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NOT ANOTHER NEW WINE IN THE SAME OLD BOTTLES – MOTIVATORS AND INNOVATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT E-SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Research paper

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Abstract

E-services hold the potential to innovate how the public sector operates, and to increase the transparency of public services. Numerous research initiatives have illustrated the innovation power of e-services; with new technology and new solutions to existing problems. Research on this topic also emphasizes that in order for public e-services to reach their full potential, they need to be designed in a way that users find useful and beneficiary. Interestingly, in practice, only fragments of this claimed innovation seem to take place. Today, most public e-services launched are merely electronic versions of existing services with no, or very low, degree of innovation. In this paper, we analyse empirical data from local government e-service providers. The aim is to explore the current practices in local government e-service development with respect to how aspects related to innovative and high quality service provisioning are handled. In doing so, we analyse what basic motivators there are for local governments to offer e-services in the first place, and how such motivators influence innovation in local government e-service development. The analysis concludes that local governments are facing a challenging situation in terms of a general lack of resources regarding time, competence, and skills, as well as a dispersed user segment where needs and wills often are hard to grasp. Furthermore, local governments are facing conflicting interests and agendas. At the end of the day, the heights of innovation are then hard to achieve. We call for further research on the applicability of previous research findings in other research areas in order to promote more innovative e-service provisioning.

Keywords: Public e-service, service innovation, e-service development, local government

1 Introduction

Public e-services are currently considered as the main delivery channel for public administrations to provide service to the surrounding society; as manifested in many policy documents and actions plans nationally and governmentally. As such, a public e-service is about offering service using information and communication technologies (ICT), such as the internet (Rowley, 2006). Public e-services are often discussed in terms of enabling public sector transformation, and as a means of increasing transparency of public services (Lindgren & Jansson, 2013). The potential benefits of introducing public e-services are said to be fulfilled if adhering to citizens' needs and including citizens in development processes (Holgersson, Alenljung, & Söderström, 2015). However, as highlighted by Ilshamar, Bjurström, and Grönlund (2005) in the paper: "Public e-services in Sweden – Old wine in new bottles", despite government policies and imperatives towards increased user centeredness, public administrations' main incentive for launching new public e-services is increased internal efficiency. The same situation is reported seven years later by Axelsson, Melin, and Lindgren (2013), who state that public e-service development can be characterised by an inside-out perspective, where needs and ideas from the intended users, i.e. the citizens, are often left out of the development process. The

government-centric view on public e-services may explain the many failures related to e-service development in the public sector, and why many citizens do not consider public e-services as viable options, when compared to other existing service channels, such as mail, phone calls, and physical meetings.

Moreover, public administrations on different levels tend to adopt a techno-centric approach to e-service development, meaning that public e-service development is viewed as being synonymous with merely digitising already existing services. Millard (2010, p. 5) concludes: *“It is clear that most current eGovernment services are simply existing service put online which are still basically silo-centric, top-down, with little service innovation, expensive, and with just as many failures as successes. In other words, their main focus remains first and foremost to serve the needs of the government”*. As emphasised by e.g. Yildiz (2007) and Janowski (2015), public administrations must realise that increased use of ICT as a mediator of public services is not synonymous with innovative service provisioning. Instead, ICT should be viewed as one of several equally important aspects to consider when providing service. Instead of just focusing on putting citizens online, instead of in line, public administrations would benefit from a broadened and more holistic perspective on e-service development. In doing so, public e-service development would not only be diminished to what can be achieved by the usage of ICT. Instead, focus would lie on how ICT can be used in order to support service delivery in order to be truly innovative, thus favouring both vertical as well as horizontal integration (Layne & Lee, 2001) of services within as well as between public e-service providers.

As highlighted by Heeks and Bailur (2007), e-government research is characterised by an inability to build on previous research findings, both within its own research community but foremost from other research communities. Furthermore, as highlighted by Bannister and Connolly (2012), a trend in e-government research is to strive for new and more complex technologies, but these do not necessarily provide better options and solutions than existing ones. It is clear that general IS research offers numerous research initiatives where emphasis lies on highlighting the importance of viewing ICT as one of several equally important components needed to design and provide innovative and high quality service (e.g. Barrett, Davidson, Prabhu, & Vargo, 2015; Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). However, in e-government research, very few research initiatives can be found where innovation and design of service are combined. Notable and recent exceptions are provided by Janowski (2015) and Bertot, Estevez, and Janowski (2016), who both provide valuable insights in discussing service innovation in e-government in general, as well as classifying stages of service innovation in e-government. However, despite these efforts, there is a general lack of conceptualisation of e-government research. This in turn hampers the possibilities to design public e-services perceived as useful and meaningful by the citizens, not just the providing public services.

Public e-service providers can be classified in three tiers: 1) National, 2) Regional, and 3) Local; wherein local government represents the lowest and smallest unit within a state (Asgarkhani, 2005). As highlighted by Holgersson et al. (2015), local government represents the government authorities closest to the citizens in terms of service interactions in citizens' everyday life and is frequently populated by street-level bureaucrats. As discussed previously, public administrations at any tier are facing a challenging situation when it comes to design and develop of public e-services that users, e.g. citizens, perceive as valuable and desirable to use. Local government is especially vulnerable since it faces a combination of additional challenges. First, local governments must provide a wide range of services in different areas to a broad population that entails a wide diversity of user characteristics (in Sweden e.g. child care, city roads, schools, competitive conditions for local trade and industry, elderly care, social benefits, etc.). Second, resources are mostly very limited, in terms of competence, time, and funding (Holgersson et al., 2015). As today, it seems clear that the priorities for local governments are demanding and require a more holistic perspective on e-service development than is usually adopted in practice. Instead of designing separate administration centred (“silo”) e-services, e-services can be seen in their entirety from a more holistic perspective across actor borders where the needs of the citizens play an explicit role. This is a demanding task for any level of government, but is even

more demanding for local governments due to the diversity of needs and service that must be taken into account in combination with the lack of resources, competence, etc.

The aim of this paper is to explore the current practices in local government e-service development with respect to how aspects related to innovative and high quality service provisioning are handled. In doing so, we intend to analyse what basic motivators there are for local governments to: (1) offer e-services in the first place and (2) how such motivators influence innovation in local government e-service development.

The paper is structured as follows; after this introduction some related research is presented in Section Two. This is followed by the research design in Section Three. In Section Four we present findings from studies of seven local governments in Sweden. The findings are discussed and conclusions are drawn in the last section, together with some remarks on future studies.

2 Related research

E-government research has for the past decade highlighted a need for increased user centeredness in public e-service development. As discussed already in 2005 by e.g. Ilshammar et al. (2005), external values and drivers have been put aside for the benefit of internal business values favouring improved internal efficiency by reducing manual handling of service errands. At best, user needs and considerations have been guessed or assumed instead of thoroughly analysed (Axelsson, Melin, & Lindgren, 2010). As a result, many public e-service development projects have failed, simply because the intended users, i.e. the citizens, do not want to use the offered e-services since they do not add any value compared to other already existing alternatives to interact with public administrations (Kotamraju & van der Geest, 2011). As a reaction to this situation, the importance of user participation has been highlighted by several scholars (e.g. Axelsson et al., 2013; Holgersson & Karlsson, 2014). By taking into account needs and considerations not only from the service provider, i.e. the public administration, but also from the service consumer, i.e. the citizen, the likelihood for mutual benefit for both provider and consumer is enhanced. As highlighted by Vargo and Lusch (2004), it is required that both provider and consumer interact during a service process, otherwise no value for any side of the interaction will be generated. However, as argued by e.g. Ilshammar et al. (2005), co-creation of value is not the first thing to prioritise for public e-service providers. Instead, the strive to keep budgets and use limited resources in the most efficient way is often the driver in public e-service development projects; local government levels being no exception representing this situation, rather a good example of a government level where these characteristics are of extreme importance.

Besides neglecting the users, public e-service development has been accused for being too technocentric (Janowski, 2015), which means that public e-service providers tend to view service offerings as a set of separate e-services, i.e. technical artifacts or products used to offer service to e.g. citizens. It is argued that public administrations would benefit from adapting to a service dominant perspective (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) in which the process of providing valuable service is central. In doing so, public e-service development would not only be diminished to what can be achieved by the usage of IT, but how IT can be used in order to support service delivery. It is clear that there is a need for a broader perspective of how public service should be designed and implemented.

In information systems (IS) research, there are several recent research initiatives highlighting the inherent meaning of what service means and how service innovation may be stimulated. It is highlighted that ICT traditionally has been regarded mainly as a technological tool for delivering service (Barret, Davidson, Prabhu, & Vargo, 2015) which implies that e-services merely are seen as technical artifacts, i.e. products, needed in order to offer service electronically. However, as emphasised by Sawhney, Wolcott, and Arroniz (2006), innovation should not be viewed synonymously with product innovations. Instead, what is needed is a broadened perspective of e-services, where ICT should be seen as an enabler that should be combined with other resources or skills to provide service. Jarvenpaa and Tuunainen (2013) highlight the importance of stimulating co-

creation in order to promote service innovation. In addition, Lusch and Nambisan (2015) present three principles for promoting service innovation: 1) service eco systems, 2) service platforms, and 3) value co-creation. Srivastava and Shainesh (2015) highlight the importance of not only transforming manual services into e-services; instead the key to service innovation is to combine ICT with other non IT-based resources. Moreover, digital service innovation is discussed by e.g. Fichman, Dos Santos, and Zhiqiang (2014) and Nylén and Holmström (2015) wherein the importance of thinking beyond traditional existing ways of digitalising service is emphasised.

In contrast to IS research, the number of research studies in the e-government field focusing on service innovation is limited. One recent exception is provided by Bertot et al. (2016), who are presenting “the Digital Public Service Innovation Framework”, building on a four stage model of digital government evolution presented by Janowski (2015) and the four stage e-government maturity model presented by Layne and Lee (2001). Furthermore, Meijer and Thaens (2016) highlight the importance of an understanding of the sociotechnical process in smart city innovation. Sørensen and Torfing (2016) underline the importance of co-initiation in order to promote public innovation in urban spaces. Moreover, Bertot et al. (2016) point out that innovation in a public service context is hard to accomplish if compared to private or non-profit organisations, mostly because the public service context is more complex in terms of legislations, rules, and the influence of shifting political agendas. However, being a valuable contribution in measuring and promoting digital public service innovation, the model presented by Bertot et al. (2016) discuss public e-service providers in general terms, but at the same time acknowledge that the local context is important to highlight in more detail. As highlighted in the introduction, local government represents the lowest level of, and smallest units within, a state (Asgarkhani, 2005) and is exposed to a challenging situation regarding limited resources in terms of competence, time, and funding. We can conclude that existing e-government research provides little direction regarding the current practice in local government e-service development with respect to the provision of innovative services. Thus, this paper aims to give a contribution in this knowledge gap.

3 Research design

The empirical basis of this paper is constituted by a set of revisited qualitative case studies where interviews have been conducted with local governments regarding their current way of designing and developing public e-services. In total, empirical data from interviews with seven local governments have been used. The size of the municipalities varied from 5.000 residents up to 140.000 residents. Yet, a common denominator for the interviewed local governments is that they all face pressure to develop a large number of e-services on a limited amount of time and with practically no additional resources. The origin of the interviews are two separate case studies of Swedish municipalities in which stakeholders with work roles such as project managers and business developers have been interviewed. In total, 9 interviews from the case studies were included in the analysis, one from each municipality except for municipalities 1 and 3 where two interviews were applicable for the analysis. As such, all respondents were considered to possess sufficient and in-depth knowledge of public e-service development within their respective municipality. The interviews performed covered in-depth questions regarding how public e-services were developed and the basic development processes for this. Furthermore, the interviews covered responsibilities and roles in public e-service development, such as responsible stakeholders and basic drivers and motives for why public e-service development projects are initiated.

The data collection in the interview studies were based on semi-structured interviews following a basic interview guide (Patton, 2002) where a set of themes was discussed with the respondents. The interviews have been carried out either face-to-face or via telephone depending on geographical distance as well as time available for the respondents for physical meetings. All interviews were thereafter transcribed and analysed.

This study is based on an interpretive research approach (Braa & Vidgen, 1999). As such, our main research interest lies in studying and interpreting local governments' motives, meanings, and reasons for how public e-service development is conducted in practice. This means that the main focus of this study is to explore local governments' current processes for how to design and develop public e-services. When analysing the empirical data in this revisiting stage, we have used the initial interview transcripts and for each interview we have searched for aspects and answers of: 1) what seems to be the main initiator for public e-service development and for what reasons? 2) what incentives trigger public e-service development and what are the main priorities that steer and regulate public e-service development initiatives? 3) to what extent are public e-service development initiatives integrated with other development initiatives and current services provided by the local government of interest? 4) to what extent can existing public e-services be considered as innovative? The analytic approach can be classified as a thematic analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), in which each question generates a theme for the analysis. The result from the analysis is presented in the next section.

4 Results

The analysis has resulted in a set of dimensions which together provides insights on what basic drivers and motives underlie public e-service development in local governments. A short summary of the analysis is provided in Table 1.

	Org. 1	Org. 2	Org. 3	Org. 4.	Org. 5	Org. 6	Org. 7
Who initiates projects	Centralised, political agendas	Decentralised, driven by administrative units	Centralised, political agendas	Political agendas	Decentralised, driven by administrative units	Centralised, technology driven	Centralised
Incentives and decision priorities	ROI, goodwill towards citizens	ROI and internal winnings	ROI and internal winnings	Political exhortations	Internal winnings	ROI and internal winnings	Goodwill towards citizens
Time perspective and level of integration	Short termed, no integration	Short termed, some integration	Short termed, some integration	Short termed, no integration	Short termed, no integration	Short termed, no integration	Short termed, no integration
Ambition to change	Low	Low to moderate	Low to moderate	Low	Low	Low	Low

Table 1. *A set of dimensions characterising local governments' perspectives on public e-service development.*

As illustrated in Table 1, there are different stakeholders who can take on the role as initiator in local government e-service development. In some cases, initiatives are taken by the central administration, whereas in other cases there can be other administrative units that take on the role as initiator. It is not rare that political agendas also play a central role in initiating public e-services development projects. It is clear that internal needs and priorities still are the main motive for initiating public e-service development projects. However, also political exhortations as well as an increased citizen attention may in some cases act as a trigger. It is also clear that there are different decision priorities that come into play when deciding upon what development initiatives that should be approved or not. In most cases, return of investment (ROI) is a dominant factor. Moreover, it is clear that public e-service initiatives in most cases are focused on short termed and isolated electronic versions of already existing services which seldom include any aspects of service innovation.

4.1 Who initiates projects?

As highlighted by Heeks (2006), every public e-service project should be based on a need for a service to solve some sort of problem, hence there must be a stakeholder who takes on the role as initiator. When analysing the empirical data, it is clear that development initiatives in most cases stem from either political agendas, centralised initiatives, or decentralised initiatives by administrative units acting more or less independently of the remaining organisation.

Political agendas can be characterised as political exhortations, which in many cases can be linked to a willingness of being fashionable or modern (Wang, 2010), i.e. political decisions that influence how local governments should provide service to inhabitants. However, political decisions made by e.g. county councils are often passed on to central administrative units that will be responsible for implementing decisions made. Org. 4 provides an illustrating example of such a situation: *“three years ago, the county council decided that we shall install e-services. There should be at least twenty of them”*. The inherent meaning in this quote is that a certain quantity of e-services must be made available within a specific period of time. However, it does not say anything regarding what service these e-services should mediate, whose needs to fulfil, or what value to be achieved.

Besides answering to political decisions, e-service initiatives may come directly from stakeholders, such as business developers who often belong to the central administration. According to Org. 3, such initiatives may stem from different sources. One such source is external environment monitoring, which is used to monitor if the local government keeps up with other local governments' e-services, as well as to identify new e-service ideas. Another such source is to act upon needs highlighted by other administrative units, i.e. the central administration coordinates development initiatives. Org. 3 emphasises that there is an ideal (pre-planned) process where administrative units always should contact the central administration when there are new ideas and initiatives. However, it is not unusual that this ideal process is not followed, instead administrative units initiate development projects independently of other possible related administrative units, as well as the central administration. Such an example is provided by Org. 7 when stating: *“The school is looking at a system for a school portal that will be used for sick leave and such things, but that will be a small stove pipe solution”*, i.e. the education department wants to procure and implement a new e-service used only within the organisational boundaries of the education department, without any integration to other departments or IT systems.

4.2 Incentives and decision priorities

As shown in Table 1, there are various incentives that serve as triggers for initiating public e-service development projects. It comes as no surprise that internal winnings are highlighted by several local agencies. As discussed in the introduction, local governments have a tradition of using public e-services as a means to improve internal efficiency, most often in terms of reducing manual labour when providing service (e.g. Axelsson et al., 2010). In such cases, any other user considerations from e.g. citizens are seldom prioritised. Org. 2 provides an illustrating example when stating: *“As it is today, it is the needs from the business administrators that steer, and what they believe citizens need”*. However, there are also cases where external winnings are prioritized before internal ones. In these cases, focus lies primarily on serving the main user group by *providing goodwill* to e.g. citizens. Illustrating examples are provided by respondents from Org. 1 and Org. 7: *“We are not making any money out of this, we only want to provide a service to the citizens”* and *“Our political ambition is satisfied customers and citizens, and e-services are a major part of this. The reason for why we are trying to start up more e-services is not to make our own organisation more efficient. We don't believe that is going to happen since we have so few errands in total. Our main focus lies in making things better for customers and citizens”*. However, this does not mean that citizens will be surveyed and included in the decisions regarding what will be developed. Instead, as highlighted by e.g. Axelsson et al. (2010), user considerations are often assumed or guessed by the local government providing the

service, or as Org. 7 states: *“To have users participating in development would certainly have been a really positive thing, but how would we do that?”*. Furthermore, political exhortations are also emphasised as an incentive for public e-service development in where neither internal nor external winnings are prioritised: *“We don’t see any winnings in starting to use e-services since 1) there is no demand for e-service by citizens, and 2) there are no savings done by using e-services, just more expenses. E-services are only an additional cost which is placed upon all other routines used to communicate with and providing service to citizens”* (Org. 4).

An interesting interpretation that can be made is that, regardless of internal or external incentives, ROI is discussed as an important decision priority. Local governments must decide which e-service initiatives to go through with, and it is important that there is a certain expected volume of errands that will be passing an e-service once implemented, or as Org. 6 puts it: *“It cannot be a service for its own sakes”*. Another example is provided by Org. 5 who states: *“It has been quite easy for us to get the internal administrations to highlight e-services they believe will be used. It has been things that they feel ‘this is something that we get a lot of calls about’”*. As the quote shows, the number of expected service interactions is an important priority for local governments when deciding which initiatives to proceed with or not. However, it is interesting to observe that the intended users, i.e. the citizens, are missing more or less completely in such an analysis.

4.3 Time perspective and overall picture

Time perspective and overall picture refer to what extent e-service development is integrated with other services provided, and what underlying and guiding visions and strategies that govern e-service development projects in local governments. When analysing the empirical data, it is clear that local government e-service development can be characterised as short termed. There is also no or very little integration with existing services channels and other e-services. An illustrative example is provided by Org. 6: *“Then we have these so called stove pipe e-services that are provided to us by our suppliers”*. Such stove pipe e-services represent free standing, isolated e-services that provide digital versions of existing services provided by organisational functions within local governments, such as online application forms that can be used as an alternative to other existing services. Such e-services are not integrated with other internal IT-systems and civil servants must handle data in the same manner as if the data was submitted via a regular paper form. Furthermore, stove pipe e-services are seen as a “quick fix”, easy to implement since no other processes or IT systems are affected. Thus, the time perspective is limited; it is about making it possible for e.g. citizens to use service provisioning electronically, or as Org. 1 puts it: *“There must be some e-service that the citizens can take part of”*. However, the short termed time perspective may also act as a first, easy to accomplish, initial step for local governments to move towards more sophisticated e-services integrated with other IT systems; i.e. a first initial version used to determine whether it is worth to take development further, or as Org. 3 puts it: *“For most e-services we first make a simple e-service and then we see the usage of it. If there are many who use it, we take it to the next development stage”*. A development strategy like this can be classified as stepwise or emergent, or even prototype like, rather than innovative.

As discussed previously, incentives for initiating e-service development projects vary and can also be combined in various ways, e.g. political agendas may be influenced by a will to first and foremost provide good and efficient service to citizens. However, it is clear that there is a dispersed situation in which initiatives may be decentralised, as well as centralised. Even if there is an ideal process in which the central administration coordinates initiatives, there are many examples where administrations act independently and without informing the central administration what is being developed and implemented, exemplified by Org. 3: *“Before, there were a lot of administrations who ran along with their systems suppliers, and there are still some sectors where we haven’t gotten that far. Of course, when a business administrator who use a system is offered by the systems supplier that ‘if you just start using our e-services both you and citizens can work directly into the system’... then we hear about it and wonder how they think - is this good for the citizens that we get yet another*

interface in addition to thirty other ones, and is it good with thirty different ways of logging on to different services”? Obviously there is a lack of control within local governments implying that the ownership and responsibilities sometimes are hard to identify, or as Org. 4 puts it: “There are quite a few systems in a municipality that don’t have a natural owner. The problem with an e-service is that you don’t know who owns it”.

4.4 Ambition to change

Ambition to change refers to what extent a public e-service provider is willing to adapt to new possibilities that emerge when using IT in an innovative way in service delivery. Service innovation, in its essence, is about providing innovative service, in which ICT may play an important role as a technological tool or a resource (Barret et al., 2015). In the empirical data analysed it is clear that service innovation is more or less absent. Most local governments seem to be fully occupied with delivering e-services on a more day-to-day basis in order to keep up with political agendas as well as the needs and demands from administrations and citizens, rather than trying to be innovative. E-services provided can, as stated by Org. 3, be divided into “fake e-services and real e-services”. Fake e-services refer to e-services that look like any digital service from a citizen perspective; but in fact, these are free standing non-integrated application, such as digital forms, where civil servants manually must enter data submitted via the digital form into related IT systems. Real e-services, on the other hand, refer to e-services that are fully integrated with other IT systems, thus reducing the amount of manual handling of data at the local government’s end of the e-service transaction. However, regardless if e-services are fake or real, e-services provided by local governments are primarily focused on transforming already existing services into digital versions of the same services. Quotes such as “We have a few [e-services], such as lending books and downloading forms” (Org. 4), “It’s not that much, we have an e-service where you can leave your point of view regarding all administrations in the municipality, but that’s about it” clearly indicate that any discussions regarding combining and integrating service with e-service in order to provide new and innovative services are not on the agenda for the moment. This is also emphasised by Org. 4 that use the term “install” when referring to the implementation of e-services, components that are plugged in and ready to be used. One exception is Org. 3, which is also the largest of the local governments figuring in the analysis. It is clear that when the respondent describes the e-service for handing in building permits, also additional e-services for e.g. paying fees are included. However, seen in a larger perspective, it is clear that not much has changed from this empirical analysis since Millard (2010) wrote the article “Government 1.5 – Is the bottle half full or half empty”. It is also clear that the findings presented by Bertot et al. (2016) regarding missing innovations in public e-service development are most current in local government e-service development in our cases from a Swedish context.

5 Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this paper is to explore the current practices in local government e-service development with respect to how aspects related to innovative and high quality service provisioning are handled. In particular we are interested in analysing: (1) what basic motivators there are for local governments to provide e-service and (2) how such motivators influence innovation in local government e-service development. In doing so, we have identified what basic motivators there are for local governments to initiate any kind of e-service development as well as how such motivators will influence and affect possibilities for service innovation. It is clear that local governments today are facing the challenges highlighted by e.g. Holgersson et al. (2015) in terms of limited resources regarding time, competence, and skills, as well as having to relate to a dispersed user segment where needs and wills often are hard to grasp and satisfy. As a result of this situation, it is clear that local governments are struggling with developing e-services per se, and it is more or less a bonus if such e-services are perceived as useful and valuable for the intended users, i.e. the citizens in most cases. Our results show that any further

considerations than to merely develop electronic versions of already existing manual services provided are not at all a prioritised matter for local governments. The heights and expectations of innovation are then hard to achieve in this e-service development context. We have also found that most e-service initiatives can be characterised as short termed, stove pipe, solutions that might be mistaken for service innovation, just because IT is added. As highlighted by Barrett et al. (2015), IT related change in organisations is often viewed synonymously with innovation, which in turn rise expectations for increased user satisfaction and higher perceived service quality. As can be seen in our analysis, there are conflicting interests within local governments when initiating e-service development. Different initiators have different agendas and sometimes disparate or even opposing motives for initiating e-service development; this often results in isolated stove pipe e-services with no integration to the remaining organisation's IT systems and services.

As highlighted by Bertot et al. (2016), increased user centeredness and value co-creation are important enablers for service innovation in public administrations. However, at the same time, very little attention is paid to the users. The observations made by Axelsson et al. (2010), regarding e-services being developed based on assumed or guessed user needs, still seem to be valid. It is clear from our study that public administrations in general and local governments in particular are in need of more concrete knowledge and directives for how to actually design and develop e-services that offer more than just digital versions of existing services. Highlighting this on a local government level is an important contribution in this paper. However, local governments may need alternative approaches for how such enablers may be handled, considering the scarce resources put aside to develop e-services. As pointed out by Holgersson et al. (2015), local governments face pressure to provide a wide range of e-services while at the same time resources to do so are limited. As a response, Holgersson et al. (2015) suggest the usage and re-usage of personas as an alternative to other more resource intensive methods promoting user centred development. However, they do not discuss how such a concept would promote service innovation for local governments, the latter being an important theme in this paper.

As pointed out in the introduction, e-government research has been criticized for reinventing the wheel rather than incorporating research findings from the more general IS research field (Heeks & Bailur, 2007). We argue that e-government research should learn from past experiences regarding the problems addressed in this paper and to build on previous research findings in other research communities. We propose that e-government research should strive for more influences from general IS research, as well as other research areas where services innovation is discussed more extensively. As an example, Service Design is a design principle that has been put forth as an approach to new service development and service innovation (Yu & Sangiorgi, 2014) which have been applied in different research and business areas (Sangiorgi & Prendiville, 2014). In its basic setting, Service Design promotes a holistic and process oriented service approach building on user centeredness and value co-creation (Stickdorn, 2011). As such, service is viewed as a sequence of different variants of interrelated touchpoints, whereas digital ones are seen as important enablers. Increased knowledge and experiences from applying such a design perspective in an e-government context could serve as a valuable input for future e-government research in service innovation, not at least for local governments. Another dimension of this is to handle one limitation in this paper, focusing Sweden, by investigating and comparing e-service development in other national and cultural contexts.

In sum, local governments still face pressures to streamline their internal processes and make sure they operate in a more efficient and effective manner. The use of e-services as a communication channel between government and citizens hold great potential to innovate how the public sector operates, and could help local governments increase their effectiveness and improve matters for citizens. In order to reach the full potential of e-services, the research community has called for service design that puts the users' needs in focus. In local government, e-service development is still mostly focused on making manual forms digital and innovating how public services are delivered with ICT has proven challenging; as illustrated in this paper. In order to help local governments forward and not just end up with another 'new' wine, in the same old bottles, we call for further research initiatives on the

particularities of the local government and from a more practical and normative perspective clearer directives for e-service development on this particular level of government.

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