

CROSS-SECTOR STRATEGISTS
DEDICATED BUREAUCRATS IN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Petra Svensson

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

Doctoral dissertation in public administration to be presented at the
School of Public Administration, University of Gothenburg

För avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i offentlig förvaltning vid
Förvaltningshögskolan, Göteborgs universitet

Avhandlingen kommer att offentligt försvaras i hörsal Sappören, Campus
Haga, Göteborgs universitet

Petra Svensson, 2017. Cross-Sector Strategists. Dedicated Bureaucrats in Local Government Administration. English text. Swedish summary. Doctoral dissertation. School of Public Administration, University of Gothenburg, Box 712, S-40530 Göteborg, Sweden. Printed by BrandFactory AB, Gothenburg 2017. 222 pages. ISBN 978-91-629-0340-4 (Print), ISBN 978-91-629-0341-1 (PDF)

Abstract

It is argued that political-administrative organizations are becoming increasingly complex with more horizontal governance required. In Swedish municipal administration, there is a group of administrators assigned the task of monitoring and promoting strategic topics that should be integrated horizontally within the organization. Examples of strategic topics are sustainability, safety/security, diversity, children/youth, public health, human rights, and gender equality. In the thesis, these administrators are called cross-sector strategists. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how cross-sector strategists become a part of the political-administrative organization when representing, enacting, and reflecting on values in the undertaking of their formal posts. They are situated between the tradition of vertical governance, with formal procedures and hierarchy as its foundation, and the tradition of horizontal governance, with informal networks and deliberation as its foundation. Previous research has shown that this is likely to give rise to value conflicts, and the question is if cross-sector strategists experience value conflicts, and if so, how they cope with them. The cross-sector strategists are studied in this thesis from the perspective of situated agency – focusing on both the contextual expectations of the cross-sector strategists and on their internal reflections to solve value conflicts – in order to explore their process of becoming a part of the local government administration. A mixed-methods design is applied, containing analysis of job advertisements for cross-sector strategists, public managers, and social workers; in-depth interviews with cross-sector strategists; and a survey of professional networks for cross-sector strategists. The results show that cross-sector strategists are subjects to ambivalent and often-contradictory contextual expectations. Cross-sector strategists use the ambivalence of their work for their strategic purposes, and such ambivalence allows them to reframe their topics, their methods, their arguments, and their identity according to current situation in order to increase the impact of their assigned topics and diminish the inner conflict of wanting to be both a responsive bureaucrat and an active