Chapter XLVII
Joint Service Development with the Local Authorities

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ABSTRACT

There are still only few studies of the cooperation and collaboration of the governmental agencies and local authorities. This chapter presents a study of a joint e-service development from the viewpoint of a single actor, the Finnish Police. It also describes the challenges and benefits of the joint service point - "a one stop service" - development, and how the joint service development can change the customer contacts. It is argued in this chapter that the value creation potential depends on the effective management of the different actors and the definition of the roles of each party taking part in the joint service development.

INTRODUCTION

In Finland, Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's Government decided in its Government Program to start preparations for a program concerning the balanced development of resources in Finland's regional and community environments. (PM's office, 2006) A functional infrastructure, in other words, good basic IT-structures, are a necessity for the functioning of the whole of E-Government. As older age groups increase in size and the population ages, service production has to be adapted to this change. The distorted age structure of some isolated and small municipalities produces a practically overwhelming challenge with regard to organizing services. Therefore, the objective is to strengthen the public services by creating E-Government services. It is predicted that in the future, immaterial services will increase and the importance of the concrete location of the services may decrease as online services improve. (PM's office, 2006, p.86) The government has developed a national municipal policy to guarantee the availability of public services, to handle the balanced development of the municipal economy, and to level out the differences between municipalities.

The government aims to ensure equal availability of public services throughout the country. Future cooperation between the public, private and non-governmental sectors in service production will be a necessity. (PM's office, 2006, p.86)

E-Government is a relevant area of study in public administration because public administration is changing under the influence of rapidly changing ICT (information and communication technology). Recently, there has been a growing interest in E-Government and productivity as a consequence of the convergence of two issues: (1) increased demand for accountability on the part of governing bodies, and the public in general, and (2) a commitment of government bodies to focus on results and to work more intentionally towards efficiency and improved performance (See also Poister, 2003) with external and internal networks. Finland's government's e-service strategy was to increase the efficiency of the Ministry of the Interior, to improve the cooperation between the different government bodies and to develop the e-services from the customers' viewpoint. E-service refers to specific government services that can be offered online. These include business-related services such as license applications and interactive consulting of security issues for example. It also includes citizen-oriented services such as application for residency permits and traffic information (Moon, 2002). Many contacts between the local government and citizens happen when specific services are wanted or needed. Examples include passport services, licenses, and entry into official databases and Government's reports (See also Fursich & Robins, 2002).

The public sector has an important responsibility in terms of the realization of regional and equal well-being. In order to ensure the availability and sustainable development of public services, a national municipal policy was created to handle the balanced development of the municipal economy and to level out the differences between municipalities, with the objective of ensuring good and equal availability of public services throughout the country. Cooperation between the public and private sectors in service production was seen as a necessity. (PM's office, 2006, p.19). Finland's government wanted to support the area development of the different parts of the country (Ministry of the Interior, 2006).The Finnish Police's strategy was also to divide the work in a different way and not be depended on the place or time when the service is delivered or offered. The Government wanted more efficiency and long-run savings by less employees tied up in the basics processes. In addition, they wanted to increase the knowledge of creating, developing and offering in e-services (Ministry of the Interior, 2006).

This chapter will discuss about the e-services developed in and for the Finnish Police in the Finland's Ministry of the Interior and the impact of the e-services on the organization and citizens' interaction with the government bodies. These services are offered in a common service center – "one stop service center" – with other public actors' services such as library or social work services. The initial idea is both to improve the services and the interaction with the citizens through the joint service points.

Furthermore, information and communication technology (ICT) supports the collaboration between different interdependent organizations by facilitating the exchange, distribution and sharing of information, knowledge and know how (Rockart & Short, 1991; Davidow & Malone, 1992; Bellamy & Taylor, 1998). Moreover, Internet provides a powerful tool for reinventing services of local governments. It encourages transformation from the traditional bureaucratic organizational services, which emphasizes standardization, departmentalization, and operational cost-efficiency, to the "E-Government", which emphasizes coordinated actor-network building, external and internal collaboration, and customer services. Based on a content analysis of e-sites and a survey of basic services development officials, this study shows that many local authorities are already moving toward this E-Government. These

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