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# The impact of new public management through outsourcing on the management of government information

## The case of Sweden

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Using a case study method, the article investigates the impact New Public Management (NPM), through outsourcing has had on the management of government information at the Swedish Transport Agency. In April 2015 the Agency outsourced its IT-operations to IBM company. Some of the IBM sub-contractors had not been cleared by the Swedish Security Service. This exposed the Agency's information to risk. By outsourcing the IT operations, the General Director of the Agency deviated from the laws governing government information such as the Swedish Security Protection Act, the Personal Data Act and the Publicity and Secrecy Act.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The researcher has applied a case study method as the investigation focuses on a phenomenon in a real-life setting. The case study method entails the use of past studies, which facilitates the exploration and understanding of a complex issue. The phenomenon under investigation is NPM's impact, through outsourcing, on the management of public information at the Swedish Transportation Agency.

**Findings** – Outsourcing should be foregone by well-formulated contracts that should put into consideration the management of government information and the involvement of all stakeholders such as records managers/archivists, IT personnel, heads of departments, lawyers and business analysts. Outsourcing risks to compromise the two tenets of democracy that is, accountability and transparency which are central to Swedish public administrations' operations.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study is limited by the fact that it only presents the views of the archivists. This was, however, purposely done because their voice was missing during the discussions that followed after the data breach scandal had become public knowledge. Additionally, archivists are supposed to play a major role in the management of government information at Swedish institutions. Further research that will involve different categories of employees might give a deeper and better understanding of the impact that NPM, through outsourcing, is having on the management of government information and what implications this might have on issues of trust, transparency and accountability.

**Practical implications** – The study demonstrates the need for well-formulated outsourcing contracts that will include information management clauses. It is of crucial importance in a democratic society that access to government information is not compromised as institutions endeavor to achieve efficiency and high-quality service delivery.

**Social implications** – It is government information that gives citizens knowledge about the various processes of government institutions. It is therefore of paramount importance that government information is not left in the hands of unauthorized companies that are involved in the outsourcing activity but should be securely managed and guarded, as the opposite might pose privacy and national security challenges and hence undermine the trust that citizens have in government institutions.

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**Originality/value** – The search that the author conducted confirmed paucity in research that discusses issues related to NPM, outsourcing and the management of government information. This paper is therefore a contribution to the discourse from an archives and information management perspective.

**Keywords** Outsourcing, New public management, Transparency, Accountability, Government information

**Paper type** Research paper

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## Introduction

This article investigates the impact that New Public Management (NPM) through outsourcing has had on the management of government information at the Swedish Transport Agency. It demonstrates the need for well-formulated outsourcing contracts that should properly spell out responsibilities for the management of government information and involve all stakeholders such as; records managers/archivists, IT personnel, heads of departments, lawyers and business analysts. Government administrations are operating in a world of constant technological change and disruptive innovation. This development has brought along great opportunities but also challenges. Organizational environments are more unpredictable and insecure today (OECD, 2017), and this has forced organizations to deploy new management styles to achieve efficiency and flexibility in a world of constant change. The globalization and the pluralization of service provision has required government institutions to collaborate with external partners to meet the citizens' demands. Globalization and market liberalization increased the criticism toward the old style of management of public administrations and have led to the adoption of private sector practices to the public sector. This resulted in a shift from administration to management and hence, the NPM style. Furthermore, public administrations were not only to be regarded as implementers of rules and laws but organizations that can meaningfully use governments resources to deliver high-quality service (UNDP and Global Centre for Service Public Excellence, 2015).

Therefore, globalization, the free movement of capital, people and competition are the driving forces behind the streamlining of organizational business activities and the focus on core business activities to deliver satisfactory services (Baltic Quality, 2012). Since 1980s, the European Governments have embraced NPM in the quest for efficient institutions and have outsourced government functions to private organizations (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid, 2011). NPM is considered a model that can increase trust in government institutions. It is the introduction of private sector practices into the public sector, strengthening the prerogatives of managers, measuring performance, increasing competitive pressures and cutting costs. Outsourcing is a strategy within NPM and is about the contracting out of a service traditionally delivered by a government organization to a private organization. While it is seen as a means to cut costs and to create efficiencies, it has also been blamed for exacerbating unemployment and is considered a threat to data security, and hence the warning that it should be prudently applied to certain sectors (Tholons, 2010).

In the 1980s, the declining citizens' trust was identified as the driving force of the changes that government institutions underwent (OECD, 2017). Even today, the public sector is working hard to distance itself from inefficiency, non-transparency and being expensive and is working hard to put the citizens, sometimes referred to as customers, at the centre of its business activities (Svärd, 2014). It continues to implement reforms with the objective of inclusive growth, the delivery of high-quality service to the citizens amidst budgetary constraints (OECD, 2017). Like large organizations, government administrations

need cost savings and operational efficiencies during the execution of their functions. This is what is driving outsourcing within the public sector (Hood, 1995; Van de Walle and Hammerschmid, 2011). For example, IT outsourcing in Sweden has steadily been growing and is considered the largest in the Nordic region and third largest in Europe. The reasons behind outsourcing include lack of domestic skills, high costs of in-house solutions and the need to refocus on core competencies (Baltic Quality, 2012). Many governments such as the USA, UK, Australia, Japan and Singapore are investing massive amounts of money in outsourcing. Organizations engage in outsourcing with the intent to lower labor intensity and to increase efficiency. Swedish Government institutions are also involved in the outsourcing of some of their functions (UNDP and Global Centre for Service Public Excellence, 2015).

In 2015, it was revealed by *Dagens Nyheter*, one of the Swedish newspapers, that the Swedish Transport Agency had outsourced government information without prior security clearance of some of the IBM sub-contractors in Eastern Europe by the Swedish Security Service. This led to the breach of the legal framework that governs government information (Swedish Radio, 2018). In the digital age where information is the driver of all government processes and can threaten national security, its effective management is of paramount importance (Ceeney, 2008). Sweden is internationally known for being a transparent country and its Public Access Act is 250 years old (Bohlin, 2010). It further promotes open data initiatives and its institutions are encouraged to proactively publish government data for public access. Swedish public information is further governed by the Archival Law, which dictates the way information generated by public institutions should be managed. Despite the transparency nature of Swedish administrations even though the scandal took place in 2015, it did not become public knowledge until the beginning of 2017. This study investigates the impact NPM through outsourcing has had on the management of government information at the Swedish Transport Agency. It offers an introduction, a method used to examine the case, a literature review, a discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

## The research problem

Governments have globally undertaken reforms to create more efficient administrations that at a low cost are meant to deliver high-quality services to the citizens. Therefore, in the name of efficiency and cost-savings, government functions are being outsourced within the realm of NPM. This impacts the management of public information, which in today's environment could violate the personal integrity of the citizens negatively and could also be a threat to national security (Ceeney, 2009). The Swedish National Transport Agency outsourced its information to IBM with sub-contractors in Eastern Europe who had not received security clearance by the Swedish Security Service. Additionally, the General Director of the Agency deviated from the legal framework that governs the management of government information. Information is central to efficient service delivery, and where it is inefficiently managed, public trust and service delivery are affected. Outsourcing should be foregone by well-formulated contracts that will put into consideration the management of government information and the involvement of all stakeholders such as records managers/archivists, IT personnel, heads of departments, lawyers and business analysts (Svärd, 2011; Eriksson, 2014). Outsourcing risks to counteract the two tenets of democracy of accountability and transparency upon which Swedish public administrations operate.

## The method

The researcher has applied a case study method as the investigation focuses on a phenomenon in a real-life setting (Yazan, 2015). The case study method entails the use of

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past studies, which facilitates an exploration and understanding of a complex issue (Zainal, 2007). The phenomenon under investigation is NPM's impact through outsourcing on the management of public information at the Swedish Transportation Agency. Yin (2009) stated that the case study method enables a researcher to use multiple sources of evidence, and Pickard (2007) argued that a case study should have well-defined boundaries. The case study method therefore enables a researcher to investigate a bounded phenomenon in detail without seeking to generalize the findings. For this study, the researcher carried out a literature review of scientific articles that are relevant to the phenomenon being studied, and other documentary evidence such as newspaper articles, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect and SöderScholar databases have been consulted and search words such as NPM, outsourcing, government organizations and government information were used to access articles relevant to the study. The rubrics under which the literature review is presented were identified in conjunction with the reading that the researcher identified as relevant to the study. The study also draws on the data that the researcher gathered using a group interview with the archivists that oversaw the management of information at the Agency. The archivists were chosen because of their role in the management of information at Swedish administrations and because when the IT and data breach scandal unfolded, their voices were not heard. The discussions that followed in the public sphere focused on information systems and not the information that is maintained in the systems. One of the interviewed archivists had a background in cultural studies and the second one was a historian. They both had a university degree and 40 university points in archives and information science. The archivists will be referred to as A and B. The interview took 1 h 46 min and was recorded and transcribed. It generated data of about 18 single-spaced pages with responses that were deep enough to give an understanding of the issue being researched. It is only data that demonstrate the impact of NPM on the management of government information, which is presented in this paper.

## The literature review

The next section presents research that the author identified as relevant to the study. The author does not claim to cover all the work that has been done so far on NPM but cites the studies that give the reader a brief background of NPM and bare relevance to information management in public institutions. The search in the different databases such as Google Scholar, SöderScholar, ScienceDirect and Emerald proved that a very little research has dealt with NPM's impact on the management of government information.

### New public management

Van de Walle and Hammerschmid (2011) carried out an overview of academic evaluation and impact studies of the entire NPM style reform programs and argued that despite the fact that it has been implemented in the European public sector for a period of 30 years, there were very few empirical evaluations of its effects. They distinguished between two sets of NPM style changes and reforms; one that is of specific managerial innovations within public organizations and another that constitutes changes to the role of government and citizens. They concluded that a lot of academic work has focused on the first NPM style, while the second style was only a critical discourse with limited empirical studies. They suggested that evaluations should not only look at specific managerial and operational reforms but also the wider effect that NPM reforms have on the role of the state and on the position of the citizen-client. When Hood (1991) investigated NPM, he concluded that it was the most striking international trend in public administration. He identified elements that constituted NPM as follows:

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- a shift toward greater disaggregation of public organizations into separately managed corporatized units for each public sector product;
- a shift toward greater competition between both public sector organizations and private sector organizations;
- a move toward greater use of management practices broadly drawn from the private corporate sector;
- a move toward greater stress on discipline and parsimony in resources use and active search for less costly ways to deliver services;
- a move toward hands-on management;
- a move toward explicit and measurable standards of performance; and
- attempts to control public organizations in a more "homeostatic" style according to pre-set output measures (Hood, 1995).

O'Flynn (2007) examined the emergency of NPM approach and contrasted it with a public value paradigm. Her intent was to provide a conceptual discussion of difference in approach and to highlight some practical implications for both the public sector management and managers. She postulated that the post bureaucratic paradigm of public management reflected reforms that meant a break away from the traditional model of public administration, which was based on Weber's (1946) bureaucracy, Wilson's (1887) policy administration divide and Taylor's (1911) scientific management model of how work was organized. NPM was a reaction to the weaknesses that were identified in the traditional bureaucratic paradigm of public administration. Some of the common practices adopted within the realm of NPM include corporate planning based on central goals, comprehensive program budgeting, management improvement programs, contract employment for managers, central auditing and performance monitoring of individuals. She concluded that the weaknesses in NPM have led to a paradigmatic change in the way the state is looked upon, its purpose, function and management.

Pegnato (2011), who looked at the US federal outsourcing, stated that the proponents of outsourcing were of the view that competition between government employees and the contractors should lead to more efficient government and hence, huge savings for the taxpayers. Outsourcing enabled government to access the latest technologies through its contractors, and that officials were relieved of administrative burdens and could concentrate on core missions and strategic activities. Additionally, goods and services that were not available in the public sector could be found in the private sector. It further enabled federal agencies to avoid certain constraints such as the removal of a poorly performing contractor compared to a removal of a civil servant. However, Mulgan (2015), whose research aimed to establish the current state of evidence on transparency of the performance of outsourced government services, argued that outsourcing does not necessarily reduce government spending. He contended that transparency is needed to ensure that contractors do not hide problems and to allow public scrutiny. Transparency promotes efficiency and government performance. The empirical evidence for the cost savings has therefore been challenged, and there are concerns that outsourcing poses threats to the democratic values of transparency and accountability. As the focus of this article is the impact that NPM through outsourcing has had on the management of government information at the Swedish Transport Agency, the next section presents literature on the theme.

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## Information management and outsourcing

Leming (2015) argued that despite the fact that information is regarded as an important asset, it rarely appears in the definition of asset management. He asserted that information management should be a central function subject to controls and should have resources for its management in the same manner as other functions do. He further asserted that records management, information security, business continuity and data management disciplines should collaborate and coordinate to ensure that the confidentiality, integrity, availability and disposition of data and content are well managed throughout the information continuum. The information management function should have a defined network of local champions and experts to work for its integration in all the business activities. He argued that this was critical to information asset management and risk mitigation. The current environment which involves outsourcing of government information clearly requires collaboration of the different stakeholders to mitigate risks as public organizations are operating in a constantly changing and challenging environment. This is an environment with digital processes and data, staff changes, new ways of working, office relocations, the Freedom of Information Act, open data initiatives, the management of sensitive and confidential information and sometimes outdated processes (Iron Mountain, 2015).

Muid (1994) argued that though NPM reforms and informatization were presenting opportunities for the re-engineering of government business activities, more awareness and debate were needed to understand the implications the two trends have had on the stewardship of government information. He was of the view that public service reforms that led to both fragmentation and the contract culture impacted the development and implementation of information systems. He highlighted issues such as the privacy of the individual, the protection of public interest and the fact that public officials should be competent in the management and use of information that they hold in trust. Mulgan (2015) argued that public sector information is recognized as a common resource, and hence, the transparency of information about expenditure and performance of contracts for government-funded services ensures that government funds are well spent.

Klareld (2016) explored the consequences of an outsourcing policy on the management of information generated at the Swedish Transport Administration. Using interviews, she focused on the issues that were identified by the employees of the administration as important during the outsourcing act. The issues included information governance and ownership; roles and responsibilities in records management; the business systems in which records are created and managed; the legal requirements of public agencies; knowledge transfer about records management requirements; and defining organizational boundaries. She concluded that outsourcing poses challenges, and therefore, existing practices need to be revisited if the Agency was to meet with its business needs and citizens' expectations and to comply with the legal framework that governs government information.

One of the conclusions the author drew from her PhD research on the management of information amidst e-government development was that, despite the stringent legal framework that governs government information in Swedish local administrations, some knowledge about how effective information management should be achieved and the deployment of information systems, there were still challenges in the management of government information. This conclusion could be applied to the state agencies. The author worked at a state agency and saw how difficult it was to implement effective information management and to secure top management support that was needed to align information management requirements with the business processes (Svärd, 2011). In one of the studies that were part of the author's licentiate research, a respondent argued that even though they were soon to outsource part of their health service process to a private sector, the

management showed very little interest in how the records and the metadata catalogue issues were to be solved. Yet, this concerned about 3,000 employees. Additionally, the results from this research also showed that The Archival Law that regulates the management of government information in Swedish administrations in a majority of cases was only known by archivists and that the training of officers in records management was very minimal (Svärd, 2011).

It is stated in a guideline published by the Public Record Office Victoria (Public Record Office Victoria, 2010) that as the requirement of the legislation governing government information does not extend to outsourced organizations, it is important that adequate records management planning is undertaken before outsourcing any government service. Contracting managers should include records management clauses when drafting outsourcing contracts. The clauses are meant to ensure the following:

- The ownership of records developed and maintained by outsourced organizations is clear;
- All records are appropriately created, maintained and controlled in accordance with agency requirements
- Accurate information is stored within the records;
- Access to records is appropriately regulated and controlled;
- Records are appropriately stored;
- Records are only disposed of in accordance with contractual requirements; and
- Sub-contracts with any third parties mirror the agency's records management requirements.

Lack of inclusion of records management clauses in outsourcing contracts is likely to expose an agency to risks such as:

- the inability of the agency to meet their legislative obligations (e.g. the provision of records under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 or Health Records Act 2001);
- poor decision-making because of incomplete or inaccurate information;
- loss of personal information/personal history of members of the community;
- unsatisfactory service provision to clients;
- exposure to public and regulator criticism for the failure to adequately manage public records;
- loss of public accountability and transparency;
- loss of the State's history; and
- increased legal liability.

Scholl (2006) carried out a study entitled "Electronic government, information management capacity organizational capabilities and the sourcing" and established that e-government sourcing mixes impact governments' information management and organization capabilities. He highlighted the need to understand e-government related sourcing and its integration with traditional public management information systems. According to an overview of Swedish outsourcing done by Lindqvist (2018), all outsourcing of business must adhere to the provisions of Directive 95/46/EC on data protection, and from May 2018, it should be made in accordance with the new Regulation (EU) 679/2016 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

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The literature reviewed above confirms that there are advantages with NPM, but there is still lack of empirical evidence on the wider effect that NPM reforms have on the role of the state and on the position of the citizen-client, and the advantages of outsourcing are challenged too. NPM is meant to create more efficient public administrations but more research needs to be undertaken to analyze in broader terms its impact on the management of public administrations. The literature review further demonstrates the need for well-formulated outsourcing contracts that should ensure that government information is efficiently and securely managed not to compromise the two tenets of democracy, which are accountability and transparency and additionally national security. The section that follows presents the research findings.

## The research findings

This section presents the Swedish Transport Agency, the information management environment, a chronology of events prior to the IT and data breach scandal and the findings based on the group interview the author carried out with two archivists that work at the Agency.

### *The Swedish Transport Agency*

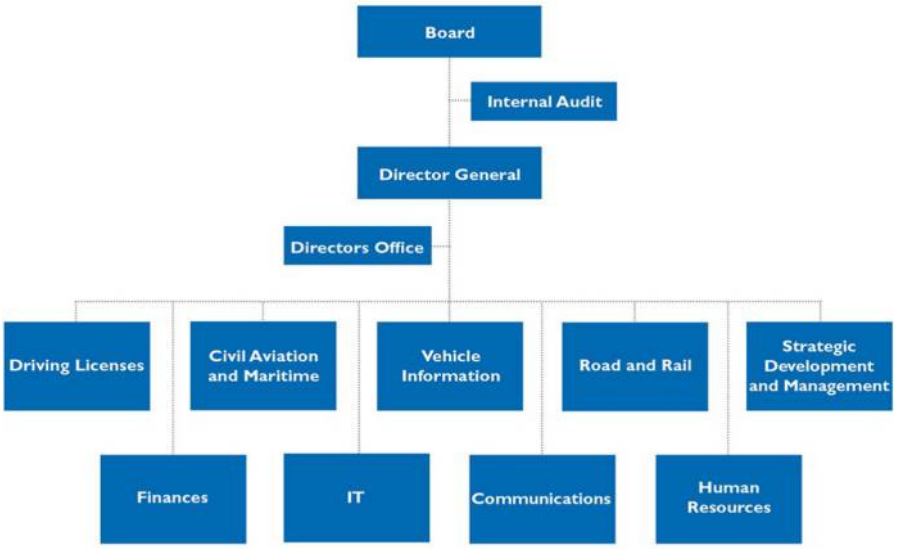
The Swedish Transport Agency has the overall responsibility for the Swedish transport infrastructure and draws regulations that govern it. It further ensures that the society at large follows the regulations. It is a member of the European Car and Driving License Information System (EUCARIS). This is a continent-wide collaboration of national agencies with a mission to facilitate data exchanges on vehicle registration, driving licenses, traffic and parking violations and accompanying personal data. EUCARIS uses a closed and encrypted EU network for the cross-border transfer of data between individual states. The partners in the EUCARIS collaboration must ensure the secure storage and legitimate use of the transferred data. Compliance with EU data protection regulations is a condition of EUCARIS's membership. As such, it is an important institution (ITS International, 2017).

The organizational chart shows what constitutes the transport infrastructure activities, driving licenses, civil aviation and maritime, vehicle information, road and rail and strategic development and management and the departments that support the activities (Figure 1).

### *The data breach scandal*

In April 2015, the Swedish Transport Agency contracted IBM to manage its IT operations. IBM had personnel from its sub-contractors in the Czech Republic, Romania, Croatia and Serbia. These IBM sub-contractors had not been cleared by the Swedish Security Service (SÄPO). When the General Director of the Agency outsourced the IT operations to IBM, she deviated from the laws governing government information, which included; the Security Act, the Personal Data Act, the Publicity and Privacy Act and the authority's own guidelines for information security requirements. On November 25, 2015, the Agency's IT security unit and the Swedish Security Service warned the Agency and urged it to stop the contract in vain (Nilsson and Nilsson, 2017). The Agency outsourced the maintenance of its firewalls, networks and databases with information about all vehicles in Sweden, information on police and military vehicles, people with protected identities, the routes of armoured vehicles which transport large sums of money, information about the weight capacity of roads and bridges, personal details of fighter pilots, police force members, members of the Swedish military (the most secret unit), information on people in Sweden's witness protection program, information on criminal suspects and encrypted communications system used by Swedish authorities (Krug, 2017; Warwick, 2017) (Table I).

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**Source:** The Swedish Transport Agency website: https://transportstyrelsen.se/en/About-us/

**Figure 1.**
Organizational chart for the Swedish transport agency

| Date | Happening |
|---|---|
| April 2015 | The transport agency signed an agreement with IBM Sweden to operate the authority's IT system (outsourcing). The agreement meant that IBM Sweden was responsible for the hardware, networking and the functioning of applications. The agreement is valid until October 31, 2020 with the possibility of extension. In connection with the outsourcing, during the first half of 2015, the Director General, Maria Ågren decided to deviate from the Security Act, the Personal Data Act, the Publicity and Privacy Act as well as the authority's own guidelines for information security requirements |
| Latter part of 2015 | In the latter part of 2015, SÄPO carried out an oversight of the authority's security protection. The SÄPO finished its work on the June 16, 2017 |
| January 2016 | Prosecutors initiated a preliminary investigation based on the SÄPO report |
| January 18, 2017 | Maria Ågren resigned from the post of Director General of the Transport Agency |
| January 26, 2017 | Maria Ågren received a criminal injunction, which imposes daily fines because of negligence with confidentiality, but without intent |
| August 3, 2017 | The transport agency was asked by the government to map what information had been handled by people who had not received security clearance and to assess what measures may be needed to adequately handle the protection of the information in the future. The investigation that was presented on January 23, 2018, showed that the information had been made available to the supplier's staff and had not been safeguarded according to the Swedish law, but there were no indications that it had ended up in the wrong hands |
| August 3, 2017 | The government also decided to appoint an independent investigator to investigate the events that led to the outsourcing of sensitive and confidential information in a manner contrary to Swedish legislation |

**Source:** The Swedish Transport Agency's website: www.transportstyrelsen.se/sv/Om-transportstyrelsen/fragor-och-svar/, Translated into English by the author

**Table I.**
Chronology of events that led to the IT scandal at the Swedish Transport Agency

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## The Swedish Transport Agency Information Management Environment

According to the data collected from the group interview, the organization does not have a pronounced information governance Model but there are, however well-developed routines and guidelines that facilitate the management of information. Knowledge and skills in information management among the employees vary depending on whether people have worked in the public sector. The employees who have worked in the public sector understand why the information they generate needs to be managed according to the legal framework that governs it, while those from the private sector do not. The archivists rely on the National Archives guidelines for the management of electronic information. The Agency had an electronic archive (e-archive), which was a result of a project pursued between 2010and 2011. The e-archive had a lot of technical problems, and therefore after several internal discussions and investigations, it was shut down in 2013. In 2014, the Agency got involved in the development of an e-archive solution that is currently taking place at the State Service Center (Statens Servicecenter). This development is supposed to result in an e-archive solution for state agencies. The State Service Center is a state owned organization that is charged with the responsibility to promote efficient administration within the state administration.

The State Service Center provides administrative services and consultancy support in accounting, salary management and human resources and is currently working on the development of e-archiving services for government agencies. The Swedish Transport Agency currently has one of its staff members who is an archivist as a particpant in the development of a requirement specification for a well functioning e-archive. Since the Agency is not among the pilot agencies, it is still waiting and hoping to be among the first agencies to buy the e-archive solution. The e-archive solution is expected to facilitate the management of the Agency's information in a co-ordinated manner. Government agencies are expected to buy the e-archive solution from the centre and to use it to archive their information resources. The solution that the State Service Center is to sell to the government agencies will lead the information to what is referred to as a middle archive. This is where all the information from the state agencies will converge but under each respective agency before it is transferred to the National Archive. This will be an effort to create a unified repository for all the state agencies and will serve as some sort of a state cloud. Traditionally, when information was transferred to the National Archives, the entire responsibility for its management was handed over to it by the depositing agency. However, with the State Service Center's solution, the responsibility for the deposited information will still be with the depositing agency.

Respondent A informed that the same legal framework governing government information will apply to the middle archive. The administration and development work will be shared among all the state agencies to leverage economies of scale and also because developing an e-archive is too expensive for a single agency. This will further facilitate the management of the knowledge that will be accumulated during the development phase as it will be managed in one place, that is, at the center. Respondent B informed that the Agency has a variety of case management systems and databases, and that most information is still maintained in the legacy systems. How all this information will be transferred to the e-archive when it is finally implemented is still a challenge that the Agency will deal with once the e-archive solution has been implemented. The integration of the systems has been identified as a necessity, but without an e-archive, it is difficult to motivate the employees to start planning for the delivery of information to it. Both archivists confirmed that to a certain extent they know what to do to export the metadata from the legacy systems, but they still do not know what tools they will have to apply, and that it is still a difficult situation.

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**Outsourcing of the Agency's information**

The respondents confirmed that when the outsourcing took place, they were not consulted because it was regarded as an IT issue. When I asked why they never actively tried to involve themselves, they informed that they sent a fellow archivist to engage with the people who were involved in the outsourcing, but he was never given time to ask questions. The timeframe within which the outsourcing took place was very tight. The information they had about the scandal was what was being reported in the media as the data breach scandal unfolded. Respondent B confirmed that based on what was being reported, he could relate to some of the questions he had been indirectly asked at the Agency by those involved in the outsourcing. The Agency uses the National Archive's specific and general regulations regarding the management of government information and the information systems, but they are not followed by the IT unit as it is assumed that they only concern the archivists. The IT personnel do not read the guidelines and have very little understanding as to why the archivists and the National Archives must involve themselves in their work. Respondent B further confirmed that they try to interest the IT personnel to follow the National Archives' guidelines, but it is not an easy task.

Respondent A clarified that this is an effect of NPM because in the IT unit, most of the people who have been recruited are from the private sector. Some of these people have never worked in the public sector and therefore do not fully understand the requirements put on them. Respondent A confirmed that there is a cultural shock when the archivists come with their demands where people only have private sector work experience. Additionally, the IT personnel have a higher status in the organization compared to the archivists trained in the management of government information, and they do not as such collaborate with the archivists where information systems are concerned. My follow-up of the reporting that was being done in different media showed that the focus was on the information systems and not the information that they contained.

**The impact of new public management on the management of information**

Respondent B expressed that there has been a lot of focus on efficiency, cutting costs, encouragement to think about how efficiently processes could be carried out and whether the time spent on each process could be measured. Respondent A complained that new business models are presented all the time, which makes their integration, implementation and follow-up difficult. He further argued that a lot of focus is put on the hard values that are easier to measure and that the soft values are disappearing. By the soft values, the respondent meant the employees' attitudes toward their work such as devoting extra time to see to it that a process is well executed or undertaking courses to improve their knowledge. Respondent A contended that when the focus is on the hard values such as measuring performance and quarterly reports, the humane aspect of work disappears. This respondent argued that he found it hard, for example, within the information management realm to establish how he can measure performance when it comes to the delivery of information to the archives and appraisal investigations because sometimes these processes can take up to a year to conclude.

Respondent B informed that administrative positions have been reduced, which means that the remaining administrative personnel have heavy workloads and hence must prioritize their work. Where new documentation plans must be created, it is sometimes difficult to find an employee who is willing to do it because they are so few. All these cause stress to the employees. Documentation plans in Swedish administrations document all types of records/information that is generated by each department within the organization, the formats in which the information is captured and the form of preservation or when the

information is to be disposed of. He argued that the appraising of government information should not be arbitrarily pursued and should be based on the guidelines from the National Archives. He confirmed that some of the bosses who never include the cost of information management in their budgets, when they discover how much it will cost to preserve the information, wonder if the information should not be appraised. Respondent B lamented that this was absurd as these bosses display lack of understanding of the need to preserve historical information where old documents are concerned and the citizens' right to access public documents through the Public Access Act, which also allows public scrutiny and promotes transparency and accountability.

Responding to the question as to whether the Agency had a department charged with the management of its information, Respondent B confirmed that they have due to re-organisations belonged to different units but now belong to a unit called strategic management, which also deals with overall questions that are directed to the Agency. Both respondents expressed the need to find allies outside their unit such as; with the IT department and the business people. They informed that they need to find allies they can convince about the value of structured and systematic information management and the need to comply with the regulations. They, however, confirmed that there are people at the Agency who understand the importance of managing information efficiently and who consider the archivists as contributors to the information management puzzle as they have skills that they lack. These included people such as IT developers and IT architects (people who are not programmers). The relationship that existed between the archivists and their allies to work toward achieving effective information management is not formal and therefore, when such people left the organization, the relationship was also terminated and they had to look for new allies, which is a time-consuming process.

Respondent A argued that the employees needed to understand what a public record is and to reflect over the information they generated if they are to handle it correctly. All employees who worked at the Agency needed to understand the legal framework that governs government information. Both archivists confirmed that some of the employees are very good at managing public records and some are not. Respondent A postulated that the employees daily made decisions that affected the quality of the information. The employees were given a 20 min introductory Web-based course in the management of government information and it was the bosses who were responsible for ensuring that the newly recruited employees followed the course. The archivists used to offer the course in person as this is a large organization and the exercise used to take a lot of time, it was reduced to 20 minutes. They argued that since some of the Agency's employees are from the private sector where information is not governed by the same stringent legal framework, dedication to the management of information varies. Therefore, not all bosses are interested in information management issues and this is not properly followed up.

Responding to the question as to how the scandal has impacted the management of information, Respondent B confirmed that before the scandal, people did not care much about the kind of information or content they handled, but now everything is super-secret. Suddenly, they cannot almost handle information, and nobody really knows what information they have in custody. Respondent B informed that there was fear in the organization to make mistakes, and lack of knowledge about what is public or not created further insecurities. Information that was supposed to be public was being classified as Level 3, because it might contain personal data. Respondent B informed that the Levels 1, 2 and 3 are those prescribed in The ISO standard 27000 called Management System for Information Security. This was likely to compromise access to government information and transparency and accountability of the Agency.

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Respondent A, however, argued that with the implementation of the GDPR, which was implemented by May 2018, a lot of discussions were being pursued at the Agency and future contracts will have to include the management of information. She confirmed that it was not only the archivists who were advocating the effective management of personal data but the Agency's lawyers too. As public documents contain personal data, she hoped that this would slowly raise awareness and enable the employees to understand the need to effectively manage public records. Despite the shared shortcomings, Respondent B confirmed that their unit was quite active and that they were involved in many projects that were about requirement specification of information systems. They worked with open data, the implementation of GDPR and collaborated with those who work with information security. A management system was in the process of being developed, and they had collaborated with the lady in charge to see to it that information governance issues are put into consideration. They currently had a mission to develop better management and support routines for information governance and were constantly trying to find new ways of improving the information management landscape.

Respondent A confirmed that the positive side of the NPM thinking is the fact that he thought about the way he carries out his work and constantly asked if it was the best way. This created both internal and external value.

## Discussion

This study set out to investigate the impact that NPM through outsourcing has had on the management of government information at a Swedish Transport Agency. In the quest for efficient government administrations and high-quality service delivery, a new management style referred to as NPM has been embraced by government administrations. It is about the emulation of private sector practices. Outsourcing, which is a strategy within NPM, is being used by government institutions to cut costs and to create efficiencies. This is not a new trend as literature reveals that it has been going on for a period of over 30 years within Europe. However, the literature reviewed confirmed that more research on the advantages delivered by outsourcing of government functions is needed (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid, 2011). Though the proponents of outsourcing claim that it delivers efficiencies, the empirical data mostly highlighted the negative impact outsourcing has had on the management of government information. The list of the negatives included re-organizations, which interrupts the continuity of processes and the capture of knowledge and routines; the trimming of an organization, which in the studied case left very few administrative personnel and led to stressed employees overwhelmed by work; the prioritization of work, which meant that some work was overlooked such as in the case of the development of the Agency's document management plans; constantly changing business models were are hard to implement, incorporate and follow-up; the prioritization of the hard values as referred to by one of the respondents which killed the humane side of work, i.e. engagement and the desire to further develop one's skills; and compromising the most important tenets of democracy upon which public administrations are built, i.e. transparency and democracy.

Information is a strategic resource and should be effectively managed to achieve efficient processes. As argued in the reviewed literature, clauses outlining responsibilities for its management should be included in the outsourcing contracts. Additionally, the literature warned that precaution should be taken to outsource certain functions of government. Even though all employees in an organization created and handled information, the understanding of its management varied. The IT personnel did not collaborate with the archivists to promote efficient information management. They further enjoyed a more

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prestigious position at the Agency than the archivists. The unclear distribution of responsibilities between the archivists and IT personnel confused the heads of departments who perceived information management to be the remit of the IT personnel and left the archivists out when outsourcing deals were being made, yet their expertise could have mitigated the risk the exposure of the Agency's information caused.

Even though government information is governed by a stringent legal framework, most government employees seem to think that information management issues are the remit of the archivists. Organizations should have a department and resources devoted to information management. The Swedish Transport Agency's organizational chart does not reflect this. As discussed by Leming (2015), information management should be of concern to all employees and organizations should use expertise from various disciplines if information is to be effectively and securely managed. The Swedish National Archives is responsible for the overall management of government information and issues general and specific guidelines to facilitate the management of information at the various agencies, but in this case, the guidelines were not embraced by the IT department. This further confirmed my own research observation that despite the legal framework, some knowledge as to how effective information should be achieved and information systems, information management still poses challenges in Swedish government administrations. Lack of an e-archives is still a challenge to the efficient and secure management of government information (Svärd, 2011). Hopefully, the efforts that are being made through the State Service Center will help government agencies to better manage and coordinate their information resources in some sort of state "cloud." The findings confirmed that lack of collaboration between the IT personnel, and the archivists compromised the effective management of information.

Furthermore, very little time was devoted to the training of government employees in information management. A person who has never worked in a government institution to be given a 20 min Web-based course demonstrated the lack of understanding of the complexity of the information management landscape that also required an understanding of the legal framework that governed government information. Information management is not about information systems as they are only tools used to facilitate its management. The employees need to understand why government information must be managed. When the IT and data breach scandal happened, the focus was on IT and very little discussion was pursued regarding the information the systems contained and information security.

The complex nature of the information landscape requires collaboration among all stakeholders who should be involved in the drafting of the outsourcing contracts to formulate the necessary clauses that should safeguard government information. Information today is not only there to create efficiencies but also, as demonstrated by the scandal at the Swedish Transport Agency, can put an entire nation at risk. Therefore, information management issues should be taken seriously.

## Conclusion

The study sought to investigate the impact that NPM through outsourcing has had on the management of government at a Swedish Transport Agency. The study has had limitations as it was only one category of employees that were interviewed. Further research with a broader focus is therefore needed to capture the views of all employees to enable a broader understanding of the challenges posed by NPM. The study has highlighted the negative effects caused by outsourcing and the need to include information management clauses in the contracts for outsourcing government functions. Government information is the basis upon which transparency and accountability are based, and therefore, its effective and

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secure management is of crucial importance to the trust that citizens have in government institutions. The information landscape has become complex, and outsourcing complicates it further as it creates a blend of public and private practices. People who have worked in public administrations might have a better understanding of the routines and guidelines that govern the management of information but those from the private sector might not. This makes the training of all government employees in the management of government information of crucial importance as the quest for efficiency continues. The in-house expertise that should constitute people from different disciplines should be consulted to avoid data breaches. I struggled to find literature that discusses the impact that NPM through outsourcing has had on the management of government information. Hopefully, this article will be a contribution toward this gap.

## Recommendations

- Outsourcing contracts should include clauses that will ensure that the contracted companies take care of government information according to the legal framework that governs it.
- Outsourcing should be done in consultation with all the stakeholders that might be affected by it.
- Collaboration among employees is key to the effective and secure management of information. The IT personnel, information security personnel, business people and information specialists and management should all be involved.
- Information security should be prioritized as information does not only prevent business efficiencies but also can cause security threats. This means that top management should take more responsibility for the efficient management of information.
- Investments should be made in the training of all government employees in information management and the legal framework that governs it. It should not just be the concern of archivists.
- The implementation of an e-archive solution is crucial to the efficient management of information, its security and service delivery.

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## Appendix. Interview guide

New Public Management as a concept.

- What is your understanding of the concept of "New Public Management"?
- How has it been embraced in your organization?
- What impact has it had on the overall function of your organization?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of New Public Management?

The Management of Government Information.

- Does the organization have an Information Department that focuses on the management of information?
- What Information Governance Model does your organization have?
- What impact has New Public Management had on the management of information in your organization?
- Is the Information Management Department consulted when information regarding the institution is going to be outsourced?
- Does the organization follow the legal framework governing government information?
- Are the employees given training in information management?
- Do the employees understand the legal framework governing government information for example the Archival Law and the Public Records Act?
- What impact has the scandal had on the information governance model of your institution?

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Your Role As an Archivist.

- How is your role understood in the organization?
- How is your expertise used in matters regarding outsourcing of the information that your organisation produces?
- What are the challenges related to your role?
- Do you have Top Management Support in your work as Archivist?
- How are you working to make yourself relevant in discussions regarding the outsourcing of government information?
- What do you think should have been done to avoid the scandal?
- Are the people managing information trained? Do they have the right skills?

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