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# **Introducing the Missing Link: National Coordinators and Their Role for Sweden's Public Administration**

## Summary

This essay is dedicated to exploring the development of new roles for officials in public administration as a result of the tendency of governments to focus on deliberation, collaboration and network management in governance. The context of the study is the political-administrative system of Sweden, where the government's introduction of national coordinators and use of them as a policy instrument has led to new, flexible and free roles for the public officials who hold these positions. The questions explored in relation to this case are what roles the national coordinators have come to play in relation to other public actors as well as what their introduction implies for the relations and democratic processes of the public administration. Using interview material from a comprehensive audit undertaken by the Swedish National Audit Office in 2016, experiences and views of public actors on national, regional and local level are investigated, based on their involvement in the policy deliberation process around national coordinators. The role national coordinators play is found to be a mix of that which previous research has labeled 'entrepreneur' and 'politicized public servant'. Through a synthesis of these role types, the implications of introducing the national coordinators into Sweden's political-administrative system are analyzed. The conclusions reached are that national coordinators, in their synthesized roles, are able to constitute the 'missing link' between different levels of the public administration, in that they enable a direct communication between the local and central levels of government. From a democratic perspective, the introduction of national coordinators provide exciting opportunities for a development of democratic processes, while at the same time implying challenges for the neutrality, continuity and institutional learning of the public administration.

Keywords: public administration, public officials, governance, discursive interaction, policy deliberation process, coordination

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# 1. Introduction

This introductory chapter begins by presenting the case of national coordinators, which this study is concerned with exploring, based on what previous research has found out about why they are appointed, what they are up to and what consequences their introduction has had. In the second segment of the chapter, the case is put into the context of the development of governance in Sweden. Finally, the aim and research question of this study is presented in relation to research on the development of new roles for public officials.

## 1.1. A New Bird in the Public Administration Jungle

In the recent decade, a new phenomenon has made its entry into Sweden's political-administrative system, gaining interest from both local researchers of public administration and the country's control authorities. The phenomenon is called *national coordinator* (nationell samordnare) and constitutes a person who has been assigned a special and temporary position by the government. The national coordinators, sometimes having commissions at their hand, are assigned to handle one of the government's prioritized issues. The expectations of what they are meant to achieve however vary a great deal, as it is a flexible instrument for the to government use, and a free role for the persons who are appointed to fill, giving coordinators a flexible mandate and a lot of freedom to interpret their assignments (Riksrevisionen, 2016: 48).

The popularity of appointing national coordinators is reflected in 33 national coordinators having been employed by different governments between 2005-2015 (Riksrevisionen, 2016: 22). Previous research has shown that the government uses national coordinators to highlight issues and promote certain perspectives, but that there are also elements of investigation and negotiation in many coordinators' instructions (Statskontoret, 2014: 18-19; Riksrevisionen, 2016: 19-20). An important purpose behind the use of national coordinators also seems to be to establish collaboration between different actors when the government is dependent upon these other actors to handle certain issues (Statskontoret, 2014: 21-22). These issues can sometimes be described as *wicked problems*, having no final solutions and requiring coordination between multiple actors from different sectors (e.g. the National Coordinator against Homelessness) (Statskontoret, 2014: s 29-30). The national coordinator can however also be assigned to handle: an issue that the government has profiled itself in dealing with during its time of mandate (e.g. the National Coordinator for Care Choice), an acute situation (e.g. the National Coordinators for Municipal Reception of Refugees), an issue that is controversial or too sensitive for the government to handle themselves (e.g. the National Coordinator Against Violent Extremism), or a clear demand for direction within a policy area (e.g.

the National Coordinator for the Expansion of the Mining Industry) (Riksrevisionen, 2016: s 19-20). In such situations, using this new and horizontal policy instrument has proven to be an effective and politically viable alternative to get the responsible actors to take action – especially when other measures have failed (Statskontoret, 2014; Riksrevisionen, 2016).

The focus of a national coordinator is often directed at multiple sectors, including target groups from the public and private sector as well as civil society, but while they are intended to have a broad coverage of these different groups, the coordinators' main target groups are in fact most often other public actors. Governmental authorities and local and regional municipalities are, in the coordinators' instructions, most often mentioned to be organizations for the coordinator to involve in their work (Riksrevisionen, 2016: 21). All efforts by the national coordinators are voluntary for these target groups to participate in and there are no sanctions for not doing so. The majority of the coordinators do not even have access to any substantial funds and are supposed to use only information and motivation to inspire and convince the target groups about the right way to prioritize, act and organize their operations (Riksrevisionen, 2016: 20). Using only these tools, the coordinators sometimes succeed in initiating action on the local level around the issue in focus for their mission, and are furthermore often able to bring back information to the government about the conditions 'on the ground' (*ibid.*: 39).

Despite its popularity and the voluntaristic nature of the policy instrument, there have been public demonstrations of conflicts arising between different levels of administration because of the appointment of national coordinators. For example, two previously active coordinators who have been publicly criticized by representatives of municipalities are the National Coordinator for Protecting Democracy Against Violent Extremism, previously headed by Mona Sahlin, and the National Coordinator for Vulnerable EU Citizens, Martin Valfridsson. Mona Sahlin and her secretariat were criticized by the municipality of Malmö for not having enough of an understanding of the municipalities' perspectives and the conditions for their work, and was further claimed to lack the mandate needed to facilitate change (Ravhed, 2016). As for Martin Valfridsson, he was criticized for making controversial statements, undermining the trust of the municipalities instead of providing support (Ankersen, 2015).

The government's use of the national coordinators has also been questioned by the Swedish control authorities. The Swedish Agency for Public Management discovered a number of potential challenges with this way of governing in regards to how it could affect the rest of the public administration. Their concerns were mainly that the appointment of national coordinators might override those authorities that have traditionally been responsible for the issues that coordinators are

now assigned to, as well as lead to a blurred division of responsibility between the national coordinators and the ministers (Statskontoret, 2014: 39-40). When the Committee on the Constitution attended to the matter, they expressed the need for a clearer and more thought-through separation of roles between national coordinators, the government, the Government Offices, and the ministers (bet 2015/16:KU10: 82). The vague definition of roles and the uncertainty about who is actually responsible for measures taken during a national coordination was further highlighted in the National Audit Office' report on the policy instrument (Riksrevisionen, 2016: 50-51).

## **1.2. On the Road to a More Collaborative Government**

Previous research on national coordinators have put them into the context of the rise of new strategies of governing promoted within the paradigm of *governance*. In a report on national coordinators, the Swedish Agency for Public Management concluded that national coordinators represented an “untraditional” mode of governance, and a break-away from vertical governing, as the coordinators mainly operate through networks (Statskontoret, 2014: 11). National coordinators can also be considered to be governance-inspired in that they mostly work through informative, 'soft' and capacity building tools (Sandheden, 2014: 29). The theory of collaborative governance have furthermore proved to be a suitable framework to understand the existence of national coordinators (Johansson & Malmström, 2015: 31).

According to the bulk of public administration research, we are today living in a 'network society' in which national and local levels of governance are integrated and where governments are increasingly incapable of dealing with societal problems on their own (Salamon, 2002; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). In this new type of society, 'traditional' methods of governing are no longer seen as appropriate, leading governments to experiment with innovative policy instruments. Based on an awareness of interdependence, alternative forms of problem solving are booming, for example in the form of collaborative dialogues and planning (Hajer, 2003: 187-189). The development has also resulted in researchers having to reformulate their theories on policy formation and implementation. The top-down perspective has been abandoned to a substantial degree, replaced by a view on policy formation as something that takes place in complex networks on various political-administrative layers (Leman, 2002: 58; Hill & Hupe, 2009: 17, 69). Government's role is seen as increasingly becoming that of a coordinating actor, facilitating collaboration and enabling actors instead of governing through hierarchy and control (Salamon, 2002: 8, 16; Leman, 2002: 73). A change of vocabulary has followed, labeling what governments do when applying these strategies as different forms of *governance*.

The development of governance in Sweden has been described as one marked by both continuity and change. Jacobsson, Pierre and Sundström prefer to phrase the development as a transformation of the role of government, rather than a shift from government to governance, and argue that the commanding role has transformed into a coordinating one (2015: 8). Interactive methods of governing have long since been in use in Sweden as the system has been characterized by corporativism, which has allowed interest groups to have their say in the development of policies and reforms (Montin & Hedlund, 2009: 26; Johansson 2012: 1032). Signs of a development towards an even more collaborative government can however be identified; contract-based governing has become much more common, inter-communal cooperation has increased, the strategy of partnerships has gained influence and more and more loose networks for specific policy areas are being formed (Montin & Hedlund, 2009: 23). Collaboration has thus evolved into the 'standard action' for the Swedish government (Montin & Granberg, 2013: 83). In Sweden, the collaborative ambition is also illustrated by the new overarching goal that was set for the public administration in the government's latest administrative policy. Today, the public administration is encouraged to be “innovative and collaborating”, in addition to the values previously strived for, that is: rule of law, efficiency, quality, service and accessibility (Prop. 2009/10:175).

### **1.3. Understanding the Changing Roles of Public Officials**

The effects of the transformation of the role of government are not yet fully known. However, while the re-invention of policymaking is by many seen as a necessary and welcome response to the fluidity of the network society, there are also concerns about the new methods of governance leading to lacking forms of accountability and legitimacy, as public officials' influence and responsibility expand (Hysing & Olsson, 2012: 16-19, 119; Lundquist, 1998: 23-24). Policymaking is becoming an even more important stage for politics than before and public officials are given new and important roles within these processes (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 12). In the context of loose networks and partnerships, “Who governs?” risks becoming an empirical question, rather than a principal one, having to be determined on a case by case basis (Montin & Hedlund, 2009: 12, 27). In fact, because of such concerns, the debate on governance has been said to be nothing less than a debate about the foundations of democracy (Jacobsson, Pierre & Sundström, 2015: 53).

The concerns expressed by these researchers about the implications of governance and collaborative methods on democracy and its guardians motivates this study. My aim is to understand how changing patterns of governing affect the public administration through the new roles that are created for public officials. The thesis is devoted to exploring the development of one such new role for public officials, as the introduction of national coordinators into the Swedish public

administration provides such an opportunity. To focus on national coordinators is motivated both by the conflicts and criticism arising from the government's use of them and the concerns that have been raised from control authorities about the coordinators' roles and their implications for the public administration's democratic processes. As no study has undertaken a deeper analysis of these issues, including the perspectives of actors on different levels of the public administration, that is the intention of this study. For this purpose, a unique material is re-used, collected in 2015/2016 by the project group for the Swedish National Audit Office' audit, which I took part in during my internship and temporary position at the office. The material is unique in that it includes interviews with politicians and public officials from central government to the municipal level. While previous studies have mainly analyzed the national coordinators' formal mandates and instructions, or focused on the policy outcomes of the coordinations, this material enables an analysis beyond the intended logic of the policy instrument and an investigation into what roles have actually been established for national coordinators in practice.

The question guiding the research is: *What roles have national coordinators come to play in practice and what implications does the introduction of these roles have for the relations and democratic processes of Sweden's public administration?* This question is answered by investigating the views and experiences of those public actors who have been involved in the policy deliberation processes around national coordinators. The properties and values associated with the national coordinators' roles are compared to those of previously known types of public officials. The implications of appointing national coordinators are then illuminated through analyzing how their introduction has affected the relations between different levels and actors of the public administration, as well as whether their roles imply any opportunities or challenges from a democratic perspective.

## 2. How This Study Was Conducted

In this chapter, the operational theory, methodological approach and material used for the purpose of this study is presented and discussed.

### 2.1. Analytical Framework

#### 2.1.1. Exploring institutional change through policy deliberation processes

Public administrations are embedded with institutions in the form of ideas, values and practices (Hysing & Olsson, 2012; Jacobsson, Pierre & Sundström, 2015; Schneider & Ingram, 1990; Salamon, 2002). An *institution* can broadly be defined as a set of rules and procedures that provides stability by structuring the interaction and behavior of actors and organizations (Powell & Di Maggio in Lascoumes & Le Gales, 1990: 8). As such, institutions have substantial impact on our societies and our lives: providing opportunities and constraints that structure situations (Ostrom, 2005: 3). These institutions are however not set in stone but dynamic and change as a consequence of individuals interacting with each other and, at certain times, the possibilities for changing the rules of the game are more open for debate than usual.

Research has illuminated that the changing context in which present-day policy making is taking place has resulted in a weakening of those institutional arrangements we are used to rely on. One can even speak of the existence of an 'institutional void', characterized by the lack of pre-given rules of responsibility, authority and accountability (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 9). Though institutions, such as states and governments, still hold central roles in our societies, such research points towards the emergence of policy deliberation as an increasingly important method of solving societal problems, and therefore also as an important object of study for research in policy analysis. Policy deliberation becomes central as stakeholders, including established institutional arrangements, take part in networks of governance with the purpose of solving challenging problems that require deliberation between these actors (Hajer, 2003: 175-176).

Against the background of the institutional void and the above definition of a policy deliberation process, I want to return to the case in focus for this essay. As national coordinators are responsible for initiating deliberation between a multitude of actors around a certain problem or policy, and have been found by previous research to represent an example of the new network-driven methods of governing, I believe that these perspectives are helpful for structuring the study of the roles of the national coordinators and their implications. Although all of the national coordinations included in

the study have a certain problem or policy as its locus, these particular problems and policies take a back seat in this study. Instead, I suggest to analyze the national coordinations in terms of policy deliberation processes. According to Hajer, a policy deliberation process includes three dimensions:

(1) it is an exchange of pros and cons of particular solutions and is concerned with understanding the different viewpoints from which the various claims are made; (2) it contains a negotiation of the rules of the game; and, (3) in light of the above it is also a matter of cultural politics: it is a string of moments at which people discuss and negotiate value commitments, and either discover or develop shared understandings and adherences or not. (Hajer, 2003: 183)

This definition points us towards important aspects of analysis when studying a policy deliberation process which are operationalized in this study. By highlighting that deliberation entails an *exchange of views coming from different viewpoints*, one is able to see the benefits of exploring the discourse on different levels of the public administration, as well as from the perspectives of different types of actors on these levels. In this study, this aspect is operationalized by including the views of different types of public actors, situated at the national, regional and local level. Hajer also directs our attention to the process entailing *negotiations of institutional rules*. In this study, I take that to mean the way in which national coordinators' roles are crystallized through interaction with other public actors and norms in the public administration. These rules can be both formal and informal, which reflects the broad understanding of institutions I apply throughout this study (for a contrasting view, see Lundquist, 1998: 40). Finally, by seeing the policy deliberation process as *a string of moments at which values are negotiated*, the analysis is guided towards the way values are challenged and legitimized when actors discuss national coordinators. Furthermore, this leads to a definition of the policy deliberation as something that not only occurs in the actual meeting between national coordinators and other actors, but takes place in a multitude of places and situations – even at the moment the informant sits across from us during an interview.

### **2.1.2. A typology of roles**

A typology by Hysing and Olsson has been used to structure the analysis of the national coordinators. Their typology builds upon six different types of roles for public officials and can be used to understand the way public servants act, what influence they have, what challenges they face and what considerations they have to make (Hysing & Olsson, 2012: 12-13). For the purpose of my study, the typology is used to enable an analysis of the way in which the actors' views on the roles of the national coordinators corresponds or conflicts with known types of public officials, and the

values and properties connected to them. To relate the national coordinators to previous research in this way increases the generalizability of the findings and enables a deepening of the discussion about the implications of introducing the national coordinators, as the empirical findings can be compared to those already identified in the literature. For the purpose of such a comparison, a merit of the chosen typology is that it has been developed within the context of the Swedish political-administrative system and includes 'traditional' as well as more recently emerging types of public officials. Another purpose of using this typology is furthermore that it can provide a theoretical contribution to the field, as the applicability and usefulness of the framework is tested.

I have summarized the values and properties that are connected to the different types that Hysing and Olsson have identified in Table 1, a summary I return to in Chapter 4: The Roles of National Coordinators. These are ideal types, and should therefore not be seen to represent actual public servants. In the reality of the public administration, individual public servants act through many different roles depending on the situation (*ibid.*).

**Table 1. Typology of Roles of Public Officials and Their Main Properties (adapted from Hysing & Olsson, 2012).**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Properties and Guiding Values</b>
The bureaucrat	Competent, working within the hierarchy, loyal, dutiful, expert, abides by rules, accountable, objective, neutral, guarder of the public ethos.
The politicized public servant	(Party)political/ideological, committed, enthusiastic, compliant, closely connected to politicians.
The street-level bureaucrat	In direct contact with citizens, has discretion over implementation in particular cases, works in regulated environments, at the bottom of the hierarchy, 'the face of government'.
The entrepreneur	Innovative, creative, individualistic, 'catalyst for change', knowledgeable, experienced, access to central government, problem-solver, has access to networks, socially competent, manipulative.
The director	NPM-inspired, manager or higher official, responsible for results, free and flexible, individually responsible, budget driven.
The activist	Committed, acts in accordance with personal values and ideals, political, has networks inside and outside public administration, expert, inspiring.

## **2.2. Approach and Material**

### **2.2.1. The audit by the Swedish National Audit Office**

The purpose of the audit *National Coordinators as a Governmental Policy Instrument* (Nationella samordnare som statligt styrmedel), from which the material used in this essay has its origin, was to investigate if the government's use of national coordinators was purposive, that is, lived up to general requirements in regards to effectiveness and efficiency, as well as whether it led to any side-effects. The report was published in 2016 and the material made available to the public, in line with the Swedish principle of public access to official documents.

The audit was compartmentalized in an overview of the 33 assignments the government introduced in the period of 2005-2015, an interview study including 12 assignments (and 13 coordinators), and four case studies in which the results of the national coordinators' assignments were investigated. The original delimitation of assignments were first and foremost based upon a semantic definition of coordinators, that is, only those assignments which had acquired the label 'coordinator' by the government were considered in the audit. The selection of cases for the interview study was made with the purpose of being able to draw conclusions about general traits in the very diverse population of national coordinators. The selection of the twelve assignments was therefore intended to cover variations in relation to target groups, professional background of coordinators, which ministry was in charge, whether the coordinator was appointed as a function within the cabinet office or as a committee, as well as if the appointment was coupled with another form of policy instrument (Rikrevisionen, 2016: 16). The selection of the case studies was based on the same logic, but also focused on assignments having been completed within a certain time-frame, enabling a review of the results and ensuring that informants had sufficient memory of events to recount them.

The interviews were semi-structured and explorative, aimed at understanding the informants' views and allowing for them to contribute with their own perspectives and thoughts. Even though the main purpose of the study was to investigate results and side-effects of using national coordinators as a policy instrument, the questions also addressed the role of the coordinators and the interviewees' experiences of meeting them. All those interviewed during the original audit were informed that the transcriptions would be made public upon release and were furthermore given the opportunity to fact check the transcriptions, and remove or change their statements, after the interviews were conducted.

## 2.2.2. Use of the material for the purpose of this study

For the purpose of my essay, I have made use of a selection of the transliterations of the taped interviews conducted within the audit. A detailed list of the interviews can be found in Annex 1 but, in summary, the selection is comprised of:

- 13 interviews with national coordinators/representatives of national coordinators
- 3 interviews with representatives of national authorities
- 4 interviews with representatives of county administrative boards
- 10 interviews with representatives of local municipalities, politicians and bureaucrats

The selection of interviews for the purpose of this study was made with regards to the focus on the public sector. Other organizations the coordinators come in contact with, such as civil society or commercial agents, were thereby excluded from the selection. To capture different viewpoints and the complexities of governing in a multi-level system, the study includes interviews with actors belonging to the public sector on national, regional and local level. Out of the public actors interviewed in the original audit neither ministers and ministries nor regional municipalities have been included, motivated by the need to be able to have time to properly analyze the interviews within the limited scope of the study.

The approach I take throughout this essay is interpretive which has implications for the manner in which I have analyzed the material. My view of what is expressed in an interview is in line with Barbara Czarniawska's in that:

[...] what people present in interviews is but their interpretations of the world. Still, these interpretations are extremely valuable to the researcher, who can assume that it is the same interpretations that informed their actions. (Czarniawska 2014: 30)

Applied, the interpretative perspective thus leads one to focus on achieving an understanding of subjective knowledge expressed by the people who are interviewed. In some aspects, an interpretative analysis therefore begins already when the material is being collected (Halvorsen, 1992: 131). A limitation of this study is therefore that I did not participate in all of the interviews included in my selection. Out of the selection, I was present at one interview conducted with a national coordinator, one interview conducted with a national authority, and all of the interviews conducted with county administrative boards and municipalities. For those interviews I did not participate in, I have only had transliterations to go by. As such, there is a risk of missing the context of the meetings and information transmitted in non-linguistic ways, which can have an

impact on the full understanding of the views expressed. These circumstances, as well as the fact that I put the original material to new use, have motivated me to analyze the statements made by the informants with great care, to avoid distorting or misinterpreting them.

As an interpretive activity requires a great deal of the researcher, I have used the computer program Nvivo to systemize the initial analysis and code the material to avoid making arbitrary conclusions. By creating nodes that reflected *who* in the deliberation process was speaking about *what* (for example, a coordinator discussing their role in relation to municipalities), I was able to easily return to the material and make sure that I had made a just interpretation. Furthermore, quotes are frequently used in the empirical description, to illustrate the main points of the understanding I have reached through analyzing the material. While all interviews included in the study are not quoted they nevertheless inform the conclusions drawn. As the quotes have been translated from Swedish to English I have appended the original quotes, so that the Swedish reader can make sure that no matters of significance have been lost in the process.

### **3. Finding One's Role as a National Coordinator**

This first empirical chapter, based on the views of the national coordinators themselves, begins by attending to the difficulties many coordinators have experienced in establishing a role for themselves. Thereafter follows a presentation of empirical findings related to how national coordinators reason about their own roles in relation to other actors of the public administration, including ministers and officials in central government, regional and national authorities and municipalities.

#### **3.1. Identity Crisis**

A national coordination often begins by the chosen person receiving a phone call from the minister responsible for the policy area that needs to be coordinated. Accepting the offer when it comes is however not an obvious choice for all. In fact, some of those coordinators interviewed proved to be skeptical of these types of appointments, even while having had such a position themselves:

I never sought after the assignment, the minister asked me to take it. [...] I was skeptical of the form that the assignment implied: to focus on only one issue, moreover such a difficult one for which the authorities have a great responsibility. I was also hesitant towards what the role implied. I believe that governing should be concentrated on actual operations, to avoid continually adding on new administrative layers. [...] There are responsible agencies and municipalities. I believe it is a bit dangerous to appoint functions like this as you do not have any power as a national coordinator, you can only make suggestions. (The National Coordinator Against Domestic Violence)

There can thereby exist both principal and practical reasons for being skeptical of the position. Coordinators can be worried about the consequences of appointing new functions in relation to other public sector organizations as well as the width of their mandate and actual possibilities to bring about change as the government's national coordinators. But even coordinators who have not been outright skeptical of the position describe having, at least initially, substantial trouble negotiating and establishing a role for themselves in central government:

I was not greeted with any real enthusiasm by the bureaucrats when I arrived at the ministry. It felt as though they thought: "Oh no, not another coordinator". It was not clear where I was going to sit or what I was meant to do. During the first couple of weeks at Fredsgatan, I was prepared to quit. (The National Coordinator on

Homelessness)

Although many of the national coordinators work very closely with and are dependent on the ministries in the Government Offices, the greetings they receive are thereby not necessarily enthusiastic ones. Instead, the ministries' staff seem to experience feelings of fatigue in relation to the government's appointments of national coordinators. The problems can, at least in part, be seen to arise from the fact that the coordinators' positions often do not arrive at their doors with already defined rules, as “there is nothing written”. There is no guide or manual on which to lean for support on how to be a national coordinator or on what their role should be in relation to the staff of the ministries. Because of this void, the coordinators have had to learn as they go.

### **3.2. Representatives of Government and Producers of Knowledge**

While decisions on method and strategies are mostly left to the coordinators themselves to think up, and there is a lot of room for interpretation, coordinators are representatives of government. The close relationship and direct communication with the government brings legitimacy to the work of the coordinators and gives them stronger mandates towards the target groups, as it lets the municipalities know that the views they present to the coordinator will be forwarded to the highest level:

The plan is anchored with the minister, who wants feedback every third month. This is important in meeting the municipalities too, so they know that their views will be continuously forwarded. [...] The assignment has developed so that the checkups with the minister are more frequent than was originally the plan. I now report every third month and can thereby act as a direct link between the municipalities and the government. (The National Coordinator for the Social Child and Youth Care)

This statement highlights an important aspect of the coordinators role in their own eyes, that of constituting a direct link and creating dialogue between different levels of the administration. The selection process and the coordinators' special relationship with the ministers gives them the legitimacy needed for them to be able to fill this function, and is of great importance for their ability to achieve the intended results.

The coordinator's role is very high profiled and requires most of those appointed to have a lot of contact with the media and stakeholders. Coordinators describe their role as being a relief for the minister in this aspect, since ministers are able to take a step back from the issue when there is a

coordinator who can take over the spotlight. Alone, or together with ministers, coordinators write debate articles and participate at press conferences, and have even acted as substitutes for ministers at international meetings (e.g. a meeting hosted by the World Health Organization in the case of the National Coordinator Against Domestic Violence). Taking on the ministers' public duties is a great responsibility that can be difficult to carry, especially when dealing with controversial issues and being openly critiqued. When the coordinator is expected to give direction on a debated or controversial issue, a substantial dialogue between coordinators and ministers is necessary to be able to anchor actions with the politicians and protect the coordinator against potential criticism. This was for instance needed in the case of the National Coordinator for Vulnerable EU Citizens:

This summer I got asked about the issue concerning allotting municipal land to this group. I publicly and pretty clearly questioned that, on both legal and sober grounds. If I hadn't, we would probably be seeing a lot of those types of solutions, which I don't think would have been great.

*To what degree do you gain approval for such a measure before you take action?*

I get approval. That's necessary. It's like, I want to protect my own back. (The National Coordinator for Vulnerable EU Citizens)

Gaining approval thereby becomes a way of making sure that one is not solely accountable for the measures taken, having harmonized one's intentions with the ministers and the cabinet office. But the balance between independence and harmonization is not always easy, particularly in relation to the ministries' staff who often expect national coordinators to take part in the daily work at the office. This is not a problem for those coordinators who see themselves as tools of the ministries; their secretariat or staff are often recommended or picked by the ministries, they have their offices at a ministry and receive a lot of administrative help. Others strive for a role more in line with being "free satellites" with, at most, "an umbilical cord attached to the ministry" – a form of independence that can be a source of irritation for the ministries. As the coordinators' real bosses are the politicians they describe having to disregard the ministries' points of view and sometimes choose to have their offices elsewhere, enabling them to strive for a more independent role. The difficulty in making these choices comes down to balancing the roles of the insider and the outsider, and the values correctness and creativity:

It is sometimes difficult to be both in-line and an outsider [...]. Correctness and form sometimes smother creativity. You cannot be as much of a free thinker within the

government office but the correctness and form is, simultaneously, important for the legitimacy of the state. (The National Coordinator for the Social Child and Youth Care)

This is not the only difficult balancing act national coordinators have to perform; they also have to negotiate between the roles of politician and public servant. For some, trying to upkeep an identity as a reliable, apolitical public servant is important from a principal perspective and something they work hard on. This means having to take active decisions about which forums to act in:

There have been instances when the press secretary has sent journalists to me when the cabinet minister has not been available for an interview. Sure, it's been like that. But I have asserted that I do not participate in media events if there is another politician present. I can have a discussion with representatives from the civil society, but I do not want to take part in regular political debates. I don't think it's my place. (The National Coordinator for Vulnerable EU Citizens)

And also about what perspective one applies:

I checked up with the politicians once a month, with a high level group consisting of the ministers' undersecretaries. This was a highly political and prestigious effort for them, but not for me and that was not a problem. I was clear about that towards the municipalities and counties, which was important since they are run by different political majorities. I made more use of my role as a physician and it is important for me that the work we did was backed up by research. (The National Coordinator on the Elderly)

Even though all national coordinators referred to themselves as bureaucrats rather than politicians when asked about their roles, some coordinators conceded that there are instances in which it is difficult to distinguish the role of politician and bureaucrat and that one might instead see the role one plays as a coordinator as a mix – a “political bureaucrat”. It can sometimes even be necessary to act political as a coordinator, as long as you do not get too involved in party politics. This is especially important for coordinators who have been politicians themselves prior to their appointment:

We try to be clear about the fact that Mona is a national coordinator and no longer a politician. I always refer to our instructions and avoid answering questions outside of our topic. It is otherwise easy for all questions related to extremism and terror to be directed at us. Mona has almost been essential, it makes it easy to reach out to the media

and visit the municipalities. There is a great respect for her, regardless of the political affiliation of the municipalities we visit. It would be difficult if only bureaucrats had been working with this. Mona is probably always a politician in that she is good at expressing a political will and vision. We get a lot of positive feedback on her presentations and the way in which she frames this question. We probably try to be bureaucrats in the secretariat to balance out the roles. It makes for a pretty good mix. (The National Coordinator for Protecting Democracy Against Violent Extremism)

It is, in other words, possible to depoliticize a national coordinator by balancing the roles within a secretariat, being able to draw benefits from the role of the politician while staying clear of unrelated debates.

Coordinators are not only assigned to affect target groups, in most cases the idea is also that they will be able to bring back knowledge to the government about the target groups' opinions and problems regarding the issue in question. When coordinators are able to establish a dialogue between the government and the municipalities they see themselves as being in a unique position to find information that central government or an agency could not attain in the same way. At the end of their assignments most coordinators therefore produce a final report, directed to the government, including suggestions for further political measures based on the information gathered throughout their assignments. While all coordinators see themselves as representatives for the government when they are out on the field, the final reports are considered to be their own work entirely. How much the reports actually influence the government's politics is an open question as the government can choose to disregard or embrace it, and the impact is vulnerable to shifts of government:

The report is mine through and through. We later presented it to the minister at Almedalen and I have not received any critique about the content of the report. In some way, it became the government's politics even though no such formal decisions were made. No one thought we brought forward the wrong aspects or went to far. I am convinced that, had the same government still been in office, they would have used the report for their continued politics and implemented some jurisdiction. (The National Coordinator on Homelessness)

National coordinators are thereby able to influence government politics, but a change of government can mean a change of priorities and that reports can be disregarded. There are even examples of coordinators' terms have even been ended prematurely because of ideological differences between a resigning and an acceding government office. When their mandates end,

coordinators have little power over whether the knowledge, networks and relations that they have worked on for several years will be sustained.

### **3.3. Pacemakers for the Authorities**

National and regional authorities are the government's main tools for implementing policies and there are hardly any policy areas not covered by the responsibility of an authority. The authorities are almost always mentioned as agents the coordinator should contact and collaborate with as a part of the assignment. The coordinators often contact government agencies as they can be an important source for contacts, expertise and knowledge. If the coordinator develops a report or suggestions towards the government, these are often partly based upon the agencies' opinions and knowledge and, as such, they are used as experts during coordination assignments. But apart from being advisors, government agencies are also, in a way, the coordinators' target groups. Coordinators can initiate national networks of agencies, often with top management participating, which are used to gain input but also to push them when deficiencies in operations have been identified. Coordinators can furthermore inspire the government to give certain instructions to the agencies:

The purpose is two-sided: we both want to get the agencies' input on our work and affect them so that they start working on this issue, as we have identified certain deficiencies they need to handle. One example is that we saw that the social secretaries needed help in their work against violent extremism. We brought this up with the National Board of Health and Safety (Socialstyrelsen) who responded that they only act upon the government's instructions, so we went to the government and it became an assignment which has been undertaken in a very good way. (The National Coordinator for Protecting Democracy Against Violent Extremism)

For the national coordinator to inspire the government to give new instructions or assignments to the agencies is especially common at the end of a coordinator's term, when someone needs to inherit their work. It is even possible for coordinators to publicly criticize authorities, even though it is uncommon, and take on the role as the one who says the obvious no one else dares to say:

I invited the Police Agency and the Enforcement Authority to a meeting, and I have after that had many further meetings with the police. I have also criticized the police publicly. I informed them first and told them to “Stop me if you don't agree, but I believe you need a pacemaker”. Because everyone backed away from this issue. No one wanted to be the one to say the obvious, that we cannot allow illegal settlements, defecation and litter. This is all criminalized. Still, nothing was done. This might not be

the standard way of working as a coordinator, but it was necessary to be able to get out of a standstill. (The National Coordinator for Vulnerable EU Citizens)

When asked what role they fill that national authorities cannot, coordinators reply that those authorities are more conventional, slow and limited in their actions than a coordinator has the potential to be. Coordinators are innovative in comparison and are furthermore considered to be able to speak to the target groups in a way the authorities cannot, as they can act as a link and a neutral part in differences between target groups and authorities. This is because of their ability to approach municipalities as equals:

Something happens in the municipality when someone from an authority arrives. A certain fear arises; “Will they find faults, will we be questioned, will they pose new demands?”. When the School Inspection visits, everyone straighten their backs and make sure all papers are filled. They did not do that when we arrived. (The National Coordinator on Homelessness)

Coordinators can thereby be seen to be in a better position to build horizontal relationships with municipalities than government agencies are, as they do not emanate the same authority. This enables them to play the role of understanding diplomat.

National coordinators additionally often come in contact with county administrative boards (länsstyrelser). In fact, the government sometimes give coordinators and counties parallel missions, expecting them to collaborate. Coordinators view the collaboration with the regional authorities in a positive light and do not see any conflicts of interest between the agents. Collaborating becomes a way of creating synergy effects as the coordinator can have easier and quicker access to municipalities, as well as assist the authorities in their work. They especially value the counties for their ability to arrange practical matters and mediate contacts regarding the coordinators' visits to the local areas. As such, regional authorities function as a channel for the coordinators, essential for coordinators being able to reach as many agents from the target groups as possible. Coordinators however express that they, in comparison to county administrative boards, are in a better position to activate and motivate than they are, being free agents outside of the hierarchal pyramid of public administration. The coordinators' close relations with the ministers is furthermore not something a bureaucrat from a regional authority could gain access to, making it more difficult to fill the same role.

### **3.4. A Channel for Municipalities**

The majority of the coordinators are assigned to affect municipalities in some way. In Sweden, municipalities are both part of the state and autonomous and their main function is to be the extended arm of the welfare state (Montin & Granberg, 2013: 32, 89). Coordinators mostly target their initiatives towards municipal politicians and leading bureaucrats who are believed to have the real ability to change the municipalities work concerning an issue. The assignments are however interpreted in different ways regarding whether they see their job as listening to the municipalities, and gathering their experiences, or as pressuring them into changing their priorities.

When coordinators do want to affect the municipalities it is seen as important to not come across as someone who wants to dictate how they should behave, but rather as someone who wants to reach agreements in grey zones. Coordinators believe themselves to be able to reach out to municipalities and gain an impact, despite lacking formal influence over the municipalities. Instead, a coordinator's main strength lies in his or her arguments. The dialogue therefore becomes key and is the reason why coordination can be a viable alternative where all other policy instruments have failed:

Traditional policy instruments have reached the end of the road. This is rather a raising of ambitions and a way to listen to the municipalities' experiences, to see what else the government can do to facilitate and support the work in developing good quality health care for children and young people in all municipalities. [...] The response has been positive. The municipalities have been especially positive towards our visits. We stressed in the invitation that the meetings are about dialogue and collaboration, not about supervision or control. Other authorities take care of that. [...] A lot of what is going to have impact will happen in the dialogue and at the meetings. (The National Coordinator for the Social Child and Youth Care)

The coordinators can take on the roles as experts and sounding boards in the dialogue with the municipalities. They can act as both representatives of the government, with whom it is possible to have direct communication, and peers with knowledge about the municipal reality:

We came as people with legitimacy who had the government's assignment. But I think one saw us more as Lasse and Gunnar, who know how it is, rather than as the state, who says how it should be. [...] It was a message from colleagues, authorized by the state. (The National Coordinator for the Municipal Reception of Refugees)

This dual role is the basis for a mutual communication which is key for the success of a mission. The coordinators are able to offer a channel for the municipalities to communicate their views to central government and, possibly, push for changes in the system that could improve their working conditions. At the same time, the coordinators are able to communicate a strong message to the municipalities and get them to take action. This mutual communication is sensitive to power imbalances and can fail, resulting in coordinators, though generally well received by the target groups, experiencing difficulties and even conflicts in relation to the municipalities:

I have been a local politician and I know that it is pointless to only visit municipalities once – coffee flows in and out but the next day no one remembers who was there. That is why I decided early on that each municipality would get two visits. At the first one we analyzed the situation and developed a proposal. The proposal was called 'Letter of Intent' but that was the most stupid thing we have done. It enticed resistance in the municipalities: “You can't decide what we do”. But it was never our intention to one-sidedly dictate to the municipalities what they should do. (The National Coordinator on Homelessness)

The coordinators are thereby aware of the problems with approaching municipalities in an authoritative role and can therefore use other strategies to appeal to them and reach results. One such strategy is to play on different roles in different forums, in some sort of version of 'good cop – bad cop':

Mona has been decisive and tough with the municipalities in the media, which has led to us getting some criticism from the municipalities, as they feel exposed. If we had the same approach at our visits to the municipalities, I do not believe we would have been as successful. The municipalities feel relaxed when we are concentrated on giving them support during our visits. (The National Coordinator for Protecting Democracy Against Violent Extremism)

In this way, coordinators balance the roles of peers and representatives of the government in relation to the municipalities, and their success at this balancing act is vital for the success of their mission.

## **4. Encounters With Other Public Actors**

The empirical presentation is continued in this chapter, based on the views of authorities and municipalities the coordinators have come in contact with during their missions. Of particular interest is their experience from participating in the policy deliberation process and their views on how the introduction of national coordinators has affected them and the public administration.

### **4.1. Authorities**

#### **4.1.1. Government agencies**

Considering the authorities' independent roles in Sweden, the coordinators' power over them sparks one's interest in how they react to the government appointing coordinators. From the interviews with the three national authorities included in this study, it is obvious that meetings between coordinators and agencies are not always without their complications.

The National Board of Health and Safety have been in close contact with national coordinators many times. The authority has approached central government several times about the fact that, from a principal perspective, they would rather see that an issue belonging to the authority's area of responsibility is handled by them, rather than by a coordinator. Their general view is that it is generally better to have an assignment within the regular structure and that the government could just as well give such responsibilities to the authority, especially when the assignments are of investigative character. The problems they see with coordinators are, on the one hand, that the information coordinators gather rarely contributes anything new and that the appointment of coordinators is not always coordinated between the ministries in the Government Offices, resulting in a less than optimal use of this function. Furthermore, there have been instances when the communication between the authority and the coordinator has not been satisfactory and the coordinator, as a result, has transmitted a message out of line with the authority's policy.

The National Board of Health and Safety are however also able to see the benefits of appointing a coordinator. They are the minister's left hand in a way that the authority cannot be themselves and, as a new agent, it is easier for them to highlight an issue in relation to municipalities and the press. In some cases, the coordinator gathers information which the authority has use for. Coordinators are also able to do things the authorities cannot:

The strength of the coordinators that have travelled around the country a lot is that they give a great input from the local and regional level. The authority is rarely able to go

around the country for two years and gather information. A coordinator is furthermore dispatched by the government and gets to meet the political leaders during a visit. To send out a director general or the head of a department for such a long time is however hardly a viable alternative. (The National Board of Health and Safety)

The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority (Brottsoffermyndigheten) and the Swedish Prosecution Authority (Åklagarmyndigheten) do not have as much experience of meeting coordinators as the National Board of Health and Safety, but they came in contact with the National Coordinator Against Domestic Violence during her term of office. The Swedish Prosecution Authority's reflections on that meeting were that coordinator – seemingly appointed an impossible task – acted as one of the government's regular investigators. They had gotten the opinion that the coordinator against domestic violence would be more involved in initiating operative work, improving cooperation between authorities, than was actually the case. What is needed of a coordinator, according to them, is to gather experiences of local development and spread this, something the authorities are not themselves always capable of doing.

In case of the Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority, they point to the fact that authorities are not always updated or consulted on whether the government should appoint a coordinator. Had they been, they had probably not requested a coordinator concerning this policy area, as they did not see the benefit of it:

The authority is of course affected when a national coordinator is appointed to investigate or give support on an area in which we have worked for twenty years. We saw it as positive that an investigation was going to be done but perhaps we had some trouble seeing what benefit yet another coordinator would add, in relation to the work that has already been done for many years. (The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority)

Agencies are thereby sometimes bothered by central government choosing to use other policy instruments, rather than giving them instructions and assignments. This is because of them considering themselves to be expert authorities on the subject and having knowledge that coordinators are not able to have in the same way. The National Coordinator Against Domestic Violence was considered to be able to bring a bit more attention to the issue during the period but not much else. Following the report and suggestions the coordinator put together the representatives of the authority did not see themselves able to change anything in their way of working. Instead they requested politics from the government and a strategy making use of the knowledge that had

been collected. In the agency's view, the government has to make a decision about what sort of politics they want and communicate this to the authorities – only then can it be implemented.

#### **4.1.2. County administrative boards**

The four regional authorities interviewed in the study value the fruitful collaboration which is often established between them and coordinators. The coordinators are seen as vitamin injections, vitalizers and door openers regarding operations towards solving the issue in focus for the mission. These are the descriptions the county administrative boards prefer over the concept 'national coordinator', which from their experience is a rather confusing term, making it more difficult to explain the purpose of the coordinators' work and what it entails. Authorities think of the coordinators as being able to highlight issues and have dialogues with decision makers and agents on the local level. They have more freedom to promote issues and introduce them into the political agenda than the county boards feel that they have, and are therefore especially appreciated when they are assigned to issues that have been difficult for the authorities to achieve success in with the municipalities. The regional authorities concede that they would have a hard time gaining the same impact that a coordinator can, since the local level is keen to speak to the national level:

We constantly go around nagging decision makers. We try to reach the right person. Along the way we have to serve to different levels of the organization, so that the agreement does not break and the decision really is kept. The levels are sometimes not connected. Now we were able to have direct communication with the decision makers, a new door was simply opened. (County Board of Västra Götaland, interviewed on the National Coordinators for Municipal Reception of Refugees)

Coordinators do thereby not lead to a questioning of the regional authorities' legitimacy. Rather, it can be a reminder for municipalities that the regional authorities are the messengers of the government, and even give them a stronger mandate:

It is about talking to municipal politicians in their own language. Under other circumstances I would probably have a different opinion about the coordinators' roles. In this case they were able to fill a new function in relation to the politicians, and say "Come on now, we know what this is about and what is needed". They could find another way, a way we do not have access to. (County Board of Gävleborg, interviewed on the National Coordinators for Municipal Reception of Refugees)

We are happy at the regional level for what goes on nationally. If something happens on

the national level it can give us an increased mandate on the regional level. (County Board of Västerbotten)

It is seen as extremely important that governmental agents work in harmony and the county administrative boards are therefore anxious to establish a good collaboration with the coordinators. The benefit of a coordinator is however temporary and the regional authorities often feel that they are the ones who become responsible for assuring the continuity of the coordinators' work and keeping the discussion on the issue alive. They are the part of the permanent structure, after all, and remain in the counties when the coordinators move on to other assignments.

## **4.2. Municipalities**

### **4.2.1. Local politicians**

Among the politicians interviewed there are both positive and negative experiences of being visited by coordinators. While no politicians are completely against the idea of national coordination, there are certainly views about the proper roles for them to take and the best ways for the central government to employ them.

When their municipalities have been approached by a national coordinator, wishing to meet with them, none of the local politicians interviewed have felt forced to accept this offer. To participate in the coordination is seen as a voluntary and there are many times no apparent reasons to say no. Coordinators wanting to meet and speak with local politicians are appreciated as a sign of central government caring about the local perspective and making an effort towards getting to know the municipalities' opinions. Coordinators are furthermore seen as important people as they are able to achieve results on the national level and act as eye openers on the local level. For local politicians, a visit from a coordinator becomes a reason to get more involved in a certain issue. As such, coordinators increase the priority of the issue in question, a prioritization that can have some results:

The point of this kind of mission is to focus on one job, it is highlighted in the day to day work, and even if we find ourselves capable we might get even better after a visit like that. (Municipality of Skellefteå)

To establish a dialogue between the national and local level is considered to be necessary and desirable, even though it can be difficult to know what the dialogue will lead to in the end. For the coordinator to be seen as a serious effort and for politicians to get something out of the dialogue, mutual communication is considered to be key. The coordinator therefore needs to be prepared to

listen to the municipalities and hear their problem descriptions. A one-way communication, where the coordinator only wants to communicate their own message, is believed to be neither effective nor strategic.

Apart from this humble approach, a national coordinator needs a clear mandate. From a politicians perspective, it can be difficult to know what the coordinators' mandates really are and whether they are speaking for themselves or on behalf of the government. As a result, politicians sometimes feel confused about what role the coordinators are meant to play in relation to municipalities:

To be honest, I have never experienced a coordinator with a clear mission towards us in the municipalities. The two coordinators that I know have had impact in the municipality are the coordinator against narcotics, Björn Fries, and Mona Sahlin. In other cases, the coordinators' missions have been very fuzzy. The issue of homelessness is, for instance, very clearly a municipal matter; juridically, financially and so on. And then a coordinator arrives without a briefcase – no muscles or anything. What is he meant to coordinate? We coordinate ourselves within the municipality. So, I am not that impressed when it comes to the coordinators. Their mission is not that clear.

(Municipality of Gothenburg)

As a coordinator you thereby have to know who you are and what you are going to do. The idea of a coordinator pushing municipalities to change their ways without having either a clear mandate, or any resources to offer, can be questioned from a local perspective. In such cases, the appointment of a coordinator is merely seen as symbol politics from the government's side, and as a function doing less substantial work than the county administrative boards already do. The work of the authorities is seen as more important to the municipalities, as the regular structure needs to be functional all the time, while coordinators can be a temporary addition – an addition to be used with restriction by the government. Some local politicians worry that this is a solution which will grow increasingly popular – leading to 'inflation':

Every day, matters flow into the municipalities and prioritize themselves. We need systems for prioritization that we return to all the time. But that inhibits having a coordinator on each and every issue. I don't mean that that is the situation today, but coordinators cannot be appointed to issues that are trivial to the municipalities. It has not happened so far. If there are too many, we will have inflation and we would not take them as seriously, the reaction would more be: “There's a new one”. It should be restrictive. (Municipality of Linköping)

It is important that we don't get inflation concerning this and that the efforts really take us somewhere, otherwise the municipalities might not be interested at all. But if you do this the right way, it can be good. It can start a mobilization around an issue. You develop a problem description and see what gaps there are in the system. And then it has to lead to conclusions and action plans. (Municipality of Gothenburg)

In other words, results are important for the politicians to get invested and these results need to be taken care of by the government. Continuity of the work that the coordinators do needs to be ensured but this has not always been the case, as projects that the coordinators have initiated in the municipalities have ended or reports have been published without gaining further impact.

#### **4.2.2. Local bureaucrats**

Bureaucrats working in the municipalities are generally positive towards the coordinators, the low level bureaucrats even more so than the high level ones. The benefits of a coordinator visiting the municipality is believed to be that it creates a good platform for further work around the issue, by creating a common view of the problem locally and nationally. This is considered to be especially relevant when the situation or the way to best deal with an issue is unclear. The reason for a problem not being taken care of is, according to the bureaucrats, rarely about disparate goals between the government, municipalities and the regions, but about uncertainty about responsibility and cost distribution. A national coordination becomes an opportunity to reach understandings in these aspects and forward opinions from a municipal perspective to the central government:

One can gather the importance of having a dialogue, not just between municipalities and government authorities, but with the Government Offices. The whole chain is involved. National coordinators and the like make up an additional link in that context. It becomes a channel in and it is valuable in that way. From a municipal perspective, one wishes to have a greater closeness in the dialogue, in which the Government Offices also participates. (Municipality of Gothenburg)

From a small municipality's perspective, a visit from a coordinator can be especially beneficial since "the view from Rosenbad [...] is limited", making it difficult for the Government Offices to understand the situation on the ground. Apart from constituting a welcome chance to take part in 'the big game', a coordinator's visit makes it possible to correct this perspective and show the reality and conditions of operating in a small municipality. The coordinators are believed to be better suited to grasp how things work in reality and transmit this to the government, which in turn is thought to

lead to better decisions. In the local bureaucrats' view, it is preferable if political decisions come from below and are based on dialogue, rather than being the results of armchair products.

Apart from being able to communicate the municipal perspective, a coordinator can serve as a catalyst regarding issues that the municipalities are responsible for. A national coordination constitutes an opportunity to gain awareness and perspectives, as well as ideas about how other municipalities have been able to deal with issues. A coordination leads to the issue in question being in greater focus, and is a good tool for creating fast action:

I think it can be a good tactic since it creates a very strong focus on one issue. I get that they want to try to work like that. There is a totally different stiffness in the government machine and the authorities. The coordinators might be able to move a little faster. I presume that is the logic of it. (Municipality of Ljusdal)

Coordinators are in this way frequently compared with authorities, whose exercise of authority is often felt to go too far. In comparison, coordinators are thought to have a freer roll, making it possible for them to reach results the authorities could not manage, provided they have a humble approach:

If the government appoints a coordinator, we take for granted that they have done an analysis concluding that it is needed and that the person who is appointed is knowledgeable on the topic and diplomatically skilled. That the person has an ability to meet the municipalities where they are. It is important to approach the issues from below and to listen to the experiences. Not from above, as we find our authorities do sometimes. They tell us what we have done wrong but not how we can do it differently. It is important that the coordinators don't work like that. [...] Michael Anefur had a very positive approach. He didn't arrive as the government's representative, smacking the municipalities over their heads. He had an understanding attitude and substantial knowledge about the issue. (Municipality of Linköping)

From the perspective of lower-level bureaucrats, it is however not always such a bad idea for national coordinators to take on an authoritative role in relation to local politicians. When a coordinator meets with local politicians, results from this meeting are sometimes experienced by the lower-level bureaucrats in the form of clearer assignments, guidelines or funds regarding the issue in focus for the coordination. These officials have felt that their work became suddenly interesting in the eyes of the local politicians and that they were able to break new ground because of the issue

being highlighted nationally, getting the politicians to “take their responsibility”.

There are speculations among the bureaucrats about whether appointing a national coordinator can be a way for the government to pressure the municipalities to take action while avoiding having to provide funds. When the communication is felt to be too one-sided, the municipalities can contend the principal of financing, that is, that the government has to provide financing when delegating matters to the municipalities. For a coordinator to come to a municipality and try to establish an agreement without bringing anything to the table is not felt to fit into the system and the formal significance of such an agreement is considered to be dubious. To have to deal with coordinators as well as authorities is furthermore overwhelming for some bureaucrats, as resources such as time and financial funds are often scarce as it is. They therefore wonder if these new contact areas are really needed:

If the responsible national authority use the regional authorities as contact areas, and a coordinator arrives from the government... what happens then? [...] If the municipal party and the state are going to find an agreement to solve a mutual problem, the question is how many contact areas one needs. How many times should we have to meet about the same thing and who is the representative? (Municipality of Linköping)

The roles are thereby sometimes unclear and the coordinators are even believed to be able to undermine the authorities if there are parallel assignments. The usefulness of a coordinator is consequently questioned in relation to other government agents, and only seen to be one part of the solution to a problem. And as a result of the policy instrument's popularity, some municipalities feel as though they soon have to appoint their own coordinators just to be able to deal with all the government's signals.

## 5. The Dual Roles of National Coordinators

In this chapter, I return to the research question armed with the analytical framework that was previously presented. I look at what negotiations have taken place around the national coordinators' roles and the rules and values guiding them, and highlight shared understandings and conflicts from different viewpoints. The central roles the national coordinators play are identified in relation to the typology of roles. I delve deeper into the theory about these roles and what they imply for public administration and democracy.

### 5.1. Viewpoints of the Policy Deliberation Actors

National coordinators see themselves as representatives of government who are able to enter the playing field when all other measures have failed. They are able to listen, facilitate, and support local work. In comparison with authorities, they can be more innovative, activating and approach the municipalities as a neutral party. In the meetings with municipalities, they do not want to come off as exercising supervision and control – that is the authorities' job! Instead, they signify the government as a facilitator, expert, sounding board and coach involved with creating dialogue, collaboration and agreements. Towards these ends they usually only have their arguments and their dual role as the government's representative as well as a peer. National coordinators are able to replace the minister in certain forums and act as politicians – which is a tough job as it causes critique from both outsiders and insiders of central government. In other situations, they want to maintain their identity of bureaucrat and be independent and neutral, especially in their production of knowledge in the shape of reports, that in some cases become the government's official politics. The impact of this knowledge can be limited because of their political affiliation, however, when asked, all coordinators respond that they primarily are public servants rather than politicians. Consequently, when applying Hysing and Olssons framework, the role that national coordinators see for themselves is mainly one combining characteristics from *the bureaucrat*, *the politicized public servants*, and *the entrepreneur*.

The government agencies sometimes have a hard time seeing the benefits of national coordinators. They prefer when issues are handled within the regular structure, especially when the assignments are such that an authority could just as well have taken them on. If it is knowledge that the government wants, that sort of assignment is thought to be better in the hands of the authorities, as they are the designated and experienced experts. Coordinators are however conceded to be the ministers' left hand in a way that the national authorities themselves cannot be. As such, national

authorities mainly see coordinators as *politicized public servants*.

In county administrative boards' eyes, the coordinators are seen in a much more positive light. National coordinators are able to help them by enforcing their messages in relation to the municipalities, by highlighting the issue and having dialogues with local decision makers in their own tongue. They are able to get into political debates and act as door openers, vitalizers and vitamin injections in the regional authorities' every day reality. The dominating views among regional authorities thereby shows a connection between coordinators and the roles of *the politicized public servant* and *the entrepreneur*.

Municipal politicians appreciate coordinators as a sign of their perspectives being valuable to the government. As representatives from the government, coordinators are able to act as signals and eye openers, mobilizing the work around a certain issue. The label of *the entrepreneur* fits best into their description of the benefits of a coordinator.

For local directors, national coordinators are a welcome addition to the regular structure, as a much needed response to the lack of a mutual dialogue between national and local government. This is especially appreciated in small municipalities who feel that the coordinators are able to understand their reality better than the government can. A coordinator who comes around and listens is hoped to lead to better decisions, coming from below. There are however concerns about being flooded with signals to take in if the government uses this solution too much. The approach of the coordinator is highlighted as extremely important, and certain characteristics are especially appreciated, such as true commitment, contextual knowledge, enthusiasm, humility, understanding and diplomacy. By local directors, the coordinators' role is thereby seen as one of *entrepreneur*, *politicized public servant* and *activist*.

Street-level bureaucrats in the municipalities have appreciated coordinators from a different perspective. They have sometimes experienced real material change in their every day work because of the coordinators visits. This comes down to the coordinators having the ability to affect local politicians and making the local work around a certain issue suddenly appreciated and prioritized. Local street-level bureaucrats therefore appreciate a national coordinator working as an *entrepreneur*, manipulating politicians in their favor.

The views expressed about the role of coordinators can be summarized into a similar table to the one that was used for the different role types. From Table 2, we can conclude that there is no clear match or full consensus on the role national coordinators play in relation to the types of public officials already identified by the literature. The role the coordinators play according the policy

deliberation actors however shares many characteristics with the politicized public servant and the entrepreneur. These two role types and their presumed implications are discussed in the following segments.

**Table 2. Views on the Roles of National Coordinators.**

<b>Role of the coordinators</b>	<b>In the view of...</b>
The bureaucrat	Coordinators
The politicized public servant	Coordinators National authorities Regional authorities Local directors
The street-level bureaucrat	
The entrepreneur	Coordinators Regional authorities Local politicians Local directors Street-level bureaucrats
The director	
The activist	Local directors

## **5.2. Politicized Public Servants**

The views of coordinators, authorities and local directors point us in the direction of the theory on politicized public servants as a tool for understanding what role national coordinators play in the public administration as well as what that role implies.

Public administration can be seen to undergo a constant process of politicization, driven in part by politicians imploring public servants to act according to certain political ideas and appointing those thought to hold certain views or values aligned with their own, instead of being aided by 'neutral' bureaucrats (Hysing & Olsson, 2012: 56, 61). It can be an important tool for gaining control over the development and implementation of policies, and counteract the bureaucracy's inherent resistance to change (*ibid.*: 58-63). This process of politicization is also driven by public servants' tacit adaption to what they believe the politicians want or their acting upon their own political views (*ibid.*: 55-57). When issues about prioritization and distribution of public values are handed down from politicians, public servants can furthermore be seen as being forced to take on a more political role, even towards the public (*ibid.*: 58, 67). But being appointed a politicized public servant can at the same time be a smart career move or an opportunity to fulfill one's commitment to an ideology

(*ibid.*).

While it is very difficult to distinguish between political and neutral public servants, as all public servants can be political in some ways, Hysing and Olsson present an indicator which they believe to be helpful. They separate between public servants involved with policy and party politics and claim that a politicized public servant would have difficulty staying in their position after a shift in political majority, creating problems of continuity (*ibid.*: 58-59, 66). As the empirical chapter showed, several of the coordinators have experienced problems with their allegiance to a particular government, leading to them having to end their terms or to the information they have gathered not being acted upon (e.g. as in the case of the national coordinators on care choice, expansion of the mining industry and homelessness). In the description of the politicized public servant above, one can further recognize a lot of other characteristics from the reality of national coordinators, as they: are appointed by ministers and act as their substitutes, often have had careers as politicians before or simultaneously to their missions, and do not fear the spotlight, as they often get involved in more or less political public debates.

Hysing and Olsson present a number of serious democratic implications that a politicization of public servants may have. The politicization of public servants can first and foremost blur the division between politicians and administration. While the existence of this division can be questioned, it is an important difference in many public servants' and the public's view, as a politicized public servant can be considered to be less professional and competent, simply an instrument to the politicians (*ibid.*: 58-59, 62-65). The professionalism and objectivity of public servants becomes especially important when they are responsible for providing decision makers with information, as the correctness of that information is crucial for the politicians making correct decisions, judgements and considerations (*ibid.*: 63-64). A politicized public servant however risks becoming the politician's 'yes man' who only writes about the reality that the political majority wants to hear (*ibid.*).

### **5.3. Entrepreneurs**

In the views of coordinators, regional authorities, local politicians, local directors and street-level bureaucrats, national coordinators can be seen to resemble entrepreneurs.

In Hysing and Olsson's typology, entrepreneurs are public servants who work actively to change the direction of politics through highlighting issues and bringing them to the political agenda, as well as generating support to be able to push through certain policies (Hysing & Olsson, 2012: 82). As such, they are problem solvers in the service of democracy. To work effectively as an entrepreneur

the person should be knowledgeable, experienced, and innovative, and perhaps be an expert on a certain policy area (*ibid.*: 81). To have a personal commitment for the issue is not mandatory to be successful, but having social competence however is, to be able to network and build trust (*ibid.*: 85-88). Those acting as entrepreneurs can either be public servants, taking on this role by their own initiative, or be appointed to this position by politicians (*ibid.*: 82, 89). In the latter case, entrepreneurs do not have to have backgrounds as public servants. The important thing is that they both have access to decision makers and policy creating actors (*ibid.*: 86). The closer an entrepreneur is to political power, the greater influence that person will have (*ibid.*: 88). Finally, to be able to attract decision makers and be successful, an entrepreneur often needs to invest resources in the form of time, energy, reputation or money (*ibid.*: 86).

As the views of the policy deliberation actors have shown, national coordinators can often be seen to act as entrepreneurs. The logic of the entrepreneur is very much the same logic by which national coordinators seem to be appointed, that is, to initiate and push for change. The characteristics that public actors value coordinators for, especially innovation and social competence, are the same that help entrepreneurs in their role. The role of the entrepreneur further allows for the diverse backgrounds that national coordinators come from and captures the way national coordinators are both on the inside and outside of the parliamentary system, being close to decision makers as well as working through networks made up of many types of actors. The importance of the national coordinator having access to resources and something to offer was especially highlighted in the municipalities' view, as coordinators arriving without 'briefcases' challenged the idea of a mutual dialogue and made the municipalities skeptical.

The entrepreneur can, according to Hysing and Olsson, be considered a strange bird in relation to democratic norms and the chain of government in parliamentary systems (2012: 88). Entrepreneurs and democracy can even be seen to be contradictory, as entrepreneurs in public administration are pervaded by very different values and principals in relation to the traditional image of public servants (*ibid.*: 81, 90). One of the value contradictions exist between *innovation* and *hierarchy*, as creativity and rules do not go together (*ibid.*: 89-90). As entrepreneurs are either inhibited by rules or silently change them it can be considered better to leave goals vague and thus give the entrepreneurs a lot of freedom (*ibid.*: 90).

#### **5.4. The Synthesized Role and its Implications**

### 5.4.1. The politicized entrepreneur

As the properties and values of the two roles, *politicized public servant* and *entrepreneur*, bare strong resemblance to the views expressed by the actors involved in the policy deliberation process, the relation between them is intriguing. A synthesis of these role types, highlighting the complementary and contradictory properties and values between the roles according to the theory, is summarized in Table 3. Some of the properties and values connected to the different roles do not conflict and should not lead to problems for those individuals who try to act as a synthesis between a politicized public servant and an entrepreneur. The contradicting properties and values do however have the potential to cause problems for public servants trying to live up to them. Combining the role types is helpful for explaining the challenges coordinators face in embracing both these roles, as well as the combined implications of introducing a public official assigned to fill these shoes. The synthesis might also prove helpful for future studies of public officials with similar characteristics as those of national coordinators.

**Table 3. Synthesis of the Role of the Politicized Entrepreneur.**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Properties and values</b>
The politicized public servant	(Party)political/ideological, committed, enthusiastic, compliant, closely connected to politicians.
The entrepreneur	Innovative, creative, individualistic, 'catalyst for change', knowledgable, experienced, access to central government, problem-solver, has access to networks, socially competent, manipulative.
A synthesis: The politicized entrepreneur	<p><i>Complementary:</i> Committed, enthusiastic, knowledgable, experienced, has access to central government, has access to networks, socially competent, manipulative.</p> <p><i>Conflicting:</i> (Party)political/ideological, closely connected to politicians, compliant vs. individualistic, innovative, creative, problem solver.</p>

The synthesized role makes it quite easy to understand why governments and ministers are attracted by the idea of appointing national coordinators. They are able to get the best of both worlds in a politicized entrepreneur; a loyal and flexible public servant who can relieve them in their relations with the media, work through networks to manipulate the policy process and invent new solutions to difficult policy problems. But this role holds many advantages for other actors in the public administration as well. County administrative boards get a colleague who can aid them in their missions by vitalizing issues and getting municipalities on the move. Municipalities, on the other

hand, get a sought after channel that enables them to have direct communication with central government.

Of course, the introduction of national coordinators has not been positive for all actors who have been involved in the policy deliberation process. The balance between being an independent, free agent and the representative of the government and the minister's helping hand is a contradiction which has been highlighted in the case of national coordinators as difficult to upkeep, resulting in conflicts between the coordinators and other public actors because of diverse expectations of what their role implies. One such conflict is with the staff of the Government Offices, who seem to experience a fatigue in relation to the government's use of national coordinators. While needing further investigation to be fully explained, the conflicts that arise could possibly be explained by the contradiction between coordinators' freedom to be creative and the restrictions of correctness public servants in the ministries are used to live by. Another conflict was identified from the perspective of governmental agencies, who question the coordinators' legitimacy and seem to feel sidestepped in their role as experts. Furthermore, conflicts have, as was described in the introductory chapter, also occurred between the national coordinators and municipalities. While the municipalities were generally positive to the national coordinators in this study's selection, this could be attributed to the particular approach of those coordinators they have come in contact with. The findings show that municipalities are sensitive to if a communication is mutual or not, and that an authoritarian coordinator would not have much luck in trying to engage them.

#### **5.4.2. Challenges and opportunities from a democratic perspective**

It has been clear from the beginning in exploring the roles of national coordinators that there are few formal rules regulating their operations, too few even for their own taste. This lack of pre-given rules creates a lot of insecurity in the relations between them and other actors in the public administration, as their authority and legitimacy is negotiated from case to case and depends upon to a great deal on their approach. These aspects are affected what public debates they get involved in, but also by how they use their own identity as, for example, politicians, doctors, experts or peers in the communication with other actors. The coordinators' authority and legitimacy are however also affected by factors partly or fully outside of their control, as by how tightly strung they are to central government, what resources they have to offer and what issue they are assigned to handle.

In relation to the research on the institutional void by Hajer, the freedom the national coordinators experience and the resulting negotiations of rules can be seen as an example of how discursive interaction is gaining an increasingly important role in shaping both polity, in terms of who participates in decision-making, and policy (2003: 176). This development towards lightly

institutionalized processes of problem solving can be considered a threat to democracy, but they can also be seen as new carriers of political democracy (*ibid.*: 188-189). From the perspective of the traditional democratic norms of the public administration, the introduction of national coordinators can be considered a concern because of the insecurity and instability if their authority and legitimacy. Their introduction however also provides exciting opportunities for a development and deepening of democratic processes. In their synthesized roles, they have been able to attend to an apparent communication deficit between the different governmental actors and act as a link between central and local levels of government. This position has enabled them to have a unique position to deliver information to the central government about the conditions 'on the ground', in a way that the national authorities do not usually have the time or ability to do. The potential, and hopes among the policy deliberation actors, is that their knowledge production can lead to better decision-making, anchored from below.

As was concluded by the National Audit Office, the knowledge national coordinators are able to provide differs from that of regular investigations in terms of comprehensiveness and systematicity (Riksrevisionen, 2016: 51-52). The empirical findings of that and this study further show that the coordinators suggestions and reports are sometimes disregarded by the government because of their actual or perceived political affiliation. As national coordinators often have a close relationships with the ministers responsible for the policy areas, there is an enhanced risk of the perspectives of the reports being tainted by the government's or the individual minister's views. The question can however be asked whether the national coordinators' politicized role renders the knowledge they produce useless. For a long time, the idea of a clear dichotomy between the roles of the politician and the administrator has had an impact as both a normative and descriptive claim. However, today in public administration research, these roles are generally seen to be overlapping and public officials are seen to be involved with politics themselves and as having power and discretion of their own (Hysing & Olsson, 2012: 9-12; Lundquist, 1998: 11, 23-24). According to leading researchers in the field, the image of a dichotomy does no longer capture the nuanced and complex relationship between the role of the politician and administrator (Svara, 2006: 127). As such, political neutrality needs to be redefined in light of the intermingled and complementary roles. According to Svara, it is possible to have neutrality in terms of "the impartial service given to any political superior" without up-keeping the dichotomy (*ibid.*:122). This would allow for public officials, such as national coordinators, to hold politicized roles while also living up to the standards of professionalism needed for the production of knowledge.

The empirical findings showed that national coordinators, because of their politicized role, are

sometimes not able to stay in their positions when there is a change of government, there are no guarantees that their work will be picked up by others and the knowledge they produce is sometimes disregarded. In light of a more dynamic view of the political-administrative relationship, the continuity and institutional learning of the public administration as well as the quality of the policy deliberation processes could possibly be improved. As indicated by previous research on policy deliberation, awareness of mutual interdependence and a distribution of power between the participating actors seems key for this type of process to be democratic (Hajer, 2003: 187). The importance of these aspects are confirmed in this study. If the introduction of national coordinators is going to have the positive democratic impact that it seems to carry the potential to have, deliberation cannot just be for show. As is evident from the findings in this study, in particular by the national coordinators' relations with municipalities, the communication between the national coordinators and their target groups must be mutual to be meaningful. Municipalities expect the deliberations to lead to substantial change and have shown willing to take action when needed to. This form of democratic process however also requires the government to fill their end of the bargain.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

### 6.1. The Missing Link of Public Administration

The analysis of the roles national coordinators play in the political-administrative context of Sweden has showed that there are room for plenty of negotiations about what their role should be and few set rules, leading to an identity crisis for many coordinators when initially stepping into the position and a role type pervaded by heterogeneity. The role the national coordinators have generally come to play in practice is that of a previously missing link of public administration. This is appreciated as a much needed function, tying together levels and sections of the administration that usually suffer from a communication deficit. The coordinators are able to fill this role because of their dual characters as politicized entrepreneurs. Their legitimacy and the success of their mission is dependent upon them being able to negotiate between these roles elegantly, using their mandate effectively and reaching results while avoiding conflicts. In this role they can alternate between being insiders and outsiders of government, politicians and public servants as well as peers and authorities.

The implications of introducing national coordinators on the public administration's democratic processes is dependent on which perspective is applied. From a normative view of the dichotomy between politics and administration, the information and knowledge national coordinators produce can be considered a threat to neutrality and professional standards. If one allows for a more complementary view of the roles of the politician and administration, these concerns can be reduced. In thinking about what implications the use of national coordinators has, one however also has to consider the alternatives. As there have been studies showing that national coordinators actually reach results (Riksrevisionen 2016), and they are mostly believed to be legitimate and necessary functions by public sector actors, is it viable to settle for less effective methods to deal with societal problems because of the potential democratic implications of the instruments? Or, as Hysing and Olsson phrases it, should public administration be governed with the purpose of solving problems or representative democracy (2012: 89)? The answer is obviously: ideally both. What it comes down to is the need for the state to strike a balance between effective and democratic performance – a balance which is absolutely necessary for governing with legitimacy (Jacobsson et al, 2015: 7). This study has shown that national coordinators are situated at the seesaw of this dichotomy and have the potential to either improve or impair both of these aspects through their dual roles as politicized entrepreneurs.

## 6.2. Future Studies

While the typology I used was helpful for the analysis in many regards, the national coordinators did not fit clearly into any of the role types. This is not such a big surprise after all as it is evident of how typologies need constant development to stay up-to-date with the dynamics of public administration. The synthesized role that I created, based upon the politicized public servant and the entrepreneur, might prove helpful for future studies of the developing roles of public officials. In particular, it would be interesting to find out if the politicized entrepreneurs can be found elsewhere, in either the Swedish public administration or an international context.

As this study highlighted that the national coordinators play the role of the missing link in Sweden's public administration, a relevant follow-up question is why such a link is needed. Do the ministers need this relief because of the increasing demands of the role of the politician, making it more difficult for them to fill these role themselves? Instead of speculating further, I suggest future research in the Swedish context to investigate this issue.

Finally, as I have used the perspective of deliberative policy analysis in this study, I have been able see the implications of the introduction of the coordinators' roles in both positive and negative light. If deliberative decision making is the future of policy formation, policy analysis must develop tools for analyzing these processes and give them the attention they deserve. I therefore propose further studies about the development of the role of public officials in policy making in general, and about the power distribution within the deliberations in particular.

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# Appendix 1. Interviews and Original Quotes

## National Coordinators

### The National Coordinator on Homelessness

Interview with Michael Anefur (coordinator) in Stockholm, on January 28, 2016. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

#### Original quotes:

“Rapporten står jag för helt och hållet. Sedan presenterade vi rapporten för ministern på Almedalen. Och jag har inte fått någon kritik från något håll om rapportens innehåll. Så på något sätt så blev det ändå regeringens politik utan att det fattades några formella beslut om det. Ingen tyckte att vi förde fram fel saker eller att vi hade gått för långt. Jag är övertygad om att om regeringen hade suttit kvar så hade man utgått från rapporten för sin fortsatta politik och genomfört en del lagstiftning.”

[...]

“När jag dök upp på departementet togs jag inte emot med någon större entusiasm bland tjänstemännen: ”Nej, inte en samordnare till” kändes det som. Det var inte klart var jag skulle sitta eller vad jag skulle göra. Under de första veckorna på Fredsgatan var jag beredd att sluta.”

[...]

“När det kommer någon från en myndighet så uppstår något i kommunen. En viss rädsla; kommer man att hitta fel, kommer man ifrågasätta oss, kommer man att ställa nya krav. När Skolinspektionen kommer så rätar alla på ryggen och ser till att alla papper är ifyllda. Det gjorde man inte när vi kom.”

[...]

“Jag har varit kommunpolitiker och vet att om man bara gör ett besök så kan man lika gärna låta bli – det är kaffe in och kaffe ut och nästa dag så kommer man inte ihåg vem som varit där. Därför bestämde jag mig tidigt för att varje kommun skulle få två besök. Ett första besök där vi analyserade läget och tog fram ett förslag. Förslaget kallade vi för Letter-of-Intent men det var det dummaste vi gjort. Det väckte motstånd hos kommunerna: ”Ni kan inte bestämma vad vi ska göra”. Men det var ju aldrig vår avsikt att ensidigt diktera för kommunerna vad de skulle göra.”

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### The National Coordinator on the Elderly

Interview with Eva Nilsson Bågenholm (coordinator). Details on setting, date and facilitator of the interview are missing from the documentation.

#### Original quotes:

“En gång i månaden stämde jag av med politikerna, med en högnivågrupp. Med ministrarnas statssekreterare. För deras del var det en politisk högprestigesatsning, men för min del var den inte politisk och det var inget problem att få ihop det. Jag var tydlig med det gentemot kommuner och landsting, och det var viktigt eftersom de styrdes av olika majoriteter. Jag använde min läkartitel mer och för mig är det viktigt att det vi gjorde hade vetenskapligt stöd.”

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### The National Coordinator on Environmental Objectives

Interview with Annika Helker Lundström (coordinator) in Stockholm on November 25, 2015. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt of the National Audit Office.

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## **The National Coordinator for the Expansion of the Mining Industry**

Interview with Christina Lugnet (coordinator) by telephone on December 2, 2015. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt of the National Audit Office.

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## **The National Coordinator for Protecting Democracy Against Violent Extremism**

Interview with Daniel Norlander (head secretary) in Stockholm December 9, 2015. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt and Camilla Gjerde of the National Audit Office.

### **Original quotes:**

“Syftet är tudelat: dels vill vi få myndigheternas input på vårt arbete, dels vill vi påverka myndigheterna så att de kommer igång med arbete kring den här frågan eftersom vi har uppmärksammat en del brister som de behöver ta tag i. Ett exempel är att vi såg att socialsekreterarna ute i landet behövde stöd i arbetet mot våldsbejakande extremism. Vi tog upp detta med Socialstyrelsen som sa att de bara agerar på uppdrag av regeringen, så vi gick till regeringen och det blev ett uppdrag som har anammats på ett jättebra sätt.”

[...]

“Vi försöker vara tydliga med att Mona är nationell samordnare och inte längre politiker. Jag hänvisar alltid till direktiven och undviker att svara på frågor som ligger utanför vårt område. Det är annars lätt att alla frågor som har med extremism och terror kommer till oss. Sedan har det ju nästan varit en förutsättning att vi har haft Mona, det gör det lätt att komma ut i media och att komma in i kommunerna. Det finns en stor respekt för henne, oavsett vilken politisk färg kommunerna vi besöker har. Många känner nog att hon är ärlig i hur hon har tagit sig an den här frågan. Det skulle bli svårt om det bara skulle ha varit tjänstemän som arbetade med det här. Mona är nog alltid politiker, hon är bra på att uttrycka en politisk vilja och vision. Vi får mycket positiv respons på hennes föredrag och hur hon sätter ord på den här frågan. Vi i kansliet försöker nog vara byråkrater för att balansera rollerna. Det är en ganska bra mix.”

[...]

“Mona har ju i media varit tydlig och hård mot kommunerna vilket vi har fått en del kritik för från kommunerna, då de tycker att de hängs ut. Hade vi haft samma angreppssätt vid våra kommunbesök som vi har i media tror jag inte att vi hade lyckats lika bra. Kommunerna tycker att det är skönt att vi är inriktade på att ge dem stöd när vi kommer ut.”

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## **The National Coordinator Against Domestic Violence**

Interview with Carin Götblad (coordinator) in Uppsala January 25, 2016. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt and Josephine Massie of the National Audit Office.

### **Original quotes:**

“Det var inget uppdrag jag bad om men ministern ville att jag skulle ta det. [...] Jag var tveksam till formen som uppdraget innebar: att fokusera bara på en fråga, dessutom en svår fråga som myndigheter har stort ansvar för. Jag var också tveksam till vad rollen innebar. Jag tycker att man måste hålla styrningen koncentrerad på den faktiska verksamheten så att man inte bygger nya administrativa nivåer hela tiden. [...] Vi har myndigheter som har ansvar och vi har kommunerna. Jag tycker att det är lite farligt att sätta till sådana här funktioner. Som nationell samordnare har man ju ingen makt, man kan bara föreslå saker.”

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## **The National Coordinator on Care Choice**

Interview with Roger Molin (coordinator) in Stockholm December 21, 2015. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt and Max Dahlbäck of the National Audit Office.

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## **The National Coordinators for Municipal Reception of Refugees**

Interview with Gunnar Hedberg (coordinator) in Stockholm January 13, 2016. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt and Max Dahlbäck of the National Audit Office.

### Original quotes:

“Vi kom som personer med legitimitet men som hade regeringens uppdrag. Men jag tror att man mer såg oss som Lasse och Gunnar, som vet hur det är, snarare än som staten som säger hur det ska vara. [...] Det var ett budskap från kollegor, auktoriserade av staten.”

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### The National Coordinators for Municipal Reception of Refugees

Interview with Lars Stjernkvist (coordinator) in Stockholm January 20, 2016. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

### Original quotes:

“Vi sa: 'Nu får vi göra det bästa av situationen. Om ni ökar ert mottagande så kommer det att underlätta för alla. Vi lovar att försöka förändra systemet – allt ni säger kommer vi att ta med oss till departementet – men under tiden, hur kan vi få det att fungera så bra som möjligt?’”

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### The National Coordinator for Vulnerable EU Citizens

Interview with Martin Valfridsson (coordinator). Details on setting, date and facilitator of the interview are missing from the documentation.

### Original quotes:

“I somras fick jag ju frågan om det här med att anvisa platser för den här gruppen, alltså kommunal mark. Då gick jag ut ganska tydligt och ifrågasatte det. Dels på lagliga grunder, men också på rent sakliga. Hade jag inte gjort det hade vi nog fått se ganska mycket av den typen av lösningar och det hade inte varit riktigt bra tror jag.

*Hur mycket förankrar du en sådan sak innan du gör det?*

Jag förankrar det. Det är nödvändigt. Jag vill ju skydda min rygg liksom.”

[...]

“Det har hänt att pressekreteraren har skickat journalister vidare till mig när statsrådet inte haft möjlighet att ställa upp på en intervju. Så visst har det varit så. Men jag har ställt kravet på media att jag inte ställer upp om det finns en annan politiker med. Jag kan ta en diskussion med representanter från civilsamhället, men jag vill inte ta regelrätta politiska debatter. Det är inte min roll tycker jag.”

[...]

“Polisen och Kronofogden bjöd jag till ett möte, och sen har jag haft väldigt mycket möten med speciellt Polisen. Jag har även varit ute och kritiserat Polisen. Jag informerade dem först och sa stoppa mig om ni inte vill det, men jag tror att ni behöver lite draghjälp. För alla backade i den här frågan. Ingen ville vara den som sa det självklara att det är klart att vi inte kan tillåta olagliga bosättningar, avföring och nedskräpning. Alltihop är kriminaliserat. Men ändå gjordes ingenting. Det kanske inte är det vanliga sättet att arbeta som samordnare, men för att komma ur ett dödläge.”

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### The National Coordinator for a Positive Supporter Culture

Interview with Rose-Marie Frebran (coordinator) in Stockholm January 14, 2016. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

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### The National Coordinator for the Social Child and Youth Care

Interview with Cecilia Grefve (coordinator) May 8, 2015. The interview was conducted by Daniel Bjerstedt and Emelie Juter of the National Audit Office. Details on setting are missing from the documentation.

### Original quotes:

“Traditionella styrmedel har nått vägs ände. Det handlar snarare om en ambitionshöjning och ett sätt att lyssna in kommunernas erfarenheter för att se vad mer regeringen kan göra för att underlätta och stödja arbetet för att driva på utvecklingen för en social barn- och ungdomsvård av god kvalitet i alla kommuner.[...] Det har varit ett positivt mottagande. Framförallt har kommunerna varit positiva till kommunbesöken. Vi har betonat i inbjudan att det handlar om att samtala och samarbete, ingen tillsyn eller kontroll. Det sköter andra myndigheter. [...] Mycket av det som kommer att få betydelse kommer hända i dialogen och mötena.”

[...]

“Men det är ibland svårt att vara i både linjen och utanför [...]. Korrektheten och form kväver ibland kreativiteten. Man kan inte vara lika mycket fritänkare inom regeringskansliet. Samtidigt som korrektheten och formen är viktig för tilltron till statsapparaten, så är detta ett både och i samordarrollen.“

[...]

“Planen är förankrad med ministern som vill ha återkoppling var tredje månad. Det är också viktigt i mötet med kommunerna, att de vet att deras synpunkter lyfts upp kontinuerligt. [...] Uppdraget har utvecklats så att avstämningarna med ministern sker oftare än vad som var tänkt från början. Nu rapporterar jag var tredje månad och kan på så sätt fungera som en direktlänk mellan kommunerna och regeringen.”

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## Authorities

### **The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority**

Interview with Annika Öster (director general) and Ulf Hjerpe (department manager) by telephone January 13, 2016. The interview was conducted by Max Dahlbäck and Josephine Massie.

#### **Original quotes:**

“Det påverkar givetvis myndigheten att en nationell samordnare tillsätts för att undersöka eller stödja på ett område som vi har verkat inom under 20 år. Vi uppfattade det som positivt att man skulle göra en genomlysning men vi kanske hade lite svårt att se vad ytterligare en samordnare skulle kunna tillföra i förhållande till det arbete som redan utförts under många år.”

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### **The Swedish Prosecution Authority**

Interview with Marianne Ny (prosecutor) and Mikael Björk (deputy attorney general) in Gothenburg October 12, 2015. The interview was conducted by Leif Svensson, Max Dahlbäck and Josephine Massie.

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### **The National Board of Health and Safety**

Interview with Beatrice Hopstadius (head of unit) and Annemarie Dannon (head of department) in Stockholm February 15, 2016. The interview was conducted by Camilla Gjerde, Max Dahlbäck and Daniel Bjerstedt.

#### **Original quotes:**

“Styrkan hos de samordnare som har rest runt mycket är att de ger en kraftig input från lokal och regional nivå. Det är sällan myndigheten själv har möjlighet att under två års tid resa runt i landet och samla in information. En samordnare är dessutom utsänd av regeringen och får träffa den politiska ledningen vid ett besök. Att skicka runt en generaldirektör eller avdelningschef under så lång tid är däremot knappast ett alternativ.”

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### **The County Administrative Board of Östergötland**

Interview with Mona Hallström Hjorth (head of social sustainability) and Jan Persson (head of culture and social structure) in Linköping June 2, 2015. The interview was conducted by Emelie Juter and Camilla Gjerde of the National

### **The County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland**

Interview with Talieh Ashjari (head of the social department), Margareta Johnsson (developer), Katarina Björkgren (developer) and Ylva Fredén Engvall (developer) in Gothenburg October 16, 2015. The interview was conducted by Max Dahlström, Josephine Massie and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

#### **Original quotes:**

“Vi är ute och tjarar på beslutsfattare hela tiden. Vi försöker nå rätt person. På vägen måste vi serva olika nivåer i organisationen. Så att inte överenskommelsen faller utan att beslutet verkligen håller. Ibland hänger det inte ihop mellan nivåerna. Nu blev det direktkommunikation med beslutsfattarna, det öppnade en ny dörr helt enkelt.”

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### **The County Administrative Board of Gävleborg**

Interview with Robert Larsson (integration coordinator), Pernilla Bylund (working on homelessness), Pernilla Spåls (working on domestic violence) and Petra Vestin (working on homelessness) in Gävle November 11, 2015. The interview was conducted by Max Dahlström, Josephine Massie and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

#### **Original quotes:**

“Det handlar om att prata med kommunpolitiker på deras språk. Annars hade jag nog tyckt annorlunda om samordnarnas roll. Nu kunde de fylla en ny funktion gentemot kommunpolitikerna – ”kom igen nu, vi vet vad det handlar om och vad som krävs.” De kunde hitta en annan väg, en väg som vi inte har tillgång till.”

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### **The County Administrative Board of Västerbotten**

Interview with Curt Hörnqvist (head of social structure), Ida Backe (working on homelessness), Maria Stefansson (working on domestic violence), Lars G Brandt (working on refugees) in Umeå December 8, 2015. The interview was conducted by Max Dahlström, Josephine Massie and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

#### **Original quotes:**

“På regional nivå är vi glada för det som sker nationellt. Händer det något på nationell nivå kan det ge ett ökat mandat på regional nivå.”

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## **Municipalities**

### **Municipality of Linköping**

Interview with Eva Lindh (politician) in Linköping June 2, 2015. The interview was conducted by Emelie Juter and Camilla Gjerde of the National Audit Office.

#### **Original quotes:**

“Vardagen i kommunen är att det väller in saker som prioriterar sig själva. Vi behöver system för att prioritera som vi måste gå tillbaka till hela tiden. Men då kan vi inte ha samordnare i var och varannan fråga. Jag menar inte att det görs i dag. Men det får inte bli så att samordnare tillsätts i oviktiga frågor för kommunerna. Det har hittills inte hänt. Om det blir för många, blir det inflation och vi skulle inte ta dem på lika stort allvar. ”nu kommer det en ny”. Det ska vara restriktivt.”

Interview with Kristina Edlund (politician) and Joakim Kärnborg (municipal manager) in Linköping June 2, 2015. The interview was conducted by Emelie Juter and Daniel Bjerstedt of the National Audit Office.

#### **Original quotes:**

“Om den statliga myndigheten som är ansvarig för frågorna använder länsstyrelserna som regionala kontaktytor, och så kommer det en samordnare från staten ... vad händer då? [...] Om parten kommun och parten stat ska hitta en överenskommelse för att lösa ett gemensamt problem, är frågan hur många kontaktytor det ska behöva finnas? Hur många gånger ska vi träffas om samma sak och vem är det som för talan?”

Interview with Agneta Persson (group manager), Eva Åbrod (advisor) and Christina Eklöv (advisor) in Linköping June 2, 2015. The interview was conducted by Emelie Juter and Daniel Bjerstedt of the National Audit Office.

Interview with Anita Lhådö (head of the social department) and Peder Ellison (director of care) in Linköping June 2, 2015. The interview was conducted by Emelie Juter and Daniel Bjerstedt of the National Audit Office.

#### **Original quotes:**

“Om regeringen tillsätter en samordnare tar vi för givet att regeringen gjort en analys att det behövs och att den person som utses har sakkompetens och diplomatisk förmåga. En förmåga att möta kommunen där dom är. Det är viktigt att man kommer in i frågorna underifrån och lyssnar in vilka erfarenheter som finns. Inte ovanifrån. Så tycker vi att våra myndigheter jobbar ibland. Dom talar om vad som gjorts fel, men inte hur vi kan göra annorlunda. Det är viktigt att samordnarna inte jobbar så. [...] Michael Anefur hade en approach som var väldigt positiv. Han kom inte som statens utsända person och slog kommunerna i huvet. Han hade en förstående attityd och stor kunskap i frågan.”

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### **Municipality of Gothenburg**

Interview with Dario Espiga (politician) and Marina Johansson (politician) in Gothenburg October 16, 2015. The interview was conducted by Max Dahlbäck, Josephine Massie and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

#### **Original quotes:**

“Det är viktigt att det inte går inflation i det här och att det verkligen leder någonstans. Annars kanske inte kommunerna alls är intresserade. Men om man gör det på rätt sätt så kan det vara bra. Då kan det bli mobilisering kring en fråga. Man får fram en problembeskrivning, ser vad det finns för luckor i systemet. Och sedan måste det också leda till slutsatser och handlingsplaner.”

[...]

“Om jag ska vara ärlig så har jag aldrig upplevt en samordnare med ett tydligt uppdrag gentemot oss i kommunen. De två samordnare som jag känner till som har haft ”impact” i kommunen är det narkotikasamordnaren Björn Fries (som hade en organisation bakom sig) och Mona Sahlin (våldsbejakande extremism). Annars har det varit väldigt luddigt vad samordnarna haft för uppdrag. Exempelvis är hemlöshetsfrågan en tydlig kommunal angelägenhet i alla dess aspekter; juridiskt, ekonomiskt osv. Och så kommer det en samordnare utan portfölj; inga muskler eller någonting. Vad ska han samordna? Vi samordnar oss själva inom kommunen. Jag är alltså inte särskilt imponerad när det gäller samordnarna. Deras uppdrag är inte särskilt tydligt.”

Interview with Christina Eide (head of department) and Malin Östling (head of social resources) in Gothenburg October 12, 2015. The interview was conducted by Max Dahlbäck, Josephine Massie and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

Interview with Pia Borg (planning officer) in Gothenburg October 14, 2015. The interview was conducted by Max Dahlbäck, Josephine Massie and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

#### **Original quotes:**

“Man kan uppleva vikten av att det inte bara sker dialog mellan kommuner, länsstyrelser och statliga myndigheter utan även med regeringskansliet. Hela kedjan finns med. Nationella samordnare, eller liknande, svarar för ytterligare en länk i det sammanhanget. Det blir en kanal in och på det sättet har det ett värde. Från kommunperspektiv finns det önskemål om större närhet i dialogen där även regeringskansliet deltar.”

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### **Municipality of Ljusdal**

Interview with Jessica Lövdal (social services), Leopold Stoltz (operations manager), Leif Persson (former politician) and Claes Rydberg (municipal director) in Ljusdal November 10, 2015. The interview was conducted by Max Dahlbäck, Josephine Massie and Leif Svensson of the National Audit Office.

**Original quotes:**

“Jag tror att det kan vara ett bra grepp för det blir ett väldigt starkt fokus på en sak. Jag förstår att de vill prova att arbeta på det sättet. Det är ju en helt annan tröghet i statsapparaten och myndigheterna. Samordnaren kan möjligen ta sig fram lite snabbare. Jag utgår ifrån att det är så man tänker.”

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**Municipality of Skellefteå**

Interview with Staffan Näslund (head of social administration), Per Åhden (head of social care) and Kenneth Fahleson (politician) in Skellefteå December 7, 2015. The interview was conducted by Leif Svensson, Max Dahlbäck and Josephine Massie.

**Original quotes:**

“Poängen med ett sådant här uppdrag är ju att fokusera på ett uppdrag, det lyfts upp i vardagen, och även om vi tycker att vi är duktiga så kanske vi kan bli ännu bättre efter ett sådant besök.”

Interview with Jessica Hallin (social secretary) and Elin Löfroth (former head of development) in Skellefteå December 7, 2015. The interview was conducted by Leif Svensson, Max Dahlbäck and Josephine Massie.

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