow, 2003; Townley, 2008). The main task here is not to survey different practice-oriented approaches, but I do consider it useful to contrast what I perceive to be a more organisational and (neo-)institutional view on practices with the poststructuralist view on practices that I draw upon in my study.[1] In chapter five, I develop my view of the study of practices; in this chapter, I focus on the more overarching practice-oriented approaches to collaboration, of which tensions and ambiguities are a key facet.

Collaboration as organisational and institutional practices

Based on Swedish welfare, Axelsson and Axelsson (2006) describe collaboration as a tension between differentiation and integration (see also Löfström, 2010). This tension is not a binary state – something that is present or absent – but something that varies according to situation and organisational context. In order to manage inter-organisational collaboration, relations must be more loosely coupled than is normally the case in welfare services. Again, loose coupling is here seen as the solution

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[1] While some may argue that poststructuralism is merely the study of structures, as opposed to practices, this would be a misunderstanding as I see it. Many poststructuralists are in fact studying different forms of social and political practices (for a discussion, see Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982).

to govern, or manage, services that do not fall entirely within the control of the politicians or management in charge. Rather than governing by regulation or use of top-down instruments, the service providers or street-level bureaucrats are subject to indirect measures of government; signals and directives that the organisations respond to. Different stages of collaboration require different management techniques in order for the collaboration to work according to plan. Managers need to facilitate contacts, manage conflicts and induce trust, all depending on where in the collaborative process the team or group finds itself (Axelsson & Axelsson, 2006; see also Basic, 2012; Danermark & Kullberg, 1999; Liff & Andersson, 2009; see 'meta-governance' described above).

The inability to manage collaboration in a traditional, top-down, and instrumental way seems to have prompted scholars of different strands to embrace, rather than dispute, the complex nature of collaboration. The idiom of loose coupling is a testament to this, as is the advocacy of self-government. By allowing – or, indeed, nurturing – a certain degree of self-government, employees who participate in collaboration are incorporated into the government of the collaboration, rather than being individuals who have to be controlled or managed more directly.

> Self-governance is regarded as crucial because it is seen as necessary for reducing implementation resistance and for motivating and empowering the relevant actors to take an active part in bringing about the desired amount and quality of governance. (Pedersen et al., 2007: 389)

Similarly, Sørensen and Torfing (2011) – in an article on public-sector innovation – point to the shortcomings of previous attempts to regulate and formalise public administration relations. While the hierarchical bureaucracies were inadequate in one way, market solutions based on competition have proved inadequate in other ways, and so collaborative arrangements with considerable self-government are proposed. In regards to collaboration, Sørensen and Torfing (2011) thus follow the theoretical argument made by Pedersen, Sehestad and Sørensen (2007), where both bureaucracy and New Public Management are seen as too focused on planning and control and where collaboration is seen as a third way, beyond these two.

Huxham and Vangen (2000) also describe how collaborative arrangements cannot be managed hierarchically and top-down, but they

do so from a somewhat different theoretical standpoint. They theorise collaboration – and especially leadership in collaboration – as performative. This means that leadership is not imposed, or practiced, instrumentally top-down, but rather, it emerges through the collaborative practices and relations. In their view, collaboration is characterised by a tension between collaborative advantage, on the one hand, and collaborative inertia, on the other. Whereas collaborative advantage is the desired outcome – the benefits that had not been possible without collaboration – inertia is the often-experienced actual outcome. By this, they make more subtle distinctions compared to the rather idealistic image painted by Sørensen and Torfing (2011).

All of the above-mentioned researchers construe collaboration as a primarily horizontal relationship, contrasted to the vertical one that is seen as characteristic of public-sector organisations. Löfström (2010) describes, with examples from Swedish welfare, how the boundaries within collaboration serve to separate the collaborating entities while simultaneously functioning as the defining point of collaboration. Boundaries are accentuated through boundary organisations, such as projects; boundary work, which are activities that are undertaken in collaboration; and boundary objects, which are artefacts, ideas and standardised practices around which the collaborating parties can unite (Löfström, 2010). The concept of boundary objects, introduced by Star and Griesemer (1989), denotes something that collaborating parties come together around – a centrepiece for collaboration. While the concept was originally related to standardised practices of different sorts – allowing different professions to collaborate without giving up their separate identities and belonging (Star & Griesemer, 1989) – the main contribution of the concept is that it forefronts the equivocal relationship to boundaries as a problematic yet defining feature of collaboration.

From a practice-oriented viewpoint, collaboration is not defined according to its formal organisation features but rather in the way that it is performed, through practices. In this sense, it seems that welfare collaboration is defined in relation to what it is not – namely, the traditional institutional order of the welfare state.

A poststructuralist perspective on practices and collaboration

Although many of the useful practice-oriented approaches to collaboration were developed from neo-institutionalist theories (see e.g. Lindberg, 2014), there is also practice-oriented research that draws upon poststructuralist perspectives and where the analytical focus is somewhat different. One could say that neo-institutionalists' view on practices was developed from a previous focus on institutions but that neo-institutionalists have subsequently argued that institutions are not as constitutive of behaviour as they were once seen to be and that practices should therefore be considered to a greater extent. Poststructuralist views on practices, on the other hand, conceive institutions as constituted by practices; institutions were never seen as constitutive of behaviour and relations but were rather seen as the outcome of such relations and practices. Common to practice-oriented approaches, however, is that they forefront *doing* – what is done, performed within organisations, institutions and politics – more than their output and what those doings amount to in terms of policy output or service production.

Lindberg (2014: 487, 496) argues that 'there is a tendency, in the literature concerning institutional logics, to move toward more practice-oriented studies and to focus upon the role of logics in practice' and that 'logics do not exist per se, but must be performed into being'. Her argument is that the institutions that harbour a certain logic – which in turn influences people's behaviour – should not be overemphasised. Instead, research should focus on the practices that invoke, or enact, the logic in question. As Lindberg (2014) shows in her own study, logics can spread to new fields, where they are translated and enacted in new ways.

By contrast, poststructuralist research – drawing on Foucault – conceive the state and its institutions not as harbouring logics, or being constitutive of behaviour, but as the outcome of practices and relations. Institutions are the consequence, or outcome, of relations, rather than what constitutes behaviour and relations. The institutions of welfare thus represent a certain way of doing and organising welfare, described as 'welfarism' by Miller and Rose (2008), rather than these institutions being the constitutive element of welfare. Similarly, Gottweis, positioning himself in the so-called government versus governance debate, asserts:

> The analytics of government in the tradition of Foucault is not interested in describing newly emerging fields of institutions or patterns. It is a perspective concerned with the analysis of the specific conditions under which particular entities emerge, exist and change. /…/ Thus, the analytics of government goes even beyond the relatively broadly focused governance concept. (Gottweis, 203: 255)

In other words, from such a poststructuralist perspective, it is not the new fields or institutions – network governance, for instance – that draw the researcher's attention; it is the conditions under which such phenomena emerge. Whereas scholars of network governance – as well as research on the organisation and management of collaboration – study governing practices within a changing (collaborative, or network-like) political and organisational landscape, the poststructuralist analysis focuses on the practices that constitute that changing landscape, or the practices which conceive the landscape *as* changing, collaborative, or network-like. As Gottweis implies, although different analytical perspectives may seem to target similar social and political phenomena, they attribute these different statuses.

Following this, in my study I focus on collaboration in the broadest possible sense in order to localise the practices that make up collaboration and from there identify those practices that make up the *government* of collaboration (see e.g. Gottweis, 2003; Nicolini, 2012). Analysing welfare collaboration from this perspective means that the practices that constitute collaboration are the object of focus and that it is a result of these practices that collaboration is considered an organisational matter in contemporary Swedish welfare. The idea is not to ascertain to what extent collaboration is taking place or whether the practices in question should be labelled collaborative, network, or interactive. Instead, I am interested in the practices that make collaboration what it is and to interpret this in terms of government. Since a main component in government is to make something *known* in a particular way, making welfare collaboration an organisational and managerial matter is to subject it to the practices and experts of organisation and management.

Returning to the equivocal relationship between welfare collaboration and the traditional welfare state, the poststructuralist perspective provides for a theoretical conceptualisation. From a poststructuralist viewpoint, a concept or phenomenon such as collaboration is constituted in relation to

its surroundings, both in relation to how it is described (its 'discursive relatives' and synonyms) and in relation to what it is not (its negations and antonyms) (see e.g. Bacchi, 2012, 2015). As I have shown, collaboration is primarily conceived as a horizontal relationship and organisational form, as opposed to a vertical and hierarchical one; it is an order where things are done together, not in competition. By these characteristics, and by reference to the research described here, collaboration seems related to partnerships, networks and projects – also based on horizontal, non-competitive features – and it is conceived in relation to the decline of the welfare state and the fragmentation of welfare institutions. Collaboration is seen as the remedy to an overly fragmented and specialised public sector, where professions and agencies need to work together. It is, however, not about reducing specialisation or fragmentation – for example by returning to large-scale organisations and institutions – but about collaborating across boundaries in teams, networks and projects. In that sense, collaboration is conceived as a break with the traditional order of welfare institutions and bureaucracy at the same time as it is these very institutions that are supposed to collaborate – which, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, could be seen as a 'collaboration paradox'.

Collaboration in the Swedish welfare sector

In order to describe and explore collaboration in some detail, it is necessary to limit one's scope of inquiry. As previous research on the matter has shown – and which I have just accounted for – although there are more general theories and conceptualisations regarding collaboration, most agree that particular political and organisational contexts are important for conceiving collaboration. Collaboration is not necessarily the same across different policy areas, nor across national borders (e.g. Axelsson & Axelsson, 2006; Haveri et al., 2009; Montin & Hedlund, 2009). In my empirical study, I have focused on one single case of welfare collaboration – which will be thoroughly introduced in the next chapter – situated in the context of Swedish welfare and local government. I will therefore end this chapter by zeroing in on the characteristics of collaboration in the Swedish welfare sector.

In Sweden, welfare collaboration has become increasingly common in recent decades, and there is considerable autonomy for the local and regional governments to organise and govern the welfare sector as they see fit. While regional authorities (counties) are responsible for healthcare, local authorities (municipalities) are responsible for primary and secondary education, social care, child care and care of the elderly. Legislation and additional government regulation as well as education programmes at universities for welfare professionals (teachers, doctors, nurses) ensure that there are national standards, routines and requirements, but the political and managerial organisation, and the relation between them, is subject to local decision. Consequently, collaboration is organised differently across Swedish municipalities, similar to the situation in Finland and Norway (Haveri et al., 2009). While some adopt existing models for collaboration, others develop their own organisational forms. Regarding children, families and youth, it is clearly stated in law and government regulations that relevant agencies are required to collaborate to the benefit of the child, but there are few imperatives as to how this collaboration should be carried out (Johansson, 2011).

Despite this, there seems to be at least some general traits of how collaboration is put into institutional arrangements. Collaboration is typically organised around certain perceived challenges facing the welfare services – identified needs or categories of patients and clients that the agencies or professions cannot service or address on their own. Regarding children and youth, collaboration often involves the agencies and departments of social services, school, healthcare and the police, where professions such as social workers, teachers, police officers, nurses and counsellors take part. In Swedish research, it has often been described how welfare collaboration has emerged as a response to broader changes in the welfare sector – primarily an increased professionalization and fragmentation – prompting agencies to integrate their efforts (Johansson, 2011; see also Basic, 2012; Danermark & Kullberg, 1999; Hjern, 2001; Löfström, 2010). In her doctoral dissertation from 2011, Johansson summarises what I perceive to be the dominating story on collaboration – a description that characterises academic accounts as well as agency reports and documents.

> The fragmentation and the need for integration is connected to the welfare services having become more and more specialised and that the number of

organisations producing the services has increased. In parallel, the organisation has professionalised, which means that more and more professions are involved in the welfare production. The consequences of the fragmentation – which includes a breakup into different welfare sectors and separate independent/autonomous service providers – is described as lacking a comprehensive view and the risk of clients falling between the cracks or getting passed around organisations. Many critics of modern welfare society consider an improved integration of welfare society necessary in order to provide 'holistic' services that address modern society's complex needs. (Johansson, 2011: 70, my translation)

When it comes to children and youth at risk, Swedish public agencies have a particular responsibility to collaborate. While the social services, being part of the municipal authorities, have the ultimate responsibility for caring for citizens and securing their needs and welfare, collaboration is often described as a shared responsibility among agencies. In legislation, inter-agency collaboration is demanded by the Administrative Procedure Act (*Swedish: Förvaltningslagen*), while the Social Services Act (*Swedish: Socialtjänstlagen*), primarily, ascertains the responsibility of the local social services. Furthermore, the imperative of collaboration has been emphasised in recent decades' government inquiries and legislative history (Johansson, 2011; see also Basic, 2012).

Johansson (2011) describes a movement towards more strategic and deliberate inter-organisational collaboration that reduces the ad hoc manner in which it has previously been organised. She describes a process of institutionalisation which seeks to integrate services into new systems and organisations. The main object of Johansson's study, *Barnahus* (equivalent to children's advocacy/legal centres in the UK and the U.S.), is one such example, where agencies working with children who are victims of crime are located together to better collaborate and reduce stress on the child. The child thus only has to meet with one or a few professionals, at one place, instead of having to visit separately the social services, healthcare, police and prosecutors (Johansson, 2011). Similarly, so-called Family Centres (*Swedish: Familjecentraler*) – which I will return to in later chapters, as one such centre appears in my case study – bring together preschool, social services, paediatric primary care and maternity care to meet children and families on an everyday basis, although not in relation to crime or to particular identified needs.

Despite its long history in legislation, and the repeated pleas from researchers, the development of collaboration into more strategic and institutional forms remains equivocal. Instead of collaboration progressing over time, perhaps developing new cross-sectorial organisational entities, welfare collaboration is to a great extent organised in temporary projects – a process sometimes described as the 'projectification' of public administration (e.g. Fred, 2018; Löfström, 2010). As the excess of projects shows no sign of slowing down, fragmented and temporary solutions are still very much the modus operandi of welfare collaboration. This new organisational landscape is perhaps better described as 'kaleidoscopic' in its ever-shifting and multifaceted character than as in any way re-institutionalised for the purpose of collaboration.

Outside academia, the organisation and management of welfare collaboration has been the subject of surveys, reports and guidelines. To a great extent, these repeat the problem-solving approach of much collaboration research devoted to organisational improvement. For obvious reasons, agencies and organisations trying to collaborate are served by research that diagnoses and prescribes – telling them what works and what does not. For those working in the area of children and youth at risk – that is, children and young people who are patients or clients of the health and social services due to various situations and problems – there is an abundance of evaluation reports and strategy documents to consult. In government reports and guidelines, the academics' prescriptive approach to collaboration is picked up and put into hands-on recommendations and suggestions for agencies and their managers and employees (Basic, 2012). Agencies such as the National Board for Health and Welfare (2007), the Board of Education (2009, 2010), the Swedish Police Authority (2013) and the National Council for Crime Prevention (2010) have all published reports and guidelines to help politicians, managers and welfare professionals managing collaboration.

In sum, descriptions and analyses of what collaboration is, how it has emerged, and what its implications are – for both politicians and practitioners – span across academic research, government policies and the so-called grey literature consisting of various public reports, evaluations and handbooks. Miller and Rose (2008) describe this intersection of different bodies of knowledge and government practices as

typical of 'government in an advanced liberal way'. It is a form of government that does not clearly emanate from the state but, rather, from different academic and other non-governmental centres of expertise, and which nonetheless appears in policies and publications (Miller & Rose, 2008).

In relation to this, however, it is worth noting an underlying tension within both the academic and the grey literature on collaboration, and that is the question of power and politics. On the one hand, collaboration is often described as a question of power; it is an organisational setting that highlights the different stakes or interests between actors (e.g. Basic, 2012; Johansson, 2011; Danermark, 2004; Danermark & Kullberg, 1999; Huxham, 2003). On the other hand, these power issues are supposedly solved not by politics but by proper organisation and management. In the above-mentioned agency publications, not the least, politicians are ascribed a considerably reactive role, as opposed to a role where they are actively engaged to govern, or steer, collaborations and networks. In one report an agency says that 'it can be difficult to reach political consensus on issues regarding crime prevention or safety' and that the politically decided collaboration agreements 'may therefore have to be written in more general terms of commitment, after which the municipal departments are given the task to specify them into action or implementation plans' (National Council for Crime Prevention, 2010: 32, my translation).

The intersection of academic research, non-academic knowledge and government publications and policies thus amount to an indistinct, yet – from the perspective of a political analyst – highly interesting setting. In theoretical terms, the making invisible of politics that follows from what I have described above could be seen both as a deliberate strategy of de-politicising pressing issues and as a consequence of an issue being conceived as a matter for experts rather than politicians (Burnett & Appleton, 2004). Regardless, there are tensions and ambiguities related to collaboration which appear more clearly when seen from a practice-oriented perspective. By bracketing the institutions for a while, the doings of collaboration emerge and become easier to observe and analyse.

Summary: Perspectives on welfare collaboration

In this chapter, I have described welfare collaboration as it appears in research and in non-academic reports and guidelines. As shown, there are several ways to approach and to theorise collaboration, and – as in all research – they forefront some features and characteristics while downplaying others.

My argument is that our understanding of welfare collaboration merits a practice-oriented approach, rather than an approach where state institutions, policies or otherwise more formal-organisational features are the object of focus. The reason for adopting such a viewpoint is that welfare practices are more than political and ideological products: they are social and political practices which are both dynamic and diverse within the organisations where they are located.

The practice-oriented approach that I advocate stands in some contrast to much of the research on collaboration that I have presented here. To a great extent, collaboration research emphasises formal-organisational features of collaboration, it adheres to an instrumental view on organisation, and it seeks to improve collaboration by prescribing certain management and organisation. A main argument of this chapter has been that collaboration should not be limited to its formal-organisational features, and it should not be seen solely in political-ideological terms. Instead, collaboration should be acknowledged precisely for its ambiguous and elusive character.

As described, welfare collaboration is paradoxical: it is political and conflict-ridden while it is also reduced to organisation and management; and it is contrasted to the institutional silos of welfare while being simultaneously defined by these very silos. Combining the practice-oriented approach with a poststructuralist theoretical perspective allows me to acknowledge these paradoxes, and it prompts me to investigate them empirically. In the next chapter, I introduce the case of my empirical study, called Deal, and I describe how I came to focus on the issue of *knowledge in governing*, which will be further theorised in chapter four.

3. Collaboration in Deal

My ambition with this study has been to observe and analyse how welfare collaboration is governed in practice. This ambition brought me to *Deal* – as I will return to in chapter five – and it prompted me to ask for access to their organisation. When I first met with the manager of Deal, DM, she told me about the role and importance of research in their work. She was in charge of the organisation I was to study for almost four years and they worked with several projects on child welfare, often involving researchers. The manager told me how you cannot involve just *any* researcher: 'First you have to identify that "this is the research we believe in", and that doesn't happen overnight. You don't just head out and say "we'll go with you today!"' (Interview[2], April 2014). Using research is about making a strategic choice, I was told. And when I went on to ask about whether I could study their organisation – by attending meetings, doing interviews and accessing documents – she answered, 'Yes., if there's a win-win.'

Deal is a small organisation that initiates, supports and leads cross-sectorial collaboration projects within the broader field of child welfare. The organisation is jointly 'owned' by five departments in two neighbouring cities located in the south of Sweden: the departments of social services, labour and education in the one city (A-city) and the departments of social services and education in the other (B-city). In addition, the regional county authorities (*Swedish: region/landsting*) are formally part of Deal, but their participation and contribution is different from the municipal departments, and they rarely took part in meetings and projects. During my study, however, they became more active participants, appointed a new political representative in the overseeing committee (see below), and began to contribute financially, just like the five municipal departments.

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[2] All interviews are translated from Swedish by me.

My interest was in how welfare collaboration was governed in practice: What goes on beyond the formal instruments of legislation, budgeting and regulations? What makes the organisation, its activities and projects, go in this or that direction? As I asked for access, and the manager answered 'yes' with an 'if' – *if* they could benefit from me as well – I afterwards realised that I had actually gotten a first indication as to how government works in practice. In Deal, research and researchers seemed to be instruments that are used to meet the organisation's aims and objectives – instruments to manage, or govern, the organisation. Expert knowledge can be a powerful political tool, useful in prioritising issues, discovering and solving problems and convincing others. Here, it was not that the manager considered researchers as tools to use entirely at her discretion, but neither were researchers seen as representatives of an objective truth. Research carried quite some weight in the organisation, I understood, but a weight that could be managed to be more or less useful – by involving it in various practices taking place. Although knowledge and research turned out to be main themes in my research, at that first meeting, I was not there to study the role of research in particular: I was set on familiarising myself with the purpose of their collaboration and with their various projects and activities.

Introducing Deal

On the webpage of Deal, some of the projects they run are presented. At the time of my first contacts, in early 2014, they described a project in which staff from the social services and the school do case work together to better address the needs of children who are clients of the social services. It also said that there had been previous projects in which children's health and education were in focus and which had been considered successful. Deal was undergoing some changes, and new projects were about to launch. Although I had previously surveyed quite a lot of different collaboration initiatives on children and youth, I did not recognise any names of projects or forms of collaboration.

In different reports, agencies such as the National Board of Education (2009, 2010) and the National Board for Crime Prevention (2010) describe

a range of municipal initiatives and projects focusing on collaboration on children and youth. The National Board of Education (2010) refers to an initiative in which local authorities received government funding for collaboration projects, and the agency concludes that a total of 125 projects were involved, located across 100 municipalities. The report describes a great variety in how the collaboration was undertaken and organised and what the main purposes and target groups of intervention were. However, as I read essays, evaluations and other reports that referred to different projects, Deal did not appear. Instead, Deal caught my attention as I searched the websites of different local authorities. In other words, I came across Deal more or less by coincidence, and what spurred my interest was not any particular feature or characteristic but the fact that I did not know what to expect from the case in question.

Guided by a broader theoretical interest in the government of collaboration, and an ethnographic impetus to go beyond what is immediately visible, Deal seemed an interesting case to commence my empirical exploration. The ethnographic and exploratory approach implies that the case selection does not follow any firmly set criteria; a case, or setting, is selected based on what it is likely to provide or appears to entail (see e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009). Accordingly, Deal appeared to be a suitable location for me to start my empirical exploration: it was an organisation devoted to collaboration on children and youth, it was located at municipal level, and it seemed to be permanent enough to venture an empirical study. From my own and others' experience, I knew from the outset that public-sector collaboration projects are not always long-lived; depending on external funding, they exist for one or a few years, only to disappear or resurrect in new forms (see e.g. Forssell et al., 2013; Fred, 2018; Sjöblom et al., 2013). Deal, however, is not a project in itself; it is a permanent organisation with a staff and an annual budget. During my first visit to the office of Deal, in A-city, the manager and coordinator described their organisational background and the projects they had organised historically and at present time.

Defining Deal

Deal is organised into a centrally located office – with only a few staff and a manager – and a set of affiliated projects, which are not entirely constant over time. When I refer to Deal as an organisation, what I have in mind is the complex of organisational entities – including the permanent office, the temporary projects, and the two committees overseeing their work – and the many related practices, which are not formal organisational entities. I find Nicolini's (2012) description of organisations as 'bundles of practices" to be a suitable conceptualisation for the matter at hand. Nicolini (2012) says that it makes more sense to picture an organisation as a complex of simultaneously ongoing practices, more or less well-arranged, rather than the embodiment of a blueprint plan (see also chapter five).

Despite the fact that Deal has existed for over ten years, the discussions on how to define Deal is still on the agenda. In the most recent political document – a declaration of objectives, finalised in 2017 – it is stated that Deal is 'a collaboration" between the different municipal departments. The former document said that Deal was 'a form of collaboration', but this wording was changed after some debate. The discussion among the politicians mainly circled on what Deal was not; it was not to be defined as a *form* of collaboration, because it includes many different kinds of collaborative initiatives and projects, nor was it to be seen as an *organisation* or a *project*. A project is simply to temporary in character, and although Deal initiates and manages projects, it is not a project in itself. According to the politicians, it could not be called an organisation, since that would send the wrong message; initiating a new organisation could be seen as going outside of their mandate – it would not be appropriate, or even allowed perhaps, for the politicians to start new organisations, they reasoned. And so, they settled on defining Deal as 'a collaboration" – a decision that was reached in consensus, and seemingly to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

Although political discussions on precise wordings should not be over-analysed, the difficulty in defining (what I call) an organisation is revealing. Deal is not a typical municipal organisational entity, but neither is its organisation unheard of. The work they do, and the projects they run, is similar to what is done in many other cities in Sweden and elsewhere

(e.g. National Board of Education, 2009, 2010; see also Fred, 2018). There is very little controversy on the aims, methods or overall ambitions of Deal. Instead, it is its place within the traditional municipal structure that makes it complex, and which requires the politicians and manager to weigh their words.

The practices that make up the organisation of Deal are the different projects and undertakings directed at children and youth – that is, the welfare work that is carried out by social workers, case workers, counsellors, teachers, and other welfare professionals. But they are also the organisational, managerial, and administrative practices that Deal entails. In some situations, but not always, these different practices are easily separated. Where a group of welfare workers describe how they screen and assess young children with regards to norm-breaking behaviour – children displaying aggression, withdrawal or attention deficit – they are describing practices that concern children directly, and which make up the very 'substance' or 'content' of Deal's projects. And when the manager describes a research circle – in which mid-level managers together with a researcher discuss leadership strategies in collaboration – she describes a practice that does not concern the children and youth directly, but which is more about the 'form' or 'configuration' of Deal.

In addition to these, there are practices within the projects that touch upon the organisation and arrangement of activities, but which nonetheless are rather hands on. In one project, representatives of the social services and the schools worked together to bring about new guidelines for how to do casework investigations. In this process, highly substantial issues were addressed – for example what precise questions to ask children that are clients of the social services – alongside organisational issues, concerning the responsibilities and roles of different professions and agencies, and how these can be joined. Issues of content and form, in other words, sometimes flowed into each other and could not be separated.

In order to study collaboration – and, more precisely, how collaboration is governed – meant that I had to comprehend this bundle. At that first meeting with the manager and the coordinator of Deal, I wondered 'if I want to see what collaboration looks like in practice, what boxes do I open?" What I was aiming for was the practical expressions of collaboration – where I should look and whom I should talk to in order to observe the collaboration taking place within Deal. This question, it turned

out, never received a satisfying answer – partly because the practices are as varied as I just described, partly because Deal is organised in an untraditional manner. DM described the difficulty in trying to capture the essence of collaboration:

> There is a common thread. But you have different horizons in front of you. The higher you go, the more abstract things become. You don't get that concrete. It's hard to say; those working as project leaders, and who meet all the professions, they are working very, very concretely. (Interview, April 2014)

Deal differs from how welfare organisations are traditionally conceived, where we imagine there being core services carried out, and which management and administration are leading and supporting. In a school, hospital or social office, there are certain tasks to fulfil, there are groups of staff designated to carry out different assignments – professionals of medicine, teaching and social work, as well as administrative staff and managers. In Deal, the projects could be seen as the 'core services' in some sense – since this is where the activities directed to the children and youth are taking place – but the projects are not a constant within the organisation. Quite the contrary, the structure around the projects – the directors' committee, the political committee, and Deal's small office – are the more permanent elements of the organisation, whereas the projects are only temporary. In other words, if one was to measure the size and scope of Deal, one would first have to decide on how to define the organisation. In a most limited sense, Deal is an organisation of about three employees – one of which, the manager DM, is undoubtedly the most important – and a relatively small budget. But from my practice-oriented approach, Deal is an organisation that also entails the practices carried out within and around the projects, by welfare professionals, managers, and politicians that spend the major part of their time and work within other organisations. While this may seem like an unorthodox way of conceiving a public-sector organisation, I contend that this approach is crucial to understand the collaborative and network-like organisation that Deal is. In fact, a few years prior to my empirical study, Deal had a more numerous staff, and thus appeared more 'traditional' seen from a formal-organisational perspective. The current organisation is the consequence of a political decision, proposed by the department directors.

The reorganisation

In 2012, Deal was reorganised. Before then – ever since it was formed in 2005 – it had grown larger, with a more numerous staff. The current and considerably smaller organisation, in other words, was quite new when I first came into contact with Deal, and it stood in some contrast to the previous organisation. One of the politicians described the transition they went through, and that it was the department directors who argued that a smaller organisational unit would be better. 'We got a proposition into our lap', he said (Politician A, interview, Sept. 2017), where the city manager (the highest ranking municipal civil servant) and the department directors suggested that locating the resources within the ordinary department organisation would better serve the organisation's purpose.

But the reference to efficiency, and to improve the organisation, was perhaps not the only reason for reorganising, as indicated by another of the politicians:

> I mean, we went from having one Deal organisation to the Deal organisation being located within the department organisation. This was pushed by the department directors, who thought that all of a sudden there was an organisation with influential people who pushed things in a direction they couldn't really control. I can't have any opinions about that, I can't evaluate it, but my hunch is that it wasn't that we did bad things. It was probably more about hierarchy and stuff. (Politician B, interview Sept. 2016)

Despite references to the department directors seeking efficiency and improvement, politicians in both cities agree that the reorganisation was probably not primarily to reduce costs but rather about the management of Deal's work. The reorganisation was likely more about seeking to control a group of individuals that was starting to grow too independent, existing in parallel to the ordinary organisations. The politicians said that the change was dramatic – 'painful', even, as one of them described – but necessary from the perspective of the department directors.

Accordingly, the dismantling of the larger organisation, and replacement by a smaller office headed by one key person, DM, was a deliberate decision made by the department directors. But it was not

necessarily intended to be that small, according to one of the politicians in charge:

> (laughing) No, I have to admit that this new organisation ended up smaller than I had thought, yes. And I did raise my eyebrows a couple of times, and thought 'ok, that was… like, is this how you [the department directors] want us to work, or, how you want to work?" Actually we didn't have that much opinions on the organisation, because it's not up to us to have opinions on that, but I think there were many politicians feeling that 'well, ok, how is this going to work – are you cutting contacts and throwing the baby out with the bath?" But all those questions have been proven wrong, and DM – as a person but also in her role – has shown very clearly in her role that she really carries that with her and develops what has already been done, you know. (Interview, Politician A, Sept. 2016)

From the politicians' viewpoint, and perhaps also from the department directors and the current manager, there was no reason to linger on the past. Instead, they all emphasised the good work that has been done since the beginning, and how the current organisation was set on developing new projects and methods, using the resources within the departments. The reorganisation was thus supposed to change how Deal was functioning, not what it produced; the integration of projects into the ordinary organisation was supposed to better benefit from their results.

While DM was hired as a manager in relation to the reorganisation, the coordinator, TC – who worked primarily with administrative tasks – had been around since before that, working with one of the projects. Together, they described to me how one particular project was essential for the creation of Deal. It all started at the department of social services in A-city, when they started collaborating with the schools. They realised that children who were clients of the social services could not be helped properly without working closely with their schools. This was an entirely new way of thinking, they described to me, that you do not first see to what is the problem at home, but put things in a school context, and see what can be done to help them there.

TC elaborated on that project, and described how a particular professor of social work was involved to develop a new method that could benefit this particular group of children. Then similar projects were launched, which drew on the good experiences and results from the first project – based on the same research and method for identifying and working with

the relevant children, in collaboration between the social services and schools. They worked systematically, conducting measurements before and after interventions to follow up on their projects' performance. In a second phase, B-city became interested in Deal, and asked to join the collaboration – which they also did. The fact that the two cities collaborate was not part of the initial idea, in other words; B-city entered into an already existing collaborative organisation in A-city.

Politicians from both cities are very respectful when speaking about their counterparts, emphasising that they benefit from each other. But A-city is undoubtedly the place were Deal began, where the office is formally and physically located, and the bigger of the two cities. B-city is referred to as 'the little brother', and they need A-city to carry out the kind of collaboration projects that Deal entails. In the politicians' committee, however – and among the department directors – I have not observed any difference among the participants that has to do with what city they are from. Department directors, politicians and managers show different engagement and interest in different issues, but not depending on whether they represent A-city and B-city.

The relation between the two cities may of course have an impact on particular projects and activities, where departments, employees and managers from the different cities should meet and work together. But as I will return to, the organisation of Deal and of its different projects should not be seen as a constant; it is something that is produced and reproduced through the various practices undertaken. The main organisational building blocks are the same – in the sense that the five departments (the departments of social services, labour and education in the one city, and the departments of social services and education in the other) jointly own the organisation of Deal – but not everyone takes part in every project, and there are different professional groups as well as groups of children and youth that are involved in different projects. It would be misleading, therefore, to present Deal as an organisation in a more traditional sense – Deal must be understood in context, which partly includes its history, but above all its current situation and relations.

The organisation of Deal – 'a bundle of practices'

As a formal organisation, Deal is a minuscule entity. Apart from DM, there is TC – who works as a project leader and administrative coordinator of Deal – and two part-time employees who work within particular projects. In terms of what is being performed, however, Deal leads and/or coordinates some 5–10 projects simultaneously, where staff from all of the involved departments take part, including the regional authorities, and which entails non-municipal actors as well, such as civil society organisations. As described above, this dual image of Deal – as something very small, yet far-reaching – is not coincidental: it is a consequence of the organisational changes that were made, where the departments directors sought to avoid a project superstructure.

Deal's office, management and oversight

The organisational structure of Deal depends to a large extent on what projects are currently running. At the time of my study, a number of projects were in place – three of which I followed more closely and which are included in the chart below (figure 1) and detailed in chapters six through eight. This organisation could be seen as a snapshot, in other words, picturing Deal as seen from my viewpoint.

At the centre is the office of Deal – formally located at the department of social services in A-city but jointly owned and financed by the five departments. The office is run by a manager, DM, who is not only the centrepiece of the organisation but also of most projects and processes. DM has a staff of approximately three. Two committees are overseeing Deal's work; the directors' committee consists of the five department directors (*Swedish: förvaltningschefer*), and the political committee consists of seven politicians, representing the five standing committees (*Swedish: nämnder*), and the regional county authorities. The political committee was reorganised during my study and reduced from nearly 20 politicians to only seven in an effort to make the political presence more involved and efficient (see also chapter seven). The innovation group consists of a few key individuals that the directors' committee has considered important for the development of Deal – but which, from my

perspective, only has a marginal role within Deal. It consists of DM and a few other mid-level managers who have thorough knowledge and contacts within the relevant issues and departments. The projects (described below), lastly, involve different groups of employees and other partners.

Figure 1: Deal organisational chart (with selected projects that are featured in this study)
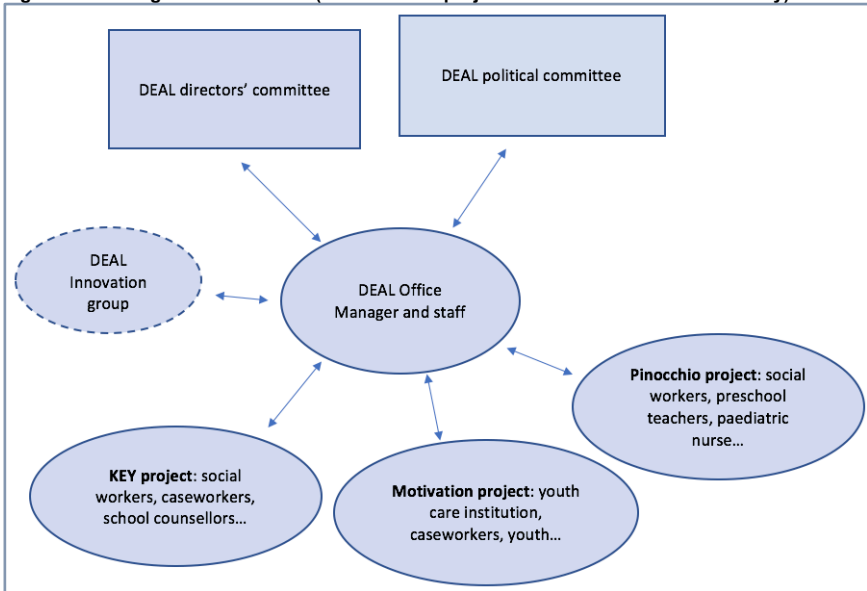
As described above, Deal can be defined in terms of formal organisational features but also from a practice-oriented, or performative, perspective according to which Deal is what they do, rather than how they appear in terms of annual budget or staff. More importantly, in order to understand how Deal functions and how they are governed, it is necessary to put the organisation into context. In this regard, the reorganisation of Deal – described above – is relevant, especially as it reveals their different concerns and ambitions.

With the organisation partly integrated into the ordinary departmental organisation, results were supposed to be more easily implemented into the ordinary structure. On the one hand, then, there was the issue of keeping the organisation within a certain reach, not allowing it to take on a life on its own; on the other hand, a certain autonomy had to be reserved for the organisation to continue to develop projects and methods and take

part in collaborative ventures with researchers and others (for a discussion on such a tension/trade-off, see Jensen et al., 2013). At any given time, the organisation of Deal is only as large as the projects they are involved in – apart from the annual budget and staff of the small office.

With such a small budget, however, the department directors have invested quite a lot in the one person who makes up the bulk of the organisation, DM. As mentioned above, one of the politicians in charge pointed to this not being a political initiative but a proposal from the department directors. He admitted that he was a bit surprised about the changes. Nonetheless, the politicians were adamant about giving the department directors a mandate to choose the organisational form and to hire the person they would like to fill the post.

> It was clearly stated from us that we wanted someone who was close to research. So preferably someone with a research background, who has worked within academia and knows their way around there, who is open for new thoughts, who has experiences from the public sector, and who is not just a consultant who has worked at a commercial enterprise – because that's entirely different, like, cultures in business and in local government. So those were some important factors that were valuable to us. And we did confer a very big mandate and trust in hiring one person… I think it has worked out really, really well. (Politician A, interview, Sept. 2016)

Although everyone seemed to agree that the hiring of DM was a success, and that she has made the most of the organisation, I wondered about the vulnerability of an organisation that consists of little more than one person. The politicians admitted to the risks that follow from such organisation, but they emphasised that a small organisation is not necessarily more vulnerable than a larger one, especially as they are less susceptible to criticism. One of the politicians explained:

> But there was a vulnerability in the old organisation too. Because then as well, we saw that it was maybe not one but a few persons who were extremely influential. (Politician B, interview, Sept. 2016)

In other words, the dismantling of the previous organisation could be seen as a testament precisely to its vulnerability. Although there was wide agreement that they did a good job, there was not enough support for allowing such a resource-demanding organisation to exist outside the

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ordinary hierarchical structure. In interviews and more casual talks, politicians and managers indicated to me that the previous Deal was renowned outside the city and that they received positive feedback also on the national level but that they had less support within the municipal organisation, where there was scepticism. It sounded to me that the current organisation, contrary to this, would not bother anyone – something which the politician in A-city confirmed. A smaller organisation is easy to defend since it does not take up too much resources. 'You don't go after *one* person', the politician said, adding, 'and when you see that it delivers results, what we do, I think it's smart in that aspect too' (Politician A, interview, Sept. 2016).

On the one hand, it seems as if the current Deal is supposed to do the same work as they did before, but with less resources; at the same time, the resources should be provided from the departments and not allocated beforehand. It is then up to DM and her few colleagues at the Deal office to engage, involve and convince others about their ideas and project proposals. This view of their work was also confirmed, I would say, in the many meetings with the department directors' committee and in how DM described her work on a day-to-day basis. The pitching of ideas and networking with the 'right people' within the departments are central tasks in keeping Deal a productive organisation.

The task of Deal's office is not easily summarised, however, and my interpretation and impression of their work is based on what they told me about particular projects and collaboration, as well on my own observations of meetings, conferences and presentations. When I talked to DM and TC, they described their office as a rather administrative unit, coordinating the work of others. At a later stage in my research, DM emphasised this to an even greater extent: that the real development work – conceiving new methods and ideas – was being done by the project participants who represent the different departments, and that she and her colleagues were mainly supportive to that end. My impression, however, was that DM played an important role in staging the projects they were involved in and in convincing the department directors about the importance of different project ideas as well as the design of the projects. And, as I will return to, DM guaranteed the involvement of researchers and other uses of knowledge within the projects.

The directors of the five departments are responsible for signing off on most of the projects that Deal undertakes. Minor collaborations and meetings are decided and handled by DM, but she keeps the directors' committee closely informed about the work. As I tried to get an overview of where decisions are made, I discussed the role of the directors' committee with DM and TC, and it seemed that the committee was less of a governing body than I had imagined.

> DM: … they have to keep track of both the politicians' visions about where we're heading and also know what conditions we have today and what has to be put in place for things to happen.

> Me: Is that [in the directors' committee] where you sit and talk, like, persons? 'Now we have one position here' and what's available, and stuff like that?

> DM: No, that's more in the budget. So… no, they don't really sit and talk like that, they don't. And besides, you can always create new conditions. If you want something, there is always funding to apply for. There's a lot on social innovation right now. So I think it's more about finding a really good idea that you believe in. I think. (Interview, April, 2014)

This was at an early stage in my study, and I was somewhat surprised to hear that budgetary issues were not a main concern from the perspective of DM, or – according to her – from the perspective of the department directors. Along the course of my study, my own observations confirmed this: there were very few discussions on budget and very few arguments that had to do with what the budget did or did not allow. Neither did I perceive conflicts of interest between the departments in the sense that the interest of one department came into conflict with that of another. Instead, as I will return to, there was a reasoning among the participants about how to best go about organising, managing and handling particular projects, and in those discussions, references were made to different kinds of knowledge.

The political organisation and representation within Deal

The role of the politicians, as compared to the directors' committee, was less pronounced. They acted even less as a governing body and more as an advisory group; they were informed about ongoing projects, and they guaranteed that there was overarching political support for Deal. While some politicians were more involved – making their own proposals and asking detailed questions – the political committee at large did not interfere with Deal's daily management or the directors' committee's decisions. During the time of my study, however, the role of the politicians was a recurring topic of debate, primarily among the politicians themselves. DM said that she appreciated the involvement of the politicians, but she confirmed that the politicians' roles were unclear, especially as there was also the directors' committee overseeing their work. As Deal's work so clearly runs through DM, I wondered especially about her role in relation to the political committee, that is, I wondered to what extent they base their decisions on what she presents and proposes.

> DM: It's not I who should govern the politicians; it's not. They govern my work. But I influence what input I am given by my saying that 'here I've found new research; this is really relevant; I see that the survey we did in A-city and B-city show great differences' and so on, and we can have those kinds of interesting discussions. (DM Interview, April 2015)

DM indicated a certain vagueness in the relationship between the two committees, while maintaining that she does think that the politicians have an important role to play. She said that for the department directors it would probably be easier not to have the political committee. Diplomatically, she added: 'And by that I don't mean anything bad, just to streamline the organisations into looking the same'. The politicians' care for Deal was also confirmed by others. A manager that I interviewed indicated that Deal was the politicians' darling, rather than the department directors'.

Having attended twelve meetings with the political committee, I was also able to observe first-hand the involvement and engagement that several politicians displayed as well as their the concern about not really knowing their role. On several occasions, with and without my presence, they discussed their own role and mission in relation to Deal. Following

up on these issues in interviews, the politicians explained that their role in the political committee of Deal differs from their work in the traditional municipal committees – that is, the standing boards or committees that characterise everyday municipal politics.

One of the politicians explained that in Deal, the political role needs to be clarified in a way that is not normally necessary. The Local Government Act (*Swedish: Kommunallagen*) does not regulate the type of political organisation that oversees Deal, as opposed to traditional committee work, where there are regulations about mandates and everyone knows what is expected from them. In Deal, things need to be 'sorted out', he said.

Another politician described how the current organisation of Deal requires another type of political presence than was previously the case, where the organisation was more independent and included a larger staff. At that time, the role of the politicians was mainly to show support, for example in relation to external parties such as national agencies. In order to receive funding, she explained, sometimes it was necessary to show that the politicians are on board, that projects are politically 'anchored' (*förankrad* – a frequently used Swedish term indicating that something is known, accepted or established by the managers or politicians within an organisation). If politicians do not show their presence, or support, an entire project can fail, despite it being really good and run by professional employees. Contrary to this, the politician in question described, the current organisation requires her to take new political representatives by the hand and explain to them what Deal is about and what their role as politicians is. Where the previous organisation had resources of their own to staff and run projects, the current organisation is dependent on the departments – and managers on different levels – providing the necessary resources for projects to be realised.

> But it's also more about governing now. Because before it was an organisation that had a life on its own. Now my mission is to make sure that my department director… 'Now you have to make sure that in every part of our organisation there is an understanding, an acceptance and a joy, and to adopt the new way of thinking about KEY [a specific project, to be explained]. No teacher in our department should slow things down and say no. That's our mission'. Now, it's much clearer about governing and management and the responsibility I have for this to succeed. Before, when

we had an organisation that executed, it wasn't the same at all because it wasn't necessary then. Because that organisation led a life of its own. (Politician B, interview, Sept. 2016)

Compared to the ordinary committee work, the politics of Deal implies more subtle means of getting your will through, it was explained to me. In traditional committees there is a chain of command and well-established procedures for decision making and for the relations between politicians and between politicians and the department management. In the committee of Deal, politicians have to exercise another type of 'craftsmanship', sometimes grabbing a political colleague by the arm to get things done but also standing shoulder to shoulder with 'your" department director, the politician explained. The politicians acknowledged that the more 'traditional' tools of government are not applicable here. Legislation, policy documents, and budgets were not really used, invoked or referred to in any of the committees during my time there.

This observation was confirmed not only by the politicians themselves but also by DM. There are no conflicts of interest – either between the two cities, or between the political parties represented – and there are no ideological clashes. The few conflicts that appear are related to the approach of individual politicians and managers, having more to do with how to govern and manage than with what issues to prioritise or how to allocate resources.

> That is the case, that in Deal's political committee we don't fight about political ideology. Because everyone stands entirely united – in both cities, too – that children and youth are the most important we have. And if they are at risk, they shall have the extra help they need to manage in adult life. That's like the best help we can give them, to give it to them now, early, so they can manage themselves. And there, there's no ideological clash in any way. (DM, interview, April 2015)

> We haven't seen so far, anyway, that there are any goal conflicts – that we and B-city have different objectives, like 'what do we do now?' It's more, perhaps, that you have expressed yourself somewhat differently. But the policy documents in the two cities are still important documents that we have to take into consideration and preferably relate to in some way in our work. (Politician A, interview, Sept. 2016)

DM and the politician painted a similar picture, that the politicians share the objectives and importance of Deal's work and that this renders political conflicts obsolete. There is no ideological traction in the particular issues, and the guiding documents – where policies and principles are formulated – are important as reference points more than actually guiding their work. The politician in B-city confirmed this image; to my questions, she replied that there is politics in Deal but not in a way that brings about debate between the politicians.

> Politician B: We know in what arenas politics is important. Politics is totally unimportant in the Deal arena. In the Deal arena, the children are in focus; the party politics we can leave at home in this case. Then we have our basic values, of course, but there is no one participating in this work who doesn't share my basic values about the vulnerable children's right to be prioritised. We agree entirely on that. And we keep to an overarching level; we're not down and meddling in the implementation. So we never disagree.

> Me: But what does that say, really? We're talking about the core services of the local government – healthcare, education, social services, etc. – and everyone just agrees?

> Politician B: Yes, but in this work, we choose, so to speak… we have chosen the group that is worst off – worst, absolutely worst off – and that is itself a political signal that we choose to work with those who are worst off… But there is no party – there is really *no* party – who doesn't think you should help those who are worst off. I mean, there is no one who wouldn't… so that in itself becomes entirely unpolitical. And the purpose of Deal is us being able to work together, across the municipal borders, across departmental borders, and with the county. (Interview, Sept. 2016)

It is not so much that Deal's issues are located beyond politics – being more profound than what is conceived as political – but rather that the issues do not benefit from political conflicts. As I tried to discern potential political conflicts, it became clear that there is no interest in 'playing politics'. When I asked whether there could be ideological conflicts, for example if some politicians want to put more focus on families while others want to put the resources in schools, the politician answered: 'But what a relief that we rely on research!' By relying on research, she argued, some issues can be left aside, because there is science basically telling

them what should and should not be done. 'Of course there is politics in this', she said, but Deal is not used for political battle: 'Absolutely not. You do that in your ordinary committee or in the city council, but not here' (Politician B, interview, Sept. 2016).

In one of the meetings with Deal's political committee, this non-partisan approach was clearly manifested for me to observe. According to a new meeting and working structure, there were plans to form a workshop series in which only a few people participate to discuss and plan issues related to the different projects. Within these networks, politicians should also attend. From a political viewpoint, however, the normal procedure is for all parties to be represented – majority as well as opposition. In this case, there was thus an obvious trade-off between the principle of small-scale working groups and that of political representation. After weighing options against each other, the minority parties gave up their principled right to be represented, instead arguing that they all agree on these issues and that they trust each other so well that not everyone needs to be represented in the working groups. The politicians in the workshops should represent the entire Deal committee, they reasoned, and not their particular party affiliation. Similar discussions appeared several times, where there was a general agreement across boundaries that are sometimes very conspicuous in local politics.

On the whole, the politicians and the management of Deal agreed that there is no framing of their issues in political-ideological terms. The politicians have settled and decided on a general direction in which the work should have a scientific basis and be carried out mainly with the resources of the departments. There is no risk of this changing, they said; there is wide agreement between parties and between the two cities. It is partly because of this, perhaps, that politicians continued to ask about their role.

Towards the end of my study, a new model for the government and management of Deal was launched. The main purpose of the model (described in more detail in chapter seven) was to clarify the roles and relations between the different political and managerial levels and to establish forms for meetings and workshops across organisational boundaries. The model was first proposed by the politician in B-city, envisioning more structure and commitment on behalf of the politicians in the committee. In an interview, she speculated that the need for

formalising the political representation and the committee is due to the change in Deal's organisation and the fact that new politicians who have not been involved before participate in the committee. 'If there is a great interest in a group, you don't have to care about the form; but when things fail, you need something to lean on', she reasoned. In this sense, the new model was part of organising the governing practices of Deal – focusing on the politicians' role but also including the levels of management and employees.

Pursuing the question of government

As DM described things, there was a certain difficulty in having two committees to oversee Deal's work. There is the directors' committee, which is supposed to be the main governing body, and the political committee, whose role was seen as rather unclear but nonetheless important. Clarifying the role of the political committee so that it became easier to distinguish between the two committees was one solution to this perceived difficulty. This was only a minor adjustment in the larger question of Deal's organisation and government, but it was significant as it implied a striving towards clarification and certainty, away from an ambiguous political and managerial organisation. The launching of the new government model followed this path, making the different roles even more structured and schematised.

Having followed Deal's work for a long time, I consider this striving towards more structure – which also entails a great devotion and ambition on behalf of the involved parties – highly significant for the organisation and the governing of their work. The manager and employees at Deal's office, as well as the department managers and the politicians, work to make their organisation predictable and thereby governable. But the non-formal and non-institutional character of Deal is not a by-product; the crossing of organisational and professional boundaries and the breaking away from traditional silos is the very idea of this form of collaboration.

At an early stage, it was difficult to overview – or identify, even – the practices that govern Deal's work. The political committee did not actively provide guidance, discuss budgetary issues, or decide on what

projects to engage in, and the directors' committee had no standing agenda in which paths or directions were discussed. Instead, it was only in relation to Deal's particular projects that I was able to observe, identify and start to comprehend what practices governed their work – and, indeed, what practices constituted Deal as an organisation. As I argued earlier in this chapter, Deal's organisation should not be reduced to a formal entity – consisting only of a budget and a few staff – but should rather be seen as the 'bundle of practices' that are performed. This performative conceptualisation of organisation is theoretical, of course (see e.g. Czarniawska, 1998; Nicolini, 2012), but it fits especially well with an organisation such as Deal, where there is an obvious discrepancy between its formal appearance – as a small organisation – and what it does in practice, in terms of several simultaneously ongoing projects.

Deal's project and performances

In my first discussions with DM and TC, they constantly returned to particular projects in order to explain to me how they are organised, what the directors' committee's role is, and how they work. It seemed difficult to paint a general picture, and everything had to be exemplified. From this, I understood that Deal consisted of its different projects: there was no 'everyday business' to which the projects were an 'add on' (see Lundin et al., 2015, on project-supported versus project-based organisations). As we talked about my research interest, however, DM made an effort to capture the collaborative aspect of Deal separately from its projects, with the intention of accommodating me.

> Well, if it's collaboration you want to look at, as opposed to the particular projects that are directed towards preschools, or the KEY project, and stuff like that… Well, yes, we could probably sit down some day and see what works in collaboration, what doesn't work, on the different levels. (DM, interview, April 2014)

From my perspective, though, Deal was best understood as an organisation made up of the collaboration projects that it leads, initiates or takes part in, together with the administrative and managerial practices that go on around the projects, and this is what I came to focus on. Accordingly, I

sought to observe and understand practices that went on within and around the projects – that is, practices that set the projects' direction and course of action.

Among the many projects that Deal has been involved in since the beginning, I will here briefly present two that have been important historically – and thereby served as constitutive elements in the very organisation of Deal – and introduce three that I will return to in the chapters to come.[3]

> **Skolfam** began as a project within Deal in 2005, and after a positive evaluation in 2008, it became a permanent way of working within A-city. The project targeted children in foster care, as studies had shown the many risks associated with this group. The project aimed to improve the educational situation for the children, in close collaboration between the school and the foster home. The conditions and needs of the child were mapped through standardised testing, supporting measures were initiated, and the children were tested again afterwards.

> The project was based on research conducted by a professor of social work from Stockholm University, who is also affiliated with the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW; (*Swedish*: *Socialstyrelsen*), the national agency overseeing healthcare and social care. The project received attention nationally and the method has spread to other cities. The national coordination of Skolfam is done in collaboration between A-city and the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden (*Swedish*: *Stiftelsen Allmänna Barnahuset*). Skolfam is no longer a part of Deal's work. (Extracted and translated from a Skolfam information brochure obtained through Deal.)

> **Utsikter** (*English: Prospects*) started in 2008 as a result of the successful work within Skolfam. It started with the research reports that showed that children's future is affected by their school performances and that there are certain groups of children that are more likely than others to not cope well with their education. Skolfam and Utsikter are both based on the idea that education and health are two crucial protective factors for the children. They are also two factors where society has a great responsibility and impact. When the Utsikter project started at seven schools within A-city

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[3] The project names which only exist in Deal have been given pseudonyms, and these are written within quotation marks here. Names without quotation marks are not specific to Deal and thus not given pseudonyms.

and B-city, the aim was the same as in Skolfam: to improve the health and education of children at risk of not succeeding in school.

Initially, the project focused on individual children within two risk groups: children in economically vulnerable families and children who had recently arrived to Sweden as refugees. Different methods were developed to support the children in school and to follow up on their results. The project's methods were subsequently broadened to also include measures on the group level. Some of the methods, or subprojects, within Utsikter have focused on cultural projects to develop teaching practices, new methods for analysing and planning the teaching of mathematics, and family mobilization to involve parents in the children's education. (Extracted and translated from an Utsikter information brochure obtained through Deal.)

'KEY – Cogwheel' started as a project for children who needed coordinated support from several actors and agencies. The individual child should receive support and continuous follow-up for at least two years. Every child who participates in the KEY project is appointed a team consisting of representatives of the organisations and agencies that the child and its family are in contact with, such as school, social services and healthcare. A designated person coordinates the initiatives and treatments from the different parties. The child's health and school performance are measured and analysed by the team with the use of standardised and evidence-based assessment tools, and further initiatives are undertaken in accordance with the result.

The evaluation of the project showed positive effects with this way of working but also that there were organisational and managerial issues that prevented the involved parties from benefitting fully from the collaboration. After the reorganisation of Deal, a new KEY project was launched that focuses on improving the investigation procedures of children who receive social services and whose problems are related to their school situation. The new KEY project will be further described as one of three projects that I have followed more closely.

Pinocchio was a project developed nationally that aimed to improve preventive work in relation to young children who are at risk of developing norm-breaking behaviour such as aggression, lack of attention or anxiety. A-city was initially not part of the national project but subsequently joined the initiative and the working methods. It was run as a project for two years and thereafter became part of the permanent organisation of one of the

city's *Family Centres* – a joint location for preschool, social services and paediatric healthcare. Within Pinocchio, the different professionals work together in screening and assessing children who display norm-breaking behaviour, with the help of an evidence-based and computer-aided tool. Based on the results, different initiatives and support measures are taken to address the needs of the child.

Deal was not involved in the start-up or the management of Pinocchio, but it was involved at a later stage to help evaluate the project, an evaluation that was carried out by a researcher in social work. Deal was also involved in a follow-up of the project in which the methods were spread to other parts of A-city. Pinocchio will also be described in more detail in the chapters to come.

Motivation started as a pilot project to investigate the prospects of working with activity bracelets and motivation within social work. The ambition was for young people who received social services to improve their physical activity and sleep through motivation. Youth and caregivers were equipped with activity bracelets that allowed them to monitor their own physical activity and sleep patterns and to use this data to change their behaviours and treatments. A pilot study was evaluated by researchers, who also contributed a research overview to help develop the methods further.

Based on the pilot study, the research overview and the participants' experiences, the Motivation project was broadened to other parts of the social services. The objective is to create a structured work method to involve digital technology within social work. Apart from the researchers involved and the administrations involved in the different subprojects, Motivation also involves A-city's research and development unit – a small organisation working with research and development related to social sustainability. This is also a project that will be described further ahead.

I learned about these projects through the meetings that I attended; through my informal talks with DM, often in relation to different meetings; and through the many documents that I gathered and was provided. I received protocols and minutes from the directors' committee meetings and the politicians' committee meetings stretching back a year, and I was provided evaluation reports and documentation on the projects that were no longer running. On the current projects and activities, I was informed through DM's presentation to the two committees and in our regular conversations

– which sometimes took on the form of informal interviews. Based on these, I could pursue issues more deeply – for example, conducting interviews with project participants and attending meetings within particular projects, where closer details were discussed. Parallel to this, however, my focus on the role of *knowledge* grew stronger, and I pursued this theme more closely, for instance by addressing it in interviews.

As I have described, the importance of knowledge showed at a very early stage in my research, although its governing role did not present itself immediately. In the first conversations with DM and TC, they mentioned one particular professor who was important in a project, and they referred to researchers who were currently involved in projects. At the very first workshop I attended, pertaining to the new KEY project, there was a researcher present who talked about leadership and management of collaboration. Soon after this, I realised that many of the more 'traditional' governing instruments were largely absent; budgets, staffing and different governing documents were not really paid much attention among the department directors or the politicians. Instead, they were informed about practices and collaborative procedures related to specific projects, where researchers, evidence-based methods and guidelines were often invoked. All of the projects mentioned above – the previous ones as well as the current – drew upon knowledge in one way or the other, often as a key element. As I subsequently followed up on this issue in interviews with politicians, managers and others, my impression was confirmed: knowledge is crucial for Deal's work, and its role is indeed governing.

The study of government practices – exploring knowledge

In the introduction to this chapter, I described how DM made it clear at an early stage that research – and the involvement of academic researchers in particular – was a centrepiece in Deal's work. When she described her own career and the path that had led her to the position as manager of Deal, DM emphasised that much of the job was about research and development. And as I discussed her role and academic background with one of the leading politicians, asking whether that was important for them, he

acknowledged that it was: since Deal's work should be based on research, they needed someone who knew academia and the scientific community.

The significance of research was thus evident from the beginning of my study – not just the involvement of academics in various projects but also the use of evidence-based instruments and methods. As I subsequently learned more about Deal's organisation, their different projects and the discussions and decisions taking place in the two committees consisting of department directors and politicians, respectively, I began to conceive of the use and role of knowledge with respect to governing. Knowledge was not used instrumentally, in my view: not as a lever at the hands of managers or politicians nor as a source of indisputable truth. Instead, knowledge seemed important – to DM, to the department managers and to the politicians – and it seemed to be something that had to be acted upon. Researchers were invited to share their expert knowledge; standardised methods and instruments were used; and the different professional groups were involved in different procedures and projects. From the beginning, these practices – whereby different kinds of knowledge were drawn upon or used in Deal – seemed strategic rather than ad hoc, and they seemed genuinely important for politicians and managers as well as employees.

As I have described in this chapter, and as I will elaborate in the chapters to come, Deal consisted of the activities, methods and particularities of each individual project, *and* it consisted of the surrounding management and organisation of the supporting structures. Different forms of knowledge played an important role in all of these. My decision to zero in on the role of knowledge in governing was thus based on my empirical observations. I knew there were annual budgets, politically decided documents and objectives and organisational factors that all in some way steered, directed and limited what Deal was and was not supposed to do. My ambition was to explore the *how* of government – how activities, priorities, decisions and courses of action are not only decided upon or prioritised but also in fact conceived in the first place. Coupling the ethnographic methodological approach with a Foucauldian view of government, I focused on how Deal – including their project activities as well as managerial and organisational features – was constructed, made known and thereby governed.

In chapters six, seven and eight, I will return to the governing practices that draw upon knowledge of different forms, and I will describe the

contexts and situations in which those practices appear. Through these descriptions, it will be shown how knowledge has appeared to me, how it has taken the centre stage and, more specifically, how different types of knowledge figure in a way that effectively governs the organisation. The organisation should of course be understood here in a performative sense: it is what is being done, and it is not its purely formal organisation.

In the coming chapters, I also reflect on practices and features of Deal that could have a governing role but do not – or do only to a limited extent. Again, I have not sought to account for anything and everything that may or may not be seen as practices of government but rather to illustrate and describe what I observe and perceive empirically. For example, I have perceived very few explicitly political conflicts, and there is virtually no ideology present in the political discussions. Instead, discussions among the politicians are characterised by consensus, pragmatism and a prominent sense of problem-solving. Likewise, one might have expected certain organisational conflicts – discussions and negotiations over organisational boundaries and mandates – but such conflicts appear to have been more prominent in the past. In fact, the dismantling of the previous and larger Deal organisation seems to have removed the 'administrative politics' somewhat, rendering Deal less sensitive to organisational conflict and debate. Today, there is only a small office and staff left, and it is up to the manager to reason and argue for each of the projects and to secure additional funding and staffing to the extent that it is necessary. And in such discussions, knowledge is again the important feature in that all Deal projects should be – and indeed are – based on science in one way or another, both as regards their content and the way they are managed and organised.

Summary: The organisation of Deal and the practices of government

In this chapter, I have described the organisation of Deal. I described the current organisation, including some of the ongoing projects that are significant for understanding Deal, and I described the background and the

reorganisation that took place a few years ago and which appears to have been important for those involved.

With the purpose of studying how collaboration is governed, Deal is an interesting case in that it illustrates several of the tensions and ambiguities that collaboration often displays. In the previous chapter I described how research on collaboration often compares the government of ordinary organisational structure with the government of collaboration – a comparison where organisational boundaries are often emphasised, as is as the tension between integration and differentiation (e.g. Axelsson & Axelsson, 2006; Löfström, 2010). As described in this chapter, Deal is indeed characterised by tensions and ambiguities, and these pertain to its organisational boundaries as well as to the very question of what Deal is. Consequently, Deal raises not only questions about formal organisation and management but also issues of what Deal is – how the collaboration should be defined and what the defining features of the collaboration are.

Adopting a practice-oriented approach to organisation, I have argued that Deal should not be reduced to a formal organisational entity but should rather be understood as the practices that it consists of – including the many projects, regardless of whether these are formally managed or staffed by Deal. Deal should be seen as a 'bundle of practices', and studying the government of this must therefore also focus on practices.

The first of my research questions, described in the introductory chapter, asked how collaboration is governed and, more specifically, how Deal is governed. The short answer to this question is that Deal is governed by knowledge. The second of my research questions, however, which is the more central, is *how* knowledge governs – and the answer to this requires more detailed reasoning.

In sum, there are several examples of how knowledge governs specific situations, which will be illustrated in detail in the coming chapters. Here I have shown that it is argued by politicians as well as managers that the scientific basis is extremely important in Deal. The interest in research is well established with the leading politicians in the two cities – most generally in A-city and in some parts of B-city. However, the prominence of knowledge does not imply an absence of politics. Quite the contrary, by closely observing, exploring and analysing knowledge in practices, it is possible to focus on precisely the political implications and aspects of knowledge. This will be theoretically elaborated in the next chapter.

4. Governing by knowledge

As I had acquainted myself with Deal and familiarised myself with the projects and governing practices, my empirical and theoretical interest was increasingly directed towards the role and importance of knowledge. The view of government that guided me was somewhat different from the most traditional ones: following a Foucauldian view of government, I conceived knowledge as essential in government practices, rather than as potential instrument or government tool.

In chapter two, I noted that research on collaboration is often about organisational and managerial issues and that much research is devoted to the improvement of collaboration. I described practice-oriented approaches to collaboration, and in chapter three I introduced the case of Deal, where research seemed to be an important part of how the organisation was governed. However, not only research but also other forms of knowledge played an important role in the government of Deal; thus, in order to appreciate and analyse the role of knowledge, there is need for a theoretical understanding of the relationship between government and knowledge.

The practice of governing is commonly seen as someone directing the actions of someone or something else. There is a governing actor, a governed one, and an act or practice whereby the one directs, or steers, the behaviour of the other. Research on governing is typically about describing and analysing how these two relate to each other or with what tools, instruments or strategies the one governs the other. This image is of course much simplified, but in my view, this general approach is still the point of departure – explicitly or implicitly – in much research on governing. It is explicit in instrumentalist accounts, such as Hood's (2007) 'generic policy tools approach', and more implicit in neo-institutionalist theories (e.g. Jacobsson & Sundström, 2015).

By contrast, poststructuralist analyses of government – drawing on the works of Foucault – see government as a practice that precedes both the governing subject and object. Rather than starting out with preconceived actors – such as a principal and an agent, or a governing political body and a public agency – government is here seen as constituting those very actors. Government is not about targeting a ready-made object – individual, organisation or societal problem – but how individuals, organisations or problems are *construed as governable*. As Townley (2008) describes, in order for something to be governed, it must first be known. Contrary to the more traditional approaches, the poststructuralist analysis of government is thereby not about identifying, categorising or mapping strategies or tools that particular actors use but about investigating and exploring how that which is governed is construed and made governable (e.g. Gottweis, 2003; Howarth & Griggs, 2015).

In this chapter, I will present government from a Foucauldian perspective, focusing particularly on the role of knowledge in government. Knowledge, I argue, is crucial in rendering individuals, objects and issues known, which is not only a prerequisite for directing their behaviour and targeting them politically but also a substantial part of actually governing them. As I will argue, governing is essentially about providing an order that constitutes what is feasible and not. In this process, however, knowledge must be understood broadly; not only scientific knowledge but also other ways of knowing serve as a basis for government. In this chapter, I first describe *government on a scientific basis*: how science serves government both by providing knowledge of the organisation of politics and of specific policy areas. I thereafter describe *the rationalities and practices of government*, where I focus on the difference between the way government is carried out, or exercised, and the underlying rationality, or logic, that it rests upon. This discussion shows how different practices of government are underpinned by different rationalities – thus emphasising that knowledge within government is highly diverse, ranging from scientific theories to unarticulated, or tacit, knowledge. In the last part of the chapter, I present the concept of *knowledge regimes* – a concept that I use for describing practices of government that draw upon different kinds of knowledge. Knowledge regimes, the way I use the concept, refers to government practices that in some way draw upon knowledge – either existing knowledge, such as scientific theories, or knowledge that is

conceived only through its practices, such as tacit, professional knowledge. The practice-oriented approach implies an empirical focus on practices of government – as opposed to institutions, actors or merely linguistic discourse – while theorising these practices in terms of their underlying *rationalities*.

For conceptual clarity, I should say that, in this chapter, the term *government* is used broadly to denote a social and political practice whereby behaviour is directed, or 'steered'. It does not refer to the institutional arrangement comprising national or local politicians, and neither is it limited to a traditional linear way of governing, which is sometimes contrasted with a network-like way of governing. In this so-called 'government-governance debate', *government* often refers to a rather traditional, hierarchical, top-down way of governing, whereas *governance* refers to governing across horizontal relations, across administrative levels and across public and private sectors. Outside this debate, both *governance* and *government* are used in a generic sense. Bevir (2013) uses *governance* in this sense – instead using the concepts *system* or *network governance* when referring to the government-governance debate – while Foucauldian scholars, including Michel Foucault himself, instead use *government* in the generic sense (e.g. Foucault, 1980; Rose & Miller, 2010; Triantafillou, 2012). Here, I align myself to the latter company.

Government on a scientific basis

The political role and use of knowledge may be conceived as more or less instrumental (Haas, 1992; Sabatier, 1988) or symbolic (Boswell, 2009; Lindblom & Cohen, 1979); but knowledge may also be seen as a social and political construct in itself, structuring the way civil servants and politicians think and behave (Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2008; Ferlie et al., 2012; Jasanoff, 2004a; Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007; Triantafillou, 2015). Partly because of these very different conceptualisations, it is difficult to provide a satisfying overview of the knowledge–politics relationship (Blackler, 1995; Freeman & Sturdy, 2015a). My ambition is to illustrate how knowledge – and, in this first part of the chapter, science in particular

– serves as a basis for government. What is commonly perceived as science has been part of politics and the government of society for a long time, but as constructivist scholars have argued, the establishment of science as an advanced form of knowledge cannot be separated from the context in which it is applied (e.g. Dear, 2006; Jasanoff, 2004a).

The scientific claims that the earth is round and that condoms prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS are not impartial scientific assertions that may or may not be used politically; they are assertions that in their very articulation locate issues to a certain domain and thereby affect how we, as a society, handle them. Jasanoff, (2004a), a prominent figure within the field of science and technology studies, refers to this as *co-production*: 'Briefly stated, co-production is shorthand for the proposition that the ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it' (Jasanoff, 2004a: 2).

Science in politics

The history and role of science can be read similarly from a Foucauldian viewpoint, where the governing role of knowledge – or the power–knowledge relation – is further emphasised. From Foucault's perspective, the establishment of different forms of knowledge is a form of government (Foucault, 1980; see also Dreyfus & Rabonow, 1982; Townley, 1993). The production of knowledge – science included – provides an order, or structure, that allows individuals to act in certain ways and makes it impossible to act in other ways. However, most important here are not specific scientific claims but rather the *way* that social problems and phenomena are rendered rational. Within the literature on government drawing on Foucault's work – often described as *governmentality studies*, from a concept coined by Foucault – research focuses on the *rationality* of government, the 'logic' or 'mode of thinking' that makes a certain way of government feasible and reasonable (e.g. Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose & Miller, 2010; Triantafillou, 2012; see also Townley, 2008).

When poverty or health inequality are construed as political, they are first construed as problems and, in relation to this, as problems that merit a certain attention from society. The solution to the problem of poverty

may be initiatives from government agencies, but it may also be that politicians should not interfere and instead allow non-governmental bodies or individuals themselves to handle the problem. Although this process – of framing, or 'making known', particular issues and problems – may seem relatively straightforward, it typically involves several actors and practices (see Foucault, 1980; O'Connor, 2001). The construction of issues and problems as governable is something that is not carried out by one single actor based on a coherent political ideology but rather through the intersection of different actors and their practices.

This legacy of Foucault's – emphasising the decentred nature of power – is important for the understanding of how knowledge matters in government practices. Within governmentality studies, government is most often described as something that structures individuals into governing themselves (e.g. Gottweis, 2003; Rose & Miller, 2010; Townley, 1993, 2008; Triantafillou, 2012; 2015). Rather than being coerced or limited into behaving in certain ways, individuals acquire values, thoughts and – not least – knowledge that comply with a particular discourse or logic. Contrary to theories that focus on the use of knowledge, knowledge in Foucault's view is not at the disposal of actors; instead, knowledge constitutes practices and subjects, influencing the way they behave. As opposed to most theories on government, the Foucauldian conceptualisation does not refer to political bodies or institutions but to the social and political practices that are carried out therein.

> From a Foucauldian perspective, the focus on government is on practices: on those mechanisms and techniques which, in the name of truth and public good, aspire to inform and adjust social and economic activities. /…/ Government, then, refers to the activities which are undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies that seek to shape our conduct by working through our desires, interests, aspirations and beliefs. (Gottweis, 2003: 255)

In the quote above, the emphasis on government as emanating from practices should be especially noted, rather than whether these practices work through individuals' desires, interests and beliefs. More importantly, the Foucauldian analysis does not discard the existence of institutions or the fact that agencies take action in order to govern (Gottweis, 2003). The important part is rather how institutions, such as agencies and

organisations, and their activities are enmeshed in a broader complex of practices. The main difference between this approach and that of instrumentalist and institutionalist theories of government lies in the way that activities, organisations and individuals are theorised – not whether or not they are important. Consequently, I would say that the Foucauldian perspective implies a broader approach to government – both by also looking at practices taking place outside the state and by theorising differently the practices that take place within the state, such as inter-professional relations or manager–employee relationships (e.g. Townley, 1993). The history of welfare illustrates this well, since welfare *practices* existed before they were institutionalised into a welfare *state* – thus showing how practices may move in and out of the public realm. Practices, here, should not be seen as individual performances or isolated actions but rather as something that is carried out within a social context, regardless of whether they are physical, linguistic or otherwise manifest practices (e.g. Gottweis, 2003; Nicolini, 2012).

Additionally, this perspective on knowledge and government applies both to the government and management of public administration, organisations or public employees, and to the government of citizens and societal issues outside the public sector. In both of these, several actors are involved, drawing on different forms of knowledge, together creating a nexus where issues are made known. This is worth noting in the case of welfare collaboration, where both organisational knowledge – on project management, for example – and knowledge of social work is present. The government of public administration in general, and of collaboration in particular, draws upon knowledge on organisation and management as well as knowledge related to more specific professional practices, such as social work. In order to provide a thorough context, this chapter continues with a presentation of the scientific basis of welfare politics before turning to the science of organisation and management.

The science of welfare politics

Seen historically, the practices of welfare preceded the welfare state, and these practices have often been based on different forms of knowledge. As described by historians and other scholars, social policies developed in

tandem with the social sciences (e.g. Hirdman, 2000; Ekström von Essen, 2003; see also O'Connor, 2001; Skocpol & Rueschemeyer, 1996). Therefore, the welfare state should not be reduced to a solely political or ideological undertaking, despite its close association with the labour movement and, in Sweden not the least, the Social Democratic party. The concept of *social engineering* is instrumental to this argument, indicating that welfare policies were planned and implemented in a top-down fashion on the basis of a rational science.

In Sweden, the development of the welfare sector was partly orchestrated through government-appointed commissions, in which experts contributed to carry out investigations and suggest policy recommendations based on science and expert knowledge. Such governmental commissions, known as SOUs (*Swedish*: *Statens offentliga utredningar*), have been an important instrument for developing new policy initiatives and organising the government of the policy area in question, but there have also been other similar practices, such as local surveys to census populations on the municipal level (e.g. Hirdman, 2000; Ekström von Essen, 2003; Premfors, 1983).

On one hand, then, science and politics have not been separated in the history of Swedish welfare; they have rather been enacted and embodied by the same practices. On the other hand, the view of science and expert knowledge as instruments of good – located outside of politics and untainted by ideology – has been important. This view, or rationality, is what effectively endows science its authority.

The influence of science and expert knowledge indicates a form of governing where knowledge is external to political and administrative practices. There is an alleged solution beyond politics, values and ideology – one that can be obtained through the use of scientific methods and explanations. Consequently, experts such as researchers, professionals and academics – or, in the past, philosophers – become figures of authority. The position of experts and researchers is thus a consequence of a certain order, or rationality, rather than their being actors who produce that order. The societal and political role of scientific knowledge stems less from its scientific achievements than from its relation to other ways of apprehending the world and from its relation to other social actors (Dear, 2006).

The modernist view of knowledge as non-political, impartial and of potential use for improving society emerged through both small events and dramatic shifts throughout history. Yanow (2009b) describes how science developed from a pre-positivist knowledge, which emanated from the human as knowing subject, to an impersonalised knowledge, allegedly objective. This modernist science proclaimed certainty to an extent that was not previously the case, establishing facts about the world. As described by Peter Dear (2006), science entails a will to understand society and nature, but it also entails a doing – a striving to act upon knowledge to accomplish something. While the Greeks distinguished between these two forms of knowledge – knowing as understanding, on the one hand, and knowing as doing, on the other – modern science entails both of these aspects (Dear, 2006). Similarly, experts, as bearers of knowledge, are important because they are seen as capable of understanding society, for example by making society and individuals calculable, categorised and standardised. In short, experts – just as Dear describes modernist science – help make things known and thereby governable (see also Jasanoff, 2004b; Rose & Miller, 2010).

However, Yanow (2009b) argues, modernist science also entailed 'an attitude of doubt' – as demonstrated by Popper's axiom that science can never provide absolute certainties, only disprove. 'It took another revolution in thinking to begin the (re)turn from machine-like, objective certainty back toward a more subjective posture of self-reflective inquiry', says Yanow (2009b: 583-584), continuing, 'As two ways of knowing, systematicity and the attitude of doubt are firmly embedded within all forms of science'.

In a sense, the government commissions of the Swedish welfare state epitomise the dual role of science, where it is supposedly impartial, while also being directed at societal change. This modernist dualism is based on the idea that *knowledge* is commissioned –produced and packaged outside of politics – while *the practice of government* remains in the political-administrative sphere. Once the experts, or commissions, deliver their report, the governing part is up to the politicians. In order for academics to be influential in relation to the political and administrative sphere, they must remain in separate rooms, but they must also stay relevant. From a Foucauldian viewpoint, the influence of experts lies not in their persona but rather in their position relative to other individuals and to institutional

arrangements and in their perceived access to desirable knowledge (see also Skocpol & Rueschemeyer, 1996).

In contemporary welfare, the scientific basis is still an ideal held high. But in recent years the role of knowledge in welfare and public administration has often surfaced through debates about particular reforms and novelties, which all entail some sort of scientisation of welfare, welfare professionals and administrators. Evidence-based practices (EBP), quality standards and assurances, performance measurements and the increase of projects and evaluations in different policy areas all testify to a standardisation of the welfare apparatus in their aim to replace arbitrariness and personal judgement with science and proof (e.g. Bergmark & Lundström, 2006; Björk, 2016; Ferlie et al., 2012; Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007; Triantafillou, 2015). Much like the authority of experts, standardised knowledge is based on the idea of knowledge as external to politics. But unlike academic research, standardised knowledge enters public administration without being attributed to a certain researcher or theory or even presenting itself as knowledge per se. It is typically externally produced knowledge – ideally by academics conducting independent analyses or randomised control trials (RCT) – delivered in the shape of ready-to-use instruments, manuals and reforms (Bergmark & Lundström, 2006; Björk, 2016; Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007; Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012).

In a presentation of EBP in Swedish social work, Bergmark and Lundström (2006) point to a long-term development towards increased rationality as part of a modernist movement. This development, they say, has brought increased demands for knowledge, not least scientific knowledge, and evaluations. EBPs are based on the modernist dualism of science as impartial and located outside politics, much like the authority of scientists, but it also differs from the experts' and scientists' positions.

> The authority of EBP is not – as is the case with traditional authority – based on individual experience but on a non-individually bound evidence which is basically of immediate access for everyone; in EBP, not only can a younger professional outshine an older and more experienced colleague, but, in the extreme case, a client can be more informed than the professional. (Bergmark & Lundström, 2006: 102, my translation)

With examples from British health care, Ferlie et al. (2012) discuss evidence-based practices as a 'power/knowledge nexus'. With reference to Townley's argument – that for a domain to be governed it must first be knowable – the authors suggest that evidence-based practices render the health care domain knowable in a particular way. Again, a particular form of knowledge, such as randomised control trials (RCT), occupies a central position, while other forms of knowledge are marginalised (Ferlie et al., 2012). Furthermore, the Foucauldian perspective on evidence, which Ferlie and his co-authors adopt, focuses on how this power/knowledge nexus subjectifies actors. They are interested in how evidence-based practices constitute the health care workers – turning them into self-governing individuals in charge of their own networks – as opposed to being interested in descriptions of evidence-based practices as coercive measures implemented against the will of the employees using them (Ferlie et al., 2012; see also Bergmark & Lundström, 2011a; Björk, 2016).

Just like the influence of experts, it is the relation between different ways of knowing that makes evidence influential within welfare work. The use of evidence-based practices enacts and upholds an 'evidence hierarchy' where particular modes of knowledge are superior to others. Randomised control trials (RCT) is the form of knowledge-production that is placed at the top, whereas experience-based knowledge is considered inferior. Through this stratification, or ordering, of knowledge, particular practices do not necessarily need to be imposed by politicians or managers; they are adopted by employees voluntarily. And as Triantafillou (2015: 182) points out, 'What is important to the regime of truth is not whether some forms of knowledge are truer than others, but which procedures and standards of truth production are granted authority and which are not'.

Accordingly, the use of standardised knowledge – such as EBP, quality assurance and benchmarking – has been criticised for how it changes the roles of politicians and civil servants in the welfare sector. Invoking an external and allegedly neutral knowledge risks depoliticising public administration and circumventing the role of politicians (e.g. Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2013; Mouffe, 2005; Triantafillou, 2015). But the political role of knowledge in welfare entails both the content of welfare – the policies advancing social security, healthcare and education – and its form – through a scientisation and professionalisation of organisation and

management. This is the situation in contemporary welfare as well as during earlier decades' social engineering, which was not limited to policies and interventions in specific issue areas of the welfare sector but also entailed the organisation and government of the administration.

The science of public management and organisation

In the welfare sector, standardised knowledge is used both within particular issues or policy areas – such as treatments for specific target groups or clients – and within the management and organisation of services – for example, how to run a hospital clinic or manage collaboration projects (see chapter two). This is entirely in accordance with how expert knowledge has been employed in welfare; as described, social engineering and government commissions have historically dealt with welfare services in terms of content as well as form. Common to standardised knowledge is that it is based on a principle of universal application, preferably through guidelines or step-by-step instructions and with few adaptions to the particular case.

For example, as projects have become increasingly common in the public sector, so has the use of standardised knowledge in project management. In an article on 'the politics and standards in modern management', Hodgson and Cicmil (2007) describe PMBOK – *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*, which has now become established as an ISO-standard (ISO 21500:2012). The authors describe PMBOK and its features, but they also engage in a critical examination of the very aspiration of producing a body of knowledge on project management:

> In particular, we have concerns about the 'blackboxing' of PM knowledge, the elevation of universal, abstract rationality over embodied and reflexive rationality, and the constraining effects this has upon the action of individuals who work within and manage projects. (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007: 433)

By establishing a body of knowledge that is standardised and diffused through guidelines and institutionalised practices, organisations and employees working with projects retain their autonomy while subjecting

themselves to a particular discourse. As Hodgson and Cicmil (2007) emphasise, the knowledge is not limited to project *management* – as a practice or work activity – but to the very object of that activity, the project itself. The project is not just managed but is performed through the practices of those who manage and participate in the project. Instead of there being a defined practice or organisational entity known as 'a project', the project is constituted through the practices. The authors point to the discursive construction of projects, the linguistic and other practices that render the object known in the first place (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007).

Just as standardised practices of *project management* (PM) constitute projects, so do other comparable management practices. *Human resource management* (HRM) signifies a range of practices and ideas about the organisation and management of employees. It is also a field of knowledge, where employees are conceived as resources that can be invested in and developed to serve the organisation's objectives (Townley, 1993). Townley (1993) describes how HRM does more than manage a ready-made individual: it partakes in the historical production of individuals, which is essential in governing individual subjects in an advanced society or organisation. Along the same lines, *knowledge management* (KM) refers to the practices and strategies that an organisation uses to deliberately manage knowledge – including producing, documenting, refining and in other ways handling knowledge as an organisational resource. An important idea within KM is the acknowledgement of tacit knowledge and that such knowledge can be 'abstracted and reified from individuals' to create value for the organisation (Carter & Scarbrough, 2001: 211). From a Foucauldian viewpoint, the practices of HRM, PM and KM govern organisations and its employees, and they do so by making their objects known in a particular way – establishing one kind of knowledge at the expense of others. Employees are thus construed as human resources, as opposed to public servants, bureaucrats or professionals; certain work activities are construed as projects, following a certain work order, or logic, while the knowledge that employees hold is seen as a resource to extract and process for the benefit of the organisation.

Broadly speaking, scholars of public administration who work in Foucauldian or similar traditions have argued that we should pay attention to the scientific claims underlying management and organisational ideas,

since this is where actors and problems take shape and where preferences and behaviours are formed (e.g. Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2008; Deetz, 2003; Hasselbladh & Bejerot, 2017; Rose & Miller, 2010; Townley, 1993; Triantafillou, 2012). Studying health care, Bejerot and Hasselbladh (2008) have shown how the implementation of management reforms, such as TQM, seems to fail but still has a profound impact on the functioning of the organisation. In their study, they (Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2008) describe how assertions about the organisation of a given clinic were initially rather isolated but subsequently linked together into a comprehensive story about what the clinic needed in order to improve and function better. Although the implementation project itself was not successful, the problematisation that came with it had deeper effects on the relations and structure of the organisation. The authors write: 'When the initial problematization changed mode to become a coherent formation of knowledge-based technologies of government sanctioned by expertise, there was a more pervasive closure of TQM' (Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2008: 103, my translation). Instead of focusing on the failed implementation of an isolated project, they analyse the reforms epistemologically, arguing that single reforms connect to a more profound understanding of public organisation. Managers, experts and groups of employees were all mobilised to take part in the practices of TQM, and despite the failure to finalise the implementation, their joint effort did influence how the organisation came to perceive itself (Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2008; Hasselbladh & Bejerot, 2017; see also Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Deetz, 2003; Townley, 1993; Triantafillou, 2012; Åkerstrøm Andersen & Born, 2001).

As described in chapter two, earlier organisational theories described collaboration as an instrumental undertaking, where costs and benefits were calculated before entering into a collaborative exchange. And although contemporary organisational and managerial theories and practices are less overt in their instrumentality, similar assumptions on management and organisational improvement still prevail. While Deal did not display any use of specific management or project standards – such as the ones described above – they did enact standardised knowledge, seeking to formalise and to instrumentalise the role of politicians, managers and their relations, which will be described in chapter seven.

In sum, the modernist dualism of science and politics still seems pertinent to how public administration and welfare politics is conducted. As indicated by the so-called evidence movement (e.g. Björk, 2016; Triantafillou, 2015), science is still trusted as an instrument of good. But rather than analysing science as an instrument – used by political actors for particular purposes – I have approached it as a social construct, focusing on the political role inherent in knowledge in general and in scientific knowledge in particular. Dear's (2006) argument that modern science has always entailed a dual function – of simultaneously understanding the world and acting within it – is mirrored also in contemporary politics and public administration. The social engineering of the mid-1900s and the human resource management of the 1990s are both examples of knowledge production that is not only about understanding how society and organisations work but also about providing guidance or templates for politicians and managers on how to govern and manage.

In a sense, one could say that the political implications of modernist science are intrinsic. But the political implications of knowledge are not limited to scientific knowledge; other forms of knowledge also imply a doing, an encouragement to act, oftentimes in a more direct way than the way we normally perceive science. By focusing on the concept of *rationality*, it is possible to differentiate between different forms of knowledge – knowledge that is rational in different ways – and how such knowledge is enacted through different government *practices*. A focus on rationalities shows that not all knowledge is based on the same premises, or criteria; while modernist science is based on a modernist rationality, other knowledge – such as local or situated knowledge or knowledge that is bound to certain professional practices – is based on a rationality embedded in context or particular situations.

The rationalities and practices of government

The political use or implications of science can be attributed to its truth claims – the particular assertions, explanations and evidence it conveys – and to its very rationality, its 'scientificity'. The same logic that makes

science rational is what renders it powerful and makes it politically useful (Dear, 2006). Accordingly, Foucauldian-inspired research is not only about tracing and deconstructing particular scientific theories that are influential in politics and public administration – no matter how important and rewarding such analyses may be – but is also about exploring the very features of science, and other forms of knowledge, that make it politically relevant. By focusing on the rationality of science rather than the specific theories or truth claims, a greater emphasis is put on the *how* of government (Townley, 2008: 16).

Beyond science: Different rationalities and the diversity of knowledge

Pinpointing the scientific claims behind organisational reforms and management – and the scientific basis of particular policies – means that we can understand and problematise the assumptions, theories and ideas of politics. In a Foucauldian tradition, tracing the truth claims of contemporary politics and administration allows a problematisation of taken-for-granted ideas and practices – revealing them as historically and socially contingent. Discourse analysis and genealogy are examples of such research, which serves to describe and map relations of power and knowledge. One limitation of this approach, however, is that if we are too focused on specific theories and *scientific* assumptions, we may disregard the underlying ideas and assumptions that are *not* scientific but that are rational in a non-scientific way (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2001; Townley, 2008).

Following Townley (2008), the remedy to this conceptual confusion lies in the very notion of *rationality*. For her, rationality denotes the way of thinking and reasoning that underlies action, regardless of whether this makes sense for others and of whether it is widely (or scientifically) acknowledged as logically coherent. Rationality does not refer to one sole logic, but to *any* logic. By applying this notion of rationality, routine behaviour, moral judgement and common sense – oftentimes perceived as irrational features – are also acknowledged as constitutive of human behaviour, in the same way as scientifically based behaviour. In *Reason's Neglect*, Townley (2008) distinguishes between analytical perspectives

that consider rationality *embedded* within institutions, contexts or practices, and those perspectives that consider rationality *disembedded*.

Most often when people speak about something being rational, they refer to a disembedded rationality, which means that it is characterised by predictability, objectivity, universality and intellectual activity – as opposed to what is random, subjective, contextual and emotional (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Gregory, 2007; Lindblom & Cohen, 1979). Rational, in this sense, means that it is not only true and sensible within our own minds or closest proximity; it also holds for others. Disembedded rationality consists of different fundamentals, such as the idea that knowledge is valid for its inherent logic and that political and administrative actors can use this knowledge in an instrumental and predictable way. Put simply, if knowledge is knowledge not just for me but for everyone, it can be referred to and acted upon without invoking other means of authority, such as status or money (Porter, 1995; Townley, 2008).

In political science, rationality has been widely criticised as an explanation of human and organisational behaviour. When neo-institutionalists criticise rationalist theories for assuming that actors (individuals, states or organisations) behave rationally, they imply that, according to their theories, actors do not behave rationally. Instead, actors are seen to follow a logic that is not rational, a 'logic of appropriateness' rather than one of consequentialist rationality (see e.g. Boswell, 2009). Following the neo-institutionalist argument, organisations are not rational when they use knowledge symbolically, act in accordance with certain norms or comply with their external environment (Townley, 2008). Townley, on the other hand, disagrees, arguing that the logic that neo-institutionalists refer to just represents another type of rationality – one that is *embedded* within the institution, context, situation or practice. Instead of saying that actors do not behave rationally, we should say that they behave according to a particular rationality, one that is tied to a certain institution, context, or situation (see also Wagenaar, 2004).

The idea of rationality as embedded is different from the idea of rationality as disembedded. It rejects the universalist claim (that what is rational is rational everywhere), its claim of consciousness (that the actor is aware and conscious of their behaviour), and its claim that reason precedes action (that actions follow from thought, instead of their being simultaneous or even acting coming first). The main contribution of

embedded rationality as a concept is that it questions the dichotomy of rational and non- or irrational. Instead of cultural or symbolic behaviour being irrational – that is, 'the other' of rationality – it is rational according to a particular context or institution. The basis for this argument is that humans, thoughts and actions always appear in context; they are always somewhere, never located beyond everything (Townley, 2008).

The concept of embedded rationality helps one understand how communities or groups, such as professional groups, make sense of situations and problems they are faced with. Instead of valuing scientific knowledge in particular, at the expense of local knowledge such as common sense or what is known from experience, these are seen as based on different rationalities that are embedded in different institutions or contexts, such as academia, bureaucracy or a profession. Just as science, by virtue of its rationality, can capture things, make them known and sensible, and thereby make them possible to govern, so can other forms of knowledge, by virtue of *their* rationality. In fact, contrary to the disembedded rationality that construes knowledge as external to human and social impact, Townley (2008) describes a rationality that is entirely embedded within practice: a logic and knowledge that is only expressed through practices located in a particular context or situation.

Whereas the modernist sciences consist of a tension between knowing and doing, as described by Dear (2006), and where the knowing is foregrounded, Townley (2008) describes the 'rationality of situated action', which is focused entirely on doing, and a 'situated knowledge', which only exists in the situation of its application (see also Haraway, 1988; Polanyi, 1966; Wagenaar, 2004). Contrary to the modernist science that Dear (2006) describes, these forms of knowledge are discernible only insofar as they are enacted in practices.

Rationality embedded in practice

The concept of embedded rationality criticises the modernist establishment of what is rational and not, an establishment which makes local knowledge appears as 'the other' of knowledge that is scientific or otherwise more highly valued. Although Townley describes rationality as embedded in different ways – embedded in institution, context and

situation – 'situational rationality' best captures how the embeddedness differs from the 'traditional' and modernist view of rationality.

> A situational rationality takes issue with the temporal dimension of rational action, the assumption that behaviour is foresightful and that rationality occurs in advance of action. A situational rationality recognizes that action is retrospectively rational. It is the product of action, occurring either concurrently or after, rather than before, action. This is not, however, to assume an ex post facto, retrospective rationalization of events. The second facet of a situational rationality is, as its name implies, the importance of its 'situatedness', the situated nature of social action. Rationality is an ongoing accomplishment, achieved through interaction with people and objects in a particular time and setting. (Townley, 2008: 132)

By this, Townley turns the attention and analysis to practices, not only as the enactment or expression of a scientific, or otherwise preconceived, knowledge but also as a de facto location of rationality. Rationality does not always exist irrespective of whether it is turned into practice; sometimes it is articulated *only* through practices. Polanyi's concept of *tacit knowledge*, for example, emphasises that all knowing – whether scientific or not – contains an element of unarticulated knowledge. Tacit knowledge, in other words, is not so much a category of knowledge but rather a dimension of all knowing (Polanyi, 1966).

In accordance with this, and as argued by Townley (2008), among others (e.g. Flyvbjerg 2001; Wagenaar, 2004; Yanow, 1992b), close empirical studies are often necessary to capture a situated knowing of this kind. One example is Hendrik Wagenaar's (2004) study of how Judy, an employee in the Dutch immigration services, interprets and implements immigration policy in her everyday work. Focusing on the ordinary practices of work, Wagenaar (2004) argues that much of the knowledge applied is tacit, only discernible through close empirical study. By discarding the image of administrative work as highly rational and routinised, Wagenaar argues:

> Everyday administrative situations are characterized by novelty, deep uncertainty, and the requirement to act on the situation, to find some kind of resolution that is both feasible and acceptable. /…/ I believe it is this moving about in a moral-political environment of high uncertainty that

gives accounts of everyday administrative work such as Judy's their peculiar improvisational character. But improvisation is not random; it does not imply that everything goes (Wagenaar and Cook, 2003, 150). Whatever it is that administrators – or for that matter, all practitioners – do, it is certainly not devoid of reason and rationale. (Wagenaar, 2004: 649-650)

Similar arguments on the nature of administrative work – and the need for close empirical studies to appreciate it – are put forward by ethnographers of politics and public administration (e.g. Dubois, 2009; Nicolini, 2009; Schatz, 2009; Wedeen, 2009) as well as research that focuses on narratives and storytelling as part of political and administrative everyday practice (Bevir, 2013; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Rhodes, 2011). Common to these is a practice-oriented approach, not only to politics and public administration but also to the construction and role of knowledge in policy implementation. While a practice-oriented approach encourages close empirical study, the main point is that practices are the primary object of observation and analysis, rather than language, individuals or organisations (Nicolini, 2009).

Studying government practices

To study government practices empirically, I have turned to some of the practice-oriented research on politics and public administration that I consider methodologically explicit and hence fruitful for the empirical study of government. In particular, methodologically oriented scholars such as Yanow – who has written extensively on the relationship between empirical investigation, theoretical analysis and written presentation – make for good companions in the theory-induced field of Foucauldian analyses. Above all, Yanow makes an effort to acknowledge politics – policy-making, implementation and organisation included – as something ambiguous and multivocal. To study politics is to study the meaning-making and interpretations of people, and in this ambition, Yanow strikes a fine balance between thorough theorisation, on the one hand, and an ethnographic account, on the other.

In Yanow's work, policy and implementation are social phenomena and practices, which are interpreted in particular contexts. A policy does not

have a true 'essence', or single voice, that can be conveyed more or less successfully; it is an ambiguous thing that various actors and stakeholders make sense of from their vantage point. By a deliberately awkward choice of word, Yanow asks: '*How* does a policy mean?' (1993: 55, emphasis in original), and she answers:

> In general, it does so through the artefacts of the policy language and through the symbolic objects, language, and acts of the implementing agency, in a given societal context. The meanings which accrue to a particular piece of legislation from the legislative and idea history of that policy issue is embedded in its language. They may become the object of researchers' interpretation much as they are the subjects of stakeholders' interpretations.
>
> /…/
>
> From an interpretive point of view, multiple meanings and multiple interpretations are anticipated as the norm rather than treated as the aberrant exception. Such multivocality becomes the reason for and the explanation of implementation difficulties as well as successes, and the task of implementation analysis is to uncover or anticipate these multiple interpretations. (Yanow, 1993: 55)

What Yanow argues here, based on an explicitly interpretive-theoretical standpoint, is similar to what Pressman and Wildavsky argued already in 1973, in their book *Implementation*: namely, that what is perceived as implementation failure can be traced back to ambiguous policy and differing interpretation as to what it means. Yanow's contribution, however, is that she emphasises the non-essentialist view of policies – that multiple meanings and multiple interpretations are the norm – and that the meaning of policy takes place through the language and practices of those who act upon it, such as the implementation agency. This, in my view, should not be interpreted as ambiguity and multivocality being the sole reason for 'implementation difficulties'. Disagreement and differing opinions may well reflect a conflict of interest or stakeholders' different positions. Instead, it is an approach that forefronts the situated practices of public administration as a main locus of policy analysis, an approach which also effectively upheaves the scholarly distinction of policy and implementation, on the one hand, and public administration, on the other.

This approach can be illustrated through an empirical study where Yanow (1992b) describes 'the epistemological role of metaphors in administrative practices' – arguing that metaphors are not merely about painting with words, but rather that they fill a cognitive function in themselves, ordering thoughts and knowledge on what is perceived. Metaphors do not succeed language but occupy a role of inducing action: – 'Metaphors that initially appear to be merely descriptive often acquire a prescriptive aspect', she argues (Yanow, 1992b: 91). With the study of metaphors in administrative practice, it is shown how different actors and stakeholders – even within the same organisation or agency – can act upon something without it being entirely defined. The metaphor, interpreted differently by the people involved, made it possible to work together without explicitly addressing the meaning of the joint undertaking. 'The metaphor was unexamined', she summarises; 'it was introduced, and once on the table, it guided thought and action tacitly' (Yanow, 1992b: 101).

The role of the metaphor described here is similar to the concept of *boundary object* – an object, artefact or practice that allows different professions to collaborate without giving up their different identities and professional belongings. As described by Star and Griesemer (1989), boundary objects function as anchors or bridges for employees of different perspectives working together. Rather than the one group of employees imposing their views or practices upon the others, different objects – such as standardised methods or practices – serve as a centrepiece for their joint task (see also Löfström, 2010).

It is of course difficult to determine the precise role of metaphors and boundary objects, that is, the extent to which they mirror the way the individuals conceive their work and the extent to which they help construe the work in the first place. The important thing to ascertain, however, is that ambiguous metaphors, objects, representations and artefacts occupy an epistemological role in themselves. They are not just words or objects that signify something already conceivable; they serve a cognitive function and thus constitute action. Put differently, metaphors, symbols, myths and other ambiguous artefacts and practices are possible to act upon without their being made entirely explicit. They entail an unarticulated, yet practical, knowledge (Star & Griesemer, 1989; Yanow, 1992a, 1992b, 1993; see also Howarth, 2006; Wagenaar, 2004). In collaboration, this becomes potentially important as the collaborative parties often lack a

common organisational, professional or otherwise cognitive or epistemological ground (see Löfström, 2010, on boundary work; Johansson, 2011, on collaboration as 'rationalised myth').

Focusing on practices in public administration is thereby not about disregarding language nor about rejecting the existence of organisations or institutions. Following Gottweis (2003: 255), government should be seen as a 'regime of practices', regardless of whether these practices are carried out within or outside the public realm. He argues that which institutions or agencies are important depends on the practices of government. As opposed to studying government as institutions, the analysis of government needs to be directed to where such government practices take place – which can be certain institutions but also practices that take place elsewhere. He describes government as the fixation of meaning to artefacts, symbols, devices and various practices (Gottweis, 2003). Much like Yanow (1993) describes the multiple meanings of policies, the poststructuralist perspective on government acknowledges that there are potentially different meanings to a policy or a perceived problem. Whereas the interpretive approach emphasises multivocality, poststructuralist analysis focuses on how certain meanings are ruled out and others fixated – which is where power is exercised (Gottweis, 2003). The different focuses of these approaches – where the one emphasises policies' ambiguity and multivocality and the other emphasises the power in shutting down such multivocality – is what makes them complementary, in my view, rather than incommensurable.

In sum, government, as I conceive it, is about the directing of practices; reducing ambiguity and imposing a language of certainty by fixating meaning to objects and artefacts, thus creating order and structuring the field of action. This is performed through language but also through other practices in public institutions and in practices that are located elsewhere and which transgress boundaries. In these practices, invoking or enacting knowledge is crucial. In the next section, I will elaborate on the concept of *knowledge regimes*, a concept that captures the role of knowledge in government practices and which allows me to differentiate between different practices and their underlying rationalities.

Knowledge regimes

Knowledge regimes, in this study, are practices upon knowledge that govern actions and activities within politics and public administration at large and within specific organisational entities and projects. Knowledge regime is, of course, an analytical constructs; it is not a phenomenon that stands to be discovered in situ but rather a concept to capture the role of knowledge in government. Just like the concept of government, regime does not refer to a state actor or a figure of authority calling the shots, but neither does it signify a coherent government discourse. In this section, I present my conceptualisation of regimes as governing practices – a conceptualisation that is somewhat different from the way knowledge regimes are theorised elsewhere. At the core of the concept, however, lies the role of knowledge.

Government practices and the enactment of knowledge

Freeman and Sturdy (2015a) describe the literature on knowledge in policy as rich and highly diverse. Not only knowledge use or the role of knowledge in politics, they argue, but also knowledge itself is theorised in so many ways that it is difficult to provide a comprehensive overview of the research field (see also Radaelli, 1995). While a great deal of research is devoted to one single form of knowledge– such as science, expert knowledge, professional knowledge, or evidence – the purpose of Freeman and Sturdy's (2015a: 2) 'is simply to provide a common observational language for talking about knowledge – for "knowing knowledge" so to speak – as it is manifested in the world'. To this aim, the authors describe knowledge as *embodied*, *inscribed* and *enacted* – which are to be seen as different phases of knowledge, rather than distinct categories or types of knowledge based on epistemology (see also Blackler, 1995; Smith-Merry, 2015).

By focusing on how knowledge is expressed in practice, it is also emphasised that knowledge transforms through its different phases. Knowledge that is inscribed into documents (such as law or written policy) or embodied through experts or academics turns into real, observable practice. 'It is only when they are enacted that embodied or inscribed

knowledge acquire meaning and significance – that their status as knowledge becomes apparent' (Freeman & Sturdy, 2015a: 12). In other words, the governing role of knowledge appears only through its enactment, not by 'merely' existing – an assertion that is reminiscent of the tacit knowledge and situated rationality described earlier (Townley, 2008; Wagenaar, 2004). For knowledge to be of political influence or to otherwise govern, it has to be put into practice – which, to me, is what *enactment* refers to. Accordingly, for the study of government, it is relevant to speak of the enactment of knowledge without conceiving it as part of Freeman and Sturdy's triadic concept (Smith-Merry, 2015; cf. Freeman & Sturdy, 2015).

Basically, Freeman and Sturdy's (2015a) argument is similar to that of Delvaux and Mangez (2008), who see policymaking and implementation as located in different institutional settings, or scenes, where a multitude of actors meet. While knowledge is not seen by Delvaux and Mangez (2008) as the sole factor shaping these scenes, it is described as highly significant. Knowledge is here not only about defining problems and producing ideas that are turned into policy but also about structuring the way that different actors understand and relate to ideas and to other actors.

To capture this intersection of context/setting, knowledge and knowledge use and actors' behaviour or practices, the concept of *knowledge regimes* is sometimes used. 'Regime' indicates the governing role of knowledge, but due to theoretic and methodological differences among its users, knowledge regimes denote somewhat different phenomena. While I conceive knowledge regimes as consisting of government *practices*, a more widespread use of the concept refers to different institutional arrangements – such as national-level institutions, or an assemblage of agencies and think-tanks. In accordance with such a conceptualisation, Delvaux and Mangez (2008) refer to path dependency to explain the formation of knowledge regimes, arguing that the historical traits of dealing with knowledge in politics and policymaking make an imprint on how things are done today (see also Campbell & Pedersen, 2015; Freeman & Sturdy, 2015b; van Zanten, 2009).

From an organisational-theoretic perspective, however, Carter and Scarbrough (2001) provide a conceptualisation of knowledge regimes that shares many of the above-mentioned features but which further elaborates on how knowledge interacts with relations of power. They see knowledge

regimes as contingent upon particular organisational discourses and thus as directing activities and behaviour at an organisational level, not nationally. Through a longitudinal study of an electric company, the authors show how one regime of knowledge (based on managerialism) replaced another (based on engineering) in a rather short time period (Carter and Scarbrough, 2001).

Knowledge regimes – A conceptualisation

Importantly, Carter and Scarbrough (2001) call attention not only to how one way of knowing displaces another, and how this affects the practices and management of the organisation, but also to how different forms of knowledge are structured hierarchically. In the case of the electric company, the new managerial discourse did not merely oust the discourse of engineering; it sought to encapsulate it and incorporate it into its own scheme. Engineering was not seen as unnecessary or useless knowledge but rather as something that was to serve managerial knowledge (Carter and Scarbrough, 2001). The hierarchical structuring of knowledge is an important contribution, compared to how knowledge regimes are construed in the more comparative and sociologically institutionalist conceptualisations (e.g. Delvaux & Mangez, 2008; Campbell & Pedersen, 2015). The purpose of Carter and Scarbrough (2001) is not primarily to compare different knowledge regimes – across countries, for example – but to describe the change over time at a very precise locality and to analyse this change in terms of power. As described earlier in this chapter, similar analyses and arguments have been made by other researchers of organisation – such as Hodgson and Cicmil (2007) on project management as a 'body of knowledge' – and in studies of evidence versus professional knowledge in welfare (Ferlie et al., 2012; Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012; Triantafillou, 2015).

In accordance with Carter and Scarbrough (2001), I argue that knowledge regimes must be seen in a more local context. From a practice-oriented approach – and in my particular study – knowledge regimes are practices upon knowledge that govern actions and activities within the organisation or projects that I study. Knowledge regimes are here associated with practice, as opposed to being an institutionalist derivative.

The fact that knowledge regimes appear within certain institutional arrangements, as described by Delvaux and Mangez (2008), does not mean that they are products of those very arrangements. Instead, owing to poststructuralist analyses of government, I see knowledge regimes as constituted by their relation to other practices, including other knowledge regimes (Gottweis, 2003; see also Wagenaar, 2011). As described above – in relation to both modernist science and regarding the so-called 'evidence hierarchy' – a particular form of knowledge is perceived in relation to other forms of knowledge. A knowledge regime can thus hardly be identified in isolation; it cannot be entirely deduced beforehand. Instead, knowledge regimes are observed, or construed, in relation to their surroundings.

In particular contexts and situations, additionally, knowledge may intersect with practices and relations of power of entirely different sorts. Gender, certain authoritative figures or personas, strivings of professionalisation, socio-economic processes – these are all processes and relations of power that constitute knowledge but are also constituted by knowledge. Knowledge regimes thus emerge through the intersection of knowledge and practices. This means that existing knowledge may be acted upon, conveyed or otherwise invoked through the governing practices. But it also means that governing practices can articulate and construe knowledge that has hitherto not been acknowledged as knowledge – such as situated knowledge – or knowledge that has been prevalent before but then silenced (Foucault, 1980).

On the one hand, then, we can imagine knowledge that circulates – in society, in politics and in the public sector – and which can be acted upon in order to govern particular activities. Evidence-based policymaking or practices, for example, may be seen as a governing practice that invokes existing knowledge (evidence) to a particular end – governing the activities of hospitals or schools. On the other hand, we can imagine practices that govern through their production of knowledge – as opposed to invoking already existing knowledge – and practices that entail an unarticulated knowledge. We can imagine a hospital clinic or a school that is governed through the use of certain evidence-based practices or project management models, which we conceive as a regime of standardised knowledge. A clinic or school may also be governed by the local, professional and tacit knowledge of experienced medical or teaching staff,

without invoking documents or drawing upon formalised practices or standards. This knowledge is often more subtle and is sometimes not even acknowledged as knowledge the same way that science is. In this, it could be seen as 'the other' of more established forms of knowledge. In my view, however, these different forms of practices that are based on knowledge should both be seen as knowledge regimes, despite the former being more tangible – or explicit in its features – than the latter.

Following this, the three knowledge regimes that I have identified and analysed were done so through up-close observation over a longer period of time, in combination with theoretical study. The first one, which I call *a regime of expert knowledge*, consists primarily of the involvement of researchers in different ways. By involving researchers as expert consultants, evaluators and participants within projects, their knowledge was put into practice – both in particular projects aimed at youth and within the organisation and management of the projects. The second, *a regime of standardised knowledge*, consists mainly of evidence-based practices and instruments – such as computer-aided assessment tools and various guidelines that are employed by the collaborating welfare professions – but also of formalised models of management. Thirdly, *the regime of local knowledge* denotes practices in which an otherwise unarticulated knowledge is put into practice, primarily by welfare professionals but also by managers. Drawing upon professional experience and first-hand knowledge of how to act in concrete situations, local knowledge serves to guide specific activities in the projects. The *object* of the different knowledge regimes – what one knows something *about* – could be the actual welfare work, directed at children and youth, as well as organisational and managerial issues. The categorisation of the three knowledge regimes is thus based on *how* one knows, rather than on *what* one knows.

The precise methodology through which I identified, or construed, these knowledge regimes will be described in chapter five and thereafter further detailed throughout chapters six, seven and eight, where I present and analyse them through empirical study.

Summary: Governing by knowledge

To summarise, the role of knowledge within politics – and in government, more specifically – has been described and theorised in many different ways. With the concept of *rationality* it is possible to differentiate between different forms of knowledge and how these are used within government practices. The view of rationality that underlies modernist science – and which construes knowledge as impartial, universal and located outside of politics – differs from the view of rationality as embedded within institutions and specific situations. Following the latter perspective, practices of government may draw upon different forms of knowledge; not only science but also professional, tacit knowledge is seen as rational and serves as a basis for acting in the world.

Although expert knowledge and standardised knowledge such as evidence are easily recognised, local knowledge is also present within the welfare sector. Local knowledge refers here to the professional and often tacit knowledge held by welfare professionals – usually based on both science and experience – and to the situated knowledge that managers, project leaders and other administrative staff have, based on their work experience. Local knowledge is often more subtle than science, even seen as 'the other' of more established knowledge forms.

In public administration at large – and in the collaboration of Deal – knowledge serves as a platform or guide for decision making. The different types of knowledge influence what projects are initiated and how, and they help structure relations between politicians, managers and staff. Put differently, knowledge governs not only by providing information on what courses of action to take but also by constituting what welfare and welfare collaboration *is*.

The concept of knowledge regimes focuses on the way knowledge is enacted in government practices. Knowledge regimes is not a concept to investigate the mere presence or extent of one particular form of knowledge but how such knowledge is acted upon. Knowledge regimes are given meaning in relation to each other, in particular situations, and they are not bound to a specific institutional surrounding, such as national or local welfare institutions. Accordingly, knowledge regimes should be studied in context and be derived from empirically studied practices, something which I describe more closely in the next chapter.

5. Exploring knowledge regimes

In the previous chapter, I described how knowledge is enacted in practices of government. I emphasised that it is the *enactment* of knowledge that matters for how it influences what is done in practice – restricting, enabling and empowering employees. I referred to such government practices upon knowledge as *knowledge regimes*, emphasising that there are different forms of knowledge at play in an organisation or public institution. In this chapter, I present my methodological approach for studying knowledge regimes empirically. As mentioned, I consider this a practice-oriented approach; but I would also call it *explorative* in the sense that I seek to learn and to understand, from observing practices, rather than to explain or to create an explanatory framework.

In my view, an exploration is typically open-ended. It does not seek to test a hypothesis or preconceived theory of explanation, nor does it seek to map previously uncharted territory, like the explorers in the age of discovery.

> Interpretive and other forms of qualitative research are often dismissed as 'exploratory', the first and lesser step preparing the way for the more significant work of quantification and hypothesis testing. But exploration is a most demanding conceptual journey. It requires discipline and rigor but also an open and inventive mind and the willingness to learn from those we study. The driving force in interpretive research is not how well our data support our theoretical presuppositions but how well our interpretations can capture and elucidate social life. (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003: 229)

Following this, exploration denotes a method that is guided by a certain curiosity and attentiveness and an open mind – as well as determination and personal involvement. As I will describe, I have equipped myself with analytical tools and concepts in my empirical study, and I have continuously developed these as I have proceeded. The target of my

exploration has been the practices of one particular case of collaboration, Deal, and especially the practices of government within that case.

To some extent, methodology is the researcher's deliberation on how to go about conducting the study; but, as Wagenaar (2011) points out, a methods section is also a retroactive description of what has already been done in practice – reflecting the fact that research is a social activity, negotiated in practice, and at least partly decided on the go. In accordance with this, here I describe my explorative approach in four parts. In reality, these parts did not follow one after the other in an orderly fashion; they serve to summarise the main features and considerations of my methodology, as well as the disposition of this chapter.

The first part is *identifying the practices*. This means that practices must be perceived and separated from that which is not considered practices, such as actors, institutions or projects. This identification, just like all methodological procedures, is seen through a theoretical lens. The concept of practices is an analytical one that could be conceived otherwise in the eyes of another researcher. Identifying practices, in other words, is at once a crucial methodical procedure and a positioning vis-à-vis other theoretical and methodological approaches.

The second part is *observing and describing the practices* – turning the observed and identified practices into words. In this, I am particularly indebted to ethnographers of politics and organisation whose methodological reflections and craft I find inspiring.

The third part is *following the practices* – a guiding principle for how to approach that which is to be observed and distance oneself in order to start analysing. Zeroing in on the particular and putting things into context is an important part of ethnographic research, but for me it has been equally important to zoom out in order to analyse. In this movement, Nicolini's (2009, 2012) zooming exercise has been a simple, yet powerful, guiding principle.

The fourth part, lastly, is about *theorising the practices*. In this process, fieldnotes and transcriptions have been read and re-read and have been subjected to analytical conceptualisation: observations are labelled, annotated, and discussed in the social process that is social science.

Finally, in this chapter I reflect on my own role as observer, analyst and disseminator of knowledge. Social science, I believe, suffers from certain claims and aspirations inherited from a modernist rationality of knowledge

as impartial, apolitical and potentially speaking truth to power. With this in mind, I have considered it important to reflect on my own role not only in the process of observing and analysing but also in the following process of reporting on my findings. Instead of providing finite results on collaboration and the practices of government – speaking 'a language of certainty' – my ambition has been to explore and to open up for new ways of conceiving collaboration and government, speaking a 'language of reflective inquiry' (Yanow, 2009b; see chapter four).

Part one: Identifying the practices

In my empirical study, I have listened in on meetings and conferences and carried out interviews and more casual conversations on the go – all in order to follow Deal and its affiliated projects' activities, decisions and achievements. I focused especially on how Deal's various activities were presented internally in committees and project meetings and externally in meetings with researchers and others involved from the outside, myself included. During a period of nearly four years, I visited the two cities to attend meetings and conferences and to do interviews and engage in small talk related to the different projects. Most of my visits took part in 2014 and early 2015, but I also attended committee meetings and conducted interviews during the latter part of 2016 and in 2017. While some meetings were open to others, most were closed meetings to which I had been granted access beforehand. Of the many conversations I had with department directors, politicians and especially DM, only a few could be labelled interviews. Interviews were initiated by me and scheduled, and I took extensive notes or recorded and transcribed the conversation. They allowed me to have a focused conversation with one or a few people where I could make sure that questions were exhausted. In interviews with politicians and managers, we talked initially about their overall views of Deal – including its history and reorganisation – to increasingly focus on the role and importance of research. Most interviews took place in the later stages of my research and could thus be used to follow up on what I had observed and to ensure I had not misinterpreted significant issues. That said, the interviews were not used to check facts or have my analyses

confirmed; all observations and analyses are solely mine. As opposed to these, most conversations were more spontaneous, often initiated by the interlocutor, unscheduled, and took place in connection with a meeting. Oftentimes, these talks were not documented until immediately afterwards, when I took notes of what was discussed and whether there was something especially noteworthy taken up.

In total, I attended 35 meetings – most of which were with the directors' committee (10) and the politicians' committee (12) – and I conducted 6 interviews. The unscheduled talks with one or a few people at a time numbered about 10 to 15 and occurred typically in relation to a conference or a meeting, during a lunch break or afterwards. 5 meetings and all interviews were recorded and transcribed, whereas the remaining ones were documented through extensive fieldnotes. In addition, I gathered documentation such as reports, memos and evaluations produced within Deal and by researchers involved, which amounted to a total of 20 documents. I also received protocols and minutes from formal meetings that had taken place before my study began or at times when I was not able to attend; these protocols amounted to a total number of 17.

In my fieldwork, I recorded some meetings and interviews and took extensive fieldnotes when recording was not possible. Immediately afterwards, I transcribed recordings as well as fieldnotes, thus conducting a first reading of my material. In this process, I did not make any detailed annotations or comments, except for clarifying what I had seen and heard; only occasionally did I underline or comment something that was especially pertinent to my research interest. All readings and analyses were done entirely by myself and continuously throughout the entire research process. The distinction between what is relevant for the purpose of my research – and what is perhaps interesting but not relevant here and now – is a subtle analytical distinction. My theoretical guidance included a Foucauldian conceptualisation of government and a focus on practices, but these concepts were not firmly defined or operationalised as I began my fieldwork. At the beginning, I did not know whether organisational reforms, well-established models for collaboration, or budgetary issues would be most conspicuous; I knew only that I conceived government beyond formal government tools, management positions and organisational charts (in accordance with the views of government and organisation of welfare outlined in chapters two and four). In addition, of

course, I was susceptible to the role of knowledge in government, but it was not its main feature at the early stage.

Regarding protocols and documents, I was mainly interested in how they were acted upon, referred to and related to in various situations. Thus, formal protocols were mainly read to see what issues had been discussed and whether important decisions had been made. Other documents, such as reports, were interesting partly for their content and partly for how they were used in governing practices. Evaluation reports, to mention one example, were interesting because they described and summarised projects and because they were acted upon by the evaluating researcher, by DM and by others (see Jacobsson, 2016, on the situated study of documents).

Inspired by ethnographers of organisation and politics (e.g. Nicolini, 2012; Schatz, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009), most meetings, conversations and interviews took place in situations and locations I was not in control over; I allowed myself to be guided by the issues and practices at hand rather than arranging situations and meetings according to my preferences. Consequently, my study of practices has not been guided by an exact definition of what practices are. Drawing on a poststructuralist conception, on one hand, the present research identifies practices in relation to other concepts and phenomena. Inspired by ethnography, on the other hand, I agree with the notion that practices must be observed in their near environments and understood in their particular contexts. Practices is thus a concept that I attribute, as observer and analyst, to that which I study. Though it matters how practices are perceived by those undertaking them, I (as researcher) am the one who identifies them as practices, both in relation to other analytical concepts I use and in relation to what else I observe. In other words, in this study practices should be understood in relation to other analytical concepts I use (e.g. regimes, knowledge and government) as well as to the ways other researchers use the concept, which often differ from my approach.

In some empirical studies of organisational practices, what is done within the organisations in terms of projects, meetings and discussions serves to illustrate some greater organisational reform or discursive shift (e.g. Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2008, 2011; Hall, 2012b). The practices in question are seen as expressions of a more encompassing change, as a case of organisational reform such as Lean or TQM, and the case is selected to

illustrate this change. In other studies of organisation, the focus on practices takes on a more pronounced role. Lindberg (2014: 487) reflects on the literature on institutional logics and argues that there is a tendency 'to move toward more practice-oriented studies and to focus upon the role of logics in practice'. Much like my reasoning on knowledge in chapter four of this study, she concludes that 'logics do not exist per se, but must be performed into being'.

This study considers Deal a case of welfare collaboration and, more specifically, a case of collaboration on children and youth. To some extent there are other cases like Deal: in other cities, the same agencies and professional groups collaborate to address similar issues. Surveys, evaluations and other reports (e.g. National Board of Education, 2009, 2010; National Board of Health and Welfare, 2007; National Council on Crime Prevention, 2010) show that there are many different ways to organise collaboration on children and youth, and this is perhaps especially the case in Sweden, where local authorities have far-reaching autonomy. While some local authorities use existing organisational models for collaboration, others make local adaptations or organise their work entirely independently. To my knowledge, Deal has no exact equivalent elsewhere in Sweden; therefore Deal should not be considered a case out of a greater existing population.

Because of my focus on government practices, I started with and allowed myself to be guided by them. This means that wherever established models for collaboration or organisation come up in this study, that is because the practices I observed led me there. At one point, for example, the manager of Deal, DM, described to me how they had initiated a 'research circle', a workshop format where a researcher and practitioners collaborate to produce new knowledge. Rather than seeking to understand and conceptualise this phenomenon based on literature alone, I listened to the way the research circles were described to me, and I read a report on the subject that DM provided. In other words, rather than identifying an organisational or political feature or phenomenon that I then examine in an organisation, I focused on what was going on within the organisation and sought to understand it from there.

In accordance with performative and practice-oriented scholars, I have conceived of Deal as something that is made up of practices, rather than as a locality for practices: the activities that occur at Deal's office and in

its affiliated collaboration projects are what *actually comprise* Deal. This practice-oriented conception, however, is not limited to Deal as a non-traditional or atypical entity in the public administration. Following Nicolini (2012), it makes more sense to conceive organisation in general in this practice-oriented way, as opposed to focusing on formal organisation.

> When we enter an office, superstore, or a hospital it is increasingly difficult to think of it as the outcome of the application of a detailed blueprint and plan, or a single system with definite boundaries as in the traditional structural-mechanistic and functional-systemic views of an organisation. Things seem to fall into place much better if we think of the fluid scene that unfolds in front of us in terms of multiple practices carried out at the same time. In other words, there seems to be a particular purchase in a practice view that consider organizations both as the site and the result of work activities; *a view that connotes organizations as bundles of practices, and management as a particular form of activity aimed at ensuring that these social and material activities work more or less in the same direction.* (Nicolini, 2012: 2, *emphasis added*)

The focus on practices does more than question the taken-for-granted 'blueprint rationality' of organisational behaviour. It puts practices – work activities – front and centre and conceives organisations 'both as the site and the result of work activities'. According to Nicolini (2012: 3), 'all practice theories foreground the importance of activity, performance and work in the creation and perpetuation of all aspects of social life' and they 'tend to see the world as an ongoing routinized and recurrent accomplishment'. Employing a practice-oriented approach in studying how an organisation is governed means studying how that setting of work activities is governed, how the bundle of practices works more or less in a particular direction. The approach, however, does not define what those management or government practices themselves consist in –or whether, for example, they work through knowledge, desires or more coercive measures (see chapter four).

Studying practices, thus, is not about mapping, classifying or explaining activities and processes but is first and foremost about observing and understanding how things are done. My study of Deal's practices, accordingly, started with me learning about what they do, how they

perceived their own work, and how they sought to carry out their tasks – that is, how they organised (as introduced in chapter three).

The fact that Deal is not a traditional organisational entity within the Swedish welfare state – lacking the formal institutional appearance – probably makes it more susceptible to being conceived as 'a bundle of practices', to speak with Nicolini (2012). At the time of my first visits, Deal's office consisted of one manager, DM, and two more people working on administrative tasks and within the different projects that Deal was involved in. The organisational entity of Deal itself does not provide welfare services of any sort; their role is to initiate, lead and support projects that draw together employees from the collaborating departments (the departments of social services and education) in two neighbouring cities in the south of Sweden. The projects are staffed by employees that belong to the departments; they are not run by Deal directly. As already described, the practices of Deal are not limited to those carried out by Deal's few employees: they include the activities of all projects in which Deal has some involvement.

Three of the projects are called *KEY*, *Motivation* and *Pinocchio*, and these will all be described in more detail in the chapters to come. KEY began long before I came into contact with Deal; Motivation was initiated and launched during my study; and Pinocchio began earlier, but Deal had not been involved initially. While the projects are all interesting in different ways, my focus was on the practices that related to Deal; this was my entry point for observing the practices of collaboration, the practices that I wanted to learn about in terms of government. Had my theoretical interest been directed at projects or formal organisations or the role of certain professional groups, I would have chosen to approach things differently – for example, by following the relation between temporary projects and permanent/ordinary organisations (Fred, 2018), by taking a closer look at the organisational boundaries between different departments or units (Löfström, 2010) or by investigating professional roles (Parding, 2007). Identifying practices, however, means that actors and organisational structures are bracketed for the benefit of illuminating 'the doings' of collaboration.

The KEY project, to take one example, was a project for improved casework that involved both social services and schools. For my purpose of studying the government of collaboration, I found it especially relevant

to focus on the meetings, instances and junctures where the direction of the project activities was discussed. During my visits, there were meetings with different mid- and lower-level managers as well as different professional groups. They discussed what exact groups of children and youth should be targeted by the project, what roles different professional groups should take, what guidelines and tools were to be used within the project, and many more details. Identifying the relevant practices, here, meant focusing on how the project activities were 'made known' and what practices directed the project in one way or another.

In chapters six through eight, six different practices are presented. Two practices are examples of researcher involvement, drawing on what I call expert knowledge; two exemplify the use of standardised knowledge; and two are examples of the enactment of local knowledge. The practices of government, which amount to the three knowledge regimes, can be summarised as follows.

- Researchers' expert knowledge is involved through (1) workshops and lectures and (2) action research and evaluations
- Standardised knowledge is implemented through (3) evidence-based practices and (4) the use of templates and guidelines
- Local knowledge is enacted through (5) co-production of knowledge and (6) tacit and professional knowledge

Identifying practices thus requires a theoretical foundation and awareness; a viewpoint from which practices can be conceived. But it also requires an empirical attentiveness, and in this endeavour, ethnographic studies served as a particular source of inspiration, as they emphasise both close observation and thick description.

Part two: Observing and describing the practices

Ethnographic studies have become increasingly popular in studies of organisation and work, and are today found well beyond anthropology – the discipline they are most often associated with (Czarniawska, 2007; Yanow, 2009a). Besides a number of journals, articles and doctoral

courses, the two edited volumes *Political Ethnography* (Schatz, 2009) and *Organizational Ethnography* (Ybema et al., 2009) testify to the widespread use of ethnography in the social sciences. The reason for its popularity may be that ethnography is a good way of studying social processes, relations and practices.

> Applied to organization, it is a process to 'uncover and explicate the ways in which people in particular work settings come to understand, account for and take action and otherwise manage their day-to-day situation' (Van Maanen 1979/2002: 360). Questions of 'how' things get done are more significant than questions of 'what': organization or organizing rather than organizations. (Townley, 2008: 143)

Ethnographers and interpretive analysts of politics and organisation have accounted for many different ways to study everyday work situations. In a most literal sense, this can be done by shadowing (e.g. Czarniawska, 2007; Dubois, 2009) or attending a workplace for a longer period of time (e.g. Boll, 2014; Latour, 2010; Rhodes, 2011). Where such direct observations are not suitable, there are also ways of capturing work activities through detailed talks and interviews (Morgen, 2001; Nicolini, 2009; Soss, 2006; Wagenaar, 2004) or by collaborating with staff to depict their work as stories (e.g. Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Vohnsen, 2013). In the following, I will mention some features of ethnography that have been useful in my empirical work.

Firstly, I have been guided by ethnography's devotion to so-called field studies. The field can be pretty much any location where the ethnographer can be physically located and carry out their study. In my case, any activities related to Deal have guided my interest, and my field has been wherever those activities took place – most often municipal venues and facilities such as conference rooms and offices at city hall, department buildings of the social services, or a school building. But meetings and talks also stretched beyond office walls: walking to and from a meeting or during a car ride or lunch. Due to the physical presence of the researcher, ethnographic studies are particularly useful for studying mundane practices, everyday work, routine activities and common sense knowledge – things that are often unarticulated and conducted without very much explicit reflection. Within such ethnographic work, it is fully possible or even necessary to include internal and external objects such as artefacts or

documents. Ethnography is not limited to mere observation; it also includes more or less structured interviews and talks, which I have done as well (Czarniawska, 2007; Nicolini, 2009; Townley, 2008; see also Barley, 1986; Jacobsson, 2016).

Secondly, close observations are suitable for in-depth exploring, going beyond first impressions, and studying what is often taken for granted. To become familiar with an organisation, it is useful to be present for a longer time or on a recurring basis. In ethnography of an organisation such as a public institution, it is impossible to be there all the time, but regular presence makes it easier to identify different relations, to interpret moods and states of mind, and to pick up on nuances in behaviour. The first time I meet with a group of department directors, it is difficult to know how to interpret silences or animated discussions, but after a few occasions it gets easier to distinguish between personal character and any emotions caused by the issues at hand. Furthermore, by being a frequent visitor, I learned how things are done and how they can be done differently, and I was able to discern between nuances that would have otherwise been invisible. This is important in studying the ordinary: to question what may otherwise be seen as the one and only way of doing things (Nicolini, 2009; Townley, 2008). In addition, as my own experiences have shown, recurring presence gave occasion to ask about things that I did not understand or that I wanted to hear further reflections on, without such questions being overly interfering. While some ethnographers may seek to capture an undistorted truth – obtain naturally occurring data, to speak with Silverman (2007) – I consider intervening with the people I observed to be an asset, provided I took my own participation into account. Contrary to quiet observation, I consider curiosity a respectful and fruitful way to engage in conversation in an area that you want to learn about.

Thirdly, and importantly in relation to the in-depth exploration, ethnography encourages attentiveness and respect for empirical nuances. Ethnography calls for a certain sensibility, not only to avoid outright distortion of what you observe, but also to maintain a healthy respect for the complex, the ambiguous and the contradictory (Yanow, 2009a). Rather than seeking instant feedback – or sorting observations into ever so intricate analytical schemes – ethnography embraces and benefits from perceived dissonances.

> Empirical and theoretical findings often stem from puzzlement about what does not make immediate sense, and, therefore, a basic wonder about contradictions and 'counter-intuitions' may be useful throughout the research process – in generating data, developing interpretations, enlivening the empirical narrative and clarifying the relevance of things. (Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009: 106-107)

It may seem difficult to participate in meetings, ask questions and engage in conversation while at the same time being careful not to step on anyone's toes, but as Czarniawska (2007: 56) accurately points out, 'the point is never to behave like a fly on the wall /…/ but to behave like a responsible adult, showing respect and sympathy for others'. To me, this started out with such simple things as accepting a cup of coffee when offered, as this made me blend in more, compared to being the only one who does not *fika*[4] during the meeting. Once I became adjusted to being present, it became easier to know when to participate in conversation and when not to.

In a series of workshops, I was invited to be one of the participants, even though it was well known that my role was to observe and analyse the process and not primarily to contribute to the discussions on mental illness, which was the topic. I kept a low profile in most substantial discussions but did take some part in discussions and small talk as best I could in order to blend in. Since there was limited knowledge of each other's organisations, it was natural for me to ask questions about the others' roles, how they were organised, and so on. Getting to know each other was part of the workshops, put simply. With several years' experience in municipal work, I had participated before in various workshops with politicians, managers and welfare professionals, so I was familiar with the context and generally felt comfortable with the setting, which made it easier for me to be a participant observer.

When I took an active part in interviews and conversations, curiosity was something of a default mode, a guiding principle that suited my methodological ambition as well as my personal attitude. In meetings with preschool teachers and social workers, for example, I benefitted from my

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[4] 'Fika' is a Swedish word (noun and verb) meaning you have a snack or sweet – e.g. cinnamon bun – to go with the coffee, something which is very common at workplace meetings and elsewhere.

experiences as a researcher and from previous employment, which have taught me that people are often keen on talking about their work and their opinions of things, if the interlocutor comes across as honest. In pursuing my research, I am sincerely curious about their views on researcher involvement and standardised assessment tools, for example. At one point, I was surprised to hear about their unequivocal praise of an assessment tool that had been imposed 'from above' within a project; but rather than jumping to conclusions on how this tool may or may not compete with their professional knowledge, I encouraged them to talk about how the tool in question fit into their everyday work and how it supported (or not) their work outside the project. It seems in retrospect that the ethnographer's attentiveness and respect for empirical nuances translates rather well to what is commonly referred to as a curious mind.

Lastly, many ethnographers emphasise an iterative research process where fieldwork and theorisation come together in a disharmonious yet fruitful relationship (e.g. Czarniawska, 2007; Nicolini, 2009; Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009). There are numerous pitfalls to being overly theoretic or not theoretic enough, and in this process I have been guided by Nicolini's suggested 'zooming' exercise, which I use as a metaphor for moving between close observation and distant theorisation.

Part three: Following the practices

Many ethnographers of organisation and politics contend that close observations described in detail are not enough to make a compelling analysis. Empirical studies should always be guided by theory of some sort. This argument is made in a methodological community and context where theory and analytical frameworks are not always endorsed (see e.g. Wacquant, 2002, or Schatz, 2009, for a discussion on doing ethnography with or without theoretic guidance). On the other hand, an overly theoretic analysis would run the risk of suppressing the ambiguity and everyday complexity that I have previously argued is an inherent character of politics and public administration (see e.g. McKee, 2011; Wagenaar, 2011; Yanow, 1993, 2009b).

The zooming metaphor, in its simplicity, describes how the researcher zooms in on practices to observe and follow them closely and then zooms out to see how those practices fit together with other practices. Nicolini (2009) presents several tips for how to go about it. Firstly, as mentioned, one should *follow the practices*. Rather than focusing on organisations or individuals as agents, one starts with what is done; practices constitute agents, and not vice-versa (Nicolini, 2009). However, this does not mean that individuals do not matter – only that individuals are constituted by the practices they undertake, not by their formal positions such as being a manager (e.g. Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Secondly, 'the study of practices cannot be limited to focusing on details of their accomplishment' (Nicolini, 2012). Practices must be *contextualised* and related to what is going on around them, materially and otherwise. Thirdly, the analysis of practices is *always theory-guided*. One should not apply a ready-made explanatory framework, though, but rather adopt a theoretic sensitivity vis-à-vis the practices, where observation and theorisation are carried out in dialogue (Nicolini, 2009; 2012). Additionally, I argue that the zooming exercise is possible precisely because of one's adopting a theoretical perspective: if there were no viewpoint from which to look, a scope through which things are observed, it would be impossible to zoom in and out. Zooming, however, is 'about moving around and amid practices, not hovering above them', says Nicolini, (2012: 239).

The procedure of following practices can be illustrated with a snapshot from my own study. In October 2014, I attended a half-day conference on a collaboration project called Pinocchio. The project included preschool teachers, social workers and paediatric nurses who collaborated to address norm-breaking behaviour of young children. With the use of an evidence-based instrument, they screened and assessed the children in order to take the proper treatment measures and to follow up on them. The project was evaluated by a university professor, who concluded that they were very successful in assessing and treating the children. My interest, however, lay not in the particular methods of the project that served to assess and treat children, but rather in the governing of the project; how the evaluation and following discussion construed the collaboration project as successful, as worth repeating elsewhere. From my perspective, the evaluation – and the presentation by the professor – could be seen as directing the future of this and similar projects, thus effectively governing the collaboration

activities. The purpose of the presentation was to convey what was and was not successful in the project. But the evaluation not only reported on the project; it also established knowledge about the matters at hand – scientific knowledge that served as a starting point for further discussion. The involvement of the researcher, as well as his report that pointed to the significance of evidence-based practices, I identified as practices of government, regardless of whether that was his intention or of how it was perceived by the audience at the conference. In my succeeding analysis, the project was seen as subject to a regime of knowledge – one which drew upon standardised knowledge in the form of an evaluation, as well as expert knowledge, in the form of the professor's presentation.

In accordance with the zooming exercise, I focused on the governing practices I had observed, and I asked how the collaboration project was construed, or made *known* (Nicolini, 2009). Shortly after the conference, I met with the project participants separately. From them, I learned about other ways of knowing the project, not based on scientific evaluation of results but on professional everyday knowledge. They described, as I will elaborate in later chapters, how they had an established well-functioning collaboration before the Pinocchio project was initiated and before they started to use the evidence-based screening and assessment instrument. Through a rather informal meeting – a talking series called *Our children* – they shared experience-based knowledge among colleagues, without invoking either standards or otherwise formalised knowledge.

In other words, the locality of the Pinocchio project was not my primary focus point – through the researcher involved, I was led there by following the collaboration project and how it appeared to be governed. Once familiarising myself with the participants of the Pinocchio project, I learned about their other practices enacting other forms of knowledge that influenced the project. Similarly, researchers were involved in the KEY and the Motivation projects – and in the overarching organisation of Deal – but here, too, other forms of knowledge were visible when zooming in.

Although not all forms of knowledge were observed in all projects, the matrix below (see table 1) gives an indication of how practices of government, drawing upon knowledge, appear in different parts of Deal and its affiliated projects and activities. The main content of the matrix, to be inserted in the empty boxes, will be presented in three chapters following this one. It should be noted, though, that the matrix does not

represent a theoretical framework that was constructed prior to the empirical study; as described earlier, the three knowledge regimes are the product of theoretic and empirical analysis carried out iteratively.

Table 1: Practices of government in relation to Deal and its projects

PRACTICES OF GOVERNMENT	PROJECT: PINOCCHIO	PROJECT: KEY	PROJECT: MOTIVATION	DEAL'S ORG.
Regime of expert knowledge (ch 6) Researcher involvement	…	…	…	…
Regime of standardised knowledge (ch. 7) Using standards and tools	…	…	…	…
Regime of local knowledge (ch. 8) Enacting local knowledge	…	…	…	…

The method of zooming in on practices and distancing oneself with the use of theoretical analysis appears in much observation-based research, although it is not always explicitly accounted for. However, Jacobsson (2016) describes 'the situated study of documents' where documents – just as other inscriptions and enactments of knowledge – are put into context. The main point of interest is not exactly what the document states or claims but rather how it is acted upon in the organisation, and – in my case – how it becomes part of governing practices (Jacobsson, 2016).

Huxham and Vangen, in their research on the management of collaboration, describe in some detail how they observe the participants' activities and how they conceptualise and theorise those activities through a meticulous process that includes relevant literature but which also involves other researchers as well as the participants themselves (e.g. Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a, 2003b). Following their example, I intend to show how practices are interpreted, or construed, as such in order to be analysed, a process that is primarily about theorisation.

Part four: Theorising practices

Ethnography is perhaps best known for its rich descriptions of empirics, accounting for details and observations that other research traditions often omit. To ethnographers that discard the use of theory entirely – or at least significantly de-emphasise theory – putting observations into empirical context is the sole most important factor for acquiring knowledge and for conveying it. In the absence of theoretical deduction or other theorisation, empirical knowledge (sometimes referred to as 'data') is acquired through embeddedness, or immersion, and thereafter conveyed through thick description. This is a form of research that strongly emphasises the ethnographer's familiarity with the observed setting, the field, rather than reporting findings by reference to literature or a theoretical framework.

However, as many ethnographers have argued, there is no opposition between thoroughly contextualising one's observations and subjecting them to an equally thorough theoretical analysis (see Schatz, 2009). Quite the contrary, ethnographers of politics and public administration have shown how familiarity with the field, conveyed through thick description, and theorisation are mutually beneficial. Putting one's observations into context, in this respect, is not only about perceiving and reporting an empirically and physically immediate surrounding; it is also about acknowledging the cultural, cognitive, organisational or political environment that civil servants, for example, find themselves in (see e.g. Brodkin, 2011; Dubois, 2009; McKee, 2011; Morgen, 2003; Morgen & Maskovsky, 2003; Wagenaar, 2004). Although my main ambition has been to zoom in on practices and to follow them, I have also tried to put my observations into a broader context. In chapters nine and ten, especially, I make such a contextualisation to reflect on the political implications of knowledge regimes and their role in collaboration.

In a study of social workers in the United States, Morgen (2001) describes how they enact a policy of 'welfare-to-work' that entails a stronger focus on individuals' self-sufficiency compared to the previous policy that focused on their eligibility for assistance. She notes that

> …the skills and expertise necessary to effectively do this work are quite different from those required for the accurate, efficient eligibility work,

which has been the main focus of public assistance work over the past quarter century. (Morgen, 2001: 750)

By observing and interviewing social workers about their work, Morgen (2001) describes the immediate context of the social workers; interview excerpts present their voices, describing how they negotiate the needs of the clients and the regulation and intention of the policy. But in addition to capturing the highly subjective perspective of the social workers – a strength and hallmark of ethnographic studies – she also describes the political ideology and managerial discourse that has imposed itself on the practices of welfare work, effectively changing the role of the social workers. Morgen and Maskovsky (2003: 325) are explicit about the benefits of such ethnography, providing an empirical contextualisation as well as a political one: 'Ethnographers have deconstructed the hegemonic discourse on welfare restructuring, juxtaposing dominant ideologies with the so-called realities of impoverishment'.

In my study, the welfare professionals, managers and politicians who find themselves within Deal and its projects are also enmeshed within broader political and organisational discourses that affect how they think and behave but are not always evident. On the most concrete level, when discussing a specific project with welfare professionals who work with children and their families, ideological and political issues are not the first things that spring to mind. I ask about their concrete work, and they tell me about that. But as soon as questions turn to more overarching issues – on what they would want more of in their work, whether Family Centres are worth establishing – politics is on the table in that the welfare professionals call for more Family Centres rooted in the community and in that they describe the problems of high manager and staff turnover. In meetings and interviews with managers and politicians, such issues are even more pronounced, all pointing to the importance of taking political context , and not just the immediate physical surroundings, into consideration.

Empirical contextualisation can hardly be overemphasised in ethnography. It is perhaps the main trait of that kind of research. But as the examples above have shown, putting things into context in a literal sense is by no means sufficient. In order to analyse questions of government or power, observations must be put in a wider societal and political context, guided by theory. To analyse government practices, in

other words, close observation, attentiveness and contextualisation must be combined with theoretical understanding (see Nicolini, 2009; Wacquant, 2002). In their research on leadership in collaboration, Vangen and Huxham (2003a) describe this tension between bringing a theoretical conceptualisation into the field and retaining an open mind for what that conceptualisation may entail in practice. In their research a general, theoretical understanding of leadership is brought into the empirical investigation, while the particular means, tools or characteristics of leadership are allowed to emerge from observations.

Much the way I conceive government in the form of knowledge regimes, Huxham and Vangen (2000) describe how leadership was in fact not a theme that emerged from the data but, rather, it was something that they introduced to describe, or make sense of, what they observed. Identifying and differentiating practices that are pertinent to the themes and issues at hand – knowledge regimes, in my case – thus required a distancing. Zooming out allowed me to dress observations with words, finding appropriate terms and concepts to not only convey observations but also understand them (see also Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009).

This kind of analysis is characterised by what Huxham and Vangen refer to as conceptualisation – a process that is described as making sense of things, denoting and scientifically constructing what are otherwise 'mere' observations. This also involves discarding concepts and theories that are not suitable for the analysis (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a, 2003b). Although conceptualisation must be theoretically guided – apart from it being a methodical process of sorting or interpreting empirics – it is also a highly social undertaking. Rather than isolating oneself to carve out the proper terminology and highlight citations, concepts and observations need to be openly discussed.

During my entire research process, I have discussed findings and preliminary analyses with my peers, and I have conversed with the people whose work I study. To some extent, this is probably the case in all research – that ideas, findings and drafts are continuously discussed – but as Huxham and Vangen (2003b: 10) argue, 'drafting and redrafting, circulating drafts for comments, presenting the argument at academic conferences' are all part of the analytical process (see also Latour & Woolgar, 1979). In other words, engaging academic peers as well as the people that are studied does not jeopardise research results; there is no

pure data that risks contamination. Instead, subjecting one's observations to input from others is part of the analytical process and may raise new valuable questions.

The ethnographic contribution to my research – as conveyed primarily by organisational and political ethnographers – is the articulation of how to strike a balance between empirical observations and a theoretically guided analysis of those observations. In the last part of this chapter, I describe the implications of this methodology for the role of the researcher, arguing that the production of knowledge – whether in a public-sector collaboration project or in a doctoral dissertation – necessarily imposes itself on that which it tries to make known. Rather than seeking to avoid this fact, it is something that should prompt the researcher to some self-reflection.

Observer and analyst – Exploration and reflection

Scholars of interpretive, constructivist, and various critical perspectives share a critique towards positivist and otherwise modernist perspectives on science. This goes for ethnographers and practice-theorists who emphasise the situatedness of human activity (e.g. Nicolini, 2012), as well as the humanist approaches that focus on individual agency (e.g. Bevir, 2013; Morgen, 2001). As described earlier, poststructuralist research has sought to deconstruct many of the assumptions and claims that modernist sciences have established and then taken for granted. Apart from this epistemological debate having raised questions about the claims and limits of social science, it has also brought into question the role of the researcher.

As argued by Townley (2008), Yanow (2009b), and feminist scholars such as Haraway (1988), among others, the universalist claims of modernist science entail that knowledge is an impersonal object, detached from the subject who produces or possesses that knowledge. Following this, science is something that produces knowledge about the world but simultaneously produces the situation, or context, in which the knowledge is produced. Science tells us about the world, but also about how we should act, behave and live in that world (Dear, 2006; Jasanoff, 2004b).

As described by Dear (2006), the dual feature of modernist science – that science entails both a knowing of the world and a doing within the same – has been disguised somewhere in history.

While poststructuralist scholars have raised important questions about the role of science and scientists in social and political life (e.g. Foucault, 1982; Rose & Miller, 2010; Triantafillou, 2012), ethnographic and interpretive researchers have been more adamant in reflecting on these questions in their own research practice. While ethnographers differ greatly in their views on the researcher's role, I have mainly been inspired by the ethnographers of organisation and politics – such as Yanow (e.g. 2009a, b) and Czarniawska (2007) – who reflect on their own positions as observers and analysts and as perceived experts vis-à-vis the people who are observed. Yanow (2009b: 5) argues that 'the human-centeredness that characterized prepositivist modes of knowing was lost in the turn to positivism-inflected ones encapsulated in the "scientific method"'. She continues:

> Reflexivity on the part of researchers plays an increasingly central role in interpretive science: attention to the ways in which the researcher's positionality, whether literally locational (within the research setting) or personal (with respect, e.g., to demographic or experiential factors), can affect access to a research site and/or to people or other sources of information within it, and thereby the kinds of data generated. In some forms, positional reflexivity also calls for attending to the possibility of knowing how one's presence might affect either the research or participants' lives. (Yanow, 2009b: 7)

What Yanow (2009b) describes here is a response to the supposed disembeddedness of knowledge, a response often formulated by feminist scholars but which evidently has very early historical roots. By reflecting on one's own position, experiences and limits of apprehension, the point is to become aware of the different perspectives that follow from social, cultural and gender-related position – thereby also revealing the relations of power which follow from social relations (Yanow, 2009b; see also Haraway, 1988; Townley, 2008).

As I approached Deal – to learn about its work and how knowledge informed its activities – I deliberately sought to situate the knowledge I observed. Rather than relating the observed practices to one particular

theory through an analytical framework, my ambition was to understand the preconditions for each viewpoint. To a large extent, I would say, this is what led to me to conceive knowledge as something highly diverse – not only in terms of *what* different people and groups of people know but especially in terms of *how* they know. Reflection, in this sense, is not just about reflecting on one's own position and the conditions of one's knowledge but is also about reflecting on the knowledge of others and the conditions that make this or that knowledge conceivable. In an example mentioned above – where I observed one perspective on the Pinocchio project from an evaluator-researcher and another from the participants of the project – I was able to juxtapose two different perspectives of one and the same project. The one perspective was distinctly presented as scientific knowledge, while the other was evidently a professionally founded knowledge, though presented as personal reflections or lay knowledge by the participants themselves. This juxtaposition allowed me not only to differentiate between two different forms of knowledge at play, but also to study the relation between them, analysing whether this is competing knowledge, which may cause conflict, or complementary knowledge, which co-exists side by side.

In my research, in other words, the explorative ambition has been coupled with curiosity, an attentiveness to nuances and a theoretical sensitivity to how to understand what I see and hear. This approach has been partly an ethical consideration – in the sense that research should be conducted with respect and dignity for others – but it is also an approach that benefits my research. The multi-perspectivism described above, where different knowledge is acknowledged and situated, entails a constant striving to sustain room for change. Interpretive and poststructuralist approaches both seek to open up for alternative and multiple ways of analysing and knowing the world – by attending to nuances, questioning, problematising and deconstructing – as opposed to closing down analyses by settling on the one most plausible explanation. This credo of 'opening up' rather than 'closing down' is what I aspired to as I conducted my empirical study of Deal, described in the three chapters to come.

6. A regime of expert knowledge

Ever since the beginning of Deal, the involvement of researchers has been an important facet of its work. In addition to establishing an organisation for collaboration, Deal is also about developing methods appropriate for addressing the needs of children as well as handling organisational challenges. In this development, different forms of knowledge are the main building blocks by which methods and routines are established. By matching identified problems with adequate solutions, the idea is to develop and to improve the services for children, through the collaboration projects, on a scientific basis. The developmental aspect of Deal implies that scientific practices and ideas should not just be identified and implemented; their work is about involving researchers to produce knowledge together. Deal is devoted to the solutions that do not yet exist or are at least not fully developed or established. In current political and administrative discourse, this is often described as public-sector innovation, social innovation, experimental governance or, more broadly, methods development (e.g. Fred, 2018; Kronsell & Mukhtar-Landgren, 2018; Sørensen & Torfing, 2011).

   Most salient in this process is the involvement of university academics – researchers who participate in different aspects of Deal's work by giving lectures, providing training programmes, evaluating projects, and in other ways injecting their research into Deal and its many projects. In this chapter, I describe two practices that both entail the involvement of researchers and which together make up a regime of expert knowledge. It is a regime because the practices govern Deal and its projects, and it is a knowledge regime in that it draws upon (expert) knowledge. The first one described is a practice of involving researchers in holding workshops and giving lectures, where researchers typically give presentations and moderate conversations, while the second one is a practice of action research and evaluation where researchers participate more actively in

producing research within the projects' activities and the participants' work.

In the first part of the chapter, I describe the two practices with examples from Deal and its projects. I also reflect on my observations and impressions, pointing out what has been more or less conspicuous from my vantage point. In the second part of the chapter, I present more theoretically how the practices in question govern Deal. This part, in other words, is a theoretical analysis, which I carry out through the concept of knowledge regimes, as presented in chapter four.

Practices of researcher involvement

Researchers are involved in Deal's work in different ways, and they contribute to different parts of its activities. They are involved in particular projects that Deal leads, or is involved in, but they are also involved to some extent in the broader ambition of Deal – the development of appropriate routines and organisation for collaborating. The researchers involved come from very different disciplines; during my empirical study, I had the opportunity to listen to researchers of service management, social work, psychology, digital design, sociology of law, and peace and development studies, all of which were involved in the work of Deal as lecturers on a single occasion, as workshop leaders more regularly, or as action researchers participating more actively in the projects.

Practice 1: Workshops and lectures

The KEY project

In the summer of 2014, some 20 lower-level managers from the departments of education and of social services in A-city and B-city met to plan and discuss future routines for a collaborative procedure of social service casework investigations. They represented the five departments in the two cities that lie behind Deal. This particular constellation was not a standing group; they met only twice to discuss a number of issues pertaining to the collaboration on children and youth at risk, focusing on

how to examine and assess the situation of school children who are clients of the social services. DM, the manager of Deal, had gathered the participants because of their special knowledge in the subject area and because of their role in their different departments. The participants were mainly mid- and lower-level managers, and they provided input and reflections on some key concerns regarding a collaboration project, KEY, that was to be launched anew.

The KEY project aimed to implement a new procedure for casework, called 'cogwheel investigations', in which staff from the social services and the school work more closely and more resource-efficiently together, as indicated by the 'cogwheel' metaphor. The participants at the meeting engaged in discussions on how to organise and manage the project and the casework procedure. They talked about how to go about it in practice and about routines for day-to-day collaboration between employees of different professions and organisations.

They focused especially on leadership and management of collaboration processes, a thematic discussion that was led by a university professor invited by DM. The professor emphasised that collaboration requires joint efforts at all levels – from politicians to street-level professionals – and that much has to do with leading, organising and governing in a way that encourages collaboration. You cannot organise away the need for collaboration, he asserted. Together with a colleague, he had recently written a book about cross-sectorial leadership, and this was later to be used in a research circle that Deal initiated.

The people attending that meeting, the second of two, were chosen because of their key positions in their respective organisations, which meant that they had good first-hand knowledge of what to take into consideration in the project. It became clear at the meeting that, because the project was based on small teams of different professionals, the coordinator leading the teams was seen as a key to success. The professor focused on the role of the coordinator – the designated leader – and returned to the argument that organisation is not enough to run a well-functioning collaboration. He was critical towards the current trend of constant re-organisation and said that there needs to be a basic structure – including financial management – that allows employees at different levels to collaborate.

When, at a later stage, I asked DM about how KEY was progressing, they were still quite far from launching the new casework procedures. Not enough managers had been willing to get going; indeed, DM implied that some seemed to have been dragging their feet or just awaiting what will come out of the discussions and plans.

The KEY project had been running before, and some of the managers associated the new KEY project with the old one, which they were not positive towards. DM was clearly frustrated by the slow progress of the project and what she perceived to be occasional negative attitudes, but she nonetheless retained a controlled appearance, seeking solutions with a positive attitude instead of lingering on problems. I was given a thorough account of where the KEY project was at, what the issues and challenges were at that stage, and how they were set on going forth. DM also mentioned the training of the team coordinators that seemed to be an important thing at the July meeting led by the professor but that now seemed less important.

After the July meeting, DM and the directors' committee talked about the professor providing a course for the team coordinators, who were to exercise the cross-sectorial leadership, as well as his leading a research circle with key figures of the different departments, where they were to produce, document and hopefully publish new knowledge on collaboration. I asked about how these things were going:

> Me: But the research circle will get going in February, and then there's the education for the project leaders…
>
> DM: You mean the coordinator's role.
>
> Me: The coordinator.
>
> DM: That's still on ice…
>
> Me: That's the one that [the two researchers] should be in charge of?
>
> DM. Mm… yes, but now the directors' committee said we should do it on a smaller scale, on our own, didn't they?
>
> Me: That's right, that's how it was.

DM: And then we'll wait some until we know how to do it. It won't be that difficult to get going, because we have a plan, a sketch. But I haven't been working so actively with it. But the research circle is up and running. It's good. (Interview, Dec. 2014)

The role of the team coordinators seemed important at the July meeting, and the plan was for the professor to set up a training programme for the team based on his own research as well as a research circle involving other key figures related to Deal. While the members of the directors' committee were positive towards the research circle, they had been somewhat cautious about the training programme for the coordinators. Mostly, this seemed to be a budgetary issue; procuring entire courses from universities is expensive, so they decided to proceed with a less costly alternative, arranging it mostly on their own. But the research circle proceeded according to plan, I was told.

The research circle

Research circles are a method for knowledge production in which practitioners and researchers collaborate. DM mentioned to me a report written by Sven Persson, associate professor at Malmö University, and published by the City of Malmö. The report focused mainly on the collaboration between academia and school, as it described research circles, explained their purpose, and served as a guideline for conducting them.

> The idea is that a continuous dialogue between researchers and practitioners can lay a foundation for them to develop their own practice. In the research process, the purpose is for there to be a reciprocal impact between researchers and practitioners, so that both parties change their perception of the problem. The result can be that new and broader knowledge emerges with all participants in the circle. The practitioners can use the new knowledge to change their own teaching or develop parts of the school's work. (Persson, 2009: 7, my translation)

In the report, research circles are explicitly described as something in-between research and public-sector practices. In research circles, knowledge should emanate from practical experience and research, not one or the other, and thereby be mutually beneficial for practitioners and researchers (Persson, 2009).

The way the research circle was presented to me – primarily through DM – the researcher involvement was emphasised. Although research circles entail the two components – of practitioners' knowledge and the researcher's knowledge – the element of *research* appeared to be especially important and to be that which distinguished this very form of training, or skills development, from many other forms of lectures or on-the-job training taking place in public administration.

According to DM, although the research circle was led by professors, the participants approached the questions of collaboration, organisation and management as a joint undertaking. She described how they had started to reflect on their own roles and behaviour. 'How did I turn out like this?', DM quoted someone as saying as a testament to the insights and knowledge generated. She told me how much they learned from each other, and I wondered whether the research circle, as social practice, also *governed* the group – whether it directed their course of action.

> Me: If you had brought in another researcher with a different view of knowledge, would they have moved things in another direction?

> DM: I mean, the research circle is governed [or managed or directed; *Swedish: styrs*] by everyone who's sitting there. We all have tasks to do for each time and then it's about your own experiences. So if we had other people, we would have an entirely different research circle. And of course, [the researchers] influence things, but I think what has an even greater influence is the ones sitting there. And their engagement, and their experiences of their own work. (Pause.) Then there's the idea that there will be a publication in the end, that there is knowledge to disseminate. (Interview, April 2015)

The way the research circle is described clearly resonates with its historical roots, as described by Persson (2009). It implies a democratic and participatory way of learning that draws on the participants' experiences, thus connecting the learning process to the formation of the group itself. It is an educational form that has a long tradition in the Swedish labour movement and that is still common within civil society's organisation (*Swedish: folkbildning, studieförbund*). But in regards to the research circle, DM returned to the fact that there would be a publication in the end and that this would contain knowledge that would benefit the organisation – both the KEY project specifically, as well as Deal, through

the general knowledge of collaboration that would be obtained. Thus, and in relation to how Deal seeks collaboration with researchers elsewhere, *researcher involvement* appears especially important, more so than the participatory aspect of the circle.

Conferences and lectures

The role of researchers as bearers and communicators of expert knowledge was perhaps even more conspicuous on the occasions when the researcher gave lectures or talks in front of an audience consisting primarily of staff within social services and schools. On a few occasions, I attended smaller conferences that Deal arranged where researchers were invited to talk. One time there was a two-day conference where a range of different projects were presented, some of them related to Deal, others located within the two cities but not affiliated with Deal, and a few projects presented by staff and managers from a Norwegian local authority who were specially invited to share experiences with the Swedes. At the end of the first day of the conference, a professor from Gothenburg University gave a talk on societal changes related to globalisation and urbanisation. Contrary to the project presentations, his talk was more of an inspirational talk. When DM presented the agenda, she said that he would inspire them and that his talk would be entertaining. As part of the audience, my expectations were rather high: the professor was to deliver *something other* than the practitioners had presented. To add to the expectations, he ran a little late due to a train delay, and we all had to sit tight for a few minutes, waiting for him to arrive.

The lecture was truly entertaining and likely inspiring for many of the participants. He talked about overarching changes in contemporary society and about how increasing diversity and fragmentation requires more collaboration, that is, welfare services that are co-produced through the participation of citizens. But we cannot do away with the silos of public administration, he argued; it is about finding horizontal connections between them. (In Swedish, the equivalent metaphor to silos, when talking about organisational structures, are downspouts, *stuprör*, and the professor talked about supplementing these with gutters, Swedish: *hängrännor*).

At a half-day, small conference organised by Deal, there were two researchers invited to speak, each in relation to another of Deal's affiliated projects, the Pinocchio project (which will be described in the coming

chapters). The Pinocchio project had been going on for some time when I learned about it, and it was not entirely sorting under Deal. Deal had entered at a later stage, primarily to help finalising an evaluation made by a university professor – the presentation of which was the first of the two talks at that half-day conference. The second presentation, however, appeared to be the main one – what would have been called a keynote address in an academic setting. Just like at the conference described above, DM introduced the professor with some awe; he was part of the national agency's (National Board of Health and Welfare, NBHW) research council, and he appeared to be an esteemed researcher within the field. The purpose here, however, was not to inspire. Instead, he presented an evidence-based assessment tool he had developed and that was used within the project in question, Pinocchio. On this occasion too, coincidentally, the professor ran late because of a train delay – something which required some adjustment of the programme, adding to the rise in expectations.

Train delays are circumstances that can hardly be planned or accounted for; for the organisers, they are unwelcome surprises, neither more nor less. But it is perhaps not only a coincidence that the more esteemed researchers and guests are affected, as opposed to others talking at the conference. In both cases, these two professors were supposed to arrive shortly before their presentations and leave directly afterwards. Contrary to the general participants, the professors might have had busy schedules or more important things to attend to. No matter the circumstances in each particular case, the considerate introductions together with the minor delays created a sense of hierarchy between the staff in the audience and the researchers who were invited to share their expert knowledge. In another project this hierarchy was also present, although there, the researchers were doing action research, participating in one of Deal's projects alongside the project leaders and participants.

Practice 2: Action research and evaluation

The Motivation project

In the project called Motivation, Deal had identified a need within the social services: they had to become better at motivating young people and

encouraging them to physical activity and better sleep. In the first phase of the project, some ten young people aged approximately 16–18 and living at a group care home – due to social or behavioural difficulties – were offered an activity bracelet whose software was connected to a smart phone application, and through which they could keep track of sleeping patterns and their physical activity. The staff at the care home were offered the same, and the purpose was for the youth and the staff to monitor their own activities and thereby be encouraged to live healthier lives. The idea was not to manage their activities – Deal was very explicit about this – but to offer them a means to more easily improve themselves and a gadget that made it easier for the staff and youth to talk about the importance of physical activity and sleep. These lifestyle factors were considered important for young people who had had problems with family and social relations and who were perhaps suffering from depression, anxiety or eating disorders, which thus caused them to lack healthy structure in their lives. The project was subsequently expanded and included groups of children and youth that had somewhat different needs but who could still benefit from increased motivation to exercise and sleep regularly.

The Motivation project was a recurring topic of discussion in the directors' committee, in the political committee, and in other small group meetings I attended. I was also updated on the project on several occasions by DM and her staff at Deal, and I asked about it in conversation with RB, manager at A-city's unit for research and development.[5] Furthermore, I attended meetings where the researchers participated, both at a planning stage and where they presented part of their research findings from the project. Throughout the process, the researchers' participation appeared central to the project. They conducted a research overview to contribute to the project's overall purpose of methods development, and they evaluated the project based on interviews with the participants about their experiences.

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[5] The R&D unit is part of the municipal organisation. Consisting of one manager, RB, and one employee, and being jointly owned by different departments in A-city, the unit resembles Deal in some ways. Contrary to Deal, however, the R&D unit works mostly as consultant to the municipal departments and communicates research that is relevant to them. To some extent, they also manage projects – although at the time of my study, the organisation was still in its early stage and their work was just beginning to take shape.

The researchers were both affiliated with Lund University Internet Institute (LUII). Their area of research was within user design, so their expertise had nothing to do with care (e.g. social work, health, rehabilitation, prevention, etc.) of the target group, – youth in care homes. Instead, their role was to map the particular research field in question and to evaluate the project participants' experiences. The research overview was based on a bibliometric study that showed what kind of research – what journals and academic disciplines – have studied the kinds of issues that the project was dealing with (see figure 2). By screening databases, the bibliometric study shows whether the issues of interest have been studied in technology, medicine, social work, and so on. The intention is to discover knowledge gaps, that is, to identify the perspectives from which the issues of motivation, social work and technology have not been approached. The bibliometric analysis was presented through a graph illustrating the research field and conveying the research overview.

Figure 2: Bibliometric analysis of the Motivation project. (Source: Motivation report, 2015b)
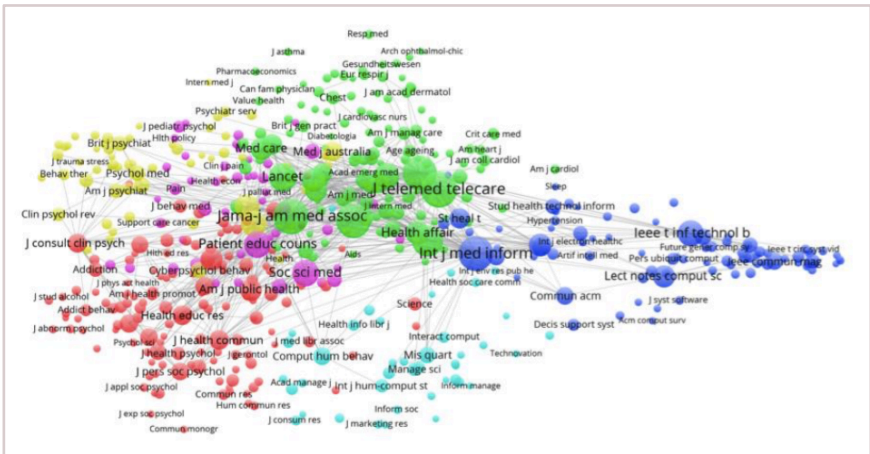
The very idea of the project, as I understood it, came from DM. With a background in computer linguistics, she had an interest in technological development and wanted to see how technology could be further developed in social work. She suspected that social work was rather underdeveloped in that respect, compared to other services where communication between people is a key feature, and the bibliometric

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survey seemed to confirm this suspicion. This, in turn, implied that the Motivation project might yield results of research relevance. But in the talks between the researchers and DM, RB and TC, much had to do with how to practically going about things. DM was in charge of the overall project, RB was responsible for parts of the researcher-involvement, and TC was administrator and one of the project leaders 'on the ground' – that is, having close contacts with the youth and staff at the care home. They talked about the different sections in the research report, who would author which part, the sequence of doing things, and so on. From my view, it sounded like any joint research task, or students doing a group work that should be presented in the end. There was very little, to my perception, indicating that this was a meeting between academia and public administration or researchers and practitioners; they appeared to be on equal footing. But in other ways, the researcher involvement in the project was accentuated and construed as less than ordinary This is indicated in the way the project was presented to the department directors through the two very comprehensive project reports and by the somewhat disturbing fact that the researchers were very late in delivering their part of the report.

When the project was presented to the directors' committee and the political committee, the researchers involved were seen as contributing to knowledge production that was essentially different from what would have been the case had the project been run entirely by Deal themselves or without any researchers involved. Projects of different sorts are commonplace in the public sector – directors and politicians are used to dealing with projects – and projects should usually include some sort of knowledge production or learning process for the host organisation. This is one of the criteria for EU-financed projects (see e.g. Fred, 2018). But the researcher involvement in the Motivation project seemed to entail a particularly substantial, or conspicuous, knowledge production. At a meeting with the directors' committee, DM and RB reported on the current status of the project. As described in the meeting protocol, the researchers' contribution is presented in an assertive wording.

§1. The Motivation project – lessons learned

DM talks about the background of the pilot project. The project consists of five subprojects with quite small groups. DM shows results from one of

the subgroups and talks about the lessons learned. RB puts the project in a context, based on the research that LUII [Lund University Internet Institute, where the researchers have their affiliation] has been looking at. In sum, we can conclude that the social aspect and computer technology is not sufficiently researched. The basic research has been done, when it comes to physical activity for example, and the connection to a good health, but there is a gap in the research on how to incorporate this into our services. The researchers draw different conclusions that will be presented in the report.

There is a discussion on how to proceed. The intention is to write an application for a continued project. The directors' committee is invited to the 29th of September, when the report on the Motivation project will be presented (by Deal, R&D A-city, and the researchers at LUII) and discussed.

(Directors' committee protocol, June 2015, my translation)

The protocol portrayed the Motivation project – or at least the research part of it – as a systematic undertaking, where data is generated and conclusions are drawn with quite some certainty.

The systematic approach was also reflected by the two project reports that were prepared. The first 18-page report was said to cover 'experiences and results from the pilot study', and it was authored by DM and the staff of Deal. The report presented each of the different subprojects – targeting different groups of children and youth – and it described the participants' positive and negative experiences. At the end, some conclusions were drawn and there was a discussion on how to continue or develop the project. The report was not the result of a scientific study; nor did it claim to be. The research part of the project was instead accounted for in a separate report, co-authored by Deal, RB of the R&D-unit, and the researchers. This 46-page document followed the structure of an academic publication, although it was published within the project and not in a scientific journal. There were sections on background, methods, results and analysis – and it covered the bibliometric analysis as well as a qualitative study, evaluating the pilot study from the perspective of the participants. At the end of this report, the researchers and the manager of Deal provided their separate reflections on the project, both concluding that digital technology such as the activity bracelets is well worth further

attention within social work and that there is a need for more profound collaboration on methods development that also includes the professionals.

The fact that it took the researchers such a long time to deliver their part of the final report added to the sense of distance between the researchers, and the municipal projects that they were conducting research on. In other words, despite the ostensibly equal relationship that I observed – and which reminded me of students engaged in a group task – the process at large indicated otherwise. Taken together, these different instances made the researcher-involvement in the project appear essential while also positioning the researchers in relation to Deal and its municipal partners.

In sum, researcher involvement appeared within all of the projects – KEY, Pinocchio, and Motivation – through lectures and talks, a research circle, and action research and evaluation. The academics presented their own previous research, and they participated in the projects, gathering first-hand data that was analysed and presented in reports. The data consisted of reported experiences of employees, children, and families as well as statistics from assessments that showed the success rate of interventions. In all of these instances, the projects were described as well-structured and carried out sequentially. This was especially the case with the evaluation of Pinocchio, which was described as highly rational in the sense that they had set up goals, worked towards them with the help of the adequate instruments, adjusted their interventions properly, and achieved results. The Motivation project and, to some extent, KEY were presented in a way that construes knowledge as clearly instrumental to solving problems or challenges.

Analysing expert knowledge: The status of academic research

As I have described in this chapter, researchers take part in Deal's activities in different ways. Sometimes they appear as lecturers or speakers; at other times they appear almost as colleagues to Deal's staff and the welfare workers within the projects. In all of these situations, however, the researchers were there to provide their expert knowledge of

things. They possessed a knowledge or an understanding of things that the staff needed – but did not have – to manage and carry out their projects. A common feature for the expert knowledge that I observed was that it provided guidance, answers or solutions to various problems. Where the expert knowledge matched the problems and concerns of the staff, it was harkened and taken into serious consideration; but where the concerns of the managers and staff could not be addressed by the researchers, they turned to other lines of reasoning. The regime of expert knowledge thus served to provide answers, to point out a direction for further action, and to induce certainty in an ambiguous situation.

In this final section of the chapter, I describe how I reasoned to understand the defining features of the expert knowledge in question – a pursuit of 'the essence of research'. This reasoning was carried out in dialogue with the people I met and interviewed – in particular DM – and in relation to others' theorisations of expert knowledge and knowledge use in politics and public administration.

Pursuing the essence of research

In the case of Deal, the expert knowledge held by researchers was often invoked with respect, and the academics themselves were introduced and presented in a way that shows their status. As mentioned, on several occasions when researchers were invited to talk in front of an audience, they were introduced with a certain high regard – often with references to their academic credentials or to expectations about the inspiration of their impending talks. Of course, such introductions of guests from out of town may be seen as common courtesy, but to my perception, the same regard – or respectful distancing – was not shown vis-à-vis public sector colleagues from outside the organisation. Nor was the tone similar in smaller settings, where only Deal's staff met with the researchers. On those occasions, the atmosphere was more casual, as if between equals. Overall, it would seem that in more public settings – and when DM referred to researcher involvement in speaking to the directors' committee – the position and importance of the researchers was played up. This may lead to the conclusion that researchers and their knowledge are invoked to

obtain a particular goal, that expert knowledge is an instrument, symbolic or not, to pursue interests.

This did not seem to be the case, however. Rather than using knowledge as a tool, or a lever, references were made to its underlying rationality: research was seen as valid in a way that goes beyond interests, opinions or politics. One time, when interviewing DM, I asked if they ever used non-academic consultants in Deal. My intention was to investigate whether anything was particular for the contribution of researchers or whether other providers of knowledge, such as consultants, might well take on similar roles. I was curious because during my entire time visiting Deal I had not seen any reference to non-academic experts.

> Me: Because I haven't come across any of this in relation to Deal.

> DM: That we take in consultants?

> Me: No, that any of these actors are mentioned, that there are no references to consultants lecturing or working with reorganisations or anything like that – it's hardly ever mentioned in the directors' committee or the more common meetings taking place. Instead there are the evaluating researchers and the organisation researchers…

> DM: Mm… But that's probably so that we can have the discussion on an objective[6] level. Consultants can be very, very good, but they haven't been published. And I can't refer to their lecture.

> Me: To whom? You often hear people referring to…

> DM: Yes, but I wouldn't… If I'm going out to talk to people, and I should *refer* to something, then it must be in writing. So I can point to that. (Interview, April 2015)

On a similar note, when I had once sent a brief note about my research, DM encouraged me to include references and name particular theories that I use. That way, she argued, she and the directors and the politicians in the committees can more easily get an understanding of things. I, for my part,

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[6] DM uses the Swedish word *saklig*, which is the same as *Sachlichkeit* in German, which in turn can be translated to English as "matter-of-factness", rather than objectivity or impartiality – something I will return to at the end of this chapter.

reacted with some surprise, and said that I was used to people preferring the simpler version, leaving theories and references out. But she told me: 'None of that dumbing down; they're intelligent people!' – adding that if they were not familiar with things, they would make a joint effort to get informed 'because we should have proper discussions'.

The fact that DM herself holds a PhD – albeit in a subject not directly related to what Deal is doing – was likely to make her more inclined to work with researchers rather than other knowledge-providers, who – in her words – have not been published. But rather than attributing the researcher involvement to DM being a former academic herself, I considered her academic background as yet another indication of Deal's interest in research and researchers; why else hire a PhD and former academic as manager of the organisation? Discussing this with the chairman of the political committee, he confirmed that the academic background was indeed important when hiring a manager for Deal (see also chapter three):

> That was clearly stated from our part, that we wanted someone who was close to the research, so preferably someone with a research background and who has worked within the academy and knows her way around it; and who is open to re-thinking things, who has experience from public service, who doesn't just come as a consultant who has worked in commercial enterprise – because that's entirely different, like, cultures in a private business and a local government. So those were some factors that were valuable to us. (Politician A, interview, Sept. 2016)

In light of Deal's history, and in the way the politicians envisioned Deal's current path, DM seemed to synthesise things. She could honour the legacy of working closely with researchers to develop new methods in collaborative projects but also take on the role of managing Deal by networking among department directors and mid-level managers. This was important because of the reorganisation in which the staff was relocated from the office of Deal to the ordinary administrations and departments (see chapter three).

Politicians in both cities thus pointed to research as a cornerstone throughout Deal's history and current work and as essential within all projects. The chairman of Deal's political committee, representing A-city, considered the emphasis on research to be entirely in accordance with how

they work in general in the city. Within Deal there had been researchers involved from the beginning, from universities in Gothenburg, Lund, and Örebro, I was told; so that was old news. But in A-city at large, there was also a political will to involve researchers and to have a scientific basis for everything they do.

> For me, and for us, we have written very clearly in our policy documents /…/ it says very clearly that we shall have a research connection; we should support the connection between A-city and the [local] university. And we have also – on [the governing majority's] initiative – initiated a research and development unit within the social services assigned to work very broadly on the environment, culture, social work, the school, and the labour market. (Politician A, interview, Sept. 2016)

The research connection, in other words, was described as an integral part of the politics in A-city. But in B-city, as described by the politician from there, this had only been the case within the department of education. In B-city at large, researcher involvement was more unusual; it was not that the ordinary work was unscientific but rather that the involvement of researchers was not a standard operating procedure within other departments in the city.

The politician representing B-city described how the collaboration through Deal basically enabled them to involve researchers. On its own, B-city was too small for that. But she also added that there had been a few very influential persons involved – for example the previous director of the department of education. 'He and I had an ambition to make a journey with the schools in B-city', she said, 'where the key to everything was that it should be done on a scientific basis'. She added: 'No one was ever going to be able to say "but that's how we've always done it"… like that'. Describing a few examples where they pushed through changes, she concluded:

> There was one hell of a commotion, I tell you. But it strengthened us to always have a scientific basis. And we have reorganised all of our development work in B-city, where all development should be systematised and be on a scientific basis. There can be different ways – you connect the work to the research community – but there should be a connection. I mean it's not guinea pigs we're dealing with, there should be an idea behind things. (Politician B, interview, Sept. 2016)

Research, in other words, was something to relate to in pursuing a policy or reform, but also something that served as a point of departure, ensuring that things are not done haphazardly. Research had a certain gravitas, it seems. In B-city, the researcher involvement of Deal thus connected to a process that was underway, whereas in A-city, Deal's devotion to science was likely more indicative of a research connection that A-city already had and valued. And from both of these perspectives, the new organisation and the prominent role of DM could serve the purpose.

As described to me by the politicians from both cities and by the manager and the staff of Deal's office, the first projects set the direction for the future. There was an identified problem to solve regarding a target group; there was an organisational need for better collaboration; and there was a researcher involved to help develop a method to solve the problem. These main building blocks were pretty much the same at the time of my study. There were groups of children and youth identified as being at risk – related to health, social behaviour or family situation – and there were needs for preventive work carried out in collaboration between the school and the social services, primarily. Following this, experts were consulted or involved to develop appropriate methods for intervention and collaboration. Although several researchers had been involved in Deal's different projects, a professor in social work from Stockholm University stood out as an especially important figure in the early years. Now, researchers were involved in particular projects – such as the Motivation, KEY, and Pinocchio projects – as well as in the overall organisation, management and structure of Deal. Judging from DM, this was the result of a deliberate strategy to not put all their eggs in one basket.

> But that's the way it is in the world of research, there's not just one hero. But when you bring something in, you can't try all, so [the Stockholm professor] has been important here, and he's had very good basic research – register studies. 'This is what has an effect'. But now, perhaps you have to bring in research of some other generation, to proceed, and then first you have to identify that 'this is the research we believe in', and that doesn't happen overnight. You don't just head out and say, 'We'll go with you today!' (DM, interview, April 2014)

The researcher involvement in the Motivation project, for instance, as well as that of the research circle, indicated a diversification of Deal's

researcher portfolio. In both of these cases, the research involvement was a key feature of the process, but always with an eye to the inter-organisational collaboration. Similarly, in the case of the research circle, the facts that the circle emphasised precisely research, that it was led by university professors, and that it had a clear aim that the project resultg in a joint publication distinguished it from many other forms of skills development or on-the-job training. Research seemed to invoke something essentially different than other forms of knowledge production. Research was not seen as a mere instrument, helping to push a certain agenda; the manager and staff of Deal, as well as the two committees overseeing Deal seemed to share a view of scientific knowledge as desired for its own sake – a belief in its rationality. Following the scientific – and disembedded (see chapter four) – rationality, research is not something that you rely on for strategic purposes; it carries an actual importance that non-scientific knowledge does not.

The expert knowledge held by researchers could be seen as having a significant weight, or mass, with a certain gravitational pull. But the mere existence of this mass is not enough for it to affect the different projects – to steer them in this or that direction. In order for the expert knowledge to influence their activities, the other participants must be brought within the reach of knowledge in question – or, inversely, the knowledge must be brought close enough for it to affect their work and to make a difference. Thus, I wish to say that the expert knowledge must be invoked, or acted upon, in some way. This is why the practice of government here is not research per se, but *researcher involvement* within Deal and its projects.

The contingency of expert knowledge

According to the rationality that underpins expert knowledge, it is valid due to its inherent character; the logical procedures whereby knowledge is produced guarantees that it is universally true. However, as Dear (2004) describes, no matter how knowledgeable experts appear, they are always dependent on an element of authority that does not stem from their actual expertise (see also Lindblom & Cohen, 1979). Even the most acclaimed experts rely on the environment's inclination to believe them – their position in relation to others. 'Expertise cannot be analysed all the way

down without it ceasing to appear as expertise', argues Dear (2004: 209), continuing, 'an irreducible and unanalysable core must always remain at the centre; if it is unveiled or explicated, its efficacy vanishes'. Had the expert knowledge been explained in every last detail, the expert as expert would have been rendered obsolete.

> Expert witnesses in the modern courtroom are there precisely because their credibility is reckoned to go beyond what they can justify on the witness stand. If they tried too hard to justify everything they said with explicit appeals to evidence and the grounds of their reasoning, that credibility would be damaged /.../ Just so, a 'mystery of state' in the seventeenth century could never be justified by marshalling all the reasons for a government action. (Dear, 2004: 220)

Dear (2004: 215) compares the authority of experts to the 'mystery of state' – 'a view of kingship and government as divinely ordained, as set-apart, [which] required a great deal of acceptance by subjects of the legitimacy of government actions'. The rule of kings was simply not possible for common people to comprehend logically; its legitimacy stemmed from elsewhere.

Later on, however, as states came to 'trust in numbers' to an increasing extent, the legitimacy of government was based on rationality instead of mystery. As described by Porter (1995), the use of statistics became a key feature of government in the modern state – but statistics and numbers were, and are, a means of communication, bound to the social identity of researchers. Just as I described in chapter four, the authority of modernist knowledge stems from it being conceived as objective – but this development was not just something that happened. Porter describes how certain administrative and professional groups adopted particular forms of knowledge – such as standards – in situations where they were under pressure from the public or from politicians.

> The appeal of numbers is especially compelling to bureaucratic officials who lack the mandate of a popular election, or divine right. Arbitrariness and bias are the most usual grounds upon which such officials are criticized. A decision made by the numbers (or by explicit rules of some other sort) has at least the appearance of being fair and impersonal. Scientific objectivity thus provides an answer to a moral demand for impartiality and fairness. Quantification is a way of making decisions

without seeming to decide. Objectivity lends authority to officials who have very little of their own. (Porter, 1995: 8)

Whether government relies on persona and mystery or is based on numbers and a perceived objectivity is thus an empirical question. In none of the cases, however, does the authority depend solely on the features of knowledge itself. Knowledge is always bound to a social context – the social status of numbers or researchers, for example – which renders it valuable.

Following from this, the superiority of the one who knows is immense. Whether it is the expert witness in the courtroom, the doctor in the emergency room, or the social scientist in the government commission, 'expertise implies rights, foremost among them the right to be believed in one's area of competence' (Dear, 2004: 220). In other words, the expert knowledge needs to be *enacted* – it has to be put into some sort of *practice* in order to govern the actions and behaviour of others. And a common feature for such practices, it seems, is that they provide answers or solutions to questions and problems that are seen as emergent in some way (see Bacchi, 2015). In other words, government seems to be more about providing functioning solutions than about explaining or understanding those solutions in detail. In the case of Deal, this shows in particular situations where expert knowledge is *not* invoked – presumably because satisfying answers are provided from elsewhere.

In the Motivation project, there were instances when other ways of reasoning were displayed, illustrating that there are always different rationalities present that can be invoked. Despite the close collaboration between the researchers and Deal – primarily through DM and RB, although the latter is not formally a part of Deal – expert knowledge was not sufficient to manage the project. At one meeting with the department directors' committee, they discussed an incident where the staff participating in the project had pushed things too far; they had focused on physical activity to the extent that it no longer motivated the youths they worked with but rather discouraged them and was thus detrimental to the project. In analysing this situation, however, no research or expert knowledge was invoked; there were no studies or observations telling them how to interpret the situation, whether to analyse this as a failed project, whether to change something in the instructions or with the activity bracelets, or whether this was just an unfortunate development.

One of the department directors proclaimed that the behaviour of the staff was all too stupid to draw any conclusions from; they had 'got lost', she put it, and the incident should not be given too much attention. She was frustrated, quite clearly, and referred to simple common sense: 'It's like saying "We don't have any biscuits to go with the coffee at this office because there was one guy here making ten different sorts every day, so from now on we'll never have any snacks!" I mean, it's as stupid as that'. Her argument was that one person's ludicrous behaviour – or 'stupidity' – should not be the basis for principled decisions. The department directors thus agreed that the project should continue as if this incident had never happened – all by reference to common sense.

This, of course, does not mean that common sense generally trumps expert knowledge; rather, the situation shows that despite the presence and heavy influence of research, it is always possible to invoke other lines of reasoning, drawing upon other rationalities. In an immediate situation, where managers are to make a decision to move the project in this or that direction, research and other forms of expert knowledge are but one source that they can draw upon. Expert knowledge may present a perfectly adequate solution to the problem at hand, and it may have incrementally informed the perceptions of the decision maker – through 'knowledge creep' (Weiss, 1980); but it may also be that no expert knowledge presents itself in a way that is immediately applicable, and the decision maker thus turns elsewhere in their reasoning. Hacking (1990: 145) describes this dilemma by illustrating how different ways of reasoning apply to different situations: 'The statistician may report that 80% of the victims treated in a certain way will recover, but the patient wants to know, "Will I survive?"' The physician, in such a situation, can hardly reason with the patient solely by invoking research or expert knowledge, no matter how correct. The reasoning must take into account the embedded rationality that guides the patient's question.

One of the prominent roles of Deal –for DM especially – was to provide a frame of reference, or a knowledge foundation, for the politicians and department directors to base their decisions on. In some meetings, DM provided statistics to paint a general picture – for example the percentage of the population or given generation at risk of entering into criminality or substance abuse. Or sometimes she summarised the research on a topic, such as the main theories regarding the increasing incidence of mental

illness among adolescent girls. Without proposing a certain policy or intervention, such contributions served to contextualise discussions among the department directors and the politicians, as well as – I would believe – give them a sense of being up to date with research. This role can be seen as a form of *knowledge brokering*; a position where different forms of knowledge are transferred, translated and transformed to suit the situation at hand. While a knowledge broker is often conceived as a rather formal position that deals with rather explicit types of knowledge such as scientific knowledge, the case of Deal implies that very subtle practices may also be seen as knowledge brokering in that they help construe knowledge in very broad terms (see Meyer, 2010, and also Knaggård, 2015 on 'problem brokers').

At one of the early meetings, I got a first insight into how Deal, and DM, are situated within the different collaboration projects that fall under its mandate. It was a meeting on the KEY project, described earlier, where an invited university professor talked about the importance of leadership in collaboration processes. DM was at the very centre, at the meeting and more generally; she had close contacts with the department directors formally in charge and with the politicians in the standing special committee overseeing Deal, and she had invited the professor as well as the key persons who could provide input on the project that was to be planned. After the professor's presentation and discussion at that meeting, DM took over and talked to the group about some more practical issues regarding the KEY project. At that point, I noted how several participants became more talkative. It was obvious that practicalities were more pressing for some people, and several of the participants asked difficult questions and expressed outright critique about different aspects of the planned project. The discussion ended before lunch, with a lot of issues raised but not many having been addressed. From my view, there seemed to be a distance between the presentation and discussion about leadership and cross-sectorial management, on the one hand, and the practical issues lying before them, on the other hand. Although there was no questioning of the researcher's ideas or his presentation, it did not seem to make an impression on the managers who were to incorporate the ideas and put them into practice. That part of the meeting was somewhat detached from the more pressing issues and concerns, which engaged the participants. The mere presence of the researcher and the expert knowledge, in other

words, was not enough for it to take a governing role in relation to the participants.

I have argued for putting the role of knowledge into context, and in Deal, it is obvious that in different situations, different rationalities are enacted. In general discussions, well-prepared occasions and talks, expert knowledge is often invoked; but in the spur of the moment, for example in the face of pressing problems, practices often draw upon entirely different rationalities. In KEY, Deal used researchers to discuss the overarching issues of leading and managing the collaboration procedures, and they initiated a research circle to this end. But further on in the project – where I attended several meetings on the detailed investigation procedures within the project – Deal did not invite researchers. Instead, managers and staff within school and social services talked about how to assess an individual who is a client of the social services, in what order to do things, and how to share the responsibility between the involved professional groups. In this process, thus, they coordinated the input from those who know the work in practice, drawing on their experiences and professional know-how.

Concluding remarks on the regime of expert knowledge

The most salient feature of expert knowledge is its explicit position as knowledge. Science, research and expertise are easily recognised as knowledge; they are not confused with values, opinions or otherwise 'murky' ideas. Based on a rationality that is seen as disembedded – a mode of thought that does not belong to any particular institution or discourse – expert knowledge remains impartial. When DM describes the distinguishing features of research, she points to it being reviewed and potentially replicated by peers – and to the fact that it enables 'objective' discussion. The Swedish word she uses, *saklig*, is not easily translated into English: it does not mean 'objective' in the sense of being distanced or necessarily impartial. It seems to be more like the German concept of *Sachlich*, used by Weber, understood as 'attaining to the matter at hand, being business like' (Townley, 2008: 172). *Sachlichkeit* is sometimes

translated a 'matter-of-factness', which I also think is an appropriate interpretation of what DM is talking about (see e.g. Triantafillou, 2015).

But while *Sachlichkeit* might be easy in some situations, in other instances this is not how things are done. This showed in the Motivation project, where DM and the department directors – almost in frustration – appealed to their own common sense in deciding how to proceed with the project. Also in the Motivation project, the researchers involved were specialised in human-technology interaction, rather than in healthcare or social work; they were not experts on the part of the project that one might suspect that the professionals – the social workers – were trained in. The researchers' contribution lay in the use of the activity bracelets as an instrument for promoting health and wellbeing, more than how to motivate or otherwise work with the target group. Both aspects are at the fore of the project, but there is not a clash between different knowledge systems or authorities on the issues.

Following the practice-oriented approach, as I have described it, we should focus the constantly on-going activities in which actors – organisations and individuals alike – are made into acting subjects. Actors do not possess a power that they can choose how to exercise, and with what instruments. They are embedded in a context, where their undertakings must fit into what goes on around them. The fact that DM and RB both have a PhD and are familiar with the academic discourse, does not automatically imbue them with a certain power vis-à-vis the department directors or their public-sector colleagues. Deal's history of researcher-involvement, together with the directors' and the political committees' evident trust in research, places Deal's staff – including DM – in a strong position. But one has to make use of such a position; power is not exercised solely by the organisational or discursive position.

Because Deal consists entirely of its collaboration projects and activities – and lacks the formal institutional framework that is typical of the welfare sector and which typically sets the limits of what an organisation can and cannot do – the governing practices are likely to take on a different form compared to more traditional welfare organisations. The knowledge brokering, thus, is not only about matching the need and demand for knowledge with what is available – it is about providing knowledge as a both cognitive and practical framework in the absence of an organisational framework.

The presence and availability of researchers is a potential resource for managing Deal and its projects, but this is not enough to explain their role. It is the *involvement* of researchers that makes use of the resource – the practice that draws upon the knowledge. And this practice is enacted in some situations – where it helps in 'structuring the field of action', to speak with Foucault (1982) – but not always. Expert knowledge, consequentially, cannot be used as a lever in any situation. No matter how authoritative and undisputed a piece of research is, it cannot determine the role and importance of politicians, department directors or professional interests just like that (see Flyvbjerg, 2001). Neither does its influence depend on institutional or organisational features; it co-exists with other forms of knowledge that are also acted upon in different situations. Where expert knowledge does not exist as a resource of power, other forms of knowledge and rationality prevail. In the next chapter, I describe what I call standardised knowledge.

7. A regime of standardised knowledge

Although expert knowledge stood out as particularly important already at an early stage in my contacts with Deal, it was not the form of knowledge that I was primarily expecting to hear about. In research on knowledge-use in social work, prevention, and child welfare, *evidence* is the form of knowledge that is most often debated (see e.g. Bergmark & Lundström, 2006, 2011a; and Björk, 2016, for a literature overview). The use of evidence-based practices (EBP) have been studied and debated from various disciplines and in different areas – in research on medicine and social work (e.g. Björk, 2016; Ferlie et al., 2012; Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012) as well as in political discourse (e.g. Ferlie et al., 2012; Hasselbladh & Bejerot, 2017; Triantafillou, 2015). On the one hand, drawing on scientific evidence in practices of social work is highly uncontroversial; on the other hand, the so-called 'evidence movement' represents a change in the nature of social work that implies scientisation, possibly at the expense of professional discretion.

In its practical use, evidence represents a form of standardised knowledge that is produced through scientific procedures and thereafter applicable to certain given situations. In Deal, where all projects are devoted to preventive social work in relation to children and youth, evidence-based practices are an important feature and part of the social workers' as well as school teachers' toolbox. But in order to capture the way that evidence governs the practices within Deal, it is necessary to zoom in on the particular projects and processes, to observe how evidence co-exists with other knowledge regimes – such as the researcher involvement described in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I describe my observations of standardised knowledge within Deal, and how this form of knowledge is acted upon in government practices.

Practices of standardised knowledge

The most prominent use of standardised knowledge that I came across in Deal's projects was the screening and assessment tool called Ester. The first time I learned about it was at a conference on collaboration in A-city, arranged by Deal. A number of projects were presented in brief, and several of these referred to methods, models and instruments that they used. One group presented a project called Pinocchio, in which Ester was an essential part. The purpose of Pinocchio was to identify and address norm-breaking behaviour with young children, and Ester was the screening and assessment tool to help the social workers and preschool teachers in this task.

The KEY project, mentioned previously, also used standardised knowledge for structuring procedures of assessment and investigation. When preparing the new casework procedures, Ester was discussed as one alternative, but for various reasons it was decided not to use this. Instead, the group that drew up the guidelines chose to rely on the system called BBIC.[7] Based on this, Deal developed a KEY-guideline for the involved collaborating parties – schoolteachers, social workers, school nurses, counsellors and others.

Practice 3: Evidence-based practices

The Pinocchio project and Ester

According to the National Board for Health and Welfare (NBHW), the Swedish government agency overseeing health and social services, 'Ester assessment is an instrument used to assess youth with norm-breaking behaviour, or that are in the risk zone for norm-breaking behaviour' (NBHW webpage 1, my translation). It is an instrument to help social workers in assessing children and in choosing and deciding on proper interventions for children with special needs. Ester is designed to support

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[7] BBIC is a widespread standard developed by the National Board for Health and Welfare (NBHW), following a British model called Siblings, and which aims to put 'the needs of the children at the centre' (*Swedish: Barnens behov i centrum, BBIC*) (Skillmark & Denvall, 2018)

a structured professional assessment of risk and protection factors in the young person's life and environment. Explicitly, 'Ester assessment is meant to facilitate communication and collaboration between professions and administrations' (NBHW webpage 1, *my translation*). *Ester assessment* and *Ester screening* are two out of some 90 methods within social work that are presented in the NBHW Methods guide (NBHW webpage 2). The fact that a method is listed in the guide does not mean that it is endorsed by the agency, only that it has been reviewed based on research.

Ester is an acronym for 'evidence-based structured assessment of risk and protection factors'. It entails a manual-based screening process – with different versions for different target groups – as well as a more thorough computer-aided assessment instrument in order to map characteristics of the child (Ester webpage 1, see fig. 3).

Figure 3: Ester assessment form and chart, excerpts (From Ester webpage)
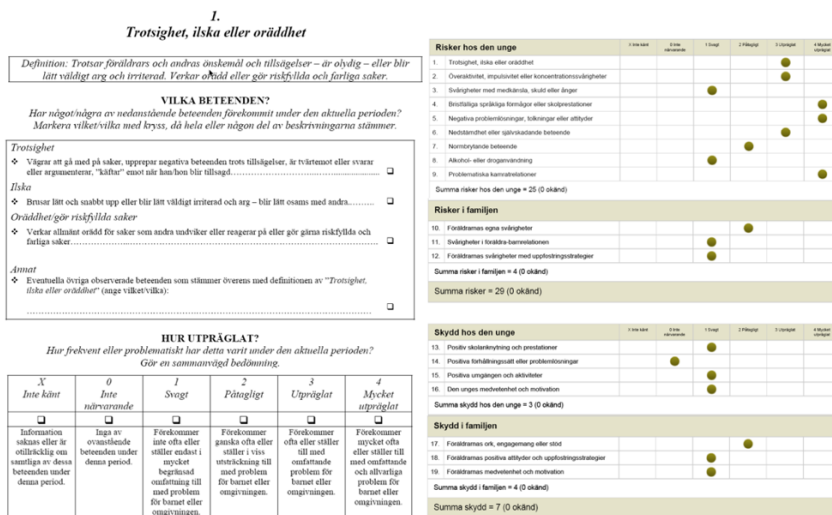
Ester was developed by Henrik Andershed, professor in psychology and criminology, and Anna-Karin Andershed,[8] associate professor in

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[8] Because these researchers are renowned in the field and not directly involved in any of Deal's current projects, they are not anonymised.

psychology, both of whom are located at the Centre for Criminological and Psychosocial Research at Örebro University, Sweden. According to the Ester-webpage, the two 'have more than twenty years' experience of research, education and instrument development, and have authored more than 60 scientific articles, book chapters and books' (Ester webpage 2). The webpage provides some general information about the instrument and how it is used, as well as scientific and other references. It is currently used by national and local welfare institutions in different parts of Sweden, primarily within social services and education. The webpage also announces courses for social workers or others who want to work with the Ester-instruments; a basic one-day course is needed to get started (Ester-webpage 1).

My knowledge of Ester, however, was primarily acquired through the different meetings and conferences I attended where the instrument was presented and discussed. The project called Pinocchio had been going on for some time when it was introduced at the conference, and it did not entirely fall under Deal. Deal had entered at a later stage, primarily to help finalise and present an evaluation that a researcher had been involved in carrying out. The evaluation results were presented at a half-day conference where the evaluating researcher, JG, gave a presentation, as did the key participants of the project as well as Professor Andershed, one of the two researchers behind Ester.

The instrument was first described by the first researcher, JG, who had conducted a summative evaluation of the Pinocchio project, and then again by the project leader and participants who took the stage after him. The project leader and her colleagues of the Pinocchio project presented a flow chart, which illustrated where in the work with the children the Ester screening came in and where the computer-aided Ester assessment was carried out.

All the presenters were very positive – to Pinocchio at large and to Ester as an instrument to help them prevent norm-breaking behaviour in young children, which was the purpose of the project. The statistics from the evaluation spoke in squares and decimals, while the social workers and preschool teachers added words to the success story. Towards the end of the conference, Professor Andershed took the stage and presented his own research on Ester, the *evidence* in the 'evidence-based practice', as it were. A series of randomised control studies had all proved that working with

an instrument such as Ester, significantly improved the work with norm-breaking behaviour, compared to not working with an instrument such as Ester.[9]

Because of my practice-oriented approach, I focused on how Ester was described and presented, not on the particularities of the assessment instrument itself. My interest in Ester lay not in its detailed use – vis-à-vis the children – but rather how it was related to by the Pinocchio project participants, what role it occupied in their work, and how it fit into the bigger picture of Deal. I tried to 'zoom out' just enough to see Ester in its context instead of in detail. This meant that I did not pay much attention to the content of the different boxes in the Ester assessment flow chart but instead focused on how the participants described their work with the flow chart, where they emphasised the benefits of having a set sequence of doing things, , for example, as well as a common terminology across professional boundaries.

There was no doubt, at the conference, that people were committed to the project and its results. The researchers appeared engaged in the topic, and they were convincing about the benefits of working in the way the project had done. The project participants' enthusiasm was also apparent. They spoke about Ester as if it were not only a tool or an instrument in the literal sense – the way a mechanic or a craftsman would probably speak about their tools used – but rather as a substantial point of reference in their work. In order to better understand the staff's own experiences of their collaboration, and more specifically what role Ester had played, I decided to visit the Family Centre – where the project had taken place and where they were all located – to talk about their work.

A few weeks after the half-day conference, I met with the Pinocchio project participants to hear more about their collaboration and how they had worked with Ester. I had had some trouble understanding the relation between Pinocchio as a project, Ester as screening and assessment instrument within the project, and the cross-sectorial organisation – the Family Centre – where the project was located. The Family Centre included a social worker, a preschool teacher and a paediatric nurse, and they had worked together well before the Pinocchio project started. The

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[9] See Bergmark & Lundström (2011b) for a discussion on the evaluation of evidence-based practices in social work, and a critique against NBHW's promotion of them.

Family Centre (*Swedish: Familjecentral*) is a form and organisation of collaboration, and according to the national association working to promote Family Centres, there are currently about 230 centres located across all Swedish regions/counties (FFFF, e-mail correspondence). The Ester instrument came as part of the Pinocchio project and was thus introduced in an already well-functioning – according to the staff themselves – collaborative organisation. The Family Centre had been around since 1999. When asked about the origin and the start-up of Pinocchio, they told me that it was rather difficult in the beginning but that they benefitted from already knowing each other and that they could learn from some other city having worked according to the Pinocchio project model.

Pinocchio was not locally developed. It was a project launched by the national agency NBHW together with IMS (*Swedish: Institutet för utveckling av metoder i social arbete*), an institute promoting knowledge and evidence-based practices within social services, which was previously independent but which was incorporated into the agency in 2009 (Pinocchio Report, 2010). After the national project had ended, the Pinocchio project model was adopted in A-city, and they worked according to the same principles and methods (Pinocchio report 2014). The national evaluation report (Pinocchio report 2010), published by NBHW and IMS, stressed the importance of evidence-based practices in screening and assessing the children, and they emphasised a certain method (The Breakthrough Series, BTS) and a project model (Plan-Do-Study-Act, PDSA), which all teams followed. The national evaluation report concluded that one should 'use standardised assessment methods which focus on evidence-based risks and resources' and that one should 'avoid doing unstructured assessments and interventions that are not focused directly on evidence-based risk- and protection factors for norm-breaking behaviour' (Pinocchio Report, 2010: 38, 59, my translation).

In my interview with the participants in the Pinocchio project in A-city, the method (BTS) and project model (PDSA) were not mentioned at all, and they were not mentioned in the local evaluation report (Pinocchio Report, 2014). The evidence-based practices, however, were put front and centre in A-city – just as in the national project. As described to me by the project participants, Pinocchio could be combined with other assessment instruments as well, apart from Ester. Some used SDQ, the Strengths and

Difficulties Questionnaire – also listed in the NBHW Methods guide (NBHW webpage 2), while the national evaluation report also described the instruments EARL, ASQ and ECBI (Pinocchio Report, 2010). Ester, however, was the one already chosen when the Pinocchio project was offered to the staff at the Family Centre.

The project participants described Ester in very positive ways, partly because it enabled them – coming from different professional backgrounds – to work better together:

> Social worker: And it's a good instrument to map risk and protection with children, it's very good. Many municipalities learn Ester and want to implement it. Andershed [the professor mentioned earlier] says that many social services have implemented it in casework investigations, for example. Because it is such a good instrument.

> Preschool teacher: And if I'm not mistaken, SDQ looks at risk factors, while Ester looks at both risk and protection. And I'm a Marte Meo therapist as well [Marte Meo is a treatment method focusing on emotional expressions, based on attachment theory, NBHW webpage 2], and for me it's really the right thing to do, looking at both risk and protection. I would have a hard time working with something where you only look at risk.

> Social worker: Yes. And it's good thinking, that you want to increase the protection with children as well, not only looking at risks.

> Me: So you don't get to that pathogenic…

> Social worker: No, exactly.

> Preschool teacher: But when we do assessments with preschool teachers, some of them can hardly do the part that is risk. Because we're not used to talking about children in that way. We're so used to talking about children based on what is supportive and positive and protective. Sometimes I get – or quite often – I get to say, 'Well, now it's this tough risk part', and that comes first, the risk part, 'but once we've done that, the protection comes'. It gets easier, so to speak. It's almost more difficult than with the parents. (Interview, Nov. 2014)

The participants all emphasised how much they learned from each other, how they benefitted from each other's perspectives, and how Ester had

been one element in this. Still, they returned to the fact that inter-professional collaboration had been a part of their work for a long time. They also told me that they took a course together at the university, as part of the Pinocchio project, which not only taught them specific methods to apply within the project, but also brought them closer to each other, gave them a common way of seeing and talking about things. In relation to this – and even more so when they talked about the meeting series *Our Children*, which I will return to in the next chapter – I perceived a certain professional respect, or humility, among them. There was a willingness to learn and to improve, which made them speak positively about each other's contribution as well as the contribution of assessment instruments such as Ester.

Practice 4: The use of templates and guidelines

The KEY project, 'cogwheel investigations' and BBIC

The project that I call KEY, which I also described in the last chapter, was about to restart as I commenced my study of Deal. It was a significant project in the early days of Deal, sprung from a previous project considered successful, but it had since then not developed as they had hoped. It was therefore evaluated in 2013, and in 2014 and 2015 it was prepared to start anew, under the management of DM.

KEY was developed within the organisation of Deal in order to answer to a pressing problem: children benefitting from social services were not being given adequate support and help because the 'ordinary' organisation of the public services does not allow for adequately addressing the complexity of the children's and their families' needs. KEY's objectives, then, were to improve the health and education situation for the targeted children and to enable the participating organisations to learn from the project and develop more adequate routines and services (KEY Report, 2013). KEY was thus intended to address problems at the individual and societal levels – related to the children – as well as on an organisational level.

KEY was described less as a project and more as a way of working in relation to the identified target group: children who receive support from the social services and whose problems are related to their school

situation. It was primarily a routine for investigating the situation and needs of these children, focusing on the role of teachers and other staff in school, and social workers. At the time of the report, the activities that had taken place – and which were evaluated – were seen as a pilot project, an implementation of a KEY project model on a limited scale, targeting children at a selection of schools that had participated in related collaboration projects. Now, the project model should be continued on a larger scale, and such a continuation needed to be well prepared and structured. In the 2013 report, the experiences and development of KEY were described in some detail. The background, purpose, work routines, challenges, and the development over time were all accounted for, along with the lessons learned and suggestions for future improvements. The evaluation report accounted for several problems and difficulties within the earlier KEY project. Above all, the collaborative aspect of the project – where different organisations and professional groups collaborate around a specific child/youth – was not supported by the so-called ordinary, or permanent, organisations. The report said that, even though the KEY group (the different professionals collaborating on a case) agreed on things, they were confronted with 'reality' – meaning that organisational silos, decision-making procedures and the high caseload made collaboration difficult (KEY Report, 2013).

When I learned about the project in one of my first contacts with Deal, the situation was that DM, as manager of Deal, was to gather input from representatives of the involved administrations and then return with a proposal for the new KEY model. During the time I visited Deal, DM met regularly with representatives from schools and the social offices in A-city and B-city in order to gather their input and to put all the pieces in place. I did not have much insight into this process; I attended a few meetings, but apart from that my knowledge of the discussions relied on what DM reported to the directors' committee and to me personally. My impression was that the process was rather difficult, with practical problems involved, due to, for example, high staff turnover in the social services and lower and mid-level managers whose plans and priorities did not fully align with Deal's priorities and intentions.

From my viewpoint, KEY seemed to be the project that DM struggled with the most. The main tasks were to agree on the standard or routine to use; to compile the KEY guideline, a thorough documentation that the

social workers and school personnel were supposed to use to carry out the new efficient 'cogwheel investigation'; and to appoint coordinators, the persons designated to tie together the contributions of the different professions.

Attending DM's meeting with representatives of the social services in A-city and B-city, I gained insight as to how the investigation procedures of KEY were planned. On the whole, DM was rather low-key, mainly listening and taking input from others. The representatives of the social services had different positions in their organisation, and they could discuss and explain in detail to DM what must be taken into consideration in an investigation and how to understand the boundaries between social services and the school. Casework investigations are regulated in detail by the Social Services Act (*Swedish: Socialtjänstlagen*), and as mentioned, the cogwheel investigations –the essence of the KEY project – were supposed to make investigations more efficient. Instead of each administration and department doing things sequentially, information should be gathered in closer collaboration between social case workers (social workers in charge of the formal investigation of individual cases, *Swedish: utredare*) and other professionals such as teachers, the school nurse, and the school counsellor.

The social workers repeatedly explained to DM what the formal responsibilities of the social services were, what could not be delegated to others, how things had been done in the past, and so on. DM, for her part, asked them questions to clarify things in order to overview the process. She had previously met with representatives from the school administrations and was about to do so again, and they would later have joint meetings to sort out who does what. A significant part of this particular meeting was devoted to the formal procedural issues of investigating children who are clients of social services. Two instruments – formalised ways of carrying out the cogwheel investigations – were discussed: the standard called BBIC and the screening and assessment instrument called Ester.

The meeting started out with one of the more experienced social workers, having worked with the previous KEY project, which was now being revised, taking a somewhat leading role. She seemed knowledgeable of much of what was discussed, and she was the one driving the discussion forward. At a few points during the meeting she summarised what had

been concluded so far and what had to be discussed next. She opened the discussion by saying that they should 'dust off' the old cogwheel investigations, adapt them to the new target group (6–12 year olds), and connect the investigation procedure to BBIC, where the cogwheel investigations cover two of the modules.

By this, she located the current project in relation to what had been done previously; referring to the 'old cogwheel investigations' and repeatedly using the phrase 'from what I can remember…' But despite this, the earlier version of the KEY project did not seem to be the most important starting point in the meeting; instead, it was BBIC that was established as a point of reference going forth. As mentioned, BBIC is a standard of social work consisting of a set of principles and procedures that BBIC-licensed authorities are required to follow. The social workers therefore discussed to what extent the cogwheel investigation procedure would cover what the BBIC-standard required of them. Two of them talked about the fact that there is guideline material within a BBIC – including a conversation guide – that seemed rather comprehensive. Someone asked whether it would make more sense to start from there, using the existing guidelines, and they seemed to agree that it would be better to do so.

The meeting continued with a detailed discussion on who does what. They talked about what was included in the investigations that the schools usually carry out; they referred to a consultations document, which appeared to be a sort of template for investigating the social situation of children. To me, they appeared to agree that all perspectives are necessary: the teachers, school nurse, and parents must all contribute in order to make the best for the child. Someone mentioned a 'network chart' – a way of mapping adults surrounding the child in question that may be important for their wellbeing. While someone of them mentioned an actual example – there was a child who had a neighbour with a dog, and the neighbour proved to be an important person in is the child's life – someone else mentioned an app for charting such networks, called *Juvopal*. The app did not figure much in the remainder of the meeting, but it caught the interest of DM. As DM had a personal interest in technological tools within social work, she checked out the Juvopal webpage and, in brief, they together weighed the pros and cons of using such an instrument.

This meeting was fast-paced, as were several other meetings in which only a few people participated. Issues and reflections sometimes quickly

entered and exited, without my being able, as an observer, to fully judge their pertinence for the future process. Juvopal could have been an instrument that was to play a major role, but as things turned out, that was the only time I ever heard about it. Out of curiosity, I later searched Juvopal on the Internet, only to find out that it no longer existed. The enterprise behind the app was registered in 2013 and ceased to exist in 2015 – shortly after it was mentioned at that meeting in October 2014.

The discussion was mostly about what guideline, instrument, or manual should be used, so the mentioning of Juvopal mainly demonstrated the character of brainstorming taking place. At one point, DM asked who decides which instrument to use – 'should we make a list?' – to which the more experienced social worker responded: '*If* we're going to use one' – indicating that perhaps it was not necessary at all. They were all engaged in the discussion, in which several instruments were mentioned, and someone concluded: 'Shouldn't we check what there is, what's been evaluated and so on?' DM entered the NBHW *Methods Guide*, on the big screen, so that everyone could see it. They focused on the Ester screening and assessment tool, and discussed the role of professor Andershed, who had developed it. One of the social workers said that the professor was also involved in the revision of BBIC – being one of the researchers in the NBHW consultation council – which means that using Ester would likely guarantee compatibility with the revised version of BBIC. Using an alternative instrument, on the other hand, might result in it not being up to date with the new BBIC standard. Since Deal and its projects also had personal contact with the professor in question, they discussed what questions they should ask him in order to get some details clarified.

At a much later time, when I received the final version of the guidelines, it was obvious that the BBIC-forms made up the bulk of the document. Totalling some 170 pages, only a one-page introduction together with a flow chart (figure 4 below) described the cogwheel investigations per se. The remainder of the guidelines consists of forms and sheets that the investigating social workers and staff at the school should fill in based on conversations and examinations of the child.

Figure 4: Process chart, cogwheel investigations (translated from KEY Guidelines, 2015)
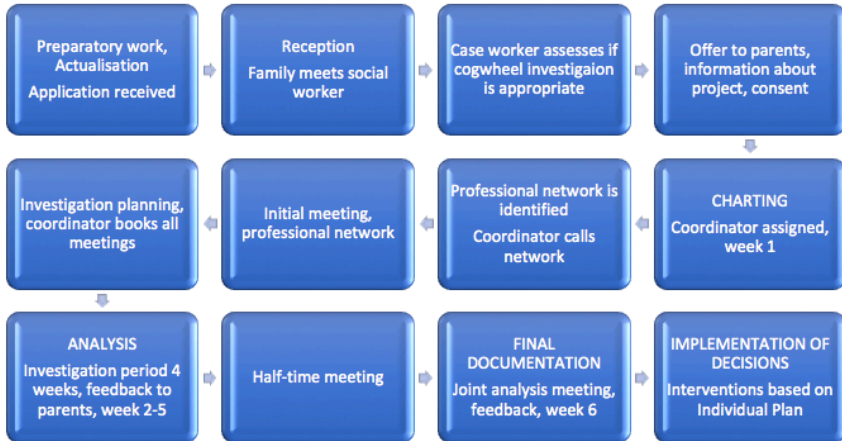
The detailed step-by-step guidelines on how to examine and assess the child stands in some contrast to how many of the organisational and procedural issues were dealt with leading up to the guidelines. While the investigation and assessment of children was meticulously detailed and boxed, the process of organising and managing projects seemed less so. The procedures of organising a project, such as KEY, sometimes seemed ad hoc – or figured out on the go. Despite the plenitude of projects within Deal, project management was not a concept or practice that seemed very formalised. Although both DM and RB presented me with one and the same flow chart on project management, describing the different stages of a project (see figure 5), this schematic view of projects was rather absent in the KEY project – leading up to the launch of the cogwheel investigations – and it did not appear in other projects either. The standardised knowledge, in other words, was more pronounced in relation to the practices directed at children and youth carried out by the welfare professionals than in practices directed at the different professional groups initiated by managers or project leaders.

Figure 5: Flow chart, project stages (provided by Deal)
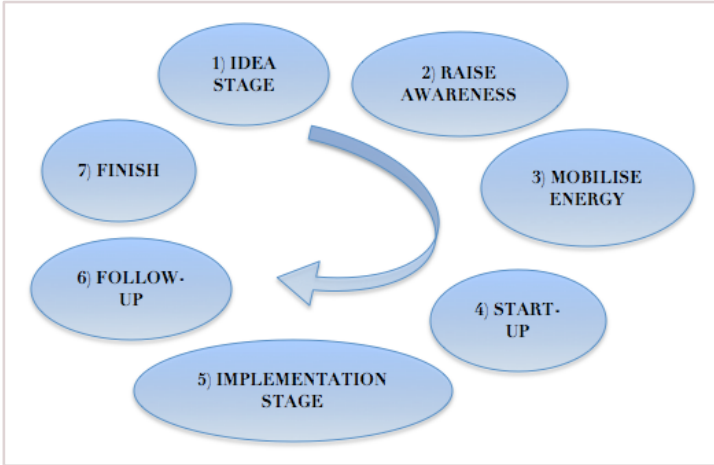
The new government model of Deal

Despite the relative absence of standardised project management, towards the end of my study I observed an increasing tendency to formalise issues of management and government. As described in chapter four, formalising different managerial practices within public administration – such as project management – often draws upon standardised knowledge found, for instance, in guidelines or project models. In Deal, however, the primarily targeted object was not the projects but rather the role of the politicians and the relationship between politics and different managerial levels. As I mentioned in chapter three, the role of the politicians had been a recurring topic for discussion, and the political committee had been reorganised and reduced. As a new model for governing Deal was proposed, however, it was not immediately obvious what this entailed and how it fit into the previous discussion on the politicians' role and the organisation of Deal more generally.

The model was proposed by the leading politician in B-city, who had experience of a similar model within the department of education in B-city. In an interview, she described to me how this way of working implied a more systematic way of doing things – from a political standpoint and concerning the relationship between politicians and department directors. But proposing the model also seemed to be a way for the politician in question to take initiative and stay involved. Although Deal was

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characterised by a political consensus, organisational discussions were recurrent and the new model became a way to influence the development and direction of the organisation.

The model was well received by the other politicians, and according to the politicians themselves – and from what DM described to me – the new government model had the purpose of clarifying roles, mandates and procedures of the different committees and managerial levels, focusing on the political committee. Before the model had been properly introduced, to either me or the committee, I asked the leading politician in A-city about its purpose:

> Me: I think it's interesting when you talk about a government model. What… is that about organising? Is it an organisational issue that you're talking about? Or is it more of an approach?

> Politician A: Actually, it's kind of a method. How are we doing things in our meetings? How do we prepare our meetings and follow up our meetings? There is a – I wouldn't say widespread, but there is a risk with politicians being in incredibly many meetings, that you just tick off a number of meetings in your calendar, sort of. And those who are elected to the political committee, they should see this as one of their most important missions. And we want… probably all stakeholders want them to… but these are the vulnerable children and youth in school, it's about early interventions to save something – economically but also on a personal level – that could be a tragedy for them. It's a really important mission as a civil servant and as a politician.

> We want every meeting to be well prepared and that all of us who are there as politicians should feel that you have a great responsibility sitting there. It's a question of trust and it's an immense responsibility. How can we become better at filling that position as individual politicians? That's one of the clues kind of. So not organisation, really, but more how we govern and how we better prepare; how we do a qualitatively better job as politicians. (Interview, Sept. 2016)

The ambition to do a better job as politicians, however, also included rather concrete organisational issues. A crucial component was a series of workshops (*Swedish: arbetande nätverk*, which translates 'working networks'), where representatives of all organisations and of all levels participated discussing common issues in-depth. And there were also

discussions on what kind of issues and results the politicians should focus on in their committee meetings; on what level should politicians enter into the government and management of the multi-level Deal organisation?

Defining the politicians' role had been a recurrent topic of debate among the politicians. This was seen when revising a previous strategy document, where they changed a paragraph which stated that politicians should focus on the *children's* results, to instead focusing on the *projects'* results. The previous wording meant that the politicians should have the well-being of children in mind – what is sometimes referred to as a citizen-orientation or client-orientation (equivalent to customer-orientation within business) – but could be interpreted as politicians should follow up on individual children's results and performances. This caused some confusion, and prompted DM to address the issue. She argued that there is a need for improved measurements and follow-ups more generally. For example, they must be better at measuring the impact of their projects on children, and this is what should be followed-up politically, rather than discussing test results or scores for individual children. Although the discussion centred on specific paragraphs and practicalities, it indicated a broader uncertainty on where politics enter into the organisation and practices of Deal.

Figure 6: The new government model (adaption and translation of a preliminary organisation scheme obtained in 2016)
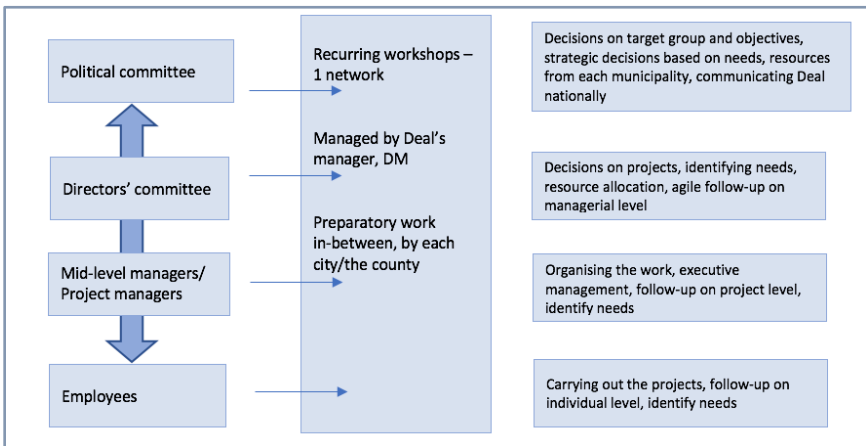
The new government model emphasised the multi-level character of Deal – where politicians, managers on different levels, as well as 'street-level' professionals take part – as well as the collaboration between the two cities and the different welfare areas of mainly schools and social care. The model thus captured the many intersections and relations characteristic of Deal while also trying to specify the purpose and role of each participant in the collaboration. In a preliminary organisational scheme presented to the political committee, this complexity was illustrated through the many boxes representing the different levels, as well as their relations. At the centre of the scheme were the recurring workshops where participants from all levels and all collaborating parties took part to discuss an area of focus decided by the political committee together with Deal's manager, DM.

As I followed the first year of the new government model, I considered the workshops to summarise the very idea of the model in the sense that different departments and levels were expected to work actively and ambitiously together. In the workshops, a few selected representatives gathered to thoroughly discuss a focus area, doing 'homework' between the meetings. The idea was to gather information from their different organisations – A-city, B-city and the County, which had taken on a more active role in Deal at this point, after replacing their political representative – and to process this information in order to find new areas in which to launch collaboration projects. Active participation on behalf of all representatives was a leading principle, as well as using different sources of information and knowledge to move the discussions forward. Apart from the information that participants themselves brought, they were also provided statistical reports from agencies and researchers, as well as statistics and case descriptions from A-city and B-city. These were provided by DM and her colleagues at the Deal office. During the first year, the workshops focused exclusively on mental illness in adolescent girls, a topic that has been widely debated in Swedish social and youth policy and that politicians as well as managers within Deal considered appropriate for joint efforts.

The first workshop was prepared and moderated by DM and a consultant acting as workshop leader. The consultant was well familiar with Deal and the participants, as she had previously been the director of the department of education in A-city and thus part of the department

directors' committee for several years. In her new role as consultant and workshop leader, she seemed cautious not to take an active part in the discussions but to provide the structure for the workshop, present information and statistics, and make sure everyone kept to the topic at hand. While some of the participants were acquainted, most did not seem to know each other beforehand – nor did they know each other's organisations that well. During the discussions and different tasks – for example discussing and sorting cases displaying variations of mental illness, unrest and anxiety – there were frequent questions and answers between participants on what their particular organisation or unit does or what they are responsible for.

The workshops consisted of discussions among the participants – who were all considered experts in some way, being knowledgeable in their particular work and representing the various levels and organisations of Deal – but there were clear and continuous instructions delivered from the workshop leader as to what should be discussed and in what format. There was a set schedule and there were methods and tools presented to make sure everyone kept on topic and the discussions moved forward – to an envisioned end of the day. Consequently, the expert role of the participants was quite different from that of invited academic experts, who gave lectures, for example (described in chapter six). There were individual, fictive cases presented, boxes to categorise the presumed needs, and subsequent discussions on who does what and in what order.

Although the workshops had the explicit purpose of using the knowledge of the different organisations within Deal and of enabling the different levels to meet and benefit from each other, both the workshops and the government model at large implied a formalisation of roles within Deal. In particular, the model served to structure, or situate, the role of the politicians. In the workshops, none of the participants were in their own familiar organisational or professional contexts. The collaborative setting meant that everyone had left their organisational comfort zone, and the clearly set goals, expectations and schedule probably served as support in an otherwise loosely structured environment.

As described by the politicians themselves, their role had previously been somewhat unclear, and now it was becoming formalised. Importantly, despite the rather unconventional relation between politics and management set by the new model – where they took part as equals in

the same workshop — the intention of this was not to play down the overall responsibility of the politicians or to circumscribe their position. Nor was this the impression that I got from observing committee meetings and taking part in the workshops. Instead, formalising the role of the politicians – providing them a box in the greater whole – meant incorporating them into the governing practices and organisation. This, as described above, would allow them to 'do a qualitatively better job as politicians. What this improvement in quality entailed, however, was not explicitly accounted for, which I will return to in my analytical reflections in this chapter and in chapter nine.

Analysing standardised knowledge: Universal and usable

Standardised knowledge is used in different areas of the public sector. It provides templates for collaboration projects, forms for examining youth at risk, and instruments to assess the behaviour of children. By *standardised knowledge*, I refer to knowledge that has been produced outside of its area of application, sorted and packaged in a ready-to-use format – as is typical of instruction manuals, step-by-step guidelines and easy-to-follow scripts and forms. They contain no unnecessary theorisations, background information or ambiguities – only what pertains to the matters of fact. Although the principle of such knowledge, its underlying rationality, can be traced far back in time – at least to Weber's ideas of a knowledge-based bureaucracy – its contemporary expressions are known as 'evidence-based practices', 'best practice', and 'quality standards'.

The use of evidence-based practices (EBP) in social work has developed from medical practice's evidence-based medicine (EBM). The comparison between social work and medicine appears also in the case of Deal, as an argument for using an assessment instrument such as Ester. The professor who had evaluated the Pinocchio project argued, in his presentation, that you cannot take any measures without first having diagnosed the child. The purpose of Ester was to help in this diagnosis; to screen and assess the child and its needs. Such a practice undeniably enacts

standardised knowledge – there are forms in which to insert data about the child and tools that help analyse the data, which can then be transferred to another form and followed-up after adequate interventions have occurred.

To some extent, standardised knowledge is also invoked in the organisational and managerial practices related to Deal's projects. The new government model is the most salient example of this, as it sought to clarify and formalise the roles of politicians, managerial levels and professionals as well as the relations between them.

Negotiating the use of evidence

The KEY project was described and presented in several documents and on several occasions where I was present. A report from 2013 described the developments and experiences from the early version of the project – a report that the directors' committee received, and based on which they decided to renew the project. The following year, after DM had met with several people in the different departments – who were seen as having important knowledge on issues concerning KEY – a project plan was written, which described the project's aims and objectives, its organisation and management, as well as a schematic risk analysis. Later on, Deal applied for external funding to implement the project, which, again, prompted a coherent and highly schematic description of the project. The entire process, thus far, appeared very systematic, and the process of developing a guideline for how to conduct the new cogwheel investigations followed suit.

The meetings and discussions leading up to the development of the guidelines, however, displayed a more dynamic procedure, where the experiences of case workers were crucial. The welfare professionals had knowledge that was necessary in order to negotiate between different needs and considerations. The written and oral presentations of the project were straightforward, but the compilation of the guidelines required thoughtful debate and hammering out of details. At that stage in the process, it was clear to me that the awaited benefits of the systematic approach required not only detailed planning but also a thorough discussion between those involved. The process could perhaps be compared to a well-directed theatre performance; seen from the

auditorium, everything is neatly arranged, but behind the stage is a certain chaos, necessary to keep things in order.

The social relations and practices surrounding social service documents of this kind have been described by Jacobsson (2016) and Åkerström (2017). Studying collaboration on youth delinquency – between the agencies of social services and youth care – Åkerström points out that despite public administration ideals of objectivity and neutrality, 'meetings and documents were surrounded by an intense involvement and were often described in emotional terms' (Åkerström, 2017: 137). The participants are described as being involved in a 'document struggle', where different forms and project documentation served as props for pursuing one's interests (Åkerström, 2017; see also Basic, 2012). Although Åkerström's study indicates more animosity than I observed within Deal, different documents, manuals and standard practices did serve as points of contention or negotiation (see also Jacobsson, 2016; and Star & Griesemer, 1989, on boundary objects).

In the KEY project, DM told me that the difficulty is not to agree on what instrument or procedure to follow, but to remove those that are unnecessary. She explained that A-city and B-city are both licensed under BBIC, which means that they are required to follow a set of elements when investigating children and to ask a set of questions. But it is not stipulated that one must follow a certain screening instrument; quite the contrary, there are several to choose from, such as Ester and SDQ, which are both in the NBHW Methods guide. 'Ester is good, but it is not necessarily the answer to all our questions', DM argued: 'it's a good way to make us aware of certain risk factors and protection factors, but it's based on *one* theory'.

Despite Ester being recognised as an evidence-based instrument, it was still conceived as one instrument among several, based on one theory among many. The instrument was thus confronted with a complex reality of organisational and professional considerations that had to be taken into account (see also Björk, 2016). At the time of this conversation, DM had had meetings with representatives of the social services in both cities and with representatives of the school administrations in both cities. She seemed eager and focused about going forward, but also a bit frustrated by things not proceeding according to plan.

Now we're going to have some extra meetings this week to try to sort out what the social services' part should look like, because they're heading in somewhat different directions. I mean, they have some different ideas. And it's very good with different ideas, because you can haggle about ideas and stuff, but there is something that the managers see – 'this is how it should be' – and when we got to it, it headed in another direction. And I… I know too little about what BBIC says to go in and say 'no, that's not how we should do it'. So now we're going to have some extra meetings and then a joint meeting. (DM, Interview, Dec. 2014)

By this, DM indicates that the standards used in the social services – mainly BBIC – imply certain requirements that cannot be compromised with. Paradoxically, what I observed can be described as precisely a negotiation: those who are knowledgeable in BBIC – who can interpret what it means in practice, what instruments are compatible and not – become important actors in the process of negotiating the compatibility (see Björk, 2016, on the mutual adaption of standardised instruments and their organisational setting). This goes for the social workers, who work with the instruments, and the experts who develop such methods and educate various professionals about their usage, such as the experts that I listened to in relation to the Pinocchio project (see Skillmark & Denvall, 2018). The fact that certain knowledge is standardised into concepts, models, manuals and guidelines is not the same as their *use* being standardised. Evidence-based practices and other standardised models still have to be argued for, negotiated and implemented through practices – and those practices take place in social contexts (Björk, 2016; Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012).

As described earlier, the national agency NBHW, overseeing social services and health care in Sweden, provides a methods guide that lists a number of different evidence-based practices; treatments, assessment instruments and models for social work are summarised and described for managers and professionals who may choose among them. This illustrates how evidence-based practices have become something that practitioners in municipal social work, for example, only *apply* in their work – as opposed to something that they contribute to developing. Bergmark and Lundström (2006) describe how evidence-based practices can be conceived differently, depending on how practitioners use them. An earlier idea implied that practitioners – such as medical doctors or social

workers – should formulate a question, gather evidence, assess the claims of that evidence, apply it, and then evaluate the procedure. This would generate an 'enlightened practitioner'. However, as this procedure proved unfeasible in the everyday work, welfare professionals took on a more reactive role, in which they had to rely on guidelines and templates to apply the evidence (Bergmark & Lundström, 2006; Björk, 2016). Judging from Deal and its affiliated projects, the role of welfare professionals in relation to evidence-based practices is still in flux. Practitioners may be seen as mere applicators of guidelines and standardised procedures, but they also take on the role of interpreters and validators of said procedures. The extent to which they take on the one or the other of these roles is at least partly dependent on the particular situation. In the KEY project, the more experienced social workers were essential in explaining different practices and their compatibility, while in Pinocchio, it seemed that the project participants took on a more reactive role. Whether this is the case in more 'ordinary' or everyday social work I cannot say, and it falls outside the scope of this particular study (see e.g. Björk, 2016; Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012; and Skillmark & Denvall, 2018 for empirical studies on the use of evidence-based practices).

As becomes clear in the evaluation report of the national Pinocchio project, however, there is tension between the view that evidence-based practices and instruments are something highly natural that should be taken for granted within the social services, and the view that these standards and instruments have to be argued for and presented with ample research and statistics (Pinocchio Report, 2010). The main objective of the project was to address norm-breaking behaviour with very young children, and this follows from the principle of early interventions. While the evidence-based instruments are presented with statistics, the importance of early intervention is seen as almost common sense. The national evaluation report of Pinocchio concludes:

> Research has shown that interventions that are research-related, structured, manual-based and which are implemented during a longer period of time give positive effects that consist over time. Additionally, preventive measures should be initiated already in preschool or early school years. *We know, of course, that in the long run, early interventions pay off.* (Pinocchio Report 2010: 69, my translation, italics added)

In Swedish, the wording 'Vi vet ju att' ('We know, of course') indicates that something does not have to be proven or argued for; 'ju' – here translated as 'of course' – signifies that it is common knowledge that early interventions pay off. In the report, this wording stands in some contrast to the otherwise very impersonal and scientific presentation.

Standardised knowledge and the role of employees

The role of individuals, or groups of individuals, are constituted within specific contexts. As described in the case of expert knowledge, with reference to Dear (2006), the role of the researcher/expert does not follow solely from the knowledge they possess; the role of expert is endowed through the social or discursive context that grants them status. Similarly, Porter (1995) describes the usage of standardised and quantitative procedures as a means of communication; they did not develop to make decisions or practices better, but as a reaction to pressure and criticism from the outside. As the position and personal judgment of experts came under fire, rendering practices more impersonal through standardised decision-making and quantification was a strategic response.

> While /…/ numbers and systems of quantification can be very powerful, the drive to supplant personal judgment by quantitative rules reflects weakness and vulnerability. I interpret it as a response to conditions of distrust attending the absence of a secure and autonomous community. (Porter, 1995: xi)

The adoption and application of standardised knowledge would thus be a defensive move on the part of employees who see their professional role under threat (see also Bergmark & Lundström, 2006). In the contemporary Swedish social services profession, evidence-based instruments can be seen – and used – as part of a modernising and increasingly tech-savvy profession distancing itself from how the profession has been construed traditionally (Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012).

In some ways, this view on evidence-based practices, instruments and standardised knowledge is present also in Deal. So-called digital techniques are often mentioned, and there is a general striving to increase the use of them within social work. But the case of Deal also implies that

standards in the form of evidence-based practices are not even something to choose or not choose; it is not a strategic choice for social workers or preschool teachers whether to use them in their work. If anything, their choice is how to relate to various standards that are available or offered to them.

When discussing the KEY guidelines – and whether to use BBIC, Ester, or neither – the social workers are turned to the experts. They are the ones who could tell DM and others managers whether or not to use one or the other. Although standards of different sorts are disseminated by agencies, influential organisations and academics who produce them, their implementation and use relies also on the reception and putting into practice by professional groups and their willingness to embrace them.

In empirical studies of Swedish health care, conclusions are similar. Authors Bejerot and Hasselbladh (2011) show how medical doctors came to endorse an encompassing instrument of government, where clinics were benchmarked against each other. They were involved in a comprehensive health care quality register containing data on diagnoses and treatments that was originally intended for scientific use but then served as a tool for governing healthcare. Importantly, this study touches upon the co-existence of different ways that knowledge governs. Standardised knowledge – whether of organisational or project management or in evidence-based practices – is often seen as a threat to professions and professional knowledge (e.g. Bergmark & Lundström, 2006; Hall, 2012b), but as Bejerot and Hasselbladh (2011) show in their study, the doctors' professional autonomy was incorporated into the managerial practice; they originally adhered to the quality registers not as a management device, but as a scientific database. It was their underlying ambition to improve their work – the will to make health care better, more efficient – that was funnelled into an instrument of government (Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2011). The practice of government thus works through the professional autonomy of the doctors, not in direct conflict with it (see also Bergmark & Lundström, 2006; Ferlie et al., 2012; Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007; Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012; Triantafillou 2012, 2015).

In Deal, discussions and decisions on standardised knowledge revolve around the target group and the particularities of specific projects. Rather than implementing large-scale guidelines on how to manage or organise Deal as a whole, they refer to specific evidence-based practices, such as

assessment instruments and methods. But studying the processes more closely, such as the planning of the KEY project and cogwheel investigations, it becomes clear that the organisation of the project – including questions of the coordinator's role, who decides what, in what order – are related to the instruments used to investigate and assess the children. Those who know how to conduct the investigations in practice, and what instruments to use for what, are given authority also over the project's organisation and management at large.

What drives the KEY project forward, in other words, is not the standardised knowledge in and of itself, but the way that it is acted upon – how that knowledge is enacted through practices, which govern the project. As described in the previous chapter, the expert knowledge of the researchers had limitations; there were instances when expert knowledge was not invoked and people appealed instead to common sense, or there were practical matters that displaced the more academic reasoning. Regarding the standardised knowledge, the practices are somewhat similar in that there is no default mode for how to use the standardised knowledge; put simply, I have perceived no standardised procedures for using standardised knowledge.

The rationality of standardised knowledge – universal and impersonal

Intuitively, it may seem paradoxical that there are two or more evidence-based practices applicable to similar situations and that these are not compatible. But this is of course entirely in accordance with how research basically works – evidence often competes. The fact that evidence-based practices have become commonplace in today's social work, and that there are several standards and instruments to use, implies that the potency of standardised knowledge lies not in it's being objectively superior, but in its enactment in practice: its influence is tied to its social and discursive location. Just like expert knowledge, described in the former chapter, standardised knowledge received its validity in relation to other forms of knowledge. Evidence thus invokes a rationality that is seen as disembedded – valid across different situations – and which thereby trumps many other forms of knowledge, which are seen as particular, or

local, in character. This is what Triantafillou (2015) and others (e.g. Bergmark & Lundström, 2006; Ferlie et al, 2012) refer to when they discuss 'evidence hierarchy' – where knowledge that is produced through randomised control trials (RCT) are socially construed as superior and other forms of knowledge are considered inferior. And it is what Porter (1995) refers to when he describes how standardised knowledge was invoked as a substitute for personal judgment, which was no longer trusted. In other words, in analysing how standardised knowledge matters in government practices, one should not be overly focused on particular models or even particular practices such as evidence-based ones. Instead, it is the rationality that these practices are based upon that should be put into perspective. In terms of rationality, it is the impersonal and universal pretence of standardised knowledge that renders it so potent. As described in chapter four, although evidence-based practices occupy a central role in the debate on knowledge in welfare work, there is an increasing use and focus on other forms of standardised knowledge in public administration, often pertaining to organisation and management.

Within the public sector at large, but not least within welfare institutions, there are practices of project management (PM), human resource management (HRM) and knowledge management (KM) that effectively standardise and black-box knowledge within the different areas. They provide bodies of knowledge, delivered in standardised models and guidelines, that practitioners can apply in their work on projects, employees, and the management of knowledge, respectively. And although formalised managerial systems and models are rather absent in the case of Deal – especially considering that projects are the default mode of organising their work – the *rationality* of the management practices does appear with some frequency. In particular, it is the instrumentality of managerialism that Deal manifests; the view that projects, employees, science and professional knowledge are assets that can be developed and refined to benefit the collaboration and the welfare work.

Hodgson and Cicmil, in their discussion on the standardisation of project management (2007), criticise one particular form of knowledge being rewarded at the expense of other forms of knowledge and ways of thinking and acting that are usually not considered knowledge-based. They point to the fact that evidence suppresses other forms of knowledge

– including personal reflexivity, which is found at the very bottom of the evidence hierarchy (see also Jacobsson et al., 2017; Townley, 1993, 2008) – and that it removes political and ethical issues from public administration, turning them into technical and quantified problems. But, as Hodgson and Cicmil (2007: 446) add, 'there is also space for discretion and contestation within any knowledge regime'.

Projects are most evidently seen as an instrument to draw together organisational units, competences and stakeholders in an appropriate and manageable manner. Although no precise project models – such as the ISO 21500 on project management – were applied, the sequential and standardised view of what a project is and how it can be managed is reflected in Deal's work. Projects have a designated project leader, project participants, objectives, resources, defined time limits, and so on – all of which gives the impression of manageability. These organisational features were frequently mentioned and illustrated, but they were rarely main topic of discussion. Taken together, this illustrates the presence of a 'project logic' – a way of organising and managing activities that draw upon features and characteristics of the project as organisation, as described by Fred (2018). But contrary to Fred's empirical studies, in Deal, the projects themselves are not surrounded by the same 'buzz' or enthusiasm among the project leaders or participants. In Deal, projects seem to be a way of organising collaboration – no more, no less.

Similarly, the key features of human resource management (HRM), as described by Townley (1993), are about constructing employees as instrumental to the organisation and its objectives. Just like the early theories on collaboration – which presumed that collaboration was a calculated exchange of resources to a particular end – Deal is based on the five departments contributing with staff in each project. Deal cannot staff the projects on its own but must rely on the departments' willingness to engage in the projects – or convince them to that end (as described in chapter three). Knowledge management (KM) can be seen as a further development of HRM, where the knowledge that employees hold is construed as an asset that can be extracted, refined, and repackaged for use outside of context (Carter & Scarbough, 2001; Stevenson, 2001).

Again, Deal does not display any obvious practices of knowledge management, but in several situations – in the KEY project and the research circle, and in some aspects of the new government model – this

is the underlying idea and instrumentality that Deal seeks to accomplish. The social workers, managers, and others with special knowledge of things participate in projects, processes and workshops where they contribute their knowledge and help turn it into guidelines and other forms of documentation that a wider range of employees and participants can learn from and apply. From the perspective of Deal – whose explicit purpose is to infuse new knowledge and develop new methods – making use of existing knowledge within the organisation is a deliberate strategy, alongside the use of existing and established forms of knowledge provided by researchers.

Lastly, the current development of a new government model – in which political decision making and representation is formalised – testifies to the incorporation of not only different groups of professionals and employees into managerial practices, but also politicians. The manager of Deal as well as the politicians themselves repeatedly expressed a need for clarifying the politicians' role; they were concerned about the politicians' role, about meetings being inefficient, and about bringing Deal forward in the best way and were therefore eager to better organise their own work – to organise politics. In relation to the functionalist narrative of collaboration, presented in chapter two, I described how politics is remarkably absent in the public discourse on welfare collaboration. Some guidelines on collaboration even suggested how to circumvent local politicians, when the issues at hand can be difficult to agree upon. In Deal, I perceived no such tendencies; politicians were not seen as problematic, or as people one has to go around to get things done. However, the instrumentalist ambitions – which include predictability, unambiguity and a means-end rationality – is dominant, and this includes also the political level of decision making.

Political scientists have argued that organisational and managerial reforms as well as the professionalisation of public managers entail a diminishing and undesired role for local politicians (e.g. Hjern, 2001; Lennqvist-Lindén, 2011), and the efforts to systematise political representation of the kind seen in Deal may be seen as a way to handle this tension (see Fred, 2018). The systematisation of politics can thus be seen as a reconstruction of the role of politicians, incorporating them into the rationality of managerialism and standards, rather than keeping them outside. In such a new order, politics is 'reigned in', so to speak, as the

politicians' role is clearly defined. Just like the different managerial practices mentioned – such as project management – we may be witnessing an emerging management of politics, with designated experts and bodies of knowledge.

Concluding remarks on the regime of standardised knowledge

Standardised knowledge is not one homogenous practice. It is enacted through the evidence-based practices within social work, but also in guidelines and templates related to managerial practices. The implications of the evidence movement have been debated widely, and researchers have pointed to problems of standardised knowledge. Some are related to practicalities, that it is often impossible to measure the things that are supposed to be measured, for example (Bergmark & Lundström, 2006; Triantafillou 2015) and others to existing power relations, that evidence-based practices are advanced at the expense of professionals' autonomy for example (Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2008; Hall, 2012b; Triantafillou 2015).

   In this chapter, however, I have pointed to the manner in which power works through standardised knowledge. Rather than imposing itself upon previously autonomous professionals –robbing them of their discretion – government by standardised knowledge works through the free will of professional employees. This is not to say that all standardisations are welcomed by professionals – far from it – but rather that standards, best practices, and even administrative procedures may often be adopted by the professions for pursuing their own interest in some way (see e.g. Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2011; Bergmark & Lundström, 2011a; Björk, 2016; Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012; Skillmark & Denvall, 2018). Doctors, teachers and social workers are neither coerced nor tricked into evidence-based practices nor lured into using forms and guidelines; they voluntarily subject themselves to one particular way of knowing, where they might – to some extent at least – have chosen another way (Ferlie et al 2012; Hodgson & Cicmil 2007; Triantafillou, 2015).

In the meetings that I observed, there were disagreements on practicalities, but also indications of underlying tensions. No one that I have listened or spoken to claims that standards, manuals and instruments should replace all professional discretion and personal judgement. They are always described as complementary – as tools at the hands of people – even in the situations where they overshadow most other things discussed. But despite these rooms for interpretation, and debates on how or whether standards should be used at all, the overarching movement seems unequivocal. In the practices of different welfare professionals, in the organisation and management of projects, and even in the definition of what politics is and is not, there is a striving towards instrumental rationality, where all practices are predictable, purposeful and clearly demarcated. Much like the expert knowledge described in the previous chapter, standardised knowledge thus serves to point out a direction for further action and to induce certainty in an ambiguous situation. While ambiguity is inherent in all politics and public administration – as argued by Yanow (1993) among others – the absence of traditional institutional boundaries and belongings that comes with collaboration is likely to provoke an increased sense of uncertainty for the participants. Instead of leaving room for politicians, managers and employees to interpret, debate or argue about their roles and relations – for example, how to formulate project goals, or whether all case workers approach and interview their clients in a similar manner – there are schemes and forms to lean on and which assure that the best possible measures are taken.

In the next chapter I will describe knowledge that relies upon a rather different rationality – knowledge that I consider *local* in that it is bound to a certain profession or practice. In some situations, local knowledge is considered entirely unproblematic and the common source of knowledge; in other cases, it clashes with knowledge entering from the outside, conveyed through researchers or as part of standards.

8. A regime of local knowledge

In the previous two chapters, I have shown how Deal draws upon expert knowledge and standardised knowledge in the management and organisation of their organisation and within specific projects. Despite their similarities, I discussed the difference between these forms of knowledge and how they direct the activities of Deal. The first one was typically manifested through researcher involvement: academic researchers are involved in several different projects, providing knowledge on particular project activities and how they should be carried out. The second one, standardised knowledge, was provided though standards, instruments and instruction manuals. Both of these, however, draw upon an externally produced knowledge –knowledge that could be referred to independently of what happened in Deal.

Local knowledge, on the other hand, is more subtle in its character. Being bound to a particular context, such as an organisational or professional practice, it is not always recognised as knowledge but as routines, traditions, or otherwise 'non-rational' in character. In Deal, what I refer to as local knowledge is often tacit, and it derives from professional experiences and a know-how of working – with children and youth, but also in managerial and political context. While this knowledge is sometimes recognised as a distinct form of knowledge, it also plays the role of 'the other' in relation to more explicit forms of knowledge. In this chapter, I describe two practices: firstly, the co-production of knowledge, taking place within Deal's projects, and secondly, a situated knowing taking place alongside other forms of knowledge. Both of these make up a regime of local knowledge, which I analyse at the end of the chapter.

Practices of local knowledge

The development of new methods is an essential part of Deal. In this work, the production and application of knowledge is seen as an indispensable element; methods are developed by applying knowledge generated by research, but also by making use of knowledge that is generated from within the projects. Co-production refers to the project participants – whether they are staff or youth – taking active part in making up the different projects. But co-production also entails a joint production of knowledge – knowledge that is produced locally, or in-house, and which distinguishes itself from the expert knowledge that the researchers provide. As described to me, this is part of how the projects are supposed to function: the co-produced knowledge is acknowledged as important. The co-production is described here with examples from the Motivation project, the KEY project and the new government model.

In other situations, however, I have observed a type of local knowledge that is rarely addressed by the ones involved. This knowledge is highly influential in work that is carried out, although it remains unarticulated, and I refer to it as a situated knowing. Despite its prominence in practice – in the Pinocchio project, for instance, and in some managerial practices – it is not presented as important by the employees, managers or politicians in Deal when discussing their projects or overall organisation.

Practice 5: The co-production of knowledge

The Motivation project

In the Motivation project (presented in chapter five), DM and her colleagues in Deal differed between the knowledge provided by the researchers – the two from Lund University Internet Institute – and the knowledge generated from within, by the project participants – the youth and staff who wore the activity bracelets and who reported their experiences and impressions back to Deal. The one knowledge was scientific, produced externally, while the other was produced by the participants themselves. The idea was for the project to generate knowledge of the method of using activity bracelets to better motivate youths to increased physical activity, sleep, and daily routines. The close

collaboration with the researchers accounted for one part, where both Deal and the R&D-unit were involved, while the interaction with the project participants provided experience-based knowledge on the method.

According to DM, it was 'a project for co-production', meaning that the involved youth and staff were supposed to tell Deal, managing the project, what was good about the activity bracelet and how it could be used for their benefit. DM explained: 'Rather than us telling them "now you should do this" we have given them the tool and we're saying "come to us and say what you want, and we'll make it happen"' (Interview, December 2014).

I asked DM how the project participants – who, in the first sub-project, included the youths who stay at the care facility as well as the staff – were involved, how their input was incorporated into the project:

> The youth, we talk about it when we meet them. We've got questions… well, we can look at the questions later, but we've got questions with the project's objectives [*Swedish: effektmål*] that we want to measure. And that's mainly TC's [the project leader] task, when she meets them – that she has asked these questions. But it's not like a manual; we don't sit there and read them. We have a conversation and we make sure that these seven or eight questions have been addressed. (DM, interview, Dec. 2014)

The staff at the facility are social workers, and they were also provided bracelets. They had no possibility of monitoring the data from others, but they were able to compare data with each other, to see, for example, who had been most physically active each week:

> DM: The staff has been given [bracelets] as well. And their task is to see whether it creates value in their work. As a group of staff, they have had a great sense of community because of it. They feel a joy in their work, both themselves and in relation to the youths, that they're competing and all this. So from that perspective, it's really positive. 'It *is* more than a pedometer, it *is* more than a pedometer' [i.e. it is a more exciting gadget] – and it's graphic and stuff like that, you know. And this competitiveness. Now, maybe I didn't show that, but there are always lists of who has done the most this week. So that… it does create something else.
>
> But what we're looking for isn't just them getting a sense of community in their group, because that's up to their boss; it's more 'see if it becomes easier to work with the youths by having this – do you see it becoming

easier to discuss sleep, do you see them becoming more susceptible?'
Because what we test is both awareness and motivation. (DM, interview,
Dec. 2014)

Although the competitive aspect went slightly out of hand in the
Motivation project – the competition overshadowing the motivational
ambition – the experience allegedly served its purpose in the sense that
knowledge was produced by the participants and could then be taken into
consideration in discussions of whether and how to proceed with the
method in question. In addition to the research on how to use technological
devices in social work, the hands-on experiences provided immediate
information – what does and does not work – to DM, TC (Deal's
designated project leader), and to the department directors. As I described
in chapter six, the department directors took notice of things and
concluded that the overly competitive staff was an isolated happening and
that they should proceed with the other subprojects without that type of
competition. In other words, the knowledge that was generated within the
project, by the activities and experiences of the participants, was of a
different character than the research report – and Deal could thereby draw
on either, or both of them, in deciding how to proceed and in what
direction to guide the projects.

The KEY project

In the process of developing the KEY guidelines, described in the previous
chapter, involving researchers from the outside was not considered a
viable solution. In order to decide on a proper structure for the project, an
investigation procedure and the appropriate assessment tools, Deal relied
on the knowledge of social workers, teachers, and others who know
certain things first hand. Even the target group of the project – how to
define and select the children and families – was subject to such
discussions, where the social workers who actually carry out the
investigations had the last word.

> Now, I don't know if you remember, but in the different KEY groups we
> have talked about the target group, that is, who is the KEY project for?
> And then we had, from the beginning, 'children with complex needs' –
> and complex needs are very difficult to define when you see just your own
> perspective. How do you know there are problems there too. And then I

said 'we should have children with recurring problems' – I changed the formulation and argued that if they are recurring, that indicates there are more problems beneath, which we haven't solved through interventions…

When we then head out to the investigating case workers [*Swedish: utredare*] – who define the problems – and talk about this, then they say… they say like this 'so we are going to check in our database whether this child has been here before, and then recommend it to KEY – isn't it exactly the opposite? When we are best served by taking in all perspectives, that's when we've never seen the child before. We need a comprehensive overview because we haven't had one. If the child has been here before, then we have all these old investigations we can look at, and dig through, and it already says how… but here, the first time, we could really use it'.

So just like that, we go from the complex needs, to the recurring needs, to what the case workers say – 'KEY is a really good model for investigation if we get it going, damn good if we can reduce the time it takes, the administrations and the children both need that, we need to get things going, really good if we can get a clearer collaboration, we could win a lot by that, but we want to do it with those who have never been here before, who don't have preconceptions about us, where we really make a difference for them'.

And the first target group, I got that from the political committee, but that has changed to the ones actually being closest, saying 'it's this, this is where we can make a difference'. (DM, interview, April 2015)

Contrary to the employees' experienced-based and professional knowledge being something to gather around in order to create inclusion and a sense of community, it is here described as highly instrumental for the success of the project. Those who are closest to the matters at hand contribute with their perspective and thus change the direction of the activities; their local knowledge is not just something that benefits themselves as a group.

Similarly, when I once asked DM about how the Motivation project was initiated, she answered: 'It doesn't really matter who came up with the idea, because now it's a co-produced project; it's the youth that produce it, it's the youth and the staff that make up the project'. Interestingly, in this case, it was actually DM herself who came up with the idea. Having worked a lot with technological aids in education and learning, she

advocated an increased use of software – such as smartphone applications – in social work on youth, and the ideas led to the project in question.

At a later stage in the process, DM elaborated on the role of the project participants, emphasising that *they* are the developers – not the project leader representing Deal's office or the researchers who partake in the project. She explained that the office of Deal should work with methods development but not be the ones who develop. Their role is more about coordination, administration and project management, while the developers are the ones who work within the participating administrations. The project participants, who are staff working with children and youth and who are not hired within the Deal organisation, are the ones who can say what works and not, I am told, and what needs to be changed in order to work better. They are the ones who can make sure that learning that can benefit their organisations takes place. DM is adamant in her description of the participants doing the greater part, if not all, of the knowledge production, while her office mainly administrates and compiles that knowledge. On a direct question, she acknowledges that the participating organisations – the schools, care homes and social offices – must have a sense of involvement in what the projects produce; Deal must not give the impression that they are the ones producing new knowledge, where the different professional groups only find themselves at the receiving end.

The new government model

In accordance with this, when the new government model was launched, the recurring workshops (described in chapter seven) were a central feature. In these workshops, professionals, managers and politicians from all of Deal's departments participated to discuss and analyse a topic. The purpose was for them to contribute with their perspectives as first-hand specialist knowledge. In roundtable discussions, school counsellors and social workers from the municipal departments in A-city and B-city talked with psychologists from the regional child psychiatric services as well as leading municipal and regional politicians. Although DM and the moderator provided some research and statistics, the discussions mainly centred on the welfare professionals' own experiences and perspectives on the topic at hand – adolescent girls' mental health problems. They shared knowledge about their organisations and asked about routines and challenges they face. In a joint exercise, everyone provided input on what

their organisation has to offer youth with mental health problems, in terms of different preventive measures, treatment and so on. Based on this input, a puzzle was constructed (see figure 7) picturing all services available – regardless of who provides the services – in order to map what there is and what should perhaps be added, by Deal or by any of the organisations present, as well as areas of collaboration.

Figure 7: Workshop exercise – laying the puzzle
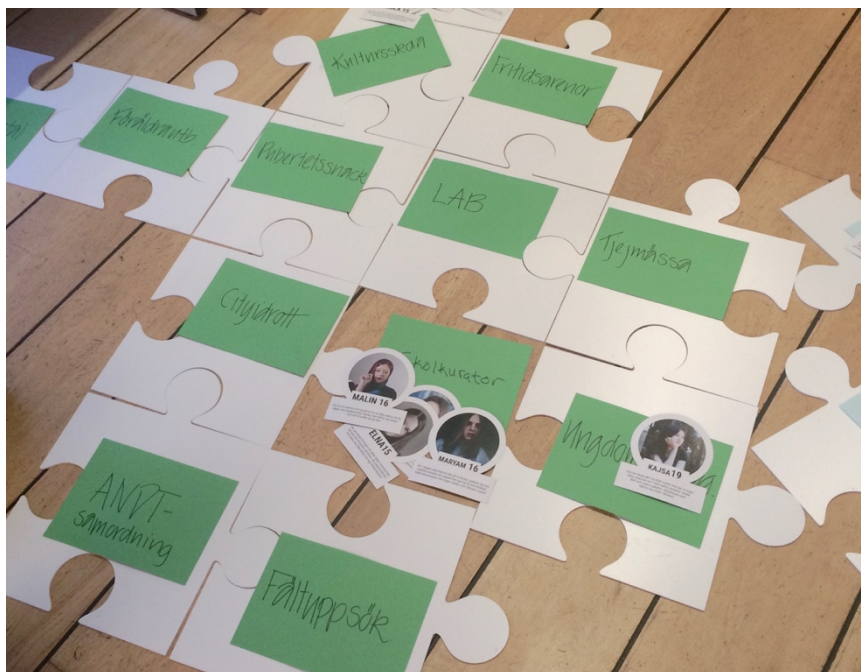
The purpose of this exercise, as with the general discussions in the workshop, was to gather information that the participants have about their organisation and services and about their way of working. Sharing experiences and knowledge was part of it, but Deal also gathered all information and compiled it in a report. The report was edited and neatly designed by the staff at the Deal office and thereafter sent out to all participants and presented to the department directors' committee and the political committee. The idea was to supplement the compilation with further information, to make the picture complete, before making it available to youths, in schools and health care facilities for example. By

engaging different professional groups, managers and politicians, Deal sought to extract knowledge that is seldom made explicit or shared outside the local professional group or organisation. Deal's role in this was partly to enable and moderate the knowledge-sharing, but also to refine and package the knowledge, making it transferable outside the workshop group.

In sum, Motivation, KEY and the new government model all drew on knowledge from within the organisation, what I call local knowledge. This knowledge served mainly as a complement to research or standardised knowledge, which were the major building blocks of the projects; co-production is acknowledged and, indeed, emphasised alongside research. In the Pinocchio project, I have already described the prominence of research and of standardised knowledge – primarily through the use of Ester. Here too, however, the professionals' local knowledge played a significant role – albeit a much subtler one.

Practice 6: Situated knowing

The Pinocchio project and 'Our children'

As described earlier, the Pinocchio project was evaluated by a university professor, and the evaluation was presented at a conference attended by employees from different administrations within A-city. Pinocchio was not initially a Deal project, but they had helped set up the evaluation and also arranged the conference. There were general appraisals of the project, of the way in which the different professionals – social worker, preschool teacher and paediatric nurse – had collaborated, and of Ester, the screening and assessment instrument they had used. Most participants seemed to agree that Ester successfully enabled them to identify what needed to be strengthened in order to improve the everyday situation of the child and what needed to be reduced – what is known as protection factors and risk factors, respectively. Identifying and assessing such factors is in the standard repertoire of social work, and Ester facilitated this procedure.

Questions arose, however, when the conference turned to the question of how the success of the Pinocchio project could be replicated in other districts of the city. In what way, if any, could the lessons learned within the project be extracted and exported to others? While all agreed that this

would not be easily done, the preschool teacher and the social worker from the Family Centre where the project was located were the most adamant advocates of a small step solution, emphasising 'this takes time'. They repeated that there are no quick fixes, that a Family Centre must be rooted in its community in order to build relations and trust.

Although there was no explicit disagreement to this claim, several others – among them the researcher-evaluator JG and the Pinocchio project leader, KS, who did not work at the Family Centre – drafted ideas about tutoring and supervising the personnel at other Family Centres and about spreading the Ester instrument via a mobile team, visiting preschools in different parts of the city. If only for a brief moment, there was a debate between those arguing for a strategic top-down proliferation of the successful methods, where a mobile team and tutoring would be part, and those advocating a bottom-up approach, where Family Centres are first established in all districts of the city. It was discussed in a panel talk at the conference including JG, KS, and two of the project participants that I afterwards interviewed at the Family Centre.

DM, who was acting as moderator during the conference, asked how to spread the success to other districts of A-city. To this, JG answered that 'it's not easy' – and that it would be essential to initiate some sort of education and tutoring of the staff who would be involved. But he argued that 'the natural thing to do would be to spread it to other Family Centres'. From the viewpoint of KS, representing the social services, it was important to reach out to everyone, not just the children who come in contact with a Family Centre; and the preschool teacher – who was part of the Pinocchio project and thus working at a Family Centre – suggested that they should spread the project through preschools in the city.

They seemed to agree that the social services was 'a poor brand', not a place where people are prone to seek help, and that Family Centres therefore would be a better place to locate the project. KS, however, proposed the idea of mobile teams, which could visit preschools and Family Centres to help with the screening and assessment process of children using the Ester tool. One of the others who had been part of the Pinocchio project was spontaneously hesitant, saying that she did not believe in those teams, showing up only when they are needed. From my seat, in the middle of the audience, I could hear that a politician sitting

behind me – and whom I knew to be part of Deal's political committee – was muttering: he was also sceptical to the idea of mobile teams.

DM, steered away from this discussion on whether mobile teams were a good idea to instead ask how tied the success of Pinocchio was to the very individuals who had collaborated in the project. JG, the researcher, said that they should be made supervisors to other colleagues learning the method – a role none of them seemed eager to take. JG argued that that there was a space between theory and practice that needed to be filled, and that the way they had worked within the Pinocchio project could not be entirely formalised and manual-based.

When meeting separately with the project participants, a few weeks later, I picked up on this discussion. I returned to the question from the conference on how to learn from the good experiences of the project. I hoped that the question about how to spread the collaboration model – the success of their work – would indicate what governing techniques or measures they believe would work; in other words, how do they get others to do what they had done.

> Me: And there [referring to the Pinocchio conference] I experienced from several – not the least you, if I'm not mistaken – that it's difficult to copy-and-paste like that, without… how do you share it? Is it like describing, talking about it, that you learn from each other, rather than formalising it? Or can you '*This* is what it is' – like a method…?

> Preschool teacher (being the most talkative): I think it should be a combination actually. Because we have done a binder with routines, which is done because we imagine you have to know a lot if you're going to get this started. I mean, we had a two-year project where we had the chance to learn a lot. And we had a lot of help from [another city] who offered their help. Then, we've succeeded better than they did, who were part of the national project. Because that's been studied too, and that didn't work that well actually. So Andershed talked to us the day after the presentation and he said it's not correct that we call ourselves Pinocchio. Because we've done so much better. For example, we're world leading, according to him, in working with risk related to empathy, guilt and remorse. That is, making progress in that area. That's the area in the world that you haven't been able to do anything about, and we've been able to do something about that. On lots of our children.

Me: But in what way is it not Pinocchio because of that? Because you do well?

Preschool teacher: He means that if we call ourselves Pinocchio, which we do – Pinocchio A-city – the researchers and people that have been involved in this big study, they think about Pinocchio related to the quite bad result there was. So they can't see… So if we'd had another name, maybe they would be more interested in looking at what we do. Because he would like more people looking at what we've done.

Social worker: People probably look more to the study than us working with it in practice.

Me: So instead of you contributing in making Pinocchio better, Pinocchio kind of pulls you down…

Social worker: Yes, that's what he's saying.

Preschool teacher: That's what he's saying.

Social worker: Yes, that's what he's saying.

Preschool teacher: I'm not sure he's right, but he lives in that world, with researchers and stuff, so I guess he should know. (Interview, Nov. 2014)

My impression from the discussion at the conference was confirmed in the interview: it is difficult – bordering on impossible – to extract the element of success in the success story. All participants seemed to agree that Pinocchio had been a good way of working together, that Ester was a necessary part of the project, but that it was not enough. The project participants expressed a great respect for the researcher and research results, but they did not consider that kind of knowledge their area of expertise. Instead, their view of knowledge was much more focused on what was applicable, of immediate use in their work. Almost in passing, they told me about a meeting series they had, called *Our children*, where professionals from social services and preschools meet on a regular basis to discuss cases and methods in a semi-formal setting.

Social worker: *Our children* is a meeting we have here at the Family Centre, and it consists of different professions. And it's these collaboration

partners that are part of a Family Centre [preschool, social services, paediatric primary care]. And the student health services, a psychologist from there. And preschool teachers, who bring up children they want to discuss at the meeting, anonymously. So the meeting is really about the preschools in this district wanting to talk about a child they're worried about, to hear from different experts what you can continue to do with this child and the child's parents and the preschool teachers in the best possible way.

Me: And then it's without the child and without identifying the child. So it's more on methods…

Social worker: Yes, yes…

Preschool teacher: They tell the gender, age, and family relations – if it's one of eight, a single child, or…

Social worker: And then there's [name], who's a preschool teacher, me who's a social worker, a psychologist, a paediatric nurse, two preschool managers from the district, ordinary preschool teachers [not working at the Family Centre], and preschool teachers who want to talk about a child. And all of these, we're gathered, and those who have good suggestions about what to do, how to proceed, it's specifically for the preschool teacher, so they don't get stuck…

Preschool teacher/manager: Usually, they've tried many different methods themselves and feel that 'no, now I have to move on, get some more help'.

Social worker: 'Now, we're stuck!'

Preschool teacher/manager: And, as you say, their colleagues also become experts. Everyone brings experiences. And by asking questions you usually return from here very satisfied. And there's no one delivering anything to you. But a lot of perspectives, many different questions. And quite some suggestions coming up.

Social worker: Sometimes there are no suggestions, you just ask questions, and that gets you thinking…

Me: You start thinking from perspectives you didn't know about…

Social worker: Yes. That itself can be a really good help.

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Me: And this is something that's done regularly? Or depending on the demand?

Preschool teacher/manager: Yes, it's done regularly.

Social worker: One Friday afternoon every month. (Interview, Nov. 2014)

They went on by describing that there are three children discussed each time – three 'cases' – and how they do not take minutes or otherwise write down what is discussed in the meetings. They had developed the idea themselves, inspired from something similar at another Family Centre but where it did not work out for various reasons. It was obvious that the employees themselves were very happy and satisfied with this way of working. They told me how there is a 'knowledge flow' between professions, and how this knowledge is transferred to their different preschools and social offices, thus spreading beyond the meetings.

Since their method is not formalised in any way – neither evidence-based nor listed in the NBHW Methods guide – I asked about their not documenting. The answer was hesitant, with a shrug:

Preschool teacher: No. I guess that's what… We're really good at *working*… (laughing)

Preschool teacher/manager: No, but we really do a lot. We don't have that many things that you can read yourself into. But we're more than happy to share it with others. And they have tried at other places, but then they've chosen a somewhat different way that isn't as successful; they don't allow that many participants, they think they can make it a bit more efficient, and then not that many show up. There are some [of our counterparts] … but there are no colleagues present. And that's something missing. Partly I think, you only visit so-called experts [as opposed to colleagues]; and we who don't work out there, we haven't got that competence. Even if we have been there, previously, it's here and now. That's a strength. (Interview, Nov. 2014)

They emphasised that there must not be a setting where someone with a problem comes to experts to receive a solution, but rather colleagues discussing a situation together. The equality between the participants, which is a hallmark of *Our children*, ensures the unpretentiousness that they consider important.

The story that sticks after reading and listening to the evaluation of Pinocchio, the presentation and discussions on Ester, and the Family Centre's work at large is the dual components – of relational, non-articulate knowledge and collaboration, on the one hand, and the highly formalised and manual-based collaboration through instruments. Despite me posing the question in various ways, the project participants repeated that both components had been necessary and that they worked well together. In accordance with this, they also acknowledged the difficulty in defining the formula of successful collaboration – or how to diffuse it to other districts in the city.

> Me: Is it Pinocchio, then, that should be spread to other Family Centres, or is it something else?
>
> Preschool teacher: That's the question we've asked ourselves!
>
> Social worker: Good question, yes!
>
> /…/
>
> Preschool teacher/manager: /…/ We're more than willing to share what we've seen as successful here. But it's hard, as we said then, to reproduce. But, I mean, I think our entire concept really… you can't just have Pinocchio and think it solves everything. I think that's it: there are relations and everything. (Interview, Nov. 2014)

Working together at the Family Centre had provided a foundation for working together in the Pinocchio project. According to the participants, the project activities could not be separated from the daily work and relations that they engaged in and experienced. What they described, however, was a rather complex intersection of organisational arrangements (the Family Centre), them being in the neighbourhood, a professional unpretentiousness and willingness to share knowledge, as well as a susceptibility for new ideas and instruments. Because research on evidence-based practices and standards are often portrayed as a threat to professional knowledge and discretion, I wondered whether Pinocchio was ever seen as a threat to the well-functioning collaboration they already had.

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Preschool teacher: No! On the contrary, it was a help! (all agree)

Me: Is that so? (surprised)

Preschool teacher: Absolutely!

Preschool teacher/manager: We're not that easily scared for that matter! (laughing) (Interview, Nov. 2014)

The boundaries of knowledge are evidently acknowledged. The project participants have great respect for the researcher and research results and they do not consider that kind of knowledge their area of expertise. Instead, their knowledge is much more focused on what is applicable, of immediate use in their work, and what is the preferred course of action in a particular situation. Accordingly, they confirm a distinct separation of knowledge forms – and they reflect on its differences, as shown in the example of *Our children* and why it did not work out as intended at another place – but without expressing any hostility or reproach vis-à-vis the expert or the evidence-based instrument.

The new government model and the role of DM

Another, and perhaps even more elusive, example of situated knowing shows in the role and work of DM. Formally, she was the manager of Deal and thereby occupied a central position in most situations. Observing the management she exercised, it became evident that this role required much more than formal managerial practices. The tacit knowledge that DM practiced was not bound to any welfare profession; her job was more like a project leader or political strategist who had to navigate between the directors' committee, the political committee, and various mid-level managers that did not formally fall under Deal. 'Traditional' management or supervision was thereby not applicable, other than possibly in relation to her own few employees. Observing the meetings with the directors' committee and the political committee, it became clear that DM managed the activities and projects of Deal not only by providing detailed plans and suggestions but also by sorting the sometimes unclear or ambiguous situations that occur.

One such situation appeared in the directors' committee, when DM proposed to hire a person to work as a project leader half-time and to work

to find and develop new projects half-time. The position seemed odd, as if the new employee did not really have a job description for part of their work. Most of the department directors had been positive to the proposal; no one doubted her judgement of the situation, and they all thought the idea was basically good. Still, there was some hesitance to allocate money to hire a person to work 50% on something that had not yet been clearly defined and valued as necessary. There were three department directors at the table at that time, one of which was rather new at his post, attending the committee meeting for the first time. The two more experienced in the group talked about budget posts with DM, making sure they got things right. 'Will there be enough tasks?' one of them asked, referring to the fact that Deal currently employed two part-time employees, apart from DM working full time as its manager. 'Oh, they should both still be financed from Deal', the other one filled in, 'plus one project leader?' To this, DM responded:

> The way I understand it, it's up to us to create these tasks – make sure we're visible out in the organisation. I've had big problems with that, making that possible. And when we're out talking to people, there are small embryos to ideas of methods development. But from there, to expand it into projects, that takes time. Not only should we get out there and talk to researchers, we should talk to the department administrations, we should find what's there, we should find a model to use. It takes time. And if it's only me who should do the method development, it will take time between the project plans. (DM, Meeting transcriptions, Sept. 2014)

While the two department directors who have been around before seemed to understand what DM was describing, convinced of her argument, the less experienced one remained hesitant. A brief conversation took place between him and DM, where she positioned herself as being on top of things, thereby making it impossible to outright deny the need for the proposed hiring.

> The director: Now, I don't really have that insight into the economy as it has been, so to speak – I shouldn't be negative – I think we should think this over, starting an employment that we don't really know what it should do.

> DM quickly responds: 50% we know.

The director responds equally quick: Yes, yes, that's obvious, that we know. But the other 50% to somehow create projects, that… at a stage where I'm sitting with a budget that isn't too darn happy, it feels a bit… It's pocket money in the context of things, but it still signals, you know. Where we got projects that we will have difficulty continuing. I feel there's something of a dead stop there'. (He laughs gently, so as to ease up.) (Meeting transcriptions, Sept. 2014)

At this point, one of the other two managers explained to him how she planned to allocate the money in order to get it to work. I had a hard time following the steps, but it all boiled down to a rearrangement of funding within the larger Deal budget, so that the 50% employment proposed by DM would not have an effect on things outside Deal. The budget discussion proceeded quickly and they summarised which one of the five departments participating in Deal should pay how much. DM made a quick calculation in her head that none of the others (including me) followed. She explained in a few words for everyone to understand, after which one of the experienced directors concluded, with a laugh: 'She's smart – not much to put up against that one!'

Similar situations also occurred in the political committee, although there, DM's role was somewhat more low-key. Nonetheless, she repeatedly demonstrated the ability to defuse situations or debates by anticipating questions, making proposals or asking questions to move a discussion in a certain direction. On two occasions, I gave short presentations to the political committee about my observations and research. As DM had made clear at an early stage, my access had been conditional on them having a use for me as well. My views and opinions were rarely asked for, however, and so when I did give a presentation – in which I told them about my focusing on the role of knowledge and different kinds of knowledge at play – I was curious as to how they would respond or react. Interestingly, DM was the first to speak after I had finished and she quickly concluded, turned to me, that I was rather uncritical.

On the one hand, this was probably true. My intention was not to scrutinise, assess or evaluate their work in any way that would come out as critical or not. My purpose was to study how Deal was governed, and on this occasion I talked about the role of knowledge in government, with some examples from Deal's projects. On the other hand, DM's conclusion

of my not being critical set the tone for how to understand what I had just been saying. Without being asked to, she took on the role of interpreter – being the expert in the room telling the politicians how to understand what I had been saying. In other words, I understood the quick conclusion of my not being critical as directed towards the politicians in the committee – telling them how to understand things – rather than it being directed at me, whom she was in fact speaking to. Similar things played out at different meetings, where DM acted as mediator, stage manager or broker between different areas of expertise or knowledge.

In sum, the way DM managed Deal in general – and the various committee meetings in particular – could be seen as part of a manager's tasks; on the other hand, it demonstrated a situated knowing that is distinct from expert knowledge or standardised knowledge on management. There could hardly be a template for navigating a political debate, and it was not a practice that was addressed explicitly in any other forum. Instead, this situated knowing should be seen as a particular form of tacit managerial knowledge, different from the standardised managerial practices described in the previous chapter.

Analysing local knowledge: Subtle but influential

Local knowledge, as I have described in this chapter, distinguishes itself from other forms of knowledge in the sense that it is not always recognised as knowledge. From certain theoretical viewpoints, what I denote local knowledge would be discarded as tradition or custom rather than knowledge, or simply considered 'the other' of rational knowledge – 'reason's neglect' (Townley, 2008). As a consequence, local knowledge may be more difficult to conceive in terms of government – as part of a knowledge regime (see chapter four).

However, in political and scholarly debate, the local knowledge held by welfare professionals is often recognised, and it is discussed in relation to administrative and managerial practices – how it differs from evidence, expert knowledge, and bureaucratic practices, for example. But in the work situations within Deal – and perhaps in the welfare sector at large – discussions on knowledge do no typically refer to such unarticulated and

professional knowledge. When talking about knowledge use, people most often refer to scientific knowledge and the kind of researcher involvement described in chapter six.

In my conversations with DM, scientific knowledge enjoyed a particular position, as I have described. Researchers and expert knowledge had a certain status, and they could be referred to in presentations. But local knowledge was also acknowledged as important, and in conversations with me, DM strongly emphasised that it was the project participants who were the true developers of methods, that they were the ones who best knew what works, and so on. It appeared to me that this was something important to convey – that Deal did not involve outsiders to provide new knowledge or methods that the social workers, teachers and others should just adopt in their work.

Despite this, I perceived a difference as to whether and how the local knowledge of the project participants was acknowledged, and even cherished, and where it was not. In the Motivation and KEY projects, the local knowledge of the social workers was taken into consideration in different ways, but in Pinocchio, this did not seem to be the case.

When does local knowledge matter?

In the KEY project, it was decided that the cogwheel investigations should be launched, and in broad terms what these investigations should encompass. But it was not decided really what children – which cases – would be best served by the new investigation procedures. To me, it seemed almost arbitrary, but DM ensured that the changes reflected the involvement of the experienced caseworkers; they voiced their opinion and described which children would benefit the most from cogwheel investigations. In retrospect, at least, it was described that such decisions require an attentiveness and discussion among the more experienced professionals in which their knowledge is acknowledged.

In the Pinocchio project, on the other hand, the opinions from the participant professionals did not seem to be as important in deciding on the project's future. Before the Pinocchio conference – when the panel discussed how to proceed from the project – I knew there were plans to initiate a mobile team; an idea that the Pinocchio project leader, KS,

suggested at the panel discussion. The idea had already been discussed between her and DM, and it had already been suggested at another meeting I attended that Deal should apply for funding such a project. At the conference, however, the immediate reaction from the project participants was hesitance; they advocated a bottom-up approach, first establishing more Family Centres around the city, rather than initiating a mobile team. To them – and to others in the audience – the idea of a mobile team sounded strange, and they seemed to prefer an approach of learning from the project, implementing Family Centres and the project's methods step by step. Interestingly, the mobile team was not discussed further at that time, and the panel was steered to talk about somewhat other issues. KS, who had suggested the idea, did not push things further, and neither did DM, who was leading the panel.

In the end, the mobile team solution was turned into a project application, and it seemed to be accepted by most involved. At that very time, though, the experiences and input from the project participants was not helping the argument – that a mobile team was necessary – and so they were not given very much attention on the topic, as opposed to the caseworkers' input regarding the cogwheel investigations. Comparing these two situations, it is obvious that in neither case was there research or expert knowledge to guide the process; nor was there any evidence or guidelines that pointed to one particular method of doing things above others. Certainly, the researchers provided a compelling story about the choice of particular measures within the Pinocchio project – how to measure the needs of children and choose the proper intervention – but they did not provide guidance on how to scale up the allegedly successful accomplishments. In other words, the summative evaluation of Pinocchio spoke clearly about statistical correlations between means and ends but not about the management or government of collaboration projects. Instead, decisions had to rely on the involved managers, project leaders and professionals with experience of things.

In the KEY project, thus, the caseworkers' suggestion was taken into consideration, while in the Pinocchio project, the preschool teachers' and social workers' input was not acknowledged to the same extent. Overall, this difference between the projects seems indicative of the two projects' broader dynamic. The KEY project relied considerably more on a bottom-up approach, where the local knowledge of the caseworkers, primarily,

was important in designing the project and investigation procedure. The Pinocchio project, inversely, was managed more top-down – the staff at the Family Centre were in no way critical of the project but nonetheless describe how it was offered to them with instruments and courses already decided.

As opposed to the local knowledge of welfare professionals – such as social workers and teachers – the situated knowing of managers, such as DM, is located even more under the social science radar. Although an unarticulated managerial or organisational knowledge is at the core of political and administrative practices, it is primarily the practice-oriented approaches that acknowledge and theorise this (see e.g. Huxham, 2003; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Vangen & Huxham, 2003a). The manager's role as mediator or stage manager may follow from the position of having the collaborative agenda as their main, or sole, priority – as opposed to politicians, managers and staff who have other issues on their table – and also them being in control over funds and information pertaining to the collaboration organisation (Huxham, 2003). In Deal, this showed in the KEY project, where DM organised meetings with different professional groups; although she was not in control over the meetings themselves, she was the one coordinating them and deciding when the two professional groups – social workers and school personnel – should be brought together (see chapter seven). In addition to this, DM's familiarity with research and the academic community was important in the role as knowledge broker, which, in turn, was something that the politicians valued and which had a history within Deal since before her entering the organisation (see chapter three).

The embedded rationality of local knowledge

Although all different forms of knowledge matter, the local knowledge of welfare professionals – especially that which appeared in the Pinocchio project – was seldom incorporated or made visible with the project structure. The reason for its invisibility likely lies in its presumed 'non-rational' character. In chapter four, I described different conceptualisations of rationality, arguing that the rationality is often conceived as disembedded, located outside of context and personal

judgement, and that it thereby offers a foundation for objective knowledge. Contrary to this, and as argued by Townley (2008), rationality should be seen as embedded in context, situation or practice. What is rational, reasonable and sound cannot be decided against an external yardstick but must be appreciated in context. In Pinocchio, the professional knowledge that I perceived, expressed in relation to *Our children*, did not claim to be scientific – or even to be knowledge. The welfare professionals were humble in their descriptions, saying that they merely posed questions and offered advice. This indicated the presence of a knowledge hierarchy, where subjective and contextual knowledge was discarded – or just neglected – for the benefit of impersonal and universal knowledge claims.

> Science and technique establish a hierarchy of knowledge. They privilege a disembedded disembodied knowledge in relation to the 'subjective', the 'personal', the qualitative, and the ad hoc. The self is disembedded to the point of its disappearance, in the sense that 'facts', science, or technique determines that something should be done in a particular way. /…/ It is to claim the impersonal and the universal. (Townley, 2008: 87)

Against the hierarchy of knowledge, which puts science at the top, Townley (2008) describes how professionals handle problems not just by solving them but by firstly understanding a situation *as* a problem (see also Polanyi, 1966). Problems are construed out of situations which may at first only appear puzzling, uncertain and difficult to disentangle – much like *Our children* was described to me. And professionals must therefore put some work into first discerning the problem at hand before thereafter addressing the problem using their knowledge. 'The essence of a contextual rationality is that rationality is embedded in the context in which it occurs and acquires meaning in reference to that context', she argues (Townley, 2008: 92).

Following this, however, Townley (2008) argues that an embedded rationality requires an embedded self; the bearer of local knowledge is also enmeshed in a context, situation or position from which they see things. The viewpoint of professionals, accordingly, is thus only partial – it can never include a complete overview. But this does not mean that all individual viewpoints and knowledge are isolated from each other and that there are no points from where to validate, judge or assess knowledge.

Quite the contrary, the embedded rationality and the embedded self imply that there is always a discourse, context, situation or community in which things make sense (see e.g. Haas, 1992, on epistemic communities, and Haraway, 1988, on situated knowledge). Professional knowledge, in other words, is not just personal or individual, but bound to the professional community or identity (Wagenaar, 2004).

What defines the context or community, however, varies from case to case – and it is ultimately an empirical question. Whether a local knowledge is cultural, professional, gendered – or bound to other common features of social relations – requires observations and analyses beyond what it done here. Based on my observations, I cannot say whether the caseworkers' opinions and knowledge are recognised to a greater extent than the preschool teachers' knowledge because of their social or organisational position or because their profession enjoys a greater status. However, from the practice-oriented approach employed here, such categories should not be over-emphasised, let alone assumed beforehand. Instead, one should bear in mind that the way that different groups of employees are acknowledged or not – to what extent and in what situations they are listened to or not – is what imbues them a certain position or status. Status and profession are dynamic features that are continuously produced and performed through practices such as the ones described in this chapter and dissertation; they are not pre-existing entities that appear in an organisational setting (see Bacchi, 2015; Townley, 2008).

Professions thus emerge, change and disappear, depending on how they and the practices that constitute them are conceived, valued and positioned in their particular contexts. In contemporary public administration, examples of perhaps dawning professions are that of public manager and project leader (Lennqvist-Lindén, 2011). Based on my observations, though, it is not possible to say whether the knowledge that DM practices, described above, would signify such a new profession. It would be accurate, however, to call this a situated knowing, which 'reflects tacit knowledge displayed by practitioners in the exercise of their practice' and 'the spontaneous actions, recognitions, and judgements that characterize work in practice' (Townley, 2008: 166). In the case of Deal, this knowledge appears invisible; it is not addressed or reflected on in any way. By this it differs from the more established professional knowledge, which

sometimes clashes with other forms of knowledge, primarily standardised knowledge.

The relationship between local and other forms of knowledge

Listening to the discussion at the Pinocchio conference where they talked about the evaluation and how to proceed from the project, I suspected there to be a difference of opinion between those favouring standardised knowledge and those safeguarding the knowledge and discretion of professionals. There were indications of such disagreements, for instance when the evaluating researcher suggested that the Social Services Act (the most important piece of legislation on the matters) should be revised to include more coercive measures for social workers, such as more mandatory treatments instead of voluntary. His argument was that social workers do not possess enough instruments to carry out their tasks and that the legislation should be imperative to this end. While some social workers in the audience agreed, saying they were unable to take necessary measures to protect children, others argued that convincing families of the right thing to do – without detailed instructions and legislation – is part of their profession.

Interestingly, there were few – if any – indications that evidence-based instruments such as Ester might compromise the autonomy of the welfare professionals – something that is frequently mentioned in previous research (see e.g. Bergmark & Lundström, 2006). Instead, my observations indicated a multifaceted and occasionally contradictory relationship between evidence-based instruments and professional knowledge. The project participants at the Family Centre, whom I interviewed, pointed to this. Rather than perceiving Ester – or the courses they had to take – as a threat to their position or professional discretion, the staff spoke highly of the instrument and the opportunity to learn more. Similar arguments were heard from staff in schools, such as school counsellors. As described in the last chapter, evidence-based practices often work through the professionals. It may be part of strengthening their professional aspiration, empowering them through knowledge use. In addition, welfare professionals have been described as both adapting *to* standardised instruments and adapting these to their work situation and

their local knowledge – despite local adaptations of such instruments often being against the very principle of them (see e.g. Björk, 2016).

The way that local knowledge and expert knowledge coexist in the Motivation project showed a similar complementary appearance. The researchers from LUII did one part – provide knowledge of certain matters – while the youth and the staff participating in the project provided knowledge of other things. Deal could then make use of either or both, depending on what it says and according to situation. While this may sound as if managers could pick and choose what to learn and what conclusions to draw, this behaviour should not be interpreted as knowledge being used instrumentally, or 'strategically' in the negative sense of the word. The fact that knowledge is acquired selectively – and according to preconceptions and preferences – is not a manipulative behaviour; this is how knowledge is always acted upon. Knowledge is perceived in context, and knowledge use is informed by rationality that is particular to the situation at hand. In other words, if the way knowledge is used and talked about sometimes appears incoherent or irrational, that is because 'rational' often denotes a specific form of rationality, universal and disembedded from context.

This is also how I have described knowledge regimes. Knowledge regimes do not refer to an institutional arrangement or an overarching discourse that determines what is possible or not to say or think. Knowledge regimes refer to governing practices that draw upon some form of knowledge. In the case of the KEY project and the cogwheel investigations, the caseworkers' knowledge seemed to be incorporated into the project; it was not neglected nor discarded for the benefit of expert or standard knowledge. Instead, it was seen as playing a significant role alongside the evidence-based practices and the researchers' expertise on project management and organisation. In the case of the Pinocchio project, on the other hand, the two knowledge regimes – the one based on standardised knowledge, mainly through Ester, and the one based on a local knowledge – seemed to exist alongside each other but without contact. The way that *Our children* was described, and the relations at the Family Centre, indicated a regime of local knowledge – a situated knowing that profoundly governed their relations and everyday work. However, despite this regime evidently being an important part of their work, it was not acknowledged as part of the project or of Deal.

When dealing with knowledge that is locally produced and context-bound, it is often relatively easy to discard it by saying it is just one case, or by making reference to research saying otherwise; while in some cases, the local knowledge is what counts, and scientific claims can be discarded for being out of touch with reality, or being overly theoretical. The difference between such situations, I argue, should be understood in terms of rationality, and in terms of power. The rationality at play determines what knowledge is and what it is not – both randomised control trials (RCT) and personal experiences count as valid knowledge. Where RCT is highly valued, practices and practitioners of RCT are rendered important, while other forms of knowledge tend to be marginalised or silenced altogether. As described by several Foucauldian-inspired scholars, the appropriate measures of a situation depend largely on how problems are construed (see e.g. Bacchi, 2012; Mouffe, 2005; Triantafillou, 2012). If the problems facing an organisation or a collaboration project are considered local and context-bound, there is good reason for trusting knowledge that is local and context-bound. In Deal, problems were sometimes described as local, sometimes as more universal. Consequently, they emphasised that knowledge must be produced in-house, that they must make a habit of learning from each other's knowledge, but also that knowledge provided through research is indispensable. Where local knowledge is acknowledged and valued *in relation to other knowledge*, it is likely to influence the ideas and practices taking place. The relational aspect is worth emphasising, because as I have repeatedly argued, it is not the validity of the knowledge in itself that renders it power; it is how it influences behaviour, governs, in each situation.

In *Our children*, accordingly, knowledge in the form of professional experiences is valued by all those present. Evidence, experts or documentation is not invoked. Local knowledge is all there is, as they describe things, and the preschool teachers who come there with a 'case' often leave satisfied. Had there been a researcher, however, things might have been different. The staff working at the Family Centre obviously find themselves in situations, such as *Our children*, where local and experience-based knowledge counts; but they also work in the Pinocchio project, which has been evaluated by a researcher and where they use an evidence-based assessment instrument. In relation to these, their own

knowledge appears inferior. In the KEY project, it is the investigating case workers' knowledge that is given precedence over the suggestions from the politicians and that of DM. When they discuss what group to focus on in the projects, there were no research findings that argued otherwise and so the professional experience and judgement of the social workers was recognised.

Concluding remarks on the regime of local knowledge

As described in this chapter, the subtlety of local knowledge should not be mistaken for its being obsolete or meaningless in any way – not for the professionals themselves or for the children they work with. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that the unarticulated knowledge held by welfare professionals makes up the very foundation of welfare (see also chapter ten). Despite this, and despite the fact that the role of professionals is repeatedly emphasised in interviews and conversations, the local knowledge of professionals is not as prominent as expert knowledge and standardised knowledge. As an observer and analyst, it requires a certain attention to identify and understand the role of local knowledge within government practices.

Nevertheless, local knowledge is present within several of Deal's projects – most notably perhaps within the Pinocchio project where local knowledge serves as a complement to the standardised knowledge that is the centrepiece of the project. Additionally, there is a local knowledge of management and organisation at play, practiced by DM as she navigates and manages the many processes and arenas within Deal.

The observations in this chapter, and my subsequent analyses, may point to there being a knowledge hierarchy present, as described in previous chapters: knowledge that has not undergone certain standardised methods or peer-review might be considered inferior to knowledge that is produced according to such acclaimed procedures. However, two things should be noted in relation to this. Firstly, although such a hierarchy may characterise many situations – as indicated by scholars – it should not be assumed a priori. In certain issues or settings, the knowledge hierarchy

may not have evidence on top but at the bottom. From academia and politics alike, we know that different communities have their theoretical preferences; there are epistemic communities, to speak with Haas (1992), which might valorise methods and knowledge forms differently. A religious group, or cult even, is likely to discard evidence or peer-reviewed knowledge – instead relying on their conviction, rational as it may be only to them. Secondly, the fact that one kind of knowledge is valued above another does not say very much. As I have argued, it is in the procedures and practices whereby different forms of knowledge are enacted, and where they meet, where we can study the exercise of power (Freeman & Sturdy, 2015a). The mere existence, or presence, of a certain form of knowledge does not say how, or to what extent, it influences the activities in a certain situation. The comparison between the KEY and Pinocchio project is a testament to this, which illustrates that one must take a look at specific practices in order to understand whether and how knowledge matters in government.

9. Knowledge regimes in collaboration

The purpose of this research has been to investigate how collaboration is governed and to explore the role of knowledge in the governing practices. The ambition has been to go beyond the formal and explicit forms of government that political analyses most often describe to instead conceive government in a broader sense. In chapter two, I described perspectives on collaboration, focusing on welfare collaboration and how this has been researched empirically as well as theoretically. Although most research on collaboration seems focused on organisational matters – often with the intention to 'describe and prescribe' how collaboration could be improved – I also accounted for practice-oriented research, a methodological approach that I adhere to myself. The third chapter introduced the case and organisation of Deal, the organisation and object of my empirical study, and I described its history as well as current organisational characteristics. The fourth chapter gave a theoretical presentation of the knowledge–politics relationship, arguing that the concept of rationality is crucial to understand the role of knowledge in government. Knowledge can be conceived very differently, I argued, and its role in government must be seen in relation to how it is enacted in government practices. The concept of knowledge regimes was elaborated and proposed to describe such government practices, which draw upon different forms of knowledge. After a methodological presentation and reflections in chapter five, where I described the explorative approach and the empirical study of government practices, chapters six through eight presented my empirical study of Deal, along with my analyses.

In chapter six, I analysed how researchers were involved to provide their expert knowledge; in chapter seven, how standardised knowledge was implemented through certain instruments and guidelines; and in

chapter eight, how local knowledge was enacted in the work of welfare professionals and within managerial practices. These different forms of knowledge all influence Deal in different ways, through the practices by which they are enacted. Rather than focusing on which form of knowledge is more dominant, I have argued that we should pay attention to the diversity of knowledge and the relationship between different forms of knowledge. Taken together, the description and analysis in these chapters shows the presence of multiple knowledge regimes and that different forms of knowledge appear side by side in the same organisation and even within the same collaboration projects. Sometimes this causes different perspectives to compete – as issues and problems are seen from different viewpoints – but oftentimes, different forms of knowledge co-exist in a seemingly harmonious and fruitful relationship.

To briefly recapitulate, the different forms of knowledge and the governing practices that I have observed can be summarised as follows in table 2:

Table 2. Practices of government in relation to Deal and its projects – some examples from chapters 6-8

PRACTICES OF GOVERNMENT	PROJECT: PINOCCHIO	PROJECT: KEY	PROJECT: MOTIVATION	DEAL'S ORG.
Regime of expert knowledge (ch 6)	Conference presentation of evaluation	Meeting presentation/ lecture; Research circle	Participant researchers; evalutation and research overview	Research circle; occasional presentation (e.g. me)
Regime of standardised knowledge (ch. 7)	Use of assessment instrument (Ester)	Investigation manual and instrument (BBIC)	Acitivity bracelet to monitor health and lifestyle	The new government model
Regime of local knowledge (ch. 8)	Our children – talking series among professionals	Producing the investigation guideline	Project participants' experiences and input	DM's role as 'stage manager' and broker

Drawing on the Foucauldian perspective on knowledge and government as laid out in chapter four, the absence of conflict and confrontation should not be mistaken for the absence of government. Practices of government work by informing and influencing how things are perceived, establishing what courses of action are possible and desirable. Government works *through* the behaviour and activities of employees, managers and politicians; to a large extent, they govern themselves as opposed to being explicitly limited or forced into certain courses of action.

The role of experts, for instance, is not to impose their knowledge upon the organisation or its staff. They provide solutions and answers to what managers and employees perceive as uncertain or problematic situations, which they need help in handling. Oftentimes, experts can be involved to address particular challenges or questions that have arisen, as opposed to guidelines or templates which are standardised and universally applicable. Additionally, experts embody the scientific contribution which is such an important element of Deal's work and history.

Having described the different knowledge regimes at play in Deal, and how they appear in different projects, in this chapter I will discuss three themes, or tensions, that underpin much of what I have observed and described in relation to Deal. These are tensions that are frequently addressed in research on the organisation and government of welfare, and which I consider relevant beyond this particular case. In the tenth and final chapter, I return to the relation between different forms of knowledge and practices of welfare in a more historical perspective in an effort to put the contemporary organisation of welfare – including collaboration – into a broader political perspective. There, I argue that collaboration reproduces a long history of knowledge-based welfare practices but that it also represents an organisational rupture and that both of these views matter for how we understand the government of collaboration.

In this chapter, though, I begin by discussing the knowledge and role of professionals. I focus on the tension between professionals' discretion and local knowledge, on the one hand, and evidence-based practices on the other, and I describe the role of public-sector manager as a potentially emerging new profession. Thereafter, I describe a tension between what can be seen as welfare's content – the core services provided within welfare – and welfare's form, its organisation. This tension often underlies research and debates on public administration and management, and in Sweden at least it has reached well outside the academic literature and arena. Lastly, in this chapter, I ask whether we are heading towards a management of politics. This question is prompted by the discussion on a management profession and the increasing focus on welfare's form – and I use the study of Deal to describe how we may be witnessing an incorporation of politics into organisational and managerial regimes. This is an issue that I will also return to in the last chapter, putting it into a broader political and historical context.

The role and knowledge of professionals

In much research on welfare professionals, the increasing use of standardised knowledge has been described. Evidence-based instruments, tools and models are often seen as advancing at the expense of professional autonomy and local knowledge. Although I have no reason to question this image in general, the case of Deal has shown a complex relationship between the two forms of knowledge, with a tension more than an outright conflict or clash between perspectives. In this section, I relate this tension to the diversity of professions and ongoing processes of professionalisation. My ambition is to focus on the non-static character of professions, emphasising that profession is a multifaceted concept with nuances and constant changes. While the first part of the section highlights the tension between professionals and evidence-based practices – asking whether we are headed towards an ever-more standardised welfare – the second part focuses on a less prominent professional category, the emerging public-sector management profession.

Towards an ever-more standardised welfare?

In studies of evidence-based practices and the so-called evidence movement, it is often described how one particular form of knowledge has precedence over others. Primarily, it is randomised control trials (RCT) that are valued the highest, while a more person-bound and reflexive knowledge is found at the bottom. This 'evidence hierarchy' appears within medicine and social work, as well as in organisation and management (see chapters four and seven). From much research, it is easy to believe that this hierarchy is always present, in the sense that RCT is always valued above other forms of knowledge. But as I have argued, this is not the case. What the knowledge hierarchy looks like depends on the context, at least to some extent. As poststructuralists have argued, the order of discourse – including language as well as cognitive or social practices – is not set in stone; the order changes over time and space. Bacchi (2012) describes how that which appears fixed and stable is in fact contextual and relational, the product of historical circumstances (see also Foucault, 1980). It does not mean that history or social and political

relations happen entirely haphazardly, but it means that they are changing and that one cannot say beforehand that after one event or practice, this or that will follow. Precisely what the knowledge hierarchy looks like must be studied empirically and not assumed a priori. As Bacchi (2012) argues, the analysis should focus on the very processes and practices that make certain objects, phenomena and practices appear stable and fixed.

In this study, I have given examples of where expert knowledge is invoked, where evidence-based practices are at the centre, and where local knowledge plays the important role. I have not provided a model, overview or explanatory theory for which knowledge matters the most in which situation, or why. Instead, my main contribution is the conceptualisation of knowledge regimes, the detailed description of the different knowledge regimes, and the first attempts to study how the knowledge regimes relate to each other. The latter question, of how knowledge regimes relate to each other, merits further scholarly attention, I would argue. While there is plenty of research on how certain knowledge is promoted and other knowledge silenced, such studies should be analysed in terms of *government* to a greater extent, and they would benefit from more attention from political scientists.

The question of why standardised knowledge such as evidence has gained ground has been the focus of much research. Within welfare, there is a rich body of literature on the how evidence-based practices are implemented or adopted and on the relationship between professional knowledge and evidence[10]. In social work the implementation of evidence-based practices has often been coupled with an ambition to modernise the profession. By invoking scientific knowledge, social work is seen as increasingly professional and gaining a higher status – much like medical professions. This development, though, is ambivalent. While evidence may imbue the social workers a more scientifically-based role, it may also reduce their professional role, which is based on a care ethic and professional judgement, to a more mechanical or routinised role. One form of knowledge silences others (Jacobsson et al., 2017; Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012). Observation studies as well as surveys show

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[10] See e.g. Bergmark & Lundström, 2006, 2011a; Björk, 2016; Ferlie et al., 2012; Jones, 1999; Jacobsson et al., 2017; Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012. See also Porter, 1995, and Triantafillou, 2015, on the emergence of standardised knowledge within politics and public administration.

the complexity of the relationship between professional roles and evidence-based practices (Bergmark & Lundström, 2011a; Björk, 2016).

Similarly, the relationship between expert knowledge – provided by academic scholars, for example – and the knowledge of welfare professionals is not possible to summarise as either adversarial or harmonious. It is only in relation to specific projects and situations that the relationship between professionals' local knowledge and the academics' expert knowledge can be properly analysed. The relation between external experts or academics vis-à-vis welfare professionals, however, seems to be given less attention in research on welfare than the relation between evidence and professionals, and the position, role and autonomy of professionals seems to be constituted more in relation to evidence and standardised knowledge than in relation to experts.

I believe that a number of exigencies matter for how different forms of knowledge are perceived, how they are acted upon, and how they play out in relation to other forms of knowledge. It could be that welfare professionals who work with the implementation of specific laws that target individuals (*Swedish: myndighetsutövning*) are seen as more important to listen to, compared to professionals who do not. In the KEY project, the social workers who had experience in casework and who were knowledgeable of the BBIC standard appeared to be important figures, since they could interpret the compatibility of different standards, and how those fulfil the legal requirements of casework. Other parts of social work – such as the one in the Pinocchio project – did not seem to be regulated by law, and the professionals in this project had little influence over what instrument to work with.

Similarly, those who enjoy a generally higher status in their work because of their professional role, such as medical doctors, or due to their organisational position, such as managers are probably more likely to also enjoy autonomy and trust in their work. Although evidence-based practices and instruments are implemented across the welfare sector, there are different techniques and practices at play regarding how the implementation is orchestrated. Bejerot and Hasselbladh (2011) have shown how doctors took part in developing Swedish healthcare quality registers; at first, the registers were an instrument for scientific measurement and improvement of healthcare, but they transformed into an instrument of governing healthcare (see also Martinell Barfoed &

Jacobsson, 2012, on social work). Björk (2016) describes how social workers adapt evidence-based instruments to fit into their everyday work situation, thus taking a pragmatic standpoint rather than 'buying the entire package'.

In sum, the extent to which welfare professionals adopt standards, instruments and various guidelines – and the way in which they do this – varies according to profession and according to how the instruments and guidelines are perceived in relation to their professional knowledge, roles, and autonomy. And the extent to which they may resist the implementation is likely also dependent on the status of the profession in question, as well as political stakes and interests – such as the relationship between politicians and the trade union. Consequently, in order to study how evidence-based practices and other enactments of standardised knowledge govern professionals, there is need for empirical investigation. As government practices work through the employees by shaping their positions and field of action, the absence of conflict and confrontation should not be mistaken for the absence of government.

Towards a public-sector management profession?

Another process of professionalisation that is noteworthy, and which has implications for collaboration in particular, concerns that of public-sector managers, coordinators and strategists. With the case of Deal, I have described local knowledge of organisational and managerial matters that I observed, knowledge that was enacted especially through the practices of DM, the manager and central figure of Deal. DM's role and prominence in Deal cannot be emphasised enough: she managed Deal with skills that are perhaps best compared to the tacit knowledge and skills associated with more traditional professions (see e.g. Stevenson, 2001; Townley, 2008; Wagenaar, 2004).

In chapter three, I described one of the leading politicians' view of DM. In the interview, he conveyed a paramount trust in her abilities – an admiration almost. When we talked about the fact that Deal has become such a small organisation – in terms of staff – he admitted that the reorganisation did leave Deal smaller than he had envisioned but also that he is very satisfied by how it turned out. When I asked about the

vulnerability of the current organisation, being so dependent on one person, he argued that the previous organisation was also vulnerable – perhaps even more so than the current one. The reason for this is that the previous organisation drew (partly negative) attention and that the current one is more flexible, or versatile. 'I mean, we went from having one Deal organisation to the Deal organisation being located within the department organisation', he explained. DM herself acknowledged this picture, and she emphasised that the bulk of the projects is performed by the participants – the employees representing the different departments. It seemed important for her to convey the image that she and the Deal office were not the ones doing the job – they were merely facilitating or administering the creativity and work of others.

This image notwithstanding, DM's role is essential for Deal and Deal's ability to initiate, lead and administer collaboration. The fact that resources – in terms of staff as well as funding – are partly located within the different departments means that DM needs to have close relationships on different levels and in different parts of the departments. This showed on several occasions and in different situations. At one point, described in chapter eight, DM discussed the hiring of a person who would work halftime on initiating new projects, having an ear to the ground in the different departments. At the same meeting, she also described one person working part-time at the Deal office who functioned as a door opener to DM, especially within the department of education, where DM had fewer relations than in the department of social services, where she and Deal were formally located. This indicated an awareness of having relations and familiarity with the different departments, but it also revealed the need for such relations in order for Deal to fulfil its tasks. Collaboration simply cannot be orchestrated without the active participation of people who are located outside the Deal office, and so building trust and relations became crucial for DM.

In chapter eight, I described DM as a mediator, stage manager or broker between different areas of expertise or knowledge. In meetings, and between them, she anticipated questions and problems, she tied contacts within and outside the departments, and she made sure to always be, or appear to be, knowledgeable on the issues that were currently on the table. In addition, she made sure to stay humble in relation to the different professional groups such as teachers, social workers or counsellors.

Wagenaar (2004) says that 'moving about in a moral–political environment of high uncertainty' makes administrative work appear improvisational, as if things are invented as one goes along. But, in reality, he argues, 'it is certainly not devoid of reason and rationale' (Wagenaar, 2004: 649-650).

Instead, this ability – and the practices of DM that I have described – are part of what is best seen as the skills of aspiring new managerial professions within public administration. Much like the teachers, doctors, social workers and nurses have tacit knowledge and skills –which are only visible in their professional practices – so do the new organisational and managerial professions.[11] Their local knowledge is not enacted in relation to students, clients and patients, however, but in the meetings and conferences that they participate in or lead – and, perhaps more importantly, in-between such occasions (Huxham, 2003). For these people, a meeting – to take an example – is both a venue and an instrument for practicing their jobs (Svensson, 2018; see also Andersson Cederholm, 2010).

In a recent study of so-called cross-sector strategists within Swedish public administration, Svensson (2018) describes the ambiguous relationship to professionalisation that characterises this rather new role in public administration. Working with issues that span across several departments or policy areas – such as environment or gender equality – the strategists can be seen as professionals within their specific area (e.g. environment, gender equality); as professionals of strategy, administration, policy and implementation; or as professionals in their support function vis-à-vis other professionals (Svensson, 2018). Much like the role of DM, the cross-sector strategists lack the formal mandate to fulfil their tasks, and so they must instead rely on relations, persuasion, and an understanding of others (Vangen et al., 2014). Such professions, however, are tied to organisational positions rather than occupational. Contrary to professions within law or medicine, strategists' and managers' professional roles stem from their organisational position, rather than from

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[11] What I call a new managerial profession within the public sector need not only be formal manager positions, but rather different professions that have organisational and managerial matters as their core tasks – such as municipal managers (Lennqvist-Lindén, 2011), project leaders (Fred, 2018), cross-sector strategists (Svensson, 2018), and partnership managers (Huxham, 2003).

an expertise that they have incorporated (Svensson, 2018; see also Bergmark & Lundström, 2011a).

In other words, the skills and knowledge that DM exercises could be understood as part of an aspiring professional role. By adopting this perspective, the local knowledge that she practices becomes easier to distinguish; it appears as a sought-after ability – necessary from the perspective of Deal – and not as a personal trait or feature. Consequently, the object of welfare managers' professional knowledge is not the content of welfare but issues pertaining to its form.

Welfare's content and form

When Deal was reorganised and made slimmer, it was the politicians' decision to dismantle the previous organisation and to substitute it for an organisation that was integrated into the permanent organisation – but it was decided on the department directors' suggestion, possibly to avoid Deal leading a life on its own. However, the change also reflected an awareness that organisational matters may overshadow the purpose and core services of the collaboration: the wellbeing of the children and youth and the services directed at this group.

Both DM and the politicians – especially the one in A-city – stressed that you must not become obsessed with yourself, losing sight of the target. The risk of collaboration projects turning to themselves – becoming small bureaucratic organisations – has been described in research (e.g. Fred, 2018), and although Deal remained project-based, they seemed aware of this risk.

In a study of Swedish public administration, Hall (2012a) describes how organisational knowledge has become increasingly important. In universities as well as in health services, there is an increasing use of methods and practices – carried out by more and more administrative staff – that focus on organisation, management and administration, as opposed to the key services of education, research and healthcare. The reasons for this development are partly the demands from regulating and supervising politicians and agencies – as made famous by Power's (1997) concept 'the

audit society' – and partly the organisations' own tendency to organise and re-organise themselves in efforts to improve.

While Hall (2012a) sees this development as part of NPM and a general managerialism, there are indications that also the counter-movement – seeking to roll back NPM – is very much devoted to management and organisation, although in a different manner. The rhetoric on public-sector innovation (see e.g. Sørensen & Torfing, 2011) is a testament to this, and I would say that Deal follows the same path. Ironically, perhaps, the very idea of the public sector being in constant need of improvement, innovation and methods development seems to stimulate organisational knowledge just as much as NPM has done. Both perspectives share a view of the problems of the public sector while proposing very different solutions (see Bevir, 2013).

Following this, organisation becomes an increasingly important object of knowledge. Rather than organisation being secondary to so-called core services – whether it is education, social work or healthcare – the organising of the services becomes the primary task for many people.[12] On a general note, welfare collaboration as a contemporary concept and phenomenon could serve as an example of this development. As I have mentioned, collaboration is in some aspects a buzzword – invoked by managers and politicians as a means of addressing pressing problems through organisation. The very focus on collaboration – understood as the relationship between agencies, professions or municipal departments – could be seen as an attempt to 'organise away' problems, but whether this is the case in specific local settings is largely an empirical question.

In Deal, the focus on organisation and management is hard to pin down, and I would not jump to the conclusion that collaboration here trumps other practices of welfare, which are to be considered core services. Instead, I would argue that Deal manifests an ambiguous relation to organisational issues, where organisational matters are essential for their very existence while also being constantly held back in an effort to keep the target groups of the projects – the children and youth – in focus.

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[12] Scholars of public administration and management have analysed and provided ample examples of this development, in international contexts as well as in Sweden (e.g. Courpasson, 2006; Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Fred, 2018; Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2014; Hall, 2012a, b; Lennqvist-Lindén, 2011; Parding, 2007).

Ever since the beginning, Deal's activities have consisted of collaboration projects. As a consequence of this – and of the profound reorganisation before DM was hired – there seems to be a certain 'maturity' as to how they relate to projects. As shown in Fred's (2018) research, projects within municipal welfare tend to suffer from an administrative and organisational overload. Issues pertaining to the project organisation itself tend to overshadow the purpose and initial ideas with the projects. Fred (2018) describes a great enthusiasm, from the staff as well as the organisation at large, where projects are ascribed very positive values, as almost being a refuge from the ordinary, everyday work. By comparison, in Deal – consisting almost exclusively of projects – there is less enthusiasm for the project as a way of organising, and the focus of the staff and the organisation is directed elsewhere (see also Lundin et al., 2015 on project-supported versus project-based organisations).

In other words, organisational knowledge is indeed at the centre within Deal, in the sense that there is a great awareness and dedication as to how their work is best organised and managed. But there is also an awareness that the organisational issues must not take over – neither in terms of what they do, by creating new organisational layers, nor by drawing focus away from the projects' purposes and target groups.

Towards a management of politics?

An important feature of knowledge regimes, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, is that it structures what is possible or not and how we can and cannot act. In effect, this is how knowledge governs. However, not only actions and behaviour are structured; knowledge regimes also position individuals and their relations, constituting them as employees, managers, administrators and professionals. For instance, the practice and body of knowledge known as human resource management (HRM) establishes knowledge of work relations, of employees and managers, and of organisational matters (e.g. Townley, 1993; Triantafillou, 2012). As the (scientific) discourses change, so do the ideals of employees and work relations, and the positioning of employees in relation to managers, politicians and the public sector in which they work (Åkerstrøm Andersen

& Born, 2001). Project management (PM), similarly, construes not only the organisation and management of projects but also what a project is (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007).

While much research on government and organisational knowledge focuses on standardised procedures and management models, I have pointed to the local organisational knowledge at play within Deal, enacted alongside standardised organisational knowledge. This is especially the case in the new government model that I described in chapters seven and eight. This model, together with the practices of DM described above, provides a structure and a knowledge of who does what within the Deal organisation – thus formalising roles for politicians, managers and employees. Although the government model is mainly directed towards organisational and managerial issues and relations (see chapter 7, figure 6), it also shows how organisational knowledge incorporates politics into its regime. This development, or movement, could thus be seen as *an incorporation of the political into the managerial* – a movement whereby the political is made subject to certain standardised knowledge.

In a similar fashion, Hodgson and Cicmil (2007) describe how knowledge of project management standardises procedures relating to projects and how it substitutes reflexive and embodied rationality for a universal and standardised knowledge. They argue that 'the "blackboxing" of knowledge in this area, as definitions, techniques and procedures become set in stone, effectively removes ethical and political questions from the agenda' (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007: 446). Similar to how they describe the establishment of what a project is, and how projects are managed, I would say that the government model contributes to a 'blackboxing' of politics. By formalising relations and the roles of politicians, knowledge of what politicians should and should not do is established. But rather than completely ousting the political – 'removing ethical and political questions from the agenda', as Hodgson and Cicmil say – the government model displays a subjugation of the political to the managerial.

This incorporation is fuelled by standardised organisational knowledge, but also by the local knowledge of DM, as an aspiring management professional – and by the eagerness of the politicians themselves 'to do a qualitatively better job as politicians', as one of them put it (see chapter three). The *political*, in this context, should be seen as both overarching

ethical and non-formal political issues – which is how I interpret Hodgson and Cicmil (2007; see also Mouffe, 2005) – and the formal politics that the elected representatives of Deal's political committee are in charge of.

The incorporation of politics into the new government model can be compared with Carter and Scarbrough's (2001) study of how a previously dominating knowledge regime – consisting of engineering knowledge – was substituted for a regime of managerial knowledge. As I described in chapter four, the new managerial discourse did not just replace the discourse of engineering; it sought to encapsulate it and incorporate it. Engineering was not seen as unnecessary or useless knowledge, but rather something that was to serve the managerial one (Carter & Scarbrough, 2001). This is precisely how I perceive politics within Deal, and the role of the politicians. DM claims that the politicians have knowledge that is indispensable for Deal and that it is rather the department directors who find it difficult to relate to the politicians. DM and the politicians agree, however, that their role must be made clearer and fit into the organisational and managerial structure.

In other words, there is not so much a struggle or negotiation *between* the politicians and the management, but rather a joint struggle to fit politics into the organisation. This struggle showed when the politicians were to appoint representatives to the recurring workshops as part of the new government model, where the minority gave up their positions. In ordinary political committee work, the minority would be entitled to positions, but here, there was an ambition to keep the workshop relatively small, and so everyone could not be represented. Although the politicians and managers all agreed on this, it could be seen as the subjugation of a political discourse, or rationale, for the benefit of the organisational knowledge as enacted in the government model. It should be noted though, that the standardised knowledge here typically appeared in tandem with DM's local knowledge; the way the meetings were managed and the workshops moderated all depended on a local organisational and managerial knowledge, which thereby also contributed to managing the politics of Deal.

To conclude, it seems that although the governing practices – the knowledge regimes – are surrounded and permeated by tensions of different sorts, there is a common strive to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity within what is an inherently uncertain and ambiguous

environment. The public sector in general, and welfare collaboration in particular, is not possible to standardise and control to the extent that some actors may wish. Admittedly, previous research on collaboration is equivocal on the matter (see chapter two). While several scholars advocate more structure and guidance, not making collaboration an issue of personal relations, others propose more leeway and increased self-government. Although Deal seem to be moving towards more of predictability and increased structure, they still demonstrate the equivocal approach to organisation and government presented in the research literature.

10. Knowledge regimes and the politics of welfare

In this last chapter, I will set contemporary welfare practices in a wider historical and political context. The purpose of this zooming out is to better understand the government of collaboration in terms of politics, as well as the political implications of knowledge regimes. In providing this contextualisation, I argue, firstly, that in a historical context, welfare practices should be seen as both *continuous and contingent*. While welfare collaboration is often seen as a break with a previous institutional order, I describe how it is at once permeated by practices and knowledge that have a long history and contingent upon its contemporary social and political context. Secondly, I focus on the *diversity of knowledge*, emphasising that experts, evidence and local knowledge have been present throughout the history of welfare but that they also exist simultaneously, and their role and relations have political implications. Following this, and finally in this dissertation, I argue that *the role of knowledge must be acknowledged within the government of welfare.* Especially, further attention should be paid to the relationship between different forms of knowledge and their bearing on government practices. While this is a task for social science, it is also imperative that politicians recognise the dynamic relationship between knowledge and government practices, since this relationship is essentially political.

Welfare practices – Continuous and contingent

The literature on public-sector collaboration, presented in chapter two, often describes an organisational order where institutions, agencies or

departments enter into collaborative arrangements in order to fulfil a task where there are mutual benefits, or where they are instructed to do so, or where there are expectations or norms that tell them to collaborate. Despite different theoretical explanations as to why collaboration appears, and what the implications are, collaboration is typically portrayed as a contemporary organisational feature positioned against an established or traditional order – where independent institutions, departments and agencies are the norm. In the case of welfare, collaboration thus represents a response to the disintegration or dismantling of the institutional welfare state (see chapter two). In scholarly debate, this organisational shift – in welfare and in the public sector at large – has been given different labels. It is sometimes described as a *post-Fordist* welfare state, where proponents of the concept argue that the welfare state's development mirrored or followed from greater macroeconomic changes in society, away from Fordism (Flynn, 1999; Loader & Burrows, 1994). Although the concept of a post-Fordist welfare state is contested, the development referred to is typically seen as deviating from the modernist production and organisation of previous times. The decentralisation, specialisation and fragmentation is seen as a break from how welfare was carried out before (Loader & Burrows, 1994).

Closely related to this is the academic debate on a *postmodern* public administration (Bogason, 2007) as well as *post-bureaucracy*, which also point to a non-modernist order of public administration, although focusing more on the organisational features of politics, administration and the politico-administrative relationship and less on socioeconomic structures. So-called defenders of bureaucracy (e.g. Byrkjeflot & DuGay, 2012; Diefenbach & Todnem By, 2012) do not share the methodological premises of postmodernist scholars, but they describe similar temporal ruptures in terms of public-sector relationships and the role of civil servants. Taken together, these different conceptualisations outline a disintegration of a previous modernist-bureaucratic order.

The claim that contemporary public administration is complex has been uttered so many times that it has all but lost meaning. Indeed, the welfare sector is a complex arrangement , as it includes education, healthcare, and a plethora of services to care for the elderly, the poor, the young, and other needs that we have from time to time. Complexity, however, often serves to distinguish the current state of welfare from a previous one, which – it

is often implied – was less complex, or at least less fragmented, more solid and more familiar. However, following a poststructuralist view on the government and organisation of the public sector, welfare could be seen as both continuous and contingent. By continuity, I mean that several of the elements and practices that make up the welfare sector have been present throughout history and that perceived shifts are often less disruptive than scholars retrospectively portray them to be. Many features that are seen as diagnostic for particular eras appear less idiosyncratic when deconstructed with the help of Foucauldian analysis. At the same time, welfare consists of practices whose relations to the state and the public institutions have shifted over time and depending on context.

By acknowledging that the organisation and practices of welfare we are experiencing and witnessing today are indeed both breaking with history and part of it, we are better equipped to comprehend and to theorise collaboration and other features of the contemporary welfare sector.

Deconstructing the welfare state

As stated in chapters two and four, welfare practices preceded the welfare state, and already at an early stage in history, these practices were based on different forms of knowledge. Without making a full historic account, there is reason to briefly reflect on the earlier practices of welfare – in order to deconstruct the institutional arrangements that today are often taken for granted and presented as a backdrop for describing collaboration. Following Miller and Rose (2008), we could analyse how the welfare state emerged through different rationalities and practices coming together under the umbrella of the public sector and how the government and politics of welfare can be seen as the organisation of these practices.

In an often referred to historical account of Swedish welfare, Hirdman (2000) describes how, in the early years of Swedish welfare politics, political advancements were closely connected to certain social scientific research and some notable key figures. It was a movement of simultaneous social and scientific advancement; politically normative in its undertaking, while trying to reach beyond political conflicts (Hirdman, 2000; see also O'Connor, 2001; Skocpol & Rueschemeyer, 1996).

Although other accounts of the history of Swedish welfare downplay the role of particular social engineers, the close relationship between social policy and social science recurs. Eventually, the welfare state became a symbol for an ideologically driven, social democratic project, where legislation, government commissions and grand programmes were among the important building blocks. But Ekström von Essen (2003) points to welfare always having been a local affair in Sweden, where the community – through churches and various volunteer arrangements – have organised and carried out the care for children, sick, poor and elderly.

In the 1940s, Ekström von Essen (2003) describes, not only welfare but local government overall became a political concern. Where local government had previously been an apolitical affair in the sense that there were no ideological affiliations or overtly political interest at play, it now became politicised – something which was promoted by the Social Democrats against the will of the Conservatives. The principle to local government and welfare that the Social Democrats promoted focused on local political programmes. Local politicians should not just adopt a centrally decided policy or reform but should also adapt policies to their local conditions – conditions that should be thoroughly investigated with the help of empirical social science. Importantly, the proposed 'social investigations' should survey the local conditions of housing, schools and situations for children, and the investigations should be done in collaboration with non-government associations, such as women's clubs and youth clubs. There was an empiricist and local approach to planning and organising welfare, inspired by how businesses investigate the needs and interests of customers (Ekström von Essen, 2003).

This non-centralist description of the emerging welfare state ascribes an important role to the local politicians – in a time when Sweden was divided into some 2500 local governments, compared to today's 290 – and the non-governmental networks and associations (see also Lundquist, 1996). This amounts to a welfare state emerging from local welfare work, rather than emerging from the state, although connected to a broader scientific rationality. This emergence, Ekström von Essen (2003) argues, was based on the views and thoughts of local politicians – described as 'the municipal men' (*Swedish: kommunalmännen*, my translation).

As local government at this time consisted almost exclusively of the elected politicians – there were essentially no administrative bodies or

non-political organisations within the local authorities (Nilsson, 2013) – the municipal men became 'an increasingly evident thought collective' (Ekström von Essen, 2003: 245, my translation). Despite the increasing politicisation of local government and welfare, the local politicians were not just acting on behalf of their party or as implementers of national reforms; they were forming into what political scientists of today would perhaps call a 'discourse coalition' (Hajer, 1993) or an 'epistemic community' (Haas, 1992). 'As members of such a collective, they included a common "knowing", a common morale, common thought figures, ideals and strategies' (Ekström von Essen, 2003: 245, my translation). They were not only theoretically informed in a similar way, but they also interpreted their context similarly and were prepared to act upon the knowledge they acquired in a similar manner (see also Lundquist, 1996; O'Connor, 2001).

The reason for this historical exposé – lingering on a few details – is not to ascertain what really happened then and there. Instead, my purpose is to underline the continuous elements of Swedish welfare, especially at the local level. Zooming out, it seems that the early years of the welfare state provide a necessary contextualisation by putting more recent reforms and transformations in a broader perspective.

> Put simply, we can talk about a development from the traditional welfare of the 1800s, over a more professional social policy propelled by voluntary organisations such as CSA [A social-liberal NGO devoted to social work], into a more publicly organised social policy; that is, along the lines of the welfare state of recent times. (Nilsson, 2013: 41–42, my translation)

This development is also described by Lundquist (1996) in his account of how care for the poor – what we now know as social care – evolved in the years 1900 to 1920 through the work of a few key individuals and organisations, most notably the CSA. In theoretical terms, I argue that such a process could be seen as a process of politicisation – a process whereby social and community-based practices are incorporated into a public sphere, thus amounting to a welfare *state*. It could of course be argued that welfare and social work is a political undertaking whether or not it is located within the public realm, but by 'politicisation' I here refer to the fact that welfare was placed under a formal government rule, which was also becoming more ideological.

In a poststructuralist line of reasoning – and in accordance with the above – Miller and Rose (2008) describe the emergence of the welfare state as a rather un-directed process. The birth and development of the welfare state consisted of quite different elements – rationalities and government practices – which together resulted in what we may label the welfare state.

> Welfarism is not so much a matter of the rise of an interventionist state as the assembling of diverse mechanisms and arguments through which political forces seek to secure social and economic objectives by linking up a plethora of networks with aspirations to know, programme and transform the social field. (Miller & Rose, 2008: 72)

Based on the historical descriptions above, I would say that the early Swedish welfare state illustrates Miller and Rose's argument. And it is in the same vein, I argue, that we should understand the disintegration, dismantling or fragmentation of the same welfare state – that which is said to have increased the need for collaboration. Rather than being a well-directed or deliberate project of dismantling welfare institutions, the reforms of the late 1900s seem to have encompassed explicitly ideological components as well as new knowledge and economic interests. In sum, however, the welfare state could be seen as a (temporary) fixation of knowledge-based welfare practices organised into public-sector institutions and departments.

By emphasising the continuity of welfare practices, it could be argued that the knowledge regimes that I have perceived within Deal have a long history; professional knowledge – including an ethics of care – held by social workers and other welfare professionals can be traced far back in time (e.g. Flynn, 1999; Nilsson, 2013). The main point to make, however, is that the knowledge regimes that I have observed as central in the collaboration of Deal are not dependent on the institutional arrangement that is often foregrounded in the literature on collaboration. Put differently, by focusing on the continuity of welfare *practices* – instead of the rupture of welfare *institutions* – collaboration seems less like a paradigmatic shift of the public sector. This view, in turn, prompts questions about whether the government of welfare collaboration is any different from the government of welfare at large?

Governing contemporary welfare

Whether we see welfare collaboration as representative of an institutional shift having taken place, as described by much research on collaboration, or as 'a bundle of practices' (see Nicolini, 2012) just like any other public organisation has implications for how to understand its government. As I have argued for viewing not only collaboration but the public sector at large as consisting of practices, it could be argued that governing welfare collaboration is no different from governing the welfare sector in general. And on a purely theoretical level, I do make this argument; I have argued that conceptualising different practices and phenomena, rendering them known in a particular way, is an essential part of government (e.g. Townley, 2008; see also chapter four). Such governing practices are not unique for welfare collaboration. These are governing practices that have been analysed theoretically and empirically within different parts of the public sector. But just because *I* – following a practice-oriented perspective to organisation and politics – have proclaimed that institutions and institutional boundaries are overemphasised does not mean that they are irrelevant for the ones working within them, or for those undertaking the governing practices or who are subject to them. For some employees – and even more so for managers and politicians – institutions and organisational compartments may be seen as the very basis of welfare, constituting its boundaries and establishing what is within and outside of the welfare sector.

Although I consider *practices* to be a better way and concept of apprehending contemporary as well as historical welfare, so much of government and politics have been invested in *institutional* arrangements that they cannot be discarded as merely theoretical inventions. For those who work within social services, schools and healthcare, the institutional and professional belonging is often highly present – regardless of whether they identify with or consider themselves loyal to their organisations. This means that whether or not researchers consider a paradigmatic disintegration of the welfare institutions as having taken place is not all that matters; if the politicians, managers and employees perceive such a shift, it will have repercussions for relations and government practices.

In this sense, it seems that welfare collaboration is indeed characterised by the narrative of disintegrated and fragmented institutions and the

increased need for collaboration across organisational boundaries (see chapter two). There is a perceived and ongoing organisational shift, constitutive of collaboration, and therefore it is not surprising that organisational and managerial issues appear especially important – thus raising the demand of organisational knowledge. Had we instead conceived welfare as consisting of an assemblage of practices, knowledge and networks inside and outside of the public realm, we would probably be less preoccupied, or concerned, about governing across organisational and professional boundaries. Likewise, the 'collaboration paradox' described in the introduction – meaning that collaboration presupposes the very boundaries that it so vehemently tries to overcome – would not be as paradoxical if we focus on the *practices* of welfare instead of its institutions or organisational entities.

However, the prominence of organisational matters is probably also related to the supply-side of organisational knowledge; there is an abundance of academic and non-academic knowledge on organisation and management that also puts organisational matters front and centre. In addition, within research on government, policy, and public administration, different institutional theories are very prominent today. On the one hand, institutional and neo-institutional theories are so diverse and nuanced that much of what I consider practice-oriented research could also be carried out within this realm. Lindberg (2014) shows how institutional logics are better understood as performed into being, through practices, than as merely institutional expressions. On the other hand, institutionalist and neo-institutionalist scholars share a point of departure which tends to overemphasise the institutional features of welfare, thus focusing too much on the welfare *state* and its shifting character, as opposed to the practices, networks, and knowledge within welfare.

As I have described, knowledge regimes are not firmly tied to the arrangement that is referred to as collaboration, nor are they unique to that particular institutional context. Instead, knowledge regimes come from different directions, they intersect, and they govern in relation to each other. While some elements of these regimes have a long history within welfare work, such as knowledge of how to treat and care for young people in need, others seem more contemporary, such as the efforts to compartmentalise politics and formalise its relation to management.

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From the Foucauldian, or poststructuralist, viewpoint, analysing politics and government is then partly about studying the knowledge or understanding that defines an issue and partly about studying the practices through which the knowledge in question is turned into government – that is, the practices, contexts and actors that enact the knowledge at hand. Drawing upon my own empirical study, I argue that we must problematise and distinguish the public institutions' roles and importance within welfare to appreciate how they are intersected by different practices and rationalities and to conclude that the public sector is part of its surrounding context. The knowledge regimes that I have described in this dissertation are not institutional derivatives, nor are they unique to the organisation of Deal and irrelevant beyond the case. They are part of a political and historical surrounding, and by pointing to their historicity and how they are imbued with power, we are better equipped to understand contemporary politics and government.

The increase of organisational and standardised knowledge, discussed in the previous chapter, may on the one hand seem natural: since collaboration is about organising things in a new way, organisational knowledge becomes important. On the other hand, there is a risk that this knowledge displaces knowledge of the particular work that should be done. Organisational and managerial issues are allowed to dominate the agenda, while the contents of welfare have to adapt to what its new configuration allows. While this risk does not seem acute in the case of Deal, where there is an awareness about the risk, there is nonetheless an overall tendency that the will to formalise and improve organisation and management incorporates professional as well as explicitly political domains. A modernist and managerial rationality seems to have amplified, settling in more domains than ever before, and Deal is no exception to this general tendency.

In sum, collaboration appears to be an organisation that dissociates itself from a history that it is still very much a part of. By focusing on knowledge within collaboration, and how different forms of knowledge are enacted in government practices, collaboration can be seen as welfare's continuity – a set of practices based on knowledge that has existed before as well as after the golden age of the welfare state – but also as a new order, where welfare politics is replaced by an increasingly standardised welfare knowledge.

The diversity of knowledge

Acknowledging the historical role and importance of knowledge in governing welfare is not enough to understand the knowledge regimes of contemporary public administration. Observing and analysing current welfare, including welfare collaboration, requires simultaneous attention to details and societal and political contextualisation. Here, I combine the historical and the contemporary-empirical perspectives to discuss the diversity of knowledge and more specifically the political implications of knowledge regimes – that is, the exertion of power they entail.

Experts, evidence and other welfare knowledge

Different knowledge has existed throughout the history of welfare, as have practices that enact such knowledge. In the early decades of the 1900s, scientific knowledge – held and conveyed by experts – was important; and in the later decades of the 1900s, new reforms implied an increasing use of managerial and organisational knowledge, often enacted in standards and guidelines. But these different forms of knowledge did not just succeed each other, as one paradigm follows after and ousts the previous. They have existed simultaneously, sometimes in conflictual relationship, at other times more peacefully.

Looking at the Swedish national government commissions of the early- and mid-1900s, these can be seen as the epitome of the progressive Swedish welfare state. But even though social sciences and the welfare institutions have changed a great deal since then, the grand ambitions of the old welfare commissions should not be discarded as historical remnants. In fact, there is reason to believe that government commissions do not only persist in their traditional form – which they do, as the Swedish publication series SOU – but also take new forms, on the national as well as local levels. In 2010, the City of Malmö – Sweden's third largest city – launched *The Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö*, known as 'The Malmö Commission'. Led by a university professor of social medicine, it consisted of some fifteen experts, most of them academics from different disciplines. The commission was to address issues of public health in the city of Malmö, and especially the pressing problems of health

inequality among its citizens. The commissioners' task was to 'assemble evidence and based on those propose strategies' (Malmö Commission webpages). Shortly thereafter, several county regions followed suit, and in 2015, the minister of public health announced a national commission for health equality (Dir. 2015:60). The government's decision was clearly inspired by the celebrated Malmö Commission – which had delivered its final report by then – and included at least one of the former Malmö Commissioners, another professor of social medicine. The modus operandi seems very similar to the historical local and national surveys and commissions described by Ekström von Essen (2003) and Hirdman (2000).

Similarly, the professional knowledge and ethics that welfare professionals hold does not automatically cease to exist when an institutional shift occurs. Despite heavy reforms in the earlier as well as the later decades of the 1900s, many aspects of welfare work persist over time. Altermark (2016) has shown how the dismantling of institutional disability care – substituting this for independent living and personal support for the intellectually disabled – still bears traces of the paternalistic practices that were supposed to be replaced by empowerment and independence. The post-institutional disability care thus includes remnants of what was associated with a certain institutional order, illustrating my point that practices upon knowledge transgress institutional arrangements.

In the case of disability care, there is an obvious discord between the ambitions set out in legislation and what the state actually delivers; there are promises made and broken, Altermark (2016) argues. In other cases, such as the welfare commissions, there seems to be an ongoing demand to survey and collect data on the population's health, inequality, and living conditions that is insatiable and unaffected by the institutional reforms and policies that have been launched over some 75 years. Despite some changes over time (see Peterson, 2013), the expert commission, appointed by local or national government, seems to thrive as it ever has.

Interestingly, the tension between different knowledge regimes also has a long history in the public sector. Ever since the 1920s, Exworthy and Halford (1999) explain, there have been tensions between professionals, with their knowledge and autonomy, and managerialism. There have been previous shifts in legitimacy, where bureaucratic, organisational control

has stood in opposition to the role of professionals (Exworthy & Halford, 1999; see also Flynn, 1999). In other words, just like the expert knowledge we see in the welfare commission of Malmö resembles that of the earlier 1900s, also the more local and professional knowledge has been present throughout the transformations over a hundred years. And so have the practices that in various ways have sought to reign in, control or otherwise handle that knowledge – practices that today are seen as management.

What is striking in the case of Deal, however, is that government is sometimes very subtle, and that different practices, enacting different types of knowledge, appear in such close vicinity to each other – sometimes as supplementary, sometimes in conflict, and sometimes perhaps not knowing of each other's existence. Following a poststructuralist perspective on power and government, I have argued that regardless of whether we conceive knowledge regimes as conflicting or not – and regardless of whether they appear in multitude or singular – they are imbued with power. The absence of conflict is not indicative of power being absent; quite the contrary, where social relations and conditions are stable, power is likely to be without much resistance. However, the question in this dissertation has not been whether or not power is exercised, or with what intent, but *how*? The very concept of knowledge regime, as it has been proposed here, signifies government practices, and as I have perceived a diversity of knowledge regimes, it is the diversity of government that should be paid particular attention to in answering the question. Drawing on the ideas of Foucault, and together with more practice-oriented scholars of politics and public administration, I have thus focused on the diversity of knowledge and the multiple workings of power. There is not one form of knowledge – such as expert knowledge, or evidence – that occupies a hegemonic position over welfare collaboration, and there is not one government practice – such as researcher involvement or the use of guidelines – that dominates. Instead, there is a multitude of practices which enact knowledge, and which make sense in their particular context and setting, by the particular people who undertake them or who are subject to them. Analysing such practices in terms of power and politics is therefore up to the observer and analyst, adopting a perspective that foregrounds the politics–knowledge relationship.

The political implications of governing by knowledge

In the words of Foucault (1982), power works by structuring the field of action. Power is not about the coercion or suppression of individuals or other actors; it is about producing an order that enables some ideas and actions, while rendering others impossible. The government of welfare, following this, is the practices whereby welfare services, including the ones performing them, are directed or structured in their undertaking. In such a process, the role of knowledge is not to offer a neutral platform for politicians on which to meet and choose how to act and govern; knowledge is a platform that only allows certain routes, and not others.

In chapter four, I described how the science of welfare politics and the science of management and organisation have served to establish order and certainty in what is otherwise perceived as ambiguous and uncertain. Whereas ambiguity and uncertainty are inherent in all politics and public administration, the practices that reduce uncertainty and that provide discursive closure make them political practices – regardless of who is undertaking them (see Mouffe, 2005).

However, as Yanow (2009b) points out, some forms of knowledge and science are more prone to induce certainty and to mark a way forward than other forms, and this ought to make some knowledge more apt for political and managerial use than other knowledge. Inversely, some forms of knowledge are more conducive to reflection and preserving ambiguity, which would make them more suitable for contesting a current order or for keeping issues open for debate. In current politics and public administration, the most 'popular' forms of knowledge seem to be the ones where there is least room for movement and reflection – such as standards, evidence and how to-guidelines. Meanwhile, knowledge that leaves room for interpretation and reflection – such as professional judgement, unarticulated knowledge and certain forms of humanistic and social scientific knowledge – has a harder time being acknowledged as legitimate (Yanow, 2009b; Jacobsson et al., 2017; see Triantafillou, 2015 on evidence hierarchy).

The political aspect of knowledge regimes – in the sense of closing down multivocality and 'structuring the field of action' – lies partly in the relationality of knowledge regimes, whereby some knowledge obtains legitimacy and others do not, and partly in the promotion of knowledge

that is more instrumental, and less conducive to reflection and questioning. In a study of evidence-based practices within social work, Martinell Barfoed and Jacobsson (2012) show how evidence is framed as part of a modernising and increasingly scientific social work profession – as opposed to an archaic one based on gut feeling. By juxtaposing 'gut feeling' and 'pure facts', the authors demonstrate how one kind of knowledge is promoted explicitly at the expense of another (Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012; see also Jacobsson et al., 2017).

By observing and analysing how different knowledge regimes are played out and related to each other, government appears more clearly and the politics of knowledge regimes emerge. Once the diversity of knowledge regimes is acknowledged and their relations observed, it becomes easier to discern what groups of professionals, clients or youth benefit from what kind of knowledge use. Local knowledge, to paraphrase Townley (2008), appears to be 'reason's neglect' – it is 'the other' of more explicit knowledge. While there may be many reasons for why standardised knowledge is so heavily promoted within different parts of the welfare sector, one should not underestimate its convincing features: standardised knowledge is usable to an extent that is unbeatable. The usability of standardised knowledge – enacted in guidelines, models and standard operating procedures – is its hallmark. Project management guidelines and standard forms in social work are rarely about questioning and reflecting upon projects and clients; they are about implementing the best available knowledge in a cost- and time-efficient, and often universally applicable, manner.

So while all knowledge regimes that I have described are governing practices in some way – which lies in the definition of the concept – the regime of standardised knowledge is especially potent in governing, as the knowledge itself so clearly encourages action and decisiveness. While local knowledge entails much more subtle and unarticulated action, judgment and reasoning, it may also be enacted in government practices – and the same goes for what I refer to as expert knowledge. The regime of expert knowledge, however, entails different kinds of scientific knowledge, ranging from quantitative evaluations and surveys to lectures that draw on the expert's rhetoric and charisma. In other words, researchers may be involved to question, provide reflection and to challenge an organisation or group of employees, while they may also be

involved to provide legitimate and authoritative answers to identified problems. Although both possibilities exist, the latter more frequently occurs in the public sector of today.

The stakes of studying collaboration and knowledge regimes

In this dissertation, I have described and analysed the role of knowledge in government while exploring the government of welfare collaboration. In relation to welfare collaboration, this study points to four conclusions that I consider especially relevant and worth summarising.

First, collaboration should not be seen as an entirely politically orchestrated phenomenon – regardless of whether it is perceived as ideological or 'merely' organisational. There is every reason to study the political aspects of collaboration, but one should not assume that collaboration is a reform or organisation that has been launched top-down or that is deliberately promoted by certain interests. Instead, collaboration appears to be the result of different processes and interests intersecting – some of which are attributable to specific policies, others being more sublime and related to contemporary science and managerial discourse. The politics of collaboration, however, lies primarily in its practices and relations and the implications of these, not in the policy or organisational reform through which collaboration is launched.

Second, the relations and practices that make up collaboration are based on different kinds of knowledge – they are not constituted primarily by the institutions in which they appear. Although knowledge has always been present in welfare work – whether in the state's realm or not – the knowledge at play at a certain time and context is subject to empirical analysis, as is the relation between different forms of knowledge and politics. Therefore, different policy areas and different types of collaboration merit their own empirical investigations.

Third, collaboration does not represent a unidimensional break with a previous order, in the sense that a horizontal logic has replaced a vertical. Certainly, collaboration is often represented as 'the other' of traditional welfare institutions, but it is an organisational form and a set of relations

and practices that also presuppose these very institutions. This is how the collaboration paradox should be understood theoretically: collaboration attempts to break with the very same institutions that it is based upon, because it is simultaneously continuous, an ongoing part of a long history of welfare practices, and contingent, particular for its context. Deal illustrates this by being at once institutionalised collaboration – being a permanent organisation, with a manager, staff and an annual budget – and having a mission to initiate and support collaboration through temporary projects.

Fourth, and following from all of the above, collaboration appears to capture what many scholars have described as distinguishing characteristics of contemporary welfare and public sector. Concepts such as post-Fordism, postmodernism, post-bureaucracy, post-institutionalism and advanced liberalism all allude to a way of organising and doing welfare work that breaks with a traditional or modernist order, and collaboration could serve as an illustration of this attempted break. I consider these concepts useful in providing further and broader theoretical and societal contextualisations to collaboration – research contributions that I would strongly encourage. The 'stakes' of studying collaboration, accordingly, lie not only in the alleged success or failure of each collaborative venture but in understanding what collaboration actually entails, how it is governed, and – I would like to emphasise – in sustaining room for change. To sustain this room for change, I would argue that we must not seek to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity, but we should rather embrace such qualities.

Preserving ambiguity to enable change

Arguing that knowledge and politics are closely intertwined may sound like a cause for concern. The separation of knowledge, science and rationality from politics, power and ideology has a long and strong history in both politics and in academia. And as I have shown with the case of Deal, the ambition to clarify and formalise the role of politicians is most present; it is the will of managers as well as politicians themselves that politics be properly managed.

Contrary to this ambition, and as a closing argument of this dissertation, I contend that the ambiguous and multivocal character of politics and public administration must be safeguarded – from various efforts to compartmentalise politics and from the managerial tendencies to settle in ever more fields and incorporate ever more practices within its realm. It should be noted here that Deal does not serve as a warning example. Instead, the case of Deal shows the many nuances and complexities that we are likely to witness elsewhere in collaborative organisations and in the public sector more broadly. In Deal, I have observed the managerial tendencies described above but also the diversity of knowledge that still prevails, and how different knowledge regimes appear in close proximity.

Through this theoretical and empirical exploration, I have perceived a potential for change and movement within the welfare sector; I have not observed a hegemonic knowledge regime which has silenced others. Sure, the prevailing order seems to be more about certain forms of knowledge – in particular standardised knowledge and the reliance on experts – and some knowledge regimes are valid across a wide range of contexts, while other forms of knowledge are rendered more or less marginal. Yet, all forms of knowledge still exist and appear in various situations.

But I have also seen how the increasing use of standardised knowledge could be problematic – as I have already described and as other research has discussed more extensively. Standardised practices within social work, project management, knowledge management, and human resource management are just some examples where local and professional knowledge is subjugated or substituted for guidelines or otherwise universally applicable knowledge regimes. Although each case may display benefits and reveal important improvements, the overall tendency to replace different knowledge and practices with 'one size fits all' is cause for some worry.

In particular, the new government model that Deal launched represents a view of politics and the role of politicians that merits further attention and research. Various computer-aided systems for government and management – *Stratsys* and *Hypergene* are just two commercial brands used by local governments in Sweden – provide a framework for how political objectives are defined and set. The government model in Deal differs somewhat from such computer programmes in the way that it focuses less on formal tools of government, but it furthers the same

ambition to *manage* politics. Just the same way as the relation between managers and employees are standardised through various models, elected representatives are also incorporated into the same managerial practices. In terms of politico-administrative relations, this is noteworthy and not necessarily beneficial for democratic values such as transparency and accountability (see e.g. Lundquist, 1998).

In addition, I would argue that the use of experts within the public sector should also be paid close attention. Although the involvement of researchers – as consultants, lecturers, evaluators – is both positive and necessary, there is a risk that the scientific knowledge they hold is not provided or presented in a way that reflects its proper value. Put differently, if expert knowledge is sold (by academics) and bought (by public procurers) on a market, competing with other instruments aimed to improve the public sector, that knowledge is more than likely to be reduced to something less than what it is. If researchers are to contribute to politics and public administration, which they should, of course, it is important to acknowledge the full benefits and limits of academic knowledge – and not to confuse it with non-academic consultant services or commercial products. The ability to make subtle distinctions and question and reflect on complex issues is a hallmark of science and the academic craft; reducing researcher involvement to simply presenting prescriptions of what works would be most unfortunate.

Knowledge and politics – a public concern

Following from the above, governing by knowledge cannot be valued beforehand as either positive or negative, something to be pursued or avoided, or even something that could be handled by striking a fine balance. Instead, I argue, the way that different forms of knowledge are enacted in government practices must be subject to debate and acknowledged as somewhat incontrollable. Firstly, we should embrace all qualities of knowledge, including its ambiguity, uncertainty and elements of doubt, and not reduce knowledge use to providing finite answers about what to do and how to behave in given situations. Secondly, the use of knowledge should be subject to proper political debate – not with the

intention of valuing its claims but to openly discuss its role in politics and public administration.

In accordance with this, Armstrong (2004) has argued that 'the illusion of objectivity disguises the power of (academic) professional "knowledge"' and that this relocates important issues away from public debate about welfare politics (Armstrong, 2004: 109). However, much like I have argued in this dissertation, he says that this does not mean that we should be reluctant to use science, or to involve researchers and other experts in public administration and welfare:

> Research does have an important role to play in contributing to debates about policy and practice and in adding perspectives which sometimes illustrate the complexity of our world and at other times cut through and expose the arbitrariness and/or inconsistencies in policy and/or practice. For this reason, the engagement between researchers, policy makers, practitioners should take place within the wider forum of public, democratic debate, rather than within the narrow confines and cosy relationships of governmentality that undermine the democratic process. (Armstrong, 2004: 113)

In other words, the way that knowledge is conceived, acknowledged, and, ultimately, organised and put into practices that serve the public interest must not be entirely detached from transparent political processes. The critique is not directed towards different forms of knowledge, or the fact that knowledge is used, but rather towards how it is reduced to administrative and technical concerns.

Admittedly, to subject knowledge use to a wider forum of public debate is a demanding exercise, for, as Dear (2006) argues, the instrumentality of scientific knowledge is part of its very conception. Science not only establishes facts about that which is known – the target of the knowledge – but it also establishes a position of the one who knows, the subject that holds the knowledge (Dear, 2006; Jasanoff, 2004a). For Dear (2006), the science of engineering is the epitome of this dualism, and I would add that it holds also for the concept of social engineering, devoted precisely to a simultaneous knowing and doing of the welfare state.

Although science has traditionally entailed 'an attitude of doubt', as argued by Yanow (2009b), contemporary discourses of administration and management are almost entirely about certainty – and the evidence

movement is the ultimate example of this. The way science has been applied in public administration and management has robbed it of the elements of doubt. Against the language of certainty, Yanow (2009b: 587) proposes a language of inquiry and passionate humility – described as the 'passionate conviction that one is right, wedded to the acknowledgement of the possibility that one might be wrong'. But in contemporary practices of management, the language of inquiry has no place. Wherever the regime of standardised knowledge prevails, a passionate humility seems unrealistic.

In addition to the regime of standardised knowledge, I would argue that also the regime of expert knowledge – described in chapter six – makes the passionate humility unlikely, since this too promotes a language of certainty. One could certainly speculate that researcher involvement like the kind seen in Deal would allow for inquiry, doubt, and reflection – but the research practices where such reflection is undertaken are not the same practices that we observe when researchers and other experts are invited to public organisations to provide their knowledge of things. There, they are still considered experts whose knowledge proclaims certainties.

In other words, even if expert knowledge per se may allow a more reflexive reasoning, this reflection is not included in the enactment of that knowledge into practice; it has no place in the *regime* of expert knowledge. While researchers may be somewhat in control over their own research practice (disregarding, for a while, the managerialist tendencies within universities), the practice of researcher involvement that I described in chapter six is not undertaken solely by them: it is a practice in which the researcher and the practitioners both take part and where the language of certainty is lingua franca.

Armstrong's (2004) argument, quoted above, can be seen as a plea for involving researchers in a less managerial and instrumental way, allowing researchers' perspectives to 'sometimes illustrate the complexity of our world'. In other words, instead of seeking an ever-more compelling narrative of how collaboration should be carried out, managed, and organised – which is what much contemporary collaboration research tries to do – research should be more about exploring and problematising the collaborative practices within politics and public administration. This is not to say that all prescriptive research is positivist in character, or that it is burdened by its modernist legacy, only that politics and public

administration needs researchers that are critical companions, as opposed to participant consultants. And while this does not make research any less conducive to the development of the public sector or society at large, it does call for an explorative rather than instrumental role of research. As I have described and analysed the practices of collaboration in some detail, it has been my intention to open up for new understandings and insights rather than present any proof beyond interpretation.

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Appendix

Interviews, observations and other empirics

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Evidence, Expertise and 'Other' Knowledge
Governing Welfare Collaboration

In contemporary welfare, collaboration between professions, agencies and different municipal departments is increasingly important. Collaboration is seen as a way to address problems and to help people by working across organisational and professional boundaries. Collaboration is thus seen as different from traditional welfare institutions, where decision-making, organisations and roles are well-established and familiar.

However, new ways of organising and managing welfare raises questions about government and political-administrative relations. This dissertation addresses these questions by studying how welfare collaboration is governed. Based on an in-depth case study of collaboration on children and youth, the work of professionals, managers and politicians is observed and analysed as governing practices.

In the study, it is shown how different forms of knowledge are central in the governing practices. Beyond formal institutions and instruments of government, knowledge is put into practices which influence courses of action. Expert knowledge provided by academics; evidence within social work and management; and local knowledge held by welfare professionals – these are different forms of knowledge which important decisions and actions are based upon.

The dissertation shows how collaboration lacks the formal institutional framework that is often associated with the welfare state. But it is also argued that welfare services have always consisted of knowledge-based practices, and that collaboration therefore is not that different from how welfare has been carried out historically.

In conclusion, it is argued that the role of knowledge should be taken into account to a greater extent than is usually done in studies of welfare collaboration. The dissertation contributes to the study of welfare, its organisation and government, and it provides a theoretical contribution to research on knowledge, politics and public administration.