Implementation in the era of accelerating projectification – Synthesizing Matland (1995) and research on temporary organizations

By
Christian Jensen[1]
Staffan Johansson[2]
Mikael Löfström[3]

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Please contact the authors before citing.

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[1] University of Gothenburg, Sweden, Dept of business adm
[2] University of Gothenburg, Sweden, Dept of social work
[3] University of Borås, Sweden, Dept of business adm

Abstract

It has become increasingly common to use projects as a form of organization when implementing public policies in the area of social welfare and probably also in other policy areas. A key player behind this development is the EU and its various structural funds, but the same trend can also be found at national and regional level in different countries. We have in previous research identified political, administrative and organizational motives behind this trend toward more project-based organizations within the public administration (Jensen, Johansson and Löfström, 2013). The problem is that the form of project organization carries inherent problems /special challenges when these projects are supposed to be implemented in permanent agencies and organizations.

The purpose of this paper is to identify problems and challenges that public administrations face when projects are used as a form of organization in policy implementation, and identify possible strategies that can facilitate successful implementation when projects is used as a form of organization.

The article takes its starting point in the policy implementation research and especially the seminal work of Richard Matland (1995) who bases the implementation analysis on the variables policy conflict and policy ambiguity as important factors by which it is possible to identify both various paradigms in implementation research, but also the factors that can explain the implementation results. This research tradition is complemented by research on temporary organizations. Our analysis shows that the use of project organization puts special demands on the players involved and if these are not taken into account, there is a high risk that projects which are designed to bring about social change risk becoming islands in the stream that are not producing the intended effects which policy makers and citizens expect.

1. Introduction and purpose

The problems related to implementing public policy are as urgent and pressing as ever, although the concept of implementation seems to have fallen down some steps on the political and also on the academic agenda (Hupe, 2014). The reason behind this may be that our contemporary societal challenges are not mainly addressed as implementation problems but rather as complex governance problems which demand creating arenas, regulations and incentives for coordinated action among relevant actors. But as stated by Hill and Hupe (2014) and Hupe (2014), we still don't know what really happens on the base level when new public policy initiatives are launched and are supposed to influence action among politicians, managers, bureaucrats, professional staff and citizens. One reason behind this is probably that new organizational forms and arrangements used when implementing policies is perceived as trivial and are not fully understood. Some popular organizational forms – such as project organizations – may affect the implementation process and the outcomes more than have been understood in mainstream implementation research.

It has become increasingly common to use 'project' as a form of organization and policy tool when implementing policies and innovations in the public sector. A key player behind this development in Europe is the European Union and its structural funds that spend billions of euros on temporary projects, but the same trend can also be found at national, regional and local levels in different countries. We have in previous research identified political, administrative and organizational motives behind this trend toward 'projectification' within the public sector (Jensen, Johansson and Löfström, 2013).

Political motives – *agenda setting* - refers to the need for policymakers to signal to the public and to other stakeholders that they take certain addressed problems and needs seriously and could therefore put some policies with earmarked resources in some kind of political 'display windows', with a different logic compared to recurrent regular operations funded in the regular budget processes. And in settings where policymakers don´t want to use the existing administrative structure for implementation - since it is perceived as a part of the addressed problem. The policymakers signal that they are proactive and that they want to act as quickly and decisively as possible.

Administrative motives – *bureaucratic control* - refers to the need for funding agencies to hold funds separated from each other in order to hold the agents accountable for control and evaluation. One way for government to facilitate such hierarchical control and evaluation seems to be to allocate and earmark funds and organize the implementation in

separate projects in parallel with the recurrent regular activities of the governmental agencies. For the applicants it is therefore appropriate to establish a project organization for each allocated fund. Opportunities for supervision and control also seem to be better, since the policy area is clearly defined in time and space and various project tools help to enable a firmer control.

Finally, organizational motives – *innovative action* - refers to the need for local entrepreneurs and sometimes also for funders to encourage people and involved organizations to do things they otherwise would not have done, and to secure the realization of the intentions from interference from other ideas and activities. By organizing the policy into projects the policy-makers could, on the one hand, keep the issue separate from existing agencies' operating activities, and on the other hand, creating networks in order to involve new actors (e. g. nonprofit organizations) which are difficult to engage within the mainstream hierarchical bureaucratic structure (Hill and Hupe, 2014). To organize the policy into projects signals innovation, allowing those involved to deviate from traditional operations and to act in new ways. This kind of behavior is favored by creating project organizations, which are kept separated from the recurrent standardized operations in the permanent organizations (Sahlin-Andersson, 2002). The problem is that the structural form of project organizations often carries inherent problems and special challenges when the content and experiences of these projects are supposed to be implemented and integrated into permanent organizational structures.

The purpose of this paper is to identify problems and challenges that public administrations face when the project is used as a structural form of organization (as a policy tool) when implementing public policy, and also to identify possible strategies that can facilitate successful implementation. The challenges and strategies are structured by Matland´s (1995) synthesis of research on policy implementation, which also appears to be suitable for analyzing project organizations as possible policy tools.

Outline of the paper

In the second section of this paper, we present research related to policy implementation in public administration, relevant for the social policy area. In the third section we present some research on project organizing relevant to implementation of social policy in public administration. In the fourth section we will integrate the two research fields based on crucial variables, identified by Matland (1995). Finally, we will draw some conclusions about the problems and prospects in research on using projects as a policy tool in the public sector.

2. Research on policy implementation – the state of the art and a point of departure

The interest in problems related to implementing public policies entered the public and academic agenda in the seventies, partly as a consequence of implementing ambitious and ambiguous social policies in North America as well as in Europe. Accounts of research on policy implementation in public administration have since then been structured by the top-down, bottom-up and the synthesizer's perspectives. Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) introduced a top-down perspective on policy implementation based on rational decision-making: policy-makers set goals and implementation analysis is concerned with investigating what helps or hinders the achievement of those goals. The top-down perspective was challenged by a bottom-up perspective which sees policy as action (Barrett and Fudge, 1981; Hjern and Porter, 1981; Lipsky, 1980/2010). The debate between 'top-downers' and 'bottom-uppers' was later followed by a synthesizer's perspective arguing that sometimes it is most relevant to investigate the problem from the policy-makers point of view, while sometimes it is most relevant interesting to understand how citizens encounter the actual public services in different policy areas, with important contributions by e. g. Lane (1987), Matland (1995) and Rothstein (1998).

There have since then been several reviews of the research on policy implementation, (e.g. Hill and Hupe, 2014; Matland, 1995; O´Toole, 1986; Sabatier, 1986), but the interest in classic implementation issues seem to have declined the latest decades, first related to the extensive introduction of New Public Management (NPM) since the nineties, and later also related to the changed focus 'from government to governance' (Pierre and Peters 2000; Torfing, et al 2012). However, this decline may be an illusion because the research on what happens between the establishment of policy and its impact in the world of action is not always found under the heading "implementation research". Hill and Hupe (2014) have identified three sorts of developments.

First there are the *mainstream implementation studies*, that are still done, and it seems to have increased the latest decades if studies on the implementation of evidence-based practices and programs are included. Most of this research departs from a top-down perspective, in order to promote fidelity and to identify deficits from the prescribed guidelines (Fixsen *et al.* 2005).

Second there are *neo-implementation studies*, which are linked to literature on multilevel governance. Looking at governing across more than one administrative layer, e.g

implementation of directives of the European Union by the various member states. In that context the traditional question about the relationship between policy formation and policy implementation is not obvious. In particular there is a possibility that implementation is presupposed where, in fact, legitimate policy co-forming is occurring (Hill and Hupe, 2014).

Third, there are studies of implementation performed under different headings, such as public management studies. Some of these can be labeled *advanced implementation studies* (Hupe 2014), and one of the characteristics of these studies is that they focus on confronting existing knowledge about a relatively narrowly defined subject, in a systematic way, with relevant sets of data. This is done instead of theorizing about what should be the elements of a comprehensive over-arching grand theory of implementation by constantly adding new variables. (Hupe 2014)

Since our aim is to link research on project organizations to current relevant implementation research without no ambition to develop a general implementation theory, we agree with Hill and Hupe (2014) who have stated that two clusters of variables do seem to be critical in most research: those about the nature of the substantive policy and those about the institutional context. We have consequently chosen to depart from Robert Matland's (1995) synthesis of top-down and bottom up perspectives, which distinguishes issues about the extent of policy ambiguity on one hand, and issues about policy conflict on the other. This model is relevant and suitable in the social policy area, where we have done most of our empirical research on project organizations.

Figure 1. Matland´s ambiguity-conflict matrix
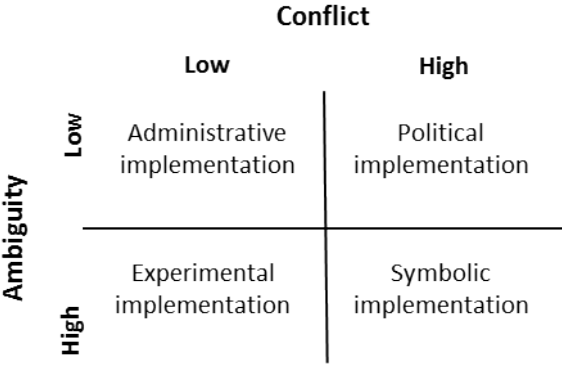
Policies with low level of ambiguity and low level of conflict can be implemented through 'administrative implementation', i. e. a rational decision process which is the ideal for a top-down approach. Policies with low degree of ambiguity but high level of conflict demand

'political implementation', since implementation outcomes are determined by power. In the case of 'political implementation', Matland argues that theories that emphasize interactions and policy/implementation feedback are particularly applicable, while those that stress decision-making at the micro-level are less applicable. Policies with high degree of ambiguity but low level of conflict demand 'experimental implementation', where local environments are likely to influence much on outcomes. There are, according to Matland (1995), complex feedback and learning issues on the local level to consider in this case, which mean that bottom-up approaches to analysis are likely to be applicable. Finally, policies with high degree of ambiguity and also high level of conflict could be characterized by the concept 'symbolic implementation', where the strength of (professional) coalitions, particularly at the local level, tend to determine outcomes. Thus, Matland's model helps us to think about implementation as differing in relation to the varying character of the policies to be implemented, which seems to be suitable when analyzing project organizations used when implementing different kind of social policies.

3. Research on temporary organizations

Research on project organization has shown that we live in a 'projectified' welfare state (Hodgson and Cicmil, 2006; Lundin and Söderholm, 1998; Midler, 1995; Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm, 2002; Söderlund, 2004). Projects have become the procedure through which authorities can reduce complexity and managed increased demand for change, as well as an organizational unit that interact and compete with others over limited resources (Crawford and Helm, 2009; Hodgson and Cicmil, 2006; Jensen, Johansson and Löfström, 2006; 2007; 2013; Lundin and Söderholm, 1998). Thus, in order to increase our understanding of the challenges regarding policy implementation, we will briefly describe some research on project organizations, particularly in the public sector. We conclude our discussion with a classification of projects used in social policy implementation and suggest a model for how this classification can be synthesized.

Project management (PM) literature, emanating from construction industry, normatively defines a project as a tool; an activity carried out with specified goals, over a limited period of time, with a predetermined input of resources and specified forms of work (Cleland and Ireland, 2002; Morris and Hough, 1987; Pinto and Prescott, 1988; Wirick,

2009). The idea that the project is an optimal tool for change has become widespread far beyond the construction industry, and nowadays the idea also permeates social policy field.

One way to clarify the difference between permanent and temporary organization within the public sector is to borrow Mintzberg's (1983) distinction between (machine-/ professional) bureaucracy and adhocracy (see Table 1). The permanent activities of most public organizations are controlled essentially by a rule-based logic. The operations are production-oriented and coordinated through standardized work processes or standardized skills. The environment is fairly predictable and it is therefore possible to create uniform workload. The change process is often characterized by incremental change, and the most important restriction on public activities is the stipulated budget.

In contrast, adhocracies or projects are initiated to solve a specific problem. Projects are also supposed to contribute to change and renewal, and the coordination is therefore done by mutual adjustment – i.e. different professions, principals and systems had to adapt to each other. The environment seems therefore uncertain and the workload likewise. If it turns out that the new approach is successful, this means a change in leaps and bounds. The most important restrictions for projects are the temporary status and what happens after completion.

However, close-knit, highly motivated, specialized and engaged project teams might have a strong interest to continue the project, which is also reinforced by the fact that human service organizations (HSO) are often highly professionalised environments. The termination process involves both dismantling the boundaries that were created initially and dissolving the identity, hierarchy and rationality created in the project. The outcome of the termination process will thus depend on how the project was established and how the project team functioned during the project life cycle (Johansson, Löfström and Ohlsson, 2007).

Table 1. Bureaucracy versus Adhocracy

Bureaucracy	Adhocracy (project)
Production oriented	Task-oriented
Coordinated through the standardization of work processes/ skills	Coordinated through mutual adjustment
Predictable environment	Uncertain environment / future
Uniform workload	Uneven workloads
Incremental change	Radical change
The most important restriction: costs	The most important restriction: time

Furthermore, most research on projects has focused on their internal logic. The specific features of the project are thus over-emphasized at the expense of the contextual interaction. Engwall (2003) rhetorically claims that ''No project is an island'', and that projects are always embedded in wider historically, organizational and institutional settings (see also Blomquist and Packendorff, 1998; Johansson, Löfström and Ohlsson, 2007; Jones and Lichtenstein, 2008; Kreiner, 1995; Löwendahl, 1995; Söderlund, 2004). These contextually oriented studies have focused on the relationship between projects and their interactional environment (Jensen, Johansson and Löfström, 2006).

A classification of projects used in social policy implementation

The relationships between projects and regular activities and its institutional settings have show that projects in the same field of activity can be quite different from each other and have few similarities. They may have different tasks, functions, funding and goals, and they can have different relationships to the environment (Crawford et al., 2003; Jensen, Johansson and Löfström, 2007; 2013; Johansson, Löfström and Ohlsson, 2007; Trägårdh and Jensen, 2013). Thus, there is reason to categorize the project based on the relationship that they are expected to have to ordinary activities on the one hand, and the actual purpose of the project on the other hand. When it comes to the relationship between project and regular activities, it can be fruitful to distinguish between intra-organizational and inter-organizational projects. Intra-organizational projects are conducted in the context of one organization/principal, while inter-organizational project is jointly operated by two or more organizations/principals. Although a major purpose for all projects is to achieve some sort of change, it can equally be fruitful to distinguish projects that intend to develop the existing operations or organizations from those who intend to create new activities or new organization (Jensen, Johansson and Löfström, 2007). Combining these both axes creates four idealized types of project: change projects, pilot projects, collaboration projects and assignment projects (se figure 2).

Figure 2. Classification of projects and their relations with their principal organizations
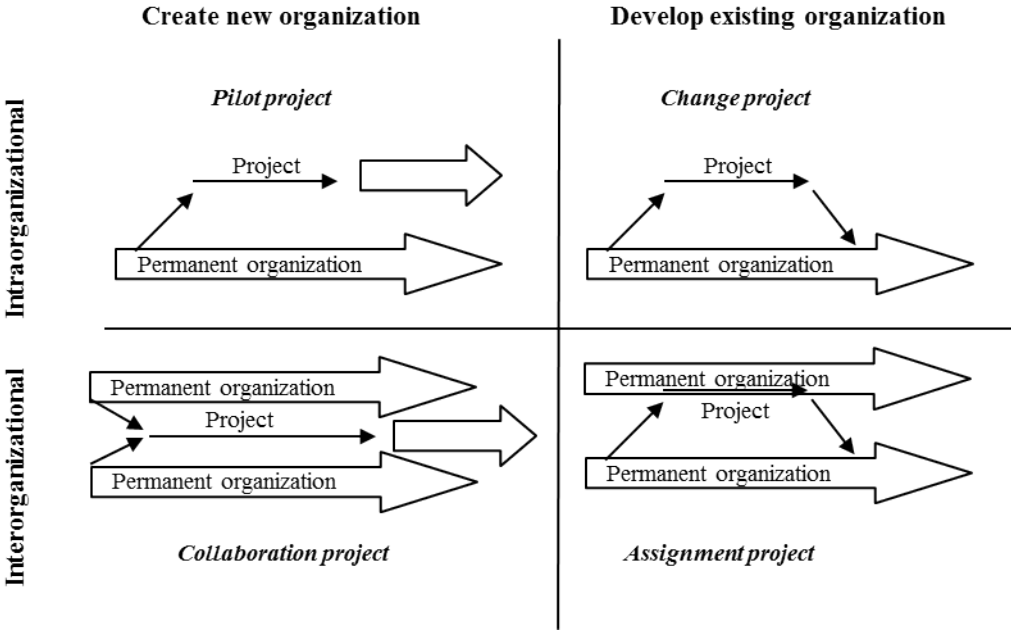
The combination of intra-organizational orientation with the mission to create new activities leads to *pilot projects*. These projects have the primary responsibility to deal with completely new challenges, and need for that reason a temporary organization in order to experiment and develop a more permanent structure for dealing with those new challenges. The challenge for a pilot project is to distance and withdraw from the prevailing patterns of thought and procedures, to create a new permanent solution to a specific problem (Jensen, Johansson and Löfström, 2007). This includes the task to establish a new organization which implies that the operations must become indispensable and to finance the business, either through grants or by selling the new services. It is important to generate and reward innovation. The trust and the status of the project are essential. Within human service organizations, this belief is often related to different professions norms and fields of knowledge. This means that the development of a pilot project frequently is conducted on the basis of the various professions' competence and ability to deal with new challenges. Parallel to this, it is also important to develop relationships with potential funders; organization which in the future can buy or fund the new organization's services. The challenge ot the pilot project is consequently about managing *simple entrepreneurship* as the project is initially dependent on one principal and its prevailing patterns of thought and routines.

The combination of intra-organizational settlement with the mission to develop existing activities or organizations leads to *change projects*. These projects have the purpose

to create change in an existing permanent organization, i.e. develop new solutions during the project and implement those solutions in the permanent organization and as a result develop procedures and operations. The challenge for a change project is often threefold: to distance and withdraw from previously existing patterns of thought and procedures, to develop new procedures during the project, and to implement new thought and procedures in the permanent organization (Johansson, Löfström and Ohlsson, 2000; 2007). In a study of change projects within the Swedish social services large differences were found in the way they were organized (Johansson 2000; Johansson, Löfström and Ohlsson, 2000). Some projects were largely separated from ordinary activities. They had a special project manager that was specially recruited for the purpose and the project was especially composed to bring about as much creativity as possible. The project took place at special locations and the task was quite different from what they usually were doing. These projects were perceived as pleasurable and creative, but they had major problems with returning experience to the permanent operations. Other projects were more integrated within the permanent organization. The project manager was at the same time line manager in the permanent organization, and project working group was the same as the usual working team. The project work was performed in the same place as the regular work, and tasks did not differ very much from those performed in the permanent operations. These more integrated projects did not seem to be very creative and innovative, but they had far less trouble in implementing lessons learned. It is important to note that the different ways of organizing are not in themselves necessarily better or worse. If you primarily want to achieve creativity one should probably choose an isolated organizational model. Would you rather ensure participation and successful implementation one should adopt an integrated model (Johansson, Löfström and Ohlsson, 2007). Change projects are expected to develop existing operations. The challenge is therefore to ensure and maintain *embedded interaction,* thereby facilitating the management of lessons learned from the project.

The combination of inter-organizational orientation with the mission to create new activities or new organizations leads to *collaboration projects*. In these types of projects several principals come together temporarily to both increase their operational capacity to act and create a new joint operation to solve new and specific challenges. Empirical examples of such projects within the social services are collaborative projects with a focus on specific target groups, such as long-term unemployed and others who have a complex problem that requires coordinated efforts by public authorities (Lindqvist, and Grape, 1999; Löfström 2010). This means that the projects have to deal with inter-organizational problems, which

could include various types of governance structures, regulations, financial conditions, operational responsibilities, organizational cultures. A challenge will thus be to establish a common approach, since the interacting organizations have a tendency to primarily look after their own interests rather than integrate in order to accomplish joint action. Thus, the collaboration projects are expected to solve a task that already several parties are responsible for, in a new and coordinated manner, often with the expectation of a new permanent organization in the future. The challenge is thus to manage *complex entrepreneurship;* to manage multiple mutually different prevailing patterns of thought and routines.

The combination of inter-organizational orientation with the mission to develop existing activities leads to *assignment projects*. As the public sector domination in producing welfare services has decreased in recent decades in most countries, the number of other service providers and entrepreneurs has grown and now includes both private sector and nonprofit organizations. The trend towards outsourcing public welfare production creates a special situation for the organization that stands as contractors and engaged in so-called assignment projects. Those projects involve relationships between multiple stakeholders, and to understand such projects one must understand what characterizes such relationships and their context - especially the relationship between client and contractor. For those organizations which projects is a central part of their operation occur also internal coordination problems similar to those that arise in, what projects literature termed multi-project organization (Engwall and Jerbrant 2003; Eskerod 1996). The challenge for an assignment project is to capitalize from previous experiences to solve tasks on a project basis without being tempted to become overly standardized in its problem solving. This means that the project should primarily concentrate on achieving the goals or objectives that are defined for the project by the purchaser. Also here, status and reputation is crucial (Jensen, Johansson and Löfström, 2007). For the purchaser, the challenge is to develop 'procurement skills', that is to use past experience in entirely new assignment. The challenge is thus to create and maintain *open interaction* and to do it in such a way that experience and lessons learned for both parties can be intensified and exploited.

4. Synthesizing policy implementation research and project organizing research

An analysis of these two research traditions shows that the use of project organization puts special demands on the actors involved and the organizing of the projects. Various forms of policy challenges (such as ambiguity and conflict) put different demands on the project organizations and their relationships to permanent organizations. In the further analysis, the

starting point will be Matland's ambiguity-conflict matrix where we place the four combinations in comparison to using projects as implementation strategy based on two questions:

1. Why choose the project organization as implementation form instead of implementing the policy directly into the existing permanent organizations?
2. What challenges do different kind of projects face when implementing policy, and what determines successful implementation in the different policy conditions?

Using project organizations when implementing policy with low conflict and low ambiguity

Policies with a low level of conflict and low levels of ambiguity can, according to Matland (1995), apply a classical top-down implementation through a rational decision process. A low level of conflict and ambiguity mean that implementation activities to a large extent can be predetermined, standardized and it is possible to limit the influence of the environmental factors. Matland (1995) uses the World Health Organization's (WHO) mass vaccination program to eliminate smallpox as an example when it's possible to establish standard operating procedures for the implementation process. It is not difficult to find contemporary programs, for example the 2009 flu pandemic which also demanded a need to implement a mass vaccination program. Another example is implementation of a decided administrative IT system such as journal system in healthcare with the aim of reducing the amount of administrative work and increase patient safety. The system and its use are well defined, as are the actors that are expected to use it. It is also clear who should do what and the implementation can be done without any major discussions or negotiations with stakeholders involved.

The main motivation of using projects when implementing policy with low conflict and low ambiguity is primarily a matter of *bureaucratic control,* especially if there are earmark funds for the implementation. Since the project is a demarcated organization, it is easier for funding organizations to control and evaluate the implementation when it is not integrated into regular operations. In exceptional cases also *agenda setting* and *innovative action* could be motives if the regular organization is unable to organize the implementation by themselves. For this type of implementation is change projects and assignment projects the most appropriate form of organization as they aim to develop existing operations or organization, but even pilot projects and collaboration projects can be useful if the task is new.

The specific challenges for different types of projects when policies with low conflict and ambiguity were to be implemented differ to some extent from the general challenges for various types of projects described in the third section. When the project is set up to organize development work, they are isolated to be given the opportunity to develop new ideas and try new models (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995). In this case this is, however, not the main reason for implementation through project organization. The policy that will be implemented requires no development work, but requires mainly extra resources for effective implementation of the policy. The establishment of a project can increase the capacity to act, i.e. give the implementation of the policy effectiveness and legitimacy.

For pilot projects the main challenge is to combine *control with simple entrepreneurship*. When the implementation requires result in new activities or new organization could the pilot project an appropriate tool as it can concentrate fully on the task This means that the project needs to be able both to distance itself from the organization, while taking advantage of the experience available. At the same time it is crucial that the implementation is systematic and that there is a documentation of actions and processes to ensure that it is done according to the policy intentions.

The main challenge for change project is to combine *control with embedded interaction*. The challenge is to detaching the project from previous ideas and methods to develop new ideas and practices, and to generate change in the permanent organization. The change project needs to establish a relationship to the principal organization and because implementation does not require development work the project needs rather verify that the purpose of the policy is achieved.

The main challenge for the collaboration project is to combine *control with complex entrepreneurship* to obtain interaction between the principal organizations: integration of responsibilities, rules, organizational culture, competence etc. A critical factor may be that organizations monitor each other rather than trying to accomplish common change. Another critical factor may be to get the principals willing to agree on the project organization and the purpose of the implementation.

Finally, the main challenge for the assignment project is to combine *control with open interaction* to take advantage of past experiences to solve the task without becoming overly standardized in its problem solving.. This means that the project should primarily concentrate on the task and achieving the objectives defined for the project.

Using project organizations when implementing policy with high conflict and low ambiguity

According to Matland (1995) policies with high level of conflict but low degree of ambiguity demand 'political implementation' which means that implementation outcomes are determined by power. Matland argues that top-down political models are particularly applicable since the issue is simple but controversial, and he uses school integration through busing in the 1960s as an example of a highly controversial yet distinct issue implemented by central authorities. One such example in our contemporary social policy area is the provision of free syringes to drug addicts.

In the same way as for the previous section, policy implementation with high level of conflict but low degree of ambiguity are normally executed as part of the regular democratic power structures; one actor or a coalition of actors have sufficient power to force their will on other participants. However, sometimes when policies are disputed the negotiation power and agenda setting will determine the outcome; decisions are preceded by tactical considerations, haggling and bargaining, and the output of the process could be compromises of one sort or another. It is not unusual that project as an organizational form may serve as a tool to generate compromise, or as a way to incrementally handle a political deadlock that may be perceived as more harmful. Thus, the most important motive behind using projects when implementing policy with high conflict low ambiguity is often *agenda setting*. As an institutionalized form, projects may also provide legitimacy and *bureaucratic control* for policy implementation by facilitating planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, especially if the projects are funded by an external organization. Since there is no disagreement on how the policy will be realized organizational learning motives are unusual, but by creating a project one can have parallel activities to satisfy different parties will, some activities take place within the projects while other activities take place within regular activities.

The specific challenges for the different kind of projects when implementing policies with high conflict and low ambiguity differ from the former section. For the pilot project the main challenge is to combine *compromise with simple entrepreneurship*. Our example of providing free syringes to drug addicts is just one out of many example of an issue surrounded by political conflicts. The controversy could partly be resolved by creating a pilot project with free injection needles for certain groups, parallel with normal restrictive policy, and leaving the crucial political issue for later resolution. The main challenge for change

projects is to combine *compromise with embedded interaction*. Conflicts need not only occur at the beginning of a policy process (where the project becomes a tool for a compromise), conflicts may also arise in connection with lesson learned from the project and the expectation that these experiences also should apply to the ordinary operations.

The main challenge for collaboration projects is to combine *compromise with complex entrepreneurship*; to manage different institutional interests before, during and after the project. New societal challenges that cannot be resolved within current functional specialization (public health, social exclusion, long-term unemployment and so forth), has created political pressure to act despite the fact of diverging political opinions about what constitute a sound policy within said policy area. EU and national generated great expectations on projects aiming at increasing collaboration between different principals and authorities, between different professional groups and the relevant clients, almost exclusively organized as projects, often also largely funded by EU or special funds at national level. Several of these collaboration projects work admittedly to develop new ways of working, but initially the program also deals with various power relations within the sphere of authorities, different regulatory systems, and various areas of competence (Löfström, 2010; Trägårdh and Jensen, 2013). The main challenge for the assignment project is to combine compromise with open interaction. In general, one can say that the conditions to reach compromises are quite good when the ratio is contractually, especially if both parties are used to procurement procedure. The contract clarifies the relationship, but at the same time should not the contract should hamper the creativity of the project. This means that the project should primarily concentrate on achieving the goals or objectives that are defined for the project by the purchaser/funder.

Using project organizations when implementing policy with low conflict and high ambiguity

Policies with high degree of ambiguity but low level of conflict demand, according to Matland (1995) 'experimental implementation', which defines cases where preferences are problematic and technology is uncertain, which also means that local environments are likely to influence much on outcomes. There are, according to Matland (1995) complex feedback and learning issues on the local level to consider in this case, which mean that bottom-up approaches to analysis are likely to be applicable. Matland uses 'Headstart' – a pre-school program for disadvantaged children from the 1960s in USA - as an example of an experimental form of implementation. It is not difficult to find similar policy challenges in our

contemporary welfare states, e.g. efforts aimed at improving the conditions for children in public schools or quality improvements in the care of the elderly.

The most important motive behind using projects when implementing policy with low conflict and high ambiguity is probably to achieve *innovative action* on the local level, but there could also be other motives such as *agenda setting* and the quest for *bureaucratic control*, especially if the experimental activities are funded by external organizations such as the European Union or national government agencies. The more practical reason behind choosing projects when performing experiments and other forms of learning activities, instead of integrating such activities in the ordinary public organizations recurrent operations is rather obvious. The recurrent standardized operations of the agencies are not disturbed and can run smoothly parallel to and simultaneously as experimental work are ran in different kind of project organizations. This is applicable to pilot projects, collaboration projects, change projects and assignment projects, which has been identified above.

The specific challenges for projects when implementing policies with low conflict but high ambiguity differ a lot from policies with low ambiguity. Generally speaking, the project organization seems to be an appropriate tool of implementation, since the rationale behind using projects is that this is often wiser to begin with and learn from small experiment, before broadening the action to drive change across the entire organization. It is however, important that the principals of these projects are aware that learning cannot be forced, and that it is important to build trustful relations between the projects and its stake-holders.

For pilot projects the main challenge is to combine *experimentation with managing simple entrepreneurship*; to find new, appropriate and legitimate solutions for the addressed problems that other organizations are willing to fund. Even if there is not so much conflict regarding policy goals, there could be different opinions concerning the level of ambition and the urgency of creating new sustainable solutions.

The main challenge for change projects is to combine *experimentation with managing embedded interaction*; to distance and withdraw from the prevailing patterns of thought and procedures, to develop new procedures during the project, and to implement new thought and procedures in the permanent organization. The dilemma here could be to balance the potential conflict between radical innovation and on the other hand well integrated and anchored implementation (Johansson, Löfström and Ohlsson, 2000; 2007). We have noted several times in evaluations that change project was successful but the effects on ordinary activities was minimal (Johansson, Löfström and Ohlsson, 2007).

For collaboration projects the main challenge is to combine *experimentation with managing complex entrepreneurship*; to find a balance between the involved organizations and to establish a common approach, since the interacting organizations have a tendency to primarily look after their own interests rather than integrate in order to accomplish joint action. Finally, the challenge for an assignment project is to combine *experimentation with managing open interaction*; to capitalize from previous experiences to solve tasks on a project basis without being tempted to become overly standardized in its problem solving.

Using project organizations when implementing policy with high conflict and high ambiguity

Finally, policies with high degree of ambiguity and also high level of conflict could be characterized by the concept 'symbolic implementation', where the strength of (professional) coalitions, particularly at the local level, tend to determine outcomes. Matland (1995) uses the establishment of the Community Action Agencies (CAA) as a part of an American program of combatting poverty as an example of symbolic implementation. Since the program aims at redistribute power, and is also disputed among different kind of professional groups, it as a good example of a policy that fall under this category. It is not difficult to find similar controversial social policy challenges and wicked problems in most contemporary European welfare states, such as homelessness, honor related violence (HRV), or efforts against drug abuse or youth crime.

The most important motive behind using projects when implementing policy with high conflict and high ambiguity is probably organizational – the quest for *innovative action*, but depending on the degree of conflict and tension within the project and between the project and stakeholders, also *agenda setting* and the quest for *bureaucratic control* could be motives behind creating such project organizations. Sometimes there are no existing organizations for dealing with such issues, which demand actors and organizations to establish pilot projects or collaboration projects for these new activities or target groups. And if there are agencies running recurrent standardized operations, these are not disturbed and can run smoothly parallel to change projects and assignments projects.

The challenges for the different kind of projects when implementing policies with high conflict and high ambiguity can be extensive. The activities often takes place in settings where actors belong to different organizations and professions and have conflicting interpretations of problems as well as solutions. The establishment of project organizations

could, however, increase the capacity to act and hereby facilitate the implementation of some policies.

For pilot projects the main challenge is to combine *trust-building with managing simple entrepreneurship* in order to find new, appropriate and legitimate solutions that other organizations are willing to fund. It is important to involve all stakeholders which could clarify lines of conflicts. It is desirable that the project management can stay neutral in the sharpest conflict lines and that the work is focused on building trust in a small scale which can dissolve paralysis. In this work, it is also important to show the projects' funders that it is possible to create compromises and solutions that are beneficial to the projects' target groups. The challenge for a change project is to combine *trust-building with embedded interaction*; to distance and withdraw from the prevailing patterns of thought and procedures, to develop new procedures during the project, and to implement new thought and procedures in the permanent organization. The dilemma here could be to balance the potential conflict between radical innovation and on the other hand well integrated and anchored implementation (Johansson, Löfström and Ohlsson, 2000; 2007).

For collaboration projects the main challenge is to combine *trust-building with managing complex entrepreneurship*; to find a balance between the involved organizations and to establish a common approach, since the interacting organizations have a tendency to primarily look after their own interests rather than integrate in order to accomplish joint action. Typically, these aspects are handled in functionally separated organizations and systems, often involving further internal inconsistencies and uncertainties. To integrate all these dimensions, with a focus on relevant user/target group, collaboration has emerged in public sector as a universal solution (Huxham and Vangen, 2002) and we now see several examples of multi-actor collaboration projects (Jones & Lichtenstein, 2008; Löfström, 2010). Also here it is important to involve all stakeholders which could clarify lines of conflicts, and it is desirable that the project management can stay neutral in the sharpest conflict lines and that the work is focused on building trust in a small scale which can dissolve paralysis. In this work, it is also important to show the project's funders that it is possible to create compromises and solutions that are beneficial to the project's target groups.

The challenge for an assignment project is to combine *trust-building with managing open interaction*; to capitalize from previous experiences to solve tasks on a project basis without being tempted to become overly standardized in its problem solving. This means that the project should primarily concentrate on achieving the goals or objectives that are defined for the project by the purchaser/funder. The projects not only influence different

relationships, roles and important border areas, but also how problems, solutions and preferential right of interpretation can be clarified. Hereby it is possible to gradually build up mutual trust through interaction in a smaller scale than through confrontations between large institutionalized organizations.

Table 2. Summary: Implementation prerequisites, driving motives, and specific challenges related to different types of projects.

	Policy area example	Main motives	Pilot projects	Change projects	Collaboration projects	Assignment projects
Low ambiguity Low conflict	Vaccination IT-system	Bureaucratic control	Controlled simple entrepreneur-ship	Controlled embedded interaction	Controlled complex entrepreneur-ship	Controlled open interaction
Low ambiguity High conflict	Free syringes for drug addicts	Agenda setting Bureaucratic control	Compromised simple entrepreneur-ship	Compromised embedded interaction	Compromised complex entrepreneur-ship	Compromised open interaction
High ambiguity Low conflict	Improvement In elderly care	Innovative action Agenda setting	Experimental simple entrepreneur-ship	Experimental embedded interaction	Experimental complex entrepreneur-ship	Experimental open interaction
High ambiguity High conflict	Homelessness, HRV, drug abuse youth crime.	Innovative action Agenda setting	Trust-building simple entrepreneur-ship	Trust-building embedded interaction	Trust-building complex entrepreneur-ship	Trust-building open interaction

5 Conclusions

Our understanding of how public policy is actually implemented is central for public administration scholars but is also the backbone of a well functioning democracy. In order to get a renaissance in the study of policy implementation we suggest that we have to study how the implementation is actually organized in practice. Therefore, we have described and combined two key areas of insights about policy implementation: First, Matland's (1995) insight that policy implementation is subjected to two crucial conditions, partly the degree of policy conflict, partly the degree of the policy ambiguity. Second, the insight that implementation nowadays to a large extent is organized in temporary organizations where project organizations can have both different functions and different inherent challenges. By studying various projects and their relationship with other organizations, we think we have contributed to a better understanding of how implementation more specifically is organized. We believe that this combination may be an important step to revitalize the discussion of policy implementation, and also a contribution to our understanding of the implementation as

an organizational phenomenon. We also believe that our project perspective serves as a useful basis when proceeding with a more fine-grained organizational analysis concerning managing implementation of public policies.

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