

## Voucher systems – A study of market designers and designed markets within municipalities

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### Abstract

In this dissertation voucher systems are studied. Client choice models have over the past decade been introduced as parts of municipal operations. One important observation, and point of departure, is that client-choice models are based on a public organization that designs a market and that this organization remains a market designer even after the market is established.

The purpose of this study is to understand how the market designer manages the market solution. Therefore, the overall guiding question is how may the market designer's actions be interpreted? What do the market designers do and why do they do it? The dissertation is founded on theories from sociology, focusing particularly on system theory and actor-network theory.

Case studies are the empirical data in this study and interviews are the main sources of information. A total of 56 interviews were made. The first case study is a voucher system that was introduced within pre-school and school in the town of Staffanstorp. The second case study is a client-choice model within the at-home assistance for elderly in the town of Nacka and the third case is a voucher system that was introduced within the maternity care division of the general health care system in Göteborg, Västra Götalandsregionen.

A model is introduced which explains why the market designers have pursued certain courses of action and why they have cared for these markets to different extents and with different focus. Two concepts constitute the core of the explanatory model: reflexivity and attention. One important contribution of this study concerns the changing nature of the market designer. The market designers' characteristics vary depending on whether the driving force in the process are civil servants or politicians and whether the issue is politically contentious or viewed as non-political. The conclusions also show how important it is that the role of the market designer is highlighted and understood. In particular, this is true with regard to the importance of the role of the market designer in creating conditions for a situation characterized by a wide range of choices, competition and high quality services. The results of the study also indicate that the perspective has contributed to develop the knowledge about the relationship between the different market models' positions and the political system.

### Key words

voucher systems, quasi-markets, new public management, management control