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FROM E-GOVERNMENT TO E- GOVERNANCE: SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES LEGITIMACY WORK

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FROM E-GOVERNMENT TO E-GOVERNANCE: SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES LEGITIMACY WORK

Research paper

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Abstract

Social media increasingly condition how public authorities build legitimacy when engaging with citizens. In this paper we report on a study of the increasing use of and exposure to social media and social networking platforms in two Swedish public authorities, the Social Insurance Agency (SIA) and the police force. Although formally grounded on the same civic principles, the two authorities have significantly different approaches to social media as a way to generate internal and external legitimacy. SIA has mainly implemented an e-government approach to rationalize services to become more efficient and customer oriented, by using social media as one of several media channels. The police force, however, adopted an e-governance approach to build legitimacy through interaction and reflexive discussion between government and citizens as a way to create transparency and nuance citizens' attitude towards the police force. Building on a two-dimensional public government/governance framework, we reflect on how the two studied authorities' social media practices shape and are shaped by different governing practices in their legitimacy work.

Keywords: e-government; e-governance; social media; public authorities, institutions

1 Introduction

Public institutions growing use of and exposure to social media and social networking sites (SNS) increasingly condition how they engage with citizens and create legitimacy. Previously dominating e-government practices oriented towards rational and efficient service to citizens through information technology, is gradually complemented with and challenged by e-governance practices, i.e. digital opportunities to an interactive, reflexive and transparent dialogue between government and citizens. With the advent of social media, e-government and e-governance become increasingly integrated, which leads to new patterns of connection and building legitimacy between citizens and public sector (Marche and McNiven, 2003). Social media may act as a catalyst for processes of organizational innovation related to how public authorities exercise power and deliver services. Such innovation processes – and the practices that they entail – differ from other organizational innovations in that they beside novelty and usefulness, also need to be legitimate, credible and appropriate (Rafaelli & Glynn, 2015). However, social media as a platform for public sector information and communication is

ambiguous: it has great novel potential for communication and interaction with citizens, but it also facilitates the escalation of negative feedback-loops, and criticism from the public. It also affords civil servants to express and diffuse opinions that might be poorly aligned with their roles as officials. It is likely that tensions are generated between the informality ascribed to social media and the formality associated with the exercise of public authority. This dual direction on the one hand creates possibilities for increased legitimacy between public organizations and citizens, but on the other hand balances on the verge of what is considered appropriate for a public institution.

The research question addressed in this paper is: *How is public organizations' legitimacy work conditioned by social media?* In order to answer the research question we applied an exploratory qualitative study on the use of social media by the Swedish Police and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. We engaged in detailed empirical analysis of interviews, documents and online observations, and conducted observations on Facebook and Twitter feeds.

The paper is structured as follows: the next section describes social media. We then present the main theoretical concepts in the form of a two-dimensional public government/governance framework. After that we describe the methodology, and the results. The subsequent section discusses the findings using the two-dimensional framework to analyze differences between how the studied public sector organizations approached social media. The last section concludes the paper.

2 Social Media

Well-known examples are blogs, microblogs (e.g. Twitter), sharing services (e.g. Youtube), and collaborative editing tools (e.g. Wikis). In this paper we are particularly interested in social media networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook. At the core of SNS is the users' public or semi-public profiles, including an articulated list of friends who are also users (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media follows the same mechanisms as other digital platforms. Network effects, i.e. a growing ecosystem that adds more and more value in terms of complementary services, and therefore attracts more and more users, generate a "winner-takes-most" logic (Cusumano, 2011; Gillespie, 2010). In 2010 Facebook had 600.000 million users, and in 2016 1,79 billions of users, giving them a clear leading position (Gillespie, 2010; Zephoria, 2016). As different digital platforms gradually penetrate most areas of public and organizational life, platform owners such as Facebook become powerful key players in an increasingly complex digital assemblage of platforms, ecosystems, markets, data, algorithms, and regulative regimes (Lanzarra, 2009). For public institutions this raises a set of issues revolving around the areas of privacy, security, accuracy, archiving and regulative frameworks (Bertot et al., 2012).

A central feature to an SNS-platform is the the means by which users can make themselves and information they possess known to others by posting, commenting, and updating status (Treem & Leonardi 2012). This includes mechanisms for sorting, classifying and ranking the social field (Bucher, 2012), i.e. the possibility to react to other people's profiles, content and activities, for example by retweeting, voting, commenting (Majchrzak et al., 2013). One particular issue here is the increasing use of social buttons, such as "like" or "share". These mechanisms materialize social dimensions such as affect and feed them into the invisible algorithms different platforms use to prioritize, boost and metrify the popularity of certain people or content (Beer, 2009; Bucher, 2012; Gerlitz & Helmond, 2013). Thus, SNS-platforms steer users content production, communication and connections, and decide what information is considered to be important and relevant for us to see (Beer, 2009; Gillespie, 2010; van Dijk & Poell, 2013; Tufekci, 2015).

The SNS-platforms' amplification, facilitation and shaping of relations (e.g. by suggesting new friends), afford the building of large-scale fluid social networks, which opens up for spontaneous

mobilization and organization of dissatisfaction (van Dijk & Poell, 2013). Furthermore, the ability of SNS-platforms to generate all sorts of data and metadata about the users (van Dijk & Poell, 2014), play a major role in the increasing accumulation of data that is generated about citizens, and that will persist under control of others ((Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Zuboff, 2015). The surplus of data generated by social media platforms raises a set of questions regarding the quality, accuracy and uses of the data as well as issues of power and democracy (boyd & Crawford, 2016; Zuboff, 2015).

Social media's ability to create immediate and interactive dialogue, the potential to reach out to many, and the waste amount of data about citizens' activities, create tremendous opportunities for public authorities, but also challenges. Authorities are – as public sector organizations – exposed to public scrutiny and are therefore held accountable in a broad scale by the citizens. The opportunity for democratic dialogue and interaction with the citizens also create demand for matching actions and an organization that can take care of the interaction.

3 From e-Government to e-Governance

Public authorities are founded on what may be referred to as a *civic logic*, forming a higher common principle stating that individual interests are subordinated common good (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006), and that they utmost represent the will of the citizens. Authorities achieve legitimacy by showing that they meet common societal challenges and demands for citizens in an efficient and transparent way, and that their exercise of power is perceived as transparent, rational and equally fair to all citizens (Thornton et.al., 2012; Friedland & Alford, 1991). Different management and governance ideas have been developed and applied to meet up with these demands, ranging from what can be considered as e-governance practices (i.e. how decisions are made) to e-government practices (i.e. how these decisions are carried out) (Marche and McNiven, 2003). This development is described as an emerging move from New Public Management (NPM) influenced e-government practices, to a governance approach, spurred by the digitalization of society (Hess & Adams, 2007; Marche & McNiven, 2003; Navarra & Cornford, 2012). NPM influenced e-government practices aim for greater efficiency through the use of private sector management techniques (e.g. competition and incentivization), and defines the citizen as a customer and service recipient (Dunleavy et al., 2005; Hess & Adams, 2007). A number of methods have been developed to implement e-government, e.g. Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Total Quality Management (TQM), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), with support from related Information technology such as ERP-, CRM- and workflow systems (Navarra & Cornford, 2012). With the growth of Internet and Web 2.0, the impact of information technology is not only affecting back-office processes, but also the relation between government agencies and civil society (Dunleavy et al., 2005). With the support of Internet technology, this development enables extended collaboration, integration and participation for citizens in relation to public administration, using methods such as open innovation, crowdsourcing and peer production (Hess & Adams, 2007; Hilgers & Ihl, 2010; Navarra & Cornford, 2012).

Several authors point out that the evolving impact of information technology and digital infrastructure may impact public authorities far beyond the adoption of NPM-influenced e-government practices. While most of the literature has focused on the opportunities of such practices to gain more efficient processes, claims have also been made for the potential to create more transparent governance forms (Navarra & Cornford, 2012; Marche & McNiven, 2003).

In this paper we draw on Marche and McNiven's (2003) two-dimensional framework on public government. One dimension concerns whether focus is on e-government or e-governance practices. *E-government* practices focus on how decisions and directives are carried out by following formal procedures, while *e-governance practices* draw on relational and interactive matters. The other dimension concerns whether it is the administration (i.e. organization centric) or the relation to the

citizens (i.e. citizen centric) that conditions social media use. *Organization centricity* focuses on the structural characteristics of the organization and the civil servants, while *citizen centricity* focus on the needs of the citizens. Figure 1 shows the distinction between organizational centric and citizen centric practices conducted by an authority.

		Government / governance dimension	
Centricity dimension		Quadrant 1 E-government (administrative) Citizen-centric	Quadrant 2 E-governance (policy and power) Citizen-centric
		Quadrant 3 E-government (administrative) Organization-centric	Quadrant 4 E-governance (policy and power) Organization-centric

Figure 1: e-government/e-governance model (Marche & McNiven, 2003:78)

Citizen-centric e-government concerns the provision of services that support public goals in a transparent way. It enables the authority to manage people’s notifications or errands in a predictable and administratively correct manner. Transparency concerns administrative procedures, such as a citizens’ possibility to check the progress of an errand in terms of where it is in the process and who is responsible. Information technology related to responsiveness and service delivery such as call centers and one-stop-shopping government portals support this dimension (Marche & McNiven, 2003).

Organization-centric e-government practices are related to internal demands on efficiency, and grounded on core values such as productivity, standardization, and control, i.e. measures that are guided by a managerial logic (Thornton et al., 2012). Attention is put on efficient allocation and optimization of resources, and to measure goal fulfillment and job assignment (Moynihan, 2006). The managerial logic is together with market logic often of central importance to contemporary reforms as New Public Management (NPM), invoking principles of competition and the use of private-sector managerial instruments, such as measures of output and results (Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006). The managerial logic is often inscribed in information technology supporting or enforcing rule based processes, such as workflow systems, while the principles of competition is implemented through diverse technology supporting quasi-market mechanisms (Navarra & Cornford, 2012).

Citizen centric e-governance is about technology-mediated relations and the interaction between citizens and their government that influence governmental decisions and directives. E-governance includes various aspects of deliberation and policy-making connecting people with the political process and the way governmental bodies carry out decisions. Governance transparency concerns the possibility for citizens to view and directly be involved in the policy-making process (Marche & McNiven, 2003). Information technology supports partnership and legitimacy in the way reforms are perceived. One example is participatory budgeting in Brazil, where the involvement of citizens gain responsiveness in terms of priorities of resource investments (Navarra & Cornford, 2012). Another example is the Policing-Act-Wiki launched by the New Zealand police (Hilgers & Ihl, 2010).

An *organization-centric e-governance perspective* concerns how government organizations will respond to the new governance demands by increasingly engaged citizens. In order to become more flexible and responsive, information technology cannot only increase efficiency, but must also afford collaboration and networking (Henman, 2012; Hilgers & Ihl, 2010). This may even include citizens in public task fulfilling, in what Hilgers and Ihl (2010) call collaborative administration. One example of this is the Peer-to-Patent project, where the U.S. Patent and Trademarks office used Web 2.0 technology to involve volunteer experts in the patent examination process. Another option to be more responsive is the increased possibilities to gather data in order to monitor citizen opinions, preferences and behaviour (Marche & Niven, 2003). The transparency also opens up for reversed surveillance and increased possibilities for citizen to pull accountability from public authorities and their servants.

4 Method

4.1 Setting

The study focuses on the role of social media use within public authorities, represented by the Swedish Police and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.

The assignment to enforce law and order in accordance with legitimate procedures makes the police one of the most explicit examples on public bureaucracy. It is an authority that acquire legitimacy by exercising power in accordance to formally recognized management directives. The Swedish police have, like many other public authorities, in recent years actively started to use social media, like Facebook and Twitter, as new means to inform, communicate and interact with the public. The Swedish police is nationally viewed as pioneers among Swedish public authorities in using social media as a lever for increased transparency and public interaction. Thus, the Swedish Police can be referred to as a critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006), that provides possibilities to elaborate on more general conditions for legitimate social media practices in public authorities, conditioned by expectations on a bureaucratic exercise of public power. In December 2015, the Swedish Police had five national pages on Facebook: one general (about 215,000 followers), one about intellectual property, one about fraud, one about interaction regarding “social unrest”, and one for the Police Museum. Furthermore, 110 local police areas administered their own Facebook pages. 43 of them were situated in the surrounding of the capital, Stockholm, but there were also Facebook representations all the way from North to South. The national Police has an official Instagram account, with about 13,200 followers, a Twitter account with about 5,600 followers and a YouTube channel with 4,300 subscribers. For Twitter, 30 accounts for local police areas have been established, and 17 individual policemen (mostly high-ranked officers) have official accounts.

The second case, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (SIA) represents an authority that administers the welfare system through a system of over 40 different kinds of grants and benefits, such as child benefit, health insurance, and housing allowance. SIA has a more specialized mission compared to the police, related to the general welfare system. The relation to clients is characterized by a strict formal authority in position to grant or deny economic benefits from the welfare system. Because of this, they are often in focus for close examination by newspapers and the public. There is a political pressure to be more efficient and at the same time increase service quality. Social media is here part of their strategy to decrease telephone support and increase self-service, increase trust and develop customer satisfaction. SIA is active on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. The Facebook-activities are focused on parents, health insurance, housing allowance and living abroad. SIA employees also act as a “user” on community based social platforms aimed at e.g. parents and family life (e.g. www.familjeliv.se). In addition, SIA use Facebook for recruitment.

4.2 Data Collection and analysis

The study applies an exploratory qualitative approach that combines interviews, documents and online observations, to explore the role of social media use within public authorities. We have interviewed 30 individuals from different geographical areas and with different roles in the police force about their interaction with social media as part of their work, and 10 civil servants from SIA addressing the same topics. Due to the explorative nature of the study semi-structured interviews were used that allow for deviation during the interview to capture new themes as they emerge during the interview.

The interviewees were selected by purposive sampling intended to satisfy a variation in terms of gender, type of district and tasks. In addition, we applied snowball sampling using interviewees to identify further respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The geographical areas for sampling covered both cities and more rural districts to include variations between different kinds of local conditions. The interviews lasted from between one to three hours, and were fully transcribed. They were structured on the basis of an interview guide, highlighting a number of thematic questions, still allowing for new questions to emerge in the specific interview situations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2006). To improve our understanding of officers' daily activities on social media, we have also conducted observations on Facebook (police and SIA), to some extent Twitter (police) and in different communities related to family, health etc. (SIA). For the police these observations comprise 12 different sites managed autonomously by the local police districts where our interviewees worked. SIA was differently organized with more centralized responsibilities for social media involvement. The interviewees at SIA all had the official role to communicate on social media. The content could therefore largely be connected to the interviews, both geographically and historically. Facebook observations (Savage & Burrow, 2007) enabled triangulation of the interviews with other data sources as a way to interrogate interpretations of the interviewees' descriptions of their practices on social media as well as the public's interaction on Facebook in the form of number of shares, number of likes, amount and content of comments. To further our understanding of public sector social media policies and rules, policy documents, instructions for authorities' social media use and evaluation of social media use was collected.

The data analysis developed as an iterative process where the structuring of data followed a combination of inductive and deductive strategies. A diary was written during the interview phase. This helped us ponder the interviews and identify possible coding options. Secondly the interviews were coded individually in an open fashion, as recommended for an iterative qualitative approach by extant methods literature (e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The use of the two-dimensional framework on public government by Marche and McNiven's (2003) was a result of the coding process and its application of combined inductive and deductive strategies. When identified as relevant, the four centrality dimensions in Marche and McNiven's framework was tested on the gathered data and correspond to the sub-headings under each category in Results.

5 Results

The results are structured according to Marche and McNiven's (2003) framework on public government, focusing on the police and SIA social media use in relation to e-government and e-governance practices from a citizen-centric and an organization-centric perspective.

5.1 Citizen-centric e-government

E-government from a citizen centric perspective refers to the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative considerations with regard to public policy. This could for example concern how efficiently public administration can direct citizens to the right services, the right information and to

get their questions answered. It also concerns that citizens should be treated in a proper way in the communication and that all issues are reviewed in the same manner regardless of the individual.

5.1.1 Efficient customer interaction at the social insurance agency

For SIA, efficient communication with the clients is seen as a key concern. Social media provides a new efficient channel that complement telephone, email and information accessible on web sites, and provides yet another entrance to the authority so that citizens' errands can be treated accordingly. Key concepts in SIA's vocabulary are related to service and efficiency, such as "customer" and "customer satisfaction". Social media is referred to as a new "media channel" along other channels such as advertisement in newspapers, information sheets, promotion directly to citizens' mailboxes, and the use of a front office to meet visitors. As stated by an official, social media was a strategic decision within the general marketing strategy:

"We wanted to have customer service in this channel. It was a strategic decision, when one talked to the customer service trade back then it was quite common that either the marketing department or the information department was responsible for engagement in social media."

Social media as a channel for disseminating information provides general availability and is perceived as more efficient than other channels:

"In telephone you can only help one customer at a time, but in social media, even if we answer the question from one customer at a time, the information reaches many more people."

SIA not only view their clients as customers, and measure customer satisfaction, they also emphasize that, as a public authority official employees must act in a neutral way to be perceived as legitimate:

"We are not supposed to use too official language, but we cannot be personal either, you need to have the right tone. You cannot answer with a smiley, sometimes you would like to, but then you have to restrain yourself."

SIA measures performance and customer satisfaction in several channels as well as more broadly. The call centers are routinely measured, but while social media give opportunities for different forms of detailed measures, they are still only included in the broader surveys that are conducted.

"When it comes to telephony in the call centers we know everything, the same holds for customer treatment, we do customer surveys after phone calls. Social media is included our large customer survey. [...] Social media requires much less time to handle than we initially thought."

5.1.2 Efficient securing of evidence and legal security at the police

The police force implements e-government in a slightly different way. A central concept is to act according to the protocol. One example is related to efficient solving of crimes and securing of evidence in a transparent and legally secure way. In this context social media is viewed as problematic because it is a new phenomenon and the routines are not yet developed and tested for how evidence should be gathered to hold up in court:

"You would like to have a bookshelf with manuals on how secure evidence online. I mean, new platforms, new applications and apps appear all the time. [...] If someone received a threat on Facebook, to be able to testify in court, I have to access the account and see the threat for myself. Just relying on a screen dump wouldn't do, that could be manipulated."

Social media competence is also viewed as a generation issue:

"Generally the police have too little knowledge about social media. When a young person calls in and says: I have been bullied at this chat site KIK, it might be an old person taking the call, and answering: KIK what's that?"

For the police, it is important to treat all citizens in the same manner, and to care for their security and integrity.

“You cannot put a picture of a witness or a suspect on Facebook and write that you are looking for this person in relation to a serious crime, but a picture of a stolen tractor is ok: ‘If you see this tractor contact the police.’”

Using social media to develop a more efficient police force must be accompanied by an ability to judge each case in relation to its context and adapt accordingly.

5.2 Organization-centric e-government

Organization-centric e-government regards the internal efficiency and administrative communication and interaction. In our sample SIA had a well established internal organization for social media use, while the police were struggling to identify a role for social media in relation to their internal structure.

5.2.1 New work roles and administrative adherence in the social insurance agency

E-government practices at SIA were organized from the perspective of employees’ competence profiles that were allocated to specific channels and communities. SIA workers were instructed to follow standardized procedures for how to inform clients and the general public. This administrative adherence is found among officials in SIA adjusting their organization-centric practice to different directives and measures of control from the top. To them, social media related routines and regulations emerge as necessary rules clarifying in what way daily procedures should be conducted. Middle management is also depicted as informed supervisors that enable the staff to stick to their procedures. One of the middle managers emphasized the importance of hierarchic support:

“...we provide a job-description showing in a clear way what it is that you exactly should do. They may need help sometimes when questions are tricky, and they may have to tackle inappropriate updates that demand support from their nearest boss. If they receive threats they are always passed on to the security department. All the routines for managing these types of situations are defined, and their closest boss is also ready to support if necessary.”

In this context, officials emerge as facilitators of a wide welfare system. The interviewees describe themselves as welfare providers in an organization that is constantly redesigning the routines needed to facilitate society’s welfare administration. As officials they have to spend time to internalize directives, routines and policies for social media use. They also describe procedures for control and revision of e.g. how to update social media channels, implying that they as officials are reminded about the importance of administrative adherence:

“Sometimes we control what they write on Facebook. We review all the questions and answers. If we discover poor language, faulty answers, or if the tone is not good, we have to give feedback. If a co-worker receives too much critical feedback, you have to consider: ‘are you the right one to do this job, or should you do something else?’ After all, everyone can see their answers on Facebook and they are rapidly spread, so it is really important that we have these controls”

Officials at SIA thus appreciate the regulations and management as a support that enables them to maintain a correct conduct of social media. However, mistakes still recur and social media continue fostering continuous managerial demands for administrative adherence.

5.2.2 The police - struggling with administration

Contrary to SIA, the police depict a continuous struggle with incidents that do not fit with rules and regulations. Organization-centric e-government emerge as constraints, due to constantly changing circumstances. The fact that social media is part of a global web makes this struggle complicated. This

is perceived as a complexity related to external factors, such as differences between Swedish and American law, which makes their use of information from social media platforms difficult to manage:

“I mean, if Facebook do not want to provide us with information it becomes rather complicated. Then we can only proceed by appealing to court. However, that takes time! There is a specific function within the American law system that takes care of all these errands, but it takes time and the information we need – mainly the IP-address that is used – is quickly outdated.”

This leads to complicated proceedings involving time consuming internal routines. As a result, interviewed managers in the police force were anxious for regulations of how they may draw advantage of social media. This anxiety is grounded in difficulties to grasp integrity and information security regulations about how social media can be used in daily work. One officer describes how they due to security concerns had difficulties to convince managers the need for smart-phones to update Facebook while being mobile.

“...the management had literally no understanding for our need of new technology. Instead, we used our private phones to take pictures and mail them to our joint mail, before entering a separate room with our internet connection. After all, there is virus on the internet - spread by air - and you may be struck for no reason. So we have these security aspects, but it improved lately and we may now access internet via our own units, but that was impossible a couple of years ago.”

This officer refers to viruses with irony. Even if management after years of persuasion realized that they should improve officers' internet connection, officers struggled with management's anxiety for threats, which lead to regulations and other security concerns.

5.3 Citizen-centric e-governance

Citizen-centric e-governance regards the interaction and communication with citizens that improves legitimacy for the police and SIA. In our sample the police were considerably more interactive in social media than SIA.

5.3.1 Police officers interacting with citizens directly from the field

The police saw social media as an important channel for information, communication and interaction. Social media, mainly Facebook, was used for direct interaction with citizens with the intention to shape the public image of the police force, use social media as a tool for investigating crime and develop a continuous dialogue with the public. Social media was, in this view, a good way to extend channels to citizens that could go beyond public images of the police filtered by newspapers. Social media created a generative flow of interaction that built relationships between the police officers and citizens. The police saw public communication with social media as an expression of increasing trust from citizens, enabled by fast feedback and response both from the police and the public:

“Most of the times I don't have to answer a question [on Facebook]. The public answers for us and defend us a lot. It's fascinating. I have a responsibility as a civil servant to give accurate answers. But many times they [the public] are faster. Then we can provide links to our public websites with more information.”

The police expresses spatial awareness as important for their online interaction with citizens. They stay aware of who the users are and which parts of the city they inhabit so that they can address them accurately. Online presence and physical presence interact. To reach a good level of communication the police adapts to the particular situation depending on the receiver's context:

“We work locally with our web. We have locally adapted information and interaction. For instance, if we post about a missing person in city X, we only post that to a website related to that region. Then we publish more general information on the national Swedish police website.”

Another dimension of these adaptability practices was the police officers' awareness of users' tendency to move between several different platforms, depending on user's current context as well as their information and communication practices. Officers studied user behaviour over several digital platforms and identified both criminals' modus operandi and strategies for involving users in the investigation. A communications officer at one police headquarter had noted that some police officers used combinations of social media platforms and other web resources to investigate crimes:

"Some police officers are very knowledgeable in their use of social media. I know one officer who works with identifying stolen goods. He publishes pictures on Facebook, his phone rings and there is information about where the goods can be found. He also monitors second-hand websites to figure out if stolen goods are sold there."

5.3.2 Channel flexibility in SIA

SIA emphasized the importance of being flexible in how to deliver standardized information, but few practices resembled a governance perspective. SIA co-workers could appear in user-driven communities and post information in forums and on discussion boards. "Customer orientation" was defined as "flexibility in channel" rather than "flexibility in content". While the police developed appropriate dialogues with citizens, SIA personnel strived to integrate social media with the general communication workflow, such as the telephone system.

5.4 Organization-centric e-governance

From an organization centric perspective e-governance refers to how, on the one hand increasingly connected and informed citizens challenge the way governments organize themselves, and on the other how social media opens up new possibilities of conducting work in a more effective way.

5.4.1 New work roles at SIA

At SIA, new organizational roles and responsibilities have developed and become formalized, both on the strategic and operational levels. New work activities, such as scanning social media sites, writing posts on social media, and answering citizen inquiries, are added to the public officials' work responsibilities. The local managers authorize who in the organization will be allowed to perform this work. SIA managers look for individuals who – above competence – also have motivation and drive to work with social media. SIA had decided that a few local offices, spread in different geographical areas of Sweden, should take charge of the social media work. Within these sites, the management created new formal roles for social media with detailed job descriptions, and assigned time schedules. Officials with social media responsibilities got detailed formal training through courses, often organized by consulting firms in marketing.

"Our work day is scheduled in detail. We are assigned to two-hour passes about every second day for a specific media, such as Facebook. During that time we only look at Facebook. I can see in our system every other colleague in the country who is also working on Facebook at the moment."

The SIA officials who work with social media are often experienced and good in articulating through written language. Standardized answers for common questions have been developed over time and is stored in a common knowledge bank. These standard answers were slightly modified to become "personalized", to avoid being perceived as computer-generated answers. When more difficult inquiries or problems appeared, the responsible SIA official had possibilities to discuss the matter online with social media co-workers.

5.4.2 New responsibilities at the police

New organizational responsibilities were also identified in the police. Specific officers report from the field, write updates, and answer citizen questions. As in SIA, local police managers look for individual officers who are motivated to work with social media. Still, the staffing process rely more on the individual officers themselves to express their interest in communicating via social media. In addition, the police do not provide new job descriptions, nor do officers get any assigned time for these extra activities, or any career benefits. Instead they stressed the importance of a strong personal belief in social media as a tool by which they could communicate with citizens and do a better job as an officer:

“Much of this is done on my spare time. I guess that I put down one or two hours a day [on social media]. We had a serious discussion about this at home, because it is the family who will suffer. My wife goes out and fetch some tea for us, and I quickly open my mobile to answer a question on Facebook. That is not fair towards her.”

Officers often express personal reasons for engaging with social media work, because they feel responsible for how citizens perceive the police as an authority. When communicating about their daily work directly to the public they felt that they create trust and understanding among citizens, and provide possibilities for preventing and solving crimes. The police officers did rarely refer to any policies actively supporting them in their daily work with social media. Instead, police officers working with social media informally discussed their work with peers, brainstormed about what to write and gave feedback on how to write. They also gave emotional support when colleagues were criticized or challenged. One of few guidelines used, was a traffic light metaphor developed by the central communications department: Posts associated with red should not be posted, whereas yellow means that one should check with colleagues before posting. Posts associated with green could be published without further notice. Some officers regularly engaged in bending the limit for what was and was not appropriate expressions, for example by using humour and irony. Wittiness was such a boundary practice that could raise public concern as well as create broad outreach and popularity. One police officer in a small village, known for his witty postings, had several hundred thousand followers all over the country, which sometimes generated tensions with management, such as this post about proper teenage behaviour:

“If you are 16 years old, drinking illegal booze from a pet bottle and are going to shout ‘fuck the police’, be sure that you run fast, otherwise even a middle aged police may catch up with you, and bring you home to mom.”

The post generated 70,000 likes and 2,600 comments in two days, resulting in a temporary close down of the web page. Another post generated three million views, 10,000 likes, was shared around the world and got comments in all kinds of languages. However, it did also create tensions with central management, especially since it was reported to the Parliamentary Ombudsman. In general, however, the police management defended their officers and let themselves judge the appropriate way to communicate with citizens based on peer processes and self-regulation.

6 Discussion

It is undeniable that Internet today has a substantial impact on government's communication and interaction with the public. Social media transforms public authorities' legitimacy work, challenging previous notions of transparency, and responsiveness to citizens' needs and aspirations (Marche & McNiven, 2003). Social network sites have developed as a general forum for public communication and interaction, and public institutions have established themselves within this context that are open and shared with many other organizations, communities and individuals. Increased external exposure generates demands on external transparency and internal coherence. In that sense, social media propels

public sector organizations towards organizational innovation. However, public authorities, although founded on a similar legitimization base, can take very different approaches to what social media affords when interacting with the public. In this paper we have described how two Swedish public authorities, SIA and the police force, incorporate social media into their work practice in relation to their mission as public authorities to generate internal and external legitimacy. We asked how public organizations legitimacy work is conditioned by social media, with the purpose to highlight what can explain the different approaches taken by the studied authorities.

At SIA a citizen-centric e-government approach is dominating. The opportunities that social media affords in terms of communication and data about citizens is aligned with the existing workflow. It is viewed as a new efficient communication and marketing channel that reaches many users directly. It is considered positive that users can overhear each other (an answer to one customer is often relevant to other customers), which increases information dissemination efficiency. To adapt the internal organization to these opportunities, social media aligns with managerial and market logics à la New Public Management. The whole terminology revolves around concepts such as customer and customer satisfaction. The naming of a new Facebook thread as a “promotion” is typical for this service orientation. By the implementation of detailed administrative routines, SIA aimed at strict control of the authority’s engagement with social media. This might not be surprising, since much of the work at the agency is based on a call centre approach. It enables a more efficient answering of questions than with the telephone channel. With the strict routines enforced, the use of irony, smileys or emojys was prohibited.

At SIA social media was written into a logic of efficiency and accessibility both externally and internally, and thus reinforced satisfactory service delivery as a legitimate ground for SIA e-government. There is coherence between external and internal legitimacy. However, although having full control over the telephone channel, the built in features for measuring activities in social media has not yet been used. These could even further bring social media closer to a managerial logic.

For the police a citizen-centric e-governance with the goal to increase communication and interaction is dominating. Facebook is used as a tool for everyday reporting from the field, in order to create a sense of presence, and to also highlight work that is routine. It is important to create awareness of the police as an organization that acts among and for the citizens. Publishing a picture of an empty suburb street late in the evening, and writing in the status field “Now we are here” (in your neighbourhood) creates external legitimacy for the police as an authority, and police officers as professionals. Social media allows individual police officers to reach out to citizens as part of their everyday practice. For the police this is a way to use the visibility afforded by social media to influence citizens’ recognition of public institutions as representative of public values, and thereby being supportive of a civic logic (Cooke & Sturges, 2009;smith, 2010; Grimmelijkhuisen & Meijer, 2015). Social media also enables more efficient crime investigations by taking advantage of followers that pass on information to the police. Popularity thus boosts different aspects of the police’s work practice.

The internal organization to handle the increased interaction with citizens was basically founded on principles of self-regulation and peer support, in line with a civic logic (Boltanski & Thevenôt, 2006). This created a potential for dynamic use of SNS by the individual officers that liked to communicate with the medium, and a possibility to exploit more fully the opportunities social media brings. An example of this is individual police officers’ potential to reach popularity with the use of casual and catchy language, humour and irony (promoted by the “informality” of the medium), which improve their ratings in terms of number of likes and followers, as in the case with the police officer with several hundred thousands of followers all over the country.

However, while striving for popularity as a way to support the civic value logic underpinning the

police as an institutional actor, they need to avoid conveying a picture that render them public recognition as unserious or as merely entertainers (Goldsmith, 2013). The popularity attached to the most popular Facebook police officers was not unproblematic. Many officers were critical to the consequences of social media use and saw it as a threat against traditional police work and, a threat to the very foundation of institutional legitimization work.

7 Conclusion

The increased use of social media propels public sector organizations towards organizational innovation with regard to their interaction with citizens and creation of legitimacy. In this paper we contribute to the knowledge on how public organisation deal with digital transformation. We showed how two different public authorities, although founded on a similar legitimization base, took very different routes in appropriating social media in their interaction with citizens. The cases illuminate the challenges and opportunities that face public institutions when engaging with social media. By using a public governance framework we explained this as interplay between a dominating institutional logic, and how social media affords or constrains legitimacy creation. In the case of SIA, the dominating managerial logic, influenced the taming of the inherent dynamic forces of social media, by appropriating it as an efficient customer channel, organized in a top down manner with stable and well-defined roles and responsibilities. For the police, permeated with a dominating civic logic, legitimacy was created by more fully exploiting social medias capabilities. This was achieved by rich and flexible interaction with the citizens, backed with flexible and dynamic organization of social media usage. However, this also generated organizational tensions emanating from the contradictions in the informality ascribed to social media, and the perceived formality of public authorities. The presented framework can be used to further understand different ways to appropriate social media in public organizations in future studies. It can also contribute to practice by articulating and explicating challenges and design choices related to the use of social media in public sector.

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