The Swedish government agencies and the 2030 Agenda, in between hope and despair:

A qualitative study about how the Swedish government agencies work to achieve the 2030 Agenda in Sweden

Picture: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, UN.org

By: Abdirashid Mohamed Abdi

Supervisor: Jenny Madestam
Södertörn University
School| Academy of Public Administration
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Preface

A period of two years of greatness and intensity as a student at Södertorn University is coming nearer to its end. This master dissertation is an indication of that end and therefore symbolizes an act of reaping the fruits. I, therefore, ought to thank all of you who directly or indirectly contributed to this work. I want to send an exceptional thanks to all the informants who participated in the interviews and shared their valuable experience and knowledge. Without your contributions, writing this paper would have been impossible.

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Abdirashid Mohamed Abdi
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Abstract

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted *A/RES/70/1, 2015*, a resolution that entails 17 integrative and indivisible UN Sustainable Development Goals, by the name of 2030 Agenda, a plan of action that calls for the transformation of the world to ecologically, economically and socially sustainable planet where peace and prosperity endure. With its indivisibility and universality characteristics, the Agenda puzzled the world states, demanding a new form of governance style for its realization.

With the use of qualitative research methodology, this thesis, therefore, examines how the Agenda's policies are coordinated by the Swedish Government Agencies and what activities and mechanisms they use to integrate the Agenda' policies into their daily operational activities.

Through collaborative governance and sociological institutionalism theoretical lens, results show that Government agencies use several mechanisms such as collaboration, dissemination of knowledge, leadership and communications to enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden. Nevertheless, some challenges hinder the agencies from working with the Agenda on a full scale, that if addressed properly, it could have improved the current conditions.

Keywords:
Agenda 2030, Collaborative governance, Sociological institutionalism, Swedish governmental agencies, policy coordination, implementation.

Acronyms

DG	Director generals
HLPF	UN High Level Political Forum
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
SCB	Sweden Statistics
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations

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1. Introduction

In 2015, the UN and its member states declared that the need for a sustainable global transformation by the name of the 2030 Agenda. The Agenda consists of 17 ambitious and comprehensive global sustainable goals, generally known as Sustainable Development Goals, hereafter, the SDGs. The UN member states are the responsible actors for the Agenda's implementation in both national and international scale.

Sweden is one of the leading countries when it comes to achievement at the national level and also in supporting the implementation of the goals internationally (SCB, 2017). However, current research (SOU 2019:13) shows that the Swedish government still faces challenges to explain and demonstrate clear direction and long-term leadership to achieve integrated policies, to enhance the implementation of the SDGs into the operational policymaking process. That means that there is a need for further improvements to respond to the challenging demands for the implementation of the Agenda to mitigate the conflicting interests and goals that the Agenda entails to reach a more coordinated and integrated policymaking resolution based on consensus and collaboration.

In an era of increasingly "megatrends" projects including social, economic, and environmental as well as other structural challenges, policy implementation and strategies for public management are becoming arduous (Lægreid et al., 2015). Likewise, the policies of the 2030 Agenda constitute new challenges that strain traditional public administration. Thus, the 2030 Agenda can be considered as one of such megatrends that bewildered the public management sectors in Sweden, at least in the last decade. Even though Sweden is ahead in the race of localizing the Agenda's goals, research points out that there is still a lack of coherent coordination within the government offices of Sweden as well as between the governmental authorities (see Jacobsson, 2019). The former has a role in providing clear direction for the governmental agencies and other actors who are willing to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The later, with a just an administrative role, face the burdens and challenges from a megaproject that entails policies which require cross-sectoral solutions. That results in new ways of dealing with such demanding indivisible policies that the 2030 Agenda encompasses.

The nature of the 2030 Agenda policies and the complexity of actors involved, with limited directorship from above, the Swedish governmental authorities try to engage in different activities to catalyze the implementation and integration of the Agenda into their daily operational activities.

1.1 Problem formulation

The shift from government to governance has been a contemporary development in political science and other social studies. The roles and capacities of governments to govern are challenged by the diffused boundaries and the blurred lines between public, private, and civil society, making many states perplexed to govern as they used to (Ansell & Gash 2008). New policies and demands with complexity and embeddedness emerged, demanding new forms of governance and collaboration that emphasize the role of multiple actors from the public, private and civil society (Emerson et al., 2011).

The 2030 Agenda adopted by the UN in 2015 is one of these challenges that adjudicate the political ability of states to govern and steer the binding international megaprojects. As the 2030 Agenda delegation asserted, Sweden has its challenges in implementing the SDGs, which means that there is a need for improved coordination, governance, and leadership beyond the current way of setting goals (SOU 2019:13). Even though Sweden is one of the leading countries when it comes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level (SCB, 2017), many challenges agonize Swedish authorities.

Coordination and coherence in policymaking are more complexed in states like Sweden. Many of the public administrations occur in a context where most of the policy and legislation processes are determined by supranational (EU) and decentralized and autonomous local government (Jacobsson, 2019). Public organizations need collaborative governance to coordinate and achieve their goals. In Sweden, most of these tasks are carried out by public agencies under the scrutiny of the government. Therefore, there is a great need to understand the work of the public authorities and how they coordinate their work to implement the SDGs, regardless of debates and discussions about the government, acquiring critics for failing to coordinate and integrate the 2030 Agenda in national policymaking operations (Jacobsson, 2019).

However, less attention has been paid to the vast activities and attempts made by the Swedish governmental agencies in a context in which coherent policymaking processes and explicit long-term leadership are not unveiling from the government side. Thus, it is both empirically and theoretically relevant to study how the governmental agencies are working to achieve the implementation of SDGs in Sweden.

1.2 Research objective and questions

The study concerns the coordination of 2030 Agenda and how the Swedish government agencies approach the demands and the challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda policies. The primary aim of the study is to shed light on how Swedish government agencies coordinate their work of implementing the 2030 Agenda in Sweden. Hence, the research explores four government agencies to reach its objectives. The study will, therefore, provide an empirical and theoretical analysis of the coordination of the SDGs policies at the administrative level. Thus, the research will also develop existing theories in public administration—specifically, the theories of collaborative governance and new institutionalism.

To meet the fulfillment of the objectives of the paper, the research tries to answer the following research questions.

I. How do the Swedish governmental agencies coordinate their work on the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Sweden?

II. What are the coordination mechanisms used by the agencies to enhance the implementation of 2030 Agenda into their daily operational activities?

III. What are the challenges and opportunities faced by the agencies in their current work with 2030 Agenda?

1.3 Disposition

After the first introductory chapter, the second chapter follows to present the contextual background of the 2030 Agenda, the Swedish public administration, and the role of the public authorities in Sweden. The third chapter deals with the theoretical framework and research reviews, whereby chapter four explains the research's methodology and materials used in this thesis. Chapter five presents a short descriptive, albeit essential empirical findings, while chapter six analyses and discusses the results from a theoretical perspective. Lastly, the seventh chapter concludes the paper by answering the posed research questions and thereafter providing practical reflection and recommendation for further research.

1.5 Delimitation

The scope of this research is confined to the study of the coordination of the 2030 Agenda implementation in Sweden. Particularly, the paper tries to explore how these governmental agencies work to coordinate the Agendas policies, both internally (within the same organization) and externally (outside the organizations). That means that the research will not consider the work that these organizations carry out in an international context. Such limitations confine the paper to omit the great work that these authorities are engaged in internationally. The paper examines only how four government agencies in Sweden work to coordinate the policies of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden to understand how the Swedish government agencies work with the implementation of 2030 Agenda.

Moreover, the paper sets some limitations which needed to be elaborated. The Swedish agencies have been working with the issue of sustainable development before and after the declaration of the 2030 Agenda in 2015. However, this research is not concerned about all the sustainable development initiatives carried by the agencies, rather the intentional engagement of the agencies in just the 2030 Agenda. Meaning that even if agencies work with sustainable development activities but not classified as 2030 Agenda, such activities will not be considered.

The two phenomena in this paper will also be looked at in a general sense. The objective of this research is not to provide a deeper understanding of either the government agencies in this research or the 2030 Agenda itself. Instead, the paper concerns how 2030 Agenda is dealt with by the agencies to enhance the implementation of the Agenda. Thus, neither the agencies nor the Agenda is the primary goal here, rather the interrelations or activities between the two, meaning the ways the agencies deal with the Agenda. Such demarcations will have some negative and positive repercussions for this thesis. Such limitations may make the paper insufficient to provide a deeper understanding of the individual agencies and the contents of the 2030 Agenda. Although that may have contributed some lucidity to the reader, time and the scope for this thesis will not allow more than just providing a contextual background of the two phenomena, the agencies, and the Agenda 2030.

1.6 Definitions of concepts

There are different definitions of coordination in the research realm. These definitions depend mostly on which discipline or field of study that researcher is interested in. Therefore, there is a need to define the meanings of these interrelated, albeit different concepts used in this thesis.

Collaboration, coordination and cooperation

According to Axelson & Bihari-Axelson (2007), collaboration contains components of both coordination and cooperation. Furthermore, Lindberg (2009) mentioned that coordination, cooperation, and collaboration do not exclude each other but instead complement one another. Coordination differs collaboration because coordination takes place before and does not have a specific purpose, while collaboration has a specific purpose and does not contain all interactions. However, cooperation encompasses all interactions (Lindberg 2009: 20-26)

Coordination and implementation

Moreover, there is a notable misunderstanding when it comes to distinguishing between policy implementation and policy coordination. According to the definition given by the Dictionary world thesaurus, an implementation can be defined as the process of putting plans or decisions into effect. The word i*mplementation* is synonymous with other words such as execution, application, or achievement, only as actions to bring outcomes that are line with the original intentions (Lane, 1983). However, the term *coordination* is different and means something else than putting plans into effect. Coordination is therefore synonymous with integration collaboration, cooperation, interrelation, or harmonization. Here, something more than the realization of plans is required.

Therefore, in the true meaning of coordination, togetherness and cohesion are emphasized (Guy, 2011). Hence, coordination in this paper can be seen as the integration of different activities, policies, or plans to achieve a more coherent and harmonized policymaking (see Bouckaert et al., 2010). Moreover, coordination takes place both as a process through which policy decisions are assembled, and the outcome of that process (Alexander, 1995 in Bouckaert et al., 2010).

In this paper, coordination and collaboration are related with one another, as these concepts have resemblance in the literature of Public administration.

Hence coordination can be seen as instruments and mechanisms that aim to enhance the voluntary or forced alignment of tasks and efforts of organizations within the public sector. These mechanisms are used:

"*to create a greater coherence and to reduce redundancy, lancunae and contradictions within and between policies, implementation, or management*" (Metcalfe,1994).

This definition of coordination gives a broader picture of what coordination can take in form. From the above definition, one can obtain several remarks.

Firstly, coordination contains both mechanisms and instruments that aim to improve public policies. Secondly, it touches the forms of public policies that need to be coordinated, i.e., coerced or voluntary tasks in the process of decision making or management. This definition divulges the context in which coordination and or mechanisms of it can be used, like in policy implementation or management in general. Henceforth, this thesis concerns coordination and not implementation per se.

2. Contextual background

This section of the paper provides a brief reflection about the Agenda and the Swedish public administration. That will provide the reader with a summary of the contextual information about a general background of the Swedish public administration (Swedish model), the role of the governmental agencies, and the Agenda 2030.

2.1 The 2030 agenda

No one would understand the birth of 2030 Agenda without tracing back to the history of sustainable development (SD). UN met in Stockholm 1972 for the UN conference on the Human Environment (Borowy, 2013), conserving the importance of the healthy and productive environment for the societies, a consideration that underpinned the foundation of the mindset of thinking about a sustainable future. Three years later, a commission was formed with the name of Brundtland commission. The commission then set the wheel in motion by defining sustainable development as development that meets the needs for the present without compromising the future generations to meet their own needs.

Since then, the UN and its member states held many conferences, baptizing such conferences with different names. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came into creation. The Millennium Summit in 2000 was one of the most important meetings that the world leaders had ever met. UN rectified the MDG, which consisted of eight main development goals (Borowy, 2013).

After the year 2000, the UN and its member states engaged the issue of sustainable development. However, sustainable development was mostly associated with environmental protection. The definition of sustainable development expanded when the world states met in 2005 and defined the term more holistically and expansively by referring it as "*interdependent and mutually reinforcing four pillars – economic development, environmental protection, social development, and the indigenous people and culture*" (World Summit 2005).

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Sweden has been implementing policies of sustainable development nationally and internationally since the year 2001.

Those UN conferences and different attempts gradually gave birth to an inclusive and transformative plan for action, named as the 2030 Agenda, for the people, planet and prosperity without leaving anyone behind (A/RES/70/1, 2015).

The 2030 Agenda consists of 17 SDGs and 169 targets. Some of these goals address social issues such as the ending of all forms of poverty, providing good health, quality education, and the reduced equality while others call for the protection, conservation, and preservation of the ecology on land and below waters.

Additional goals emphasize the promotion of sustainable and inclusive economic growth and industrialization and the importance of sustainable consumption and production.

Moreover, inclusive and peaceful societies and the access for justice for all are critical for a sustainable world. Even the 2030 Agenda did not miss the means of implementing such an aspiring mission whereby global partnership is crucial for the achievement of all SDGs on a global scale. Mobilized resources, innovation, technology, as well as a systemic issue such as policy and institutional coherence deemed critical for sustainable development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda on a national, regional, and even global level (A/RES/70/1, 2015*)*.

The 2030 Agenda adopted by the UN in 2015 hints how voluntary[1] reviewing and monitoring is essential to follow the achievement, insisting that the SDGs and means for implementation are indivisible, universal, and interlinked. Such characteristics or qualities of the 2030 Agenda makes it uniquely challenging compared to its precedent, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

2.2 The Swedish model

The Swedish public administration has been permeable to the role of different actors in involving in policy making and decision-making process. The section will allow the reader to familiarize herself with the Swedish model of public management and how this can be facilitative or restrictive in integrating the 2030 Agenda policies in Sweden through

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[1] Follow-ups and review process are said to be voluntary and country-led, meaning that the issue of regulation is non-compulsory and therefore lead to no sanctions or penalties. It is the implementing nations who have ownership and responsibility. They should implement the Agenda based on their capacities and priorities.

collaborative governance. Sweden is a democratic country, characterized as prosperous and inclusive growth by international comparison.

Comparing the Swedish Public administration with other countries, the Swedish model prevails in most instances. Over six fundamental pillars make the Swedish model discernible and with its worldly recognized uniqueness. (Premfors et al., 2009). Firstly, Sweden has immense public management or administrative agencies with considerable resources in terms of economy, employees, and many specialized and formalized organizations.

Even with its different reforms that took place since the wake of the new public management and other marketlike adjustments (see Karlsson, 2017), still, Swedish public administration is looked at as large and bureaucratic (Premfors et al., 2009: 57).

Even though many reforms took place with the intension to reduce the number of public authorities, Sweden still has a large public sector.

Secondly, dualism is another characteristic which analogous to the Swedish model (ibid). The dualism is one of the main attributes of the Swedish public sector. Dualism entails the notion that there two ways to classify the civil servants working in the central government offices: those who work at the Government departments with just generalized knowledge and those with higher expertise and specialized knowledge who work at the public authorities (Jacobsson et al., 2015). Such division has both negative and positive consequences for collaborative governance under different circumstances and stages of implementing the 2030 Agenda in Sweden. The paper will come to this point later on. Meanwhile, let us browse through other characteristics of the Swedish model.

A third characteristic of the Swedish model is the openness of the Swedish public administration and its pluralist governance and liberal ideas. Openness is well-rooted and is constitutionally embedded in the fabric of the Swedish state (Premfors et al., 2009: 79). The pluralist governance style of Sweden will make it possible for collective actions and policies towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The fourth reputation of the Swedish public management is the long tradition of cooperation between the public and private (Jacobsson et al., 2015). Although some researchers argue that the cooperation between the public and private was minimized, there many other scholars who argue that cooperation between the public and private did not reduce but changed its character into more frequent and informalized (see Jacobsson et al., 2015, Hedlund and Montin 2009). Sweden has encouraged increased collaboration and cooperation with the private sector as well as civil society organizations.

Currently, the Government promotes the collaboration between all actors to work on sustainable development and, more specifically, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other related sustainable development policies (Jacobsson et al., 2015).

One more aspect, which is also attributed to the Swedish public management, is the rigid and immutable local Government with reliable and effective autonomy (Premfors et al., 2009). In Sweden, there are approximately 290 municipalities, dispersed in 21 regions. However, these municipalities are autonomous and regulated by the local government Act, which is well articulated in the Swedish constitution (Montin and Granberg, 2007). From 2018, all the county councils have formed regions and taken over the regional development responsibility, a policy area in by which the County Administrative Boards have been responsible for (SKR, 2019).

All these characteristics with the Swedish public sector can be a catalytic opportunity for the implementation of cooperation in the work of the governmental authorities in achieving integrated policies that facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda nationwide. Likewise, these characteristics can also be challenging and create obstacles in forms of conflicts or overlaps during the process of collaboration (Montin and Grandberg 2007). The paper deals with this argument in the subsequent analysis.

2.3 Swedish Government agencies

This section of the paper provides a brief description of the Swedish government agencies intending to introduce the reader that although the Swedish government agencies enjoy some autonomies in their daily operations, they are not independent of the ascendancy of the government.

By 2020 there are 341 government agencies under the government (Swedish Public Management Agency 2020). The Swedish government agencies cover broad areas in the Swedish public administration. The characteristics of these agencies differ depending on the administrative areas and which issues they manage. Some of them are more specialized and manage some specific activities; others work with several issues and exercise their authority through supervision (Premfors et al., 2009: 162).

However, one has to know that the Swedish authorities are not independent of the government's influence which means that government set the goals of the work of the agencies and therefore these agencies are accountable to other governmental institutions such as the Government and Parliament (Premfors et al., 2009). Regarding the managerial leadership and the internal organization, the government agencies are led by director generals who are appointed by the government.

It is therefore important to understand the political circumstances that encircle the Swedish governmental agencies despite their high capacity for action brings misunderstandings as if they are independent of the central government's influence (Jacobsson, 2019).

The authorities have the mandate to realize and implement the laws and decisions made by the parliament and government. Therefore, the government agencies of Sweden have a meaningful role in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

However, depending on the mission and operational areas, some authorities have clear assignments linked to the implementation and coordination of the 2030 Agenda while others do not have mandates from the government, but somehow manage policy areas covered by the Agenda and in that sense affected by the Agenda in the general sense. This makes the government agencies relevant actors when it comes to the realization of SDGs in Sweden.

Swedish public agencies' role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden can be seen both as implementation and coordination at the same time. For example, if a Government agency receives a mandate from the government and the former conducts internal activities such as adopting new strategies or operational plans that permeate the 2030 Agenda policies into the daily operations, such integrating attempts can be referred to as coordination. On the other hand, when Government agencies engage in activities to handle a common problem, they collaborate. That is also one of the primary mechanisms used in public policy coordination (see Guy, 2018).

As a result of that, the activities carried out by the public agencies, may consist of some implementation mechanisms intended for enhancing coordination and collaboration to achieve the 2030 Agenda in Sweden and, therefore, not necessarily be seen as purposive implementation per se. Instead, it can be seen as an attempt to coordinate the 2030 Agenda within and between organizations.

3. Theoretical frameworks

This section offers a short review of the previous research as well as theories used in this study. The research uses an organizational theoretical perspective whereby theories of Sociological institutionalism and collaborative governance are used to understand how these chosen public agencies work to achieve coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden. With their explanatory and descriptive endowments or strengths, these theories will hopefully shed light on how we can further understand the organizational arrangements,

behaviors, and actions of the agencies to achieve a well-coordinated collaboration to facilitate the implementation of 2030 agenda.

3.1 Previous research

There are several research reviews written about the subject of policy coordination and implementation within the discipline of Public administration in general. This means that scholars gave the subject importance in the field of Public administrations. There are different theoretical and empirical examples about how public organizations should or can implement and integrate policies to harmonize policy programs and handle the conflicting and divergent interests by integrating them into the stage of implementation.

Academic articles, textbooks, and academic reports on sustainable development policies and the 2030 Agenda have been used to gain knowledge and understanding of the subject. The internet is used as a tool to search for academic articles on the Public administration Journals, whereby collaboration, coordination and governance concepts against 2030 Agenda were searched both in English and Swedish. The official websites of agencies and governments are also considered valuable sources.

Previously, researchers focus mainly on the possibilities and challenges with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden. For example, Gassen et al., (2018) studied the Agenda at the local level in Nordic countries. They looked at the challenges and possibilities that local governments in Nordic countries encounter when implementing the SDGs. They argued that the lack of initiatives and engagement among actors could hinder the implementation of SDGs locally. Gassen et al., (2018) argue that increased collaboration and Local governments' experience in sustainable development, as well as politics, would have facilitated the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Moreover, Gustafsson, et al., (2018) contend that the lack of measurements and control of the results of whether actors have contributed to the 2030 Agenda or not, halts any successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The use of common language and describe and define the meaning of sustainability is seemed facilitative for the implementation of SDGs (see Gustafsson et al., 2018).

Furthermore, some researchers looked at the subject and came with a different conclusion than the above-presented sources. For example, Howes et al. (2017) underlined the importance of communication, organization, and coordination to enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, the research conducted by Howes et al. (2017) focuses mainly on environmental sustainability and, therefore, neither covers the 2030 Agenda nor the Swedish

government agencies' role. Likewise, previous research did not study the role of the Swedish government agencies in the context of their role to contribute of the 2030 Agenda, a vacuum that this research is going to address. However, previous studies on this subject have convincingly provided a solid base for this thesis.

The case of Sweden and the government's ability to implement the SDG goals has been regarded as successful (SCB, 2017). Moreover, scholars paid attention to how the Government Offices of Sweden work with the Agenda at the national level and the challenges that the government offices encounter. Current research concluded that Sweden possesses both the capacity (knowledge and resources) to implement the Agenda. However, there is still much work to do, at least at the intermediate level, by creating new forms and designs that are different from the current way of coordinating the 2030 agenda policies (Jacobsson, 2019).

Jacobsson's analysis is about the Government Offices of Sweden and its work of implementing and integrating 2030 Agenda policies into a Swedish context. From a theoretical viewpoint, Jacobsson's analysis provides an essential narrative about how the Government Offices of Sweden work in order to achieve policy integration within the Government Offices of Sweden. The different theoretical frameworks used in the report also shed light on the challenges and opportunities that Sweden faces when implementing the SDGs. However, the aim and scope of the study did not attend the question of how Swedish public agencies work with the Agenda in a situation where the government itself obscure critics from different parts of the society.

Generally, from a theoretical point of view and in an international context, many scholars engaged how collaborative governance can be achieved. One of the most prominent scholars in collaborative governance is Chris Ansell and Alison Gash (2008), with their foundational work of collaborative governance in theory and practice. Arguing that new forms of governance had emanated, taking the place of the adversarial and managerial mode of policymaking and policy implementation (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Their meta-analytical study on collaborative governance, the authors argue that three main contingencies are vital when actors are engaging in collaborative governance. First, time is a valuable asset that needs to be considered. Ansell & Gash (2008) argue that the process of collaborative governance is time-consuming and therefore requires a long time to be effective (see also Imperial, 2005; Warner, 2006; Coglianese and Allen, 2003).

Collaborative governance commends mostly a consensus and trust-building among different stakeholders. However, this will also take time to be realized. Unless

consensus is built, achieving harmonization of any conflicting policies will lead to unsuccessful implementation (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Secondly, trust is another variable that is crucial for collaborative governance to be fruitful. Third, the authors underline the importance of interdependence (see also Vangen and Huxham (2003). In their analysis, Ansell & Gash (2008) argue that even if there are higher conflict situations where even trust among actors is lower, could collaboration still be conducive for collaborative governance if there is higher interdependence among the stakeholders (ibid). Moreover, other scholars have shown great eagerness to study collaborative governance. Even though the presented research review has its relevance and provides solid ground for this paper, at least on the theoretical level, their literature did not cover the issue of Agenda 2030 and how Swedish governmental agencies work with it.

Interestingly, Ansell & Gash call for the need to test their model of governance in collaborative governance in different collaborative contexts, which is, of course, an experimental trial that this paper aims to do.

The image of coordination of how implementing organization regard different coordination arrangement has also been highlighted by Molenveld et al., 2020. The implementing organizations face challenges when coordinating the horizontal policy programs (HPP). One of these challenges is how these implementing organizations can be motivated to contribute to the coordination of such cross-cutting policy issues. Their study has revealed three main images, such as central frame setting, networking via boundary spanners, and lastly, coordination beyond window addressing. (ibid).

Hence one can argue that the role of the Swedish authorities and the attempts made by these organizations seemed muted or unattended in the current analysis and research concerning the implementation and coordination of the 2030 agenda policies in Sweden. With the help of both primary and secondary data, this thesis will use collaborative governance and sociological institutionalism, aiming to gain a broader understanding of how the Swedish government agencies work to enhance the realization of the 2030 agenda implementation in Sweden.

So, this study intends to fill three main functions. Firstly, the research develops the descriptive and explanatory strength of collaborative governance by applying it in the case of Swedish governmental agencies and how they work with the implementation of SDGs. Secondly, other organizational theories, such as Neo-institutionalism, will be used to weigh their explanatory strengths against this case study. The aim is to contribute much to the field of Public governance and management in an era with raising challenges that demand more

collaboration and cooperation between multiple stakeholders to solve problems that demand innovative ways to be solved.

Lastly, the research provides an empirical analysis of the 2030 Agenda and how Swedish public authorities work with it and the challenges that they face in the process of collaboration to make coordinated policies within and outside their organizations. Thus, it is anticipated that the paper is relevant from a social perspective since a sustainable world is a prosperous world.

3.2 Collaborative governance

In a collaborative environment, consensus decision-making, dialogue, and creation of trust among involved actors can lead to the generation of a conducive atmosphere for organizations to gain essential elements which are helpful in their course of looking for the realization of harmonized policies implementation (Emerson et al., 2011).

According to Ansell & Gash (2008), six different main criteria must be found in collaborative governance. First, the public institutions that have broader responsibilities have to initiate the discussion for collaborative governance. Second, the participants must include not only public institutions but also non-state actors who are affected by the issues addressed in the discussion. Third, participants must be involved in the decision-making process. Therefore their role in the forum or discussions should not be limited to mere counseling, preferably active participation in the whole process of collaboration.

The fourth criterion for collaborative governance is about the argument that everything has to be formally organized, whereby meetings and dialogues are collective. The fifth, which seems to be the most difficult, is that decisions that are made should be based on consensus. Last but not least, the focus of collaboration should focus on public issues (Ansell & Gash, 2008). It means that the problems addressed in the collaborative governance should be related to the public actors' responsibility areas, and therefore not be linked with other sectors like profit or non-profit sectors.

Other scholars in the field argue that the collaborative governance does not need to contain all these criteria for it be considered as collaborative governance (Agrawal and Lemos, 2007; see also Emerson and Murchie, 2010, Emerson et al., 2011).

The theoretical framework for collaborative governance is a broad concept. It can be used on a large scale in the field of public administration with different conceptual areas — such as collaborative governance management, Joint-up government or networks, multi-partner governance, participatory governance, depending on the interested research area (Emerson et al., 2011). With such a comprehensive and open scope, collaborative governance

can be a suitable analytical tool for the understanding of how government agencies work with the issue of the 2030 Agenda.

Another aspect that also deserves to be mentioned is the broadness of collaborative governance. That includes numerous components and processes of collaborative governance, ranging from system context, collaborative dynamics, external drivers as well as actions and impacts and adaptations, which can affect or result in collaborative engagements. That allows scholars to study either the whole process of collaborative governance or address some components or elements in the process of collaboration (Emerson et al., 2011). Moreover, it comprises also several indicators or variables for researchers to analyze the causality pathways and internal dynamics to understand the performance of the collaborative governance process (ibid).

Since the aim of this paper was to examine how the Swedish government agencies coordinate their work with the implementation of 2030 Agenda policies as well as the challenges and opportunities faced, the collaboration dynamics among agencies and the existing external driving forces for collaboration will be examined. Additionally, Collaborative governance can be used at all levels of governance, whether regional, local, national, international, or even in public-private partnerships (Emerson et al., 2011). That is what makes collaborative governance an appropriate governance system that is not limited to a particular form of governance for specific organizations or entities.

Collaborative governance has become a common concept in public administration. Many definitions were given the concept of collaborative governance. The most persuasive definition of collaborative governance used in this study is:

"*Processes and structures for decision-making and management of public policy that involves actors constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government and public, private and civic spheres to accomplish a public purpose that would otherwise not be achieved*" (Emerson et al., 2011).

Collaboration in a multilayered context involves political, legal, socio-economic, environmental, and other influential factors that can affect the direction and output of collaboration. In the same way, these factors can also create opportunities that facilitate the entire system of collaboration (Emerson et al., 2011). Regarding this case, the Swedish government agencies and how they coordinate or collaborate the 2030 Agenda policies can be affected by many factors. From collaborative governance, such factors include resource conditions, policy, and mandate from the government and power relations within various levels of organizations and degrees of interconnection within existing networks as well as various

interests that exist (ibid). Therefore, the content of the context must be noticed since the context may contain several actors whose behaviors and actions can influence collaboration.

Besides, collaborative governance is more appropriate in democratic states or organizations, as it encourages the involvement of all parts through dialogue and participation, which will increase citizens' engagement and social capital among citizens. In the same way, citizens are getting closer to politicians and public policymakers. Through direct democracy processes, citizens can use their voice, which leads to a more responsive citizen-centered government (see Henton et al., 2005: 5).

It is also argued that when citizens' involvement is strengthened, and a responsive citizen-centered government takes its form, the level of openness, accountability and legitimacy within government institutions becomes higher (Emerson et al., 2011). However, there is a drawback with this governance style as it cannot offer generalizability and usability across different settings, sectors, geographical and temporary scales, and arenas and process mechanisms (Emerson et al., 2011).

In conclusion, three main mechanisms may give us some explanation about how these agencies work from collaborative governance's perspective.

First, the thesis looks at what are the driving forces for collaborative engagement among the agencies, if it does exist. Secondly, the research uses this theory to understand the collaborative dynamics among the agencies and what kind of elements and components such as institutional arrangements, shared motivations among and within the Swedish government agencies when it comes to coordinating their activities to enhance the implementation of 2030 Agenda. Lastly, the theory provides some variables which can affect the different phases of collaborative governance embraced by the agencies, both positively and negatively. Which will then help us to understand both the opportunities and challenges that these organizations encounter.

3.3 Sociological institutionalism

Another theory used in this paper is the theory of Sociological institutionalism. This theory can help us to understand why organizations work the way they do and what could be the explanatory factors that can explain why organizations and their participants behave somehow similarly even if their interests or assignments differ. It also explains the institutional structures of organizations and how this affects human actions. These are essential factors that need to be understood in the policy coordination efforts of institutions.

In contrast, collaborative governance theory does not provide elaborated explanations about the role of institutions and their impact on individuals. Instead, the collaborative governance provides a normative and descriptive picture of how collaborative governance should be conducted and those factors that drive organizations towards collaborative engagement (Ansell and Gash, 2008, Emerson et al., 2011). When collaborative governance considers collaboration and consensus decision-making as the end and the ultimate goal, sociological institutionalism theory will argue differently.

Sociological institutionalism became one of the schools of thought in the field of organization theory. This theory challenges the traditional perceptions of Institutionalism that focused on rationality and historical mechanisms in understanding why organizations prefer to employ specific forms of structures, procedures, and symbols to interact with environments in which they work (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

Contrast to other institutionalists, sociological institutionalists argue that organizations do not embrace the institutional forms and procedures simply because they are rational and efficient in handling the work at hand. Instead, these procedures and forms are culturally specific practices and connected to existing myths and ceremonies originated from the societies in which the organizations operate (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

Furthermore, the objective of assimilating cultural practices into the organizations is not to increase the formal means-ends efficiency but just as results of the process linked with the transferences and dissemination of cultural practices (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

Institutional isomorphism is the central point for the approach of Sociological institutionalism, where the similarities and diffusion of similar practices, procedures, and symbols across organizations explain more about organizational structures (DiMaggio and Powell,1983). When looking at how the Swedish government agencies work to collaborate and coordinate the 2030 Agenda, the sociological institutionalist approach will be used to see whether there is a homogeneity of what these organizations are doing when working with the 2030 Agenda. In other words, the approach will be helpful to see whether there are some institutional isomorphisms (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) in how these authorities are dealing with the 2030 Agenda.

According to Meyer (1979) and also Fennel (1980), there are two categories of isomorphism, namely institutional isomorphism, and competitive isomorphism. The competitive isomorphism usually occurs in systems in which rationality and market

competitions prevail whereby competition, niche change, and fitness measures are focused (Hannan and Freeman, 1977).

The competitive version of isomorphism does explain some critical aspects of organizational similarities. However, it does not show the full picture of the modern world organizations and, more specifically, about public organizations that lack the competitive nature that is associated with interest-oriented companies or corporations which operate in a free market (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

The second isomorphism is an institutional one, and it is this interpretation of isomorphism that can be used to shed light on why governmental organizations are imitating with one another and fall into similar forms through the process of isomorphism. Public organizations compete for different purposes than companies. DiMaggio and Powell (1983), argue that the reason that public organization competes with one another is not just for resources or customers but for political power and institutional legitimacy for social fitness (see also Whetten and Aldrich 1979).

The sociological institutionalist approach acquires three main features. Firstly, this approach defines institutions broadly by including formal rules with symbol systems, moral templates, and cognitive scripts that produce "frames of meaning", which guide human actions (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Such a broad definition will have significant inferences and implications. For example, it challenges the traditional distinctions made by political scientists who draw lines between institutional explanation (as organizational structures) and cultural explanations (as shared values and attitudes) by defining culture itself as an institution.

It also determines the relationship between individuals' actions, behaviors, and institutions by arguing that the institutions shape the actions and attitudes of the individuals through the process of socialization. Therefore, the preferences, actions, behavior, and identity of the social actions are constituted and embedded in the institutional forms.

Sociological institutionalists do not deny that the fact that individuals are purposive actors and goal-oriented rational actors, but the approach argues that what we perceive as "rationality" is itself socially constructed (Hall and Taylor,1996).

Another aspect that is worth mentioning is that the sociological institutionalist also explains how institutional forms and practices emerge and change over time. Unlike rationalists, who describe institutional development on the basis of instrumentality, the sociological institutionalist argues that the organizations adopt new practices to enhance their social legitimacy of the environment and its workers in broader cultural circumstances.

With that reason, sociological institutionalism can be complementary to understand how the institutional practices, rules, and cultures can contribute to meanings-making through the use of common language, dissemination of knowledge, symbols about the issue of 2030 Agenda. Moreover, this theory helps us to trace whether other demanding mechanisms set pressures on the agencies and their workers. Such mechanisms may include evaluation, measurement, or control mechanisms that are used for the legitimization of actions of the agencies. More specifically, much attention will be paid to whether the agencies use mechanisms such as dissemination of knowledge, building a joint knowledge base, benchmarking, and professionalism to address the 2030 Agenda (Jacobsson 2004). These discursive mechanisms can help us to understand how the chosen Swedish public agencies work with the Agenda 2030 and whether institutional isomorphism occurs.

4. **Methodology**

This chapter discusses the research approach, design, and method of analysis used to generate an empirical data. It also explores the rationale behind the case selection, ethics, and validity and reliability of the research.

4.1 Qualitative research

The paper uses a qualitative case study design in order to answer the research question. Qualitative research method can be used when the researcher is interested in discourses, meanings, and words rather than statistical quantifications in the process of data collection and analysis (Bryman 2012: 388). During the process of data collection, the research embraces an interpretative method to analyze and interpret the content of articles, reports, newspaper as well as transcribed interviews. Social science research can apply both quantitative and qualitative research methods. However, social researchers stress the importance of recognizing the ontological and epistemological differences between these practices.

Researches based on qualitative analysis are mostly interested in understanding social sciences by adopting a holistic and hermeneutic approach to examine and interpret the social world (Bryman, 2012). In contrast, research based on a quantitative perspective has a different viewpoint when it comes to explaining the social world. Unlike its counterpart, the quantitative methodology has a positivistic attitude towards the study of social sciences by postulating the possibility of reaching objective and deductive findings that are independent of human intuition or manipulation (ibid).

Another difference between the two cultures, qualitative and quantitative research is the issue of generalizability of the results. Qualitative researchers do not crave for generalizable findings. However, the opposite philosophy of science asseverates that even in social studies, the results need to be generalizable to the larger population (Bryman, 2012, Goertz and Mahoney 2012). The two cultures have similarities and dissimilarities. Goertz and Mahoney (2012), for instance, argued that the difference between constructivist and positivist approaches is positioned in various areas. Such areas of difference may include, the assumed research questions, the methods of data collection and analysis as well as the method of inferences (Goertz and Mahoney 2012).

However, other scholars argue that nothing prevents social scientists from combining both these two methodologies to analyze and understand the social world that we interested in studying (see King et al., 1994). The arguments framed by King and his co-authors is an interesting, since they try to minimize the drifting distances between the two approaches.

However, such argument encounters challenging arguments with the assertion of not to amalgamate two different approaches which have different origins and preference. For example, Goertz and Mahoney (2012) states over fifteen differences between the paradigms that a researcher has to consider when studying in social sciences.

Since the aim of this study is to understand how the Swedish governmental agencies work to integrate the 2030 Agenda policies in their operations, a qualitative research approach is deemed suitable because of two main reasons.

Firstly, the main objective of this paper is not to generate generalizable results that apply to other contexts or cases. Secondly, the research design that is used is a case study that will give us a more in-depth or broader understanding of the selected case. Therefore, results cannot be blindly generalized to how the 2030 Agenda is coordinated in other governmental agencies in Sweden without considering the difference and similarities among agencies in specific contexts. With such considerations, this paper uses qualitative research methodology, which intends the provision of an in-depth understanding of the case study.

Even though this thesis does not aim to claim generalizable results, nothing prevents us from presuming that agencies with similar characteristics as those chosen in this case study, work with the 2030 Agenda in similar ways. In that sense, one can argue that the results from this case study can be generalized to similar contexts. That allows this case study to contribute to the scientific development in researched area (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

To gain a broader picture of the examined case study, the author collected information through interviews.

The researcher has also studied document studies as a supplement to the interviews to generate a qualitative and nuanced understanding of how government agencies coordinate the work with the 2030 Agenda. The information received through interviews is based on participants' appraisal or assessment of the matter in question, which can lead to tendencies that lean to the respondents' views.

Since this cannot be avoided in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012), some more documents are analyzed to gain a broader understanding of the studied case in order to diminish any distortion in the research results.

4.2 Research design

The design of the research is a case study since the research examines the case of coordination of the 2030 Agenda in government agencies. The method of case study design is one of the most used if a researcher aims to gain an in-depth understanding of cases or phenomena (Bryman, 2012). The thesis studies four different agencies: *Public Employment Agency, Sweden's Innovation Agency, ESF council, and the County Administrative Board of Stockholm.*

The government agencies in this paper have partly different mandates; some have sectoral roles such as the Public Employment Agency, whose mission is to contribute to a well-functioning labor market. Sweden's Innovation Agency and County Administrative Boards, assume cross-sectoral roles, such as building innovation capacity that contributes to sustainable growth in all sectors, and the County Administrative Boards have a coordinating role in many policy areas.

The agencies are organized under different departments. The Innovation Agency is governed by the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, which works with business and industrial policy and Innovations. The ESF Council and Public Employment Agency are regulated under the Ministry of Employment. They are responsible for the labor market, the work environment, gender equality, human rights at the national level, children's rights, and the introduction of newly arrived immigrants are also part of the missions (ams.se, esf.se). ESF Council is lesser than all other agencies, which makes it relevant for the criterion related to the size. Additionally, the County Administrative Boards is managed under the Ministry of Finance works with issues concerning economic policies, taxes, central government administration, financial markets, and consumer policy (government.se)

All these policy areas that managed by these agencies are significant for achievement for sustainable development.

With such differences in responsibility areas and other prerequisites like mandates from the government, I hope that this case study will give us a more comprehensive picture of how government agencies work with 2030 Agenda.

4.2.1 Rationale for the case selection

Sweden has around 260 government agencies that have different assignments, size, and budget sizes. These differences mean that they also have different conditions for working with sustainable development. Smaller agencies use fewer resources than larger agencies to develop their sustainability work on their initiative (SOU 2019:15).

Different authorities also have different competencies; for example, authorities with missions in the environmental area have more knowledge of the environmental dimension of sustainable development than authorities in other areas of activity (SOU 2019:15). Those agencies from the environmental department and those that work with foreign policies and development cooperation are not included in the selection. The reason is to avoid any asymmetrical comparisons as those agencies have prior knowledge about sustainable development and its environmental dimension (SOU 2019:15).

The thesis looks closer to four different agencies with a distinguishable difference in size (annual budget, number of employees), and department. Some agencies have specific mandate from the government concerned the 2030 Agenda and whether their core mission is an issue-specific or general mandate which is not specific to a particular sector. The aim is to provide a broader picture of different authorities and 2030 Agenda and see whether there are similarities or differences about how they work with the 2030 Agenda.

Therefore, I have selected four agencies such as Sweden's Innovation Agency, Public Employment Agency, EES Council, and the County Administrative Board of Stockholm.

The case study of this research is how the government agencies organize or coordinate their work to implement the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, the research looks at four different government agencies who have different characteristics when it comes to their mandate from the government concerning the Agenda, the size and how long they have come regarding the work of the 2030 Agenda, and whether they are participating in any collaboration with other Agencies.

To gain a broader overview of how Swedish government agencies work with 2030 Agenda, these different agencies can show a broader picture of how Swedish government agencies organize their work to stimulate the work of implementing 2030 Agenda in Sweden from an administrative level. The below table shows the different characteristics of these chosen agencies that have been considered during the selection of the agencies.

Table 1: Selected cases

Government agencies	Mandate for Agenda through the appropriation directions	Agenda's integration into agencies' daily operations (based on self-assessment).	Collaboration with other Agencies on 2030 Agenda issues
Administrative Board of Stockholm	Yes	2030 Agenda does not permeate the entire operations of the Agency	Yes
Sweden's Innovation Agency	Yes	2030 Agenda permeates the entire operations of the Agency.	Yes
Swedish Public Employment Agency	No	Not yet, the agency has recently included the Agenda into its strategies and more work is needed.	Yes
Swedish ESF Council	No	Is at the initial phase, where a new function for the Agenda is established newly.	Yes

4.3 Interviews

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews during the process of data collection. The primary purpose of the interviews was to gain knowledge and understanding about how the public authorities try to integrate the 2030 Agenda into their daily operational activities.

The questions asked to respondents were based on the research questions whereby the respondents discussed and answered the questions openly. Interview questions are formulated in an open-ended character so that the respondents not to answer them with bare yes or no. For example, questions[2] start with interrogative words like "how", "what" "tell" so on so forth.

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[2] See the Appendix at the end of the paper to see the interview guide.

Since all informants speak Swedish language as their mother tongue, the interviews are conducted in Swedish to avoid any misunderstandings that would have negatively affected the results of this study. The interview guide, written in Swedish, is also attached as an appendix at the end of the paper. If, there were some areas where the respondents needed to emphasize, the researcher asked respondents further supplementary questions to gain more coherent and clear answers.

The selections of the interviews can be varying (see Kavale and Torhell 1997). During the interview process, the snowball method has been an excellent guide to some extent. That means that existing contact and network among the interviewees was a rewarding tactic and provided the possibility to reach further respondents who could provide more information (May, 2001).

In the initial phase, I used the internet by visiting the website of the interested public agencies to see whether there are Units or departments which are responsible for the 2030 agenda or sustainable development in general. On some websites, it was clear to trace information about the background and contact information about who was the responsible person or Unit for 2030 Agenda in a given agency. Nevertheless, on some other websites, it was not apparent to find who is responsible for the Agenda. Therefore, general requests through email is used to reach those who are responsible for the 2030 Agenda. Most of the request emails are forwarded to the Unit or the individual who is responsible for the coordination 2030 Agenda.

The total number of informants consisted of seven individuals. Four informants are from the four different agencies in this study. They have an essential function in related to the 2030 Agenda in their respective organizations and outside these organizations, with the title as 2030 Agenda Coordinators or Sustainable strategists. Two other informants come from other different agencies than those included in this research. However, one of them is responsible for coordination of the DG[3] Forum, a platform for the collaboration between Swedish government agencies for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the year 2020. One other informant had been responsible for the coordination of the DG forum for the last year. The seventh informant is the current national coordinator for 2030 Agenda, who is responsible for the

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[3] The DG Forum is a gathering platform for the Director generals and other heads of Agencies who are willing to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achieve the global sustainable development goals.

coordination of the 2030 Agenda nationally. The average time for interviews was one hour per interview

All informants have a currently important role for the coordination of the 2030 Agenda in the government agencies. For example, they have in-depth knowledge about sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda at the governmental level.

Likewise, they have a specific role in the coordination of the Agenda. Moreover, the national coordinator has a broader role that stretches from a governmental, regional, and local level.

Therefore, their experience, knowledge, and their current roles make them emblematic of their organization. Hence their answers can somehow be identified with the agencies they represent.

The generation of all the interviews conducted through phone calls, and therefore no physical contacts were made. As a result of the epidemic, corona crises, no face to face meeting with informants occurred in all the cases. However, to prevent any data loss or any inconvenience, six of the interviews are recorded for further analysis. Recording the interviews allows the researcher to do a thorough analysis of the interviewees' responses, thus enabling the researcher to make repeated reviews of the interviewer's response (Bryman, 2012). The 7th interview, which was the shortest, was not recorded. However, short notes are made whereby the keywords and phrases were written down by the researcher for further analysis.

The interview questions asked are formulated in an open-ended way to avoid incohesive answers that do not stimulate any further intellectual problematization. Questions are also arranged in categories depending on who the respondent is. The four respondents who represented the agencies have been approached with somehow similar questions (see appendix). For example, the first part of the interview questions intended to warm up the conversation as well as gain knowledge about the professional background and motivation of the individuals in their roles. The second part mainly focuses on the organization of the interviewees and how they work with the coordination, implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and whether the organizational structure has any relevance for the work. The same part of questions contains questions regarding collaboration and cooperation with other actors, and challenges and opportunities that can be associated with work with 2030 Agenda.

Further questions are based on the Agenda and complexity and how it coordinated and what mandate given by the government about the Agenda as well as activities or mechanisms used to integrate the Agenda policies into their core operational activities of the agencies. Questions to the National coordinator were more diminutive and generalized and

more hints seeking. The individuals from the director-general forum (DG forum) were asked by some means the same questions about the role DG forum and how it contributes to the implementation and understanding of 2030 Agenda. All these questions can be found in the appendix.

4.3.1 Other secondary and primary sources

The paper analyzes public investigation reports to generate a comprehensive picture. The 2030 Agenda delegation produces one report, a committee commissioned by the government to support and stimulate Sweden's implementation of the 2030 Agenda (dir. 2016: 18). The delegation submitted several interim reports to the government under the period of its mandate. However, it is the last report submitted in 2019, which is used in this paper since it contains relevant information and proposals and assessments on how the work to implement to 2030 Agenda has to continue in the future (SOU 2019:13).

Another material that seemed pertinent in this analysis is the interim report released by the Swedish Agency for Public Management (Statskontoret in Swedish), which is a Governmental organization for analyses and evaluations of state and state-funded programs or activities.

What is engaging with these investigative reports is that they contain detailed information about how the Governmental Agencies and other public actors such as the municipalities and regions work with the 2030 Agenda, briefing the challenges and opportunities faced (SOU 2019: 19).

Sweden's National Action Plan for 2030 Agenda, as well as Sweden's report to the UN on 2030 Agenda, are deemed relevant. Hence these materials provide relevant facts about the role of Swedish governmental agencies in the work of achieving the SDGs in Sweden. Other documents such as the appropriation directions, missives, and agencies' annual reports between 2018 – 2019 were also analyzed to gain an extensive understanding of the 2030 Agenda and the Government agencies in this study.

4.4 Method of analysis

To analyze the collected materials, the study has used a qualitative content method of analysis. This method of analysis interprets both the latent and manifest meanings from the content of text data (Hsieh and Shannon,2005). Summative, conventional, or directed approaches in the qualitative content analysis have been discussed in the literature (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2000). The conventional technique of qualitative content analysis is used when research is interested in describing a phenomenon. In contrast, the summative

technique is applied if the researcher interested in the identification and quantification of words or contents in the text, aiming to understand the contextual use of the content (ibid). The *conventional* approach had its contribution in this paper since the interviews and other materials used in this research composed descriptive information about the phenomenon; the 2030 Agenda. Since no quantification or statistical inferences were interested, the *direct* approach of content analysis was also deemed useful to analyze the contents of the research materials. The central tenet of the *directed* qualitative content analysis is the content analysis is guided by some prior theoretical underpinnings about the phenomenon (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

What Hsieh and Shannon (2005) mean is that using the *directed* and *conventional* approaches in qualitative analysis give the research a cumulative effect to validate or extend the existing theories while not keeping inductiveness at bay, making the analysis a mixture of theoretically and empirically influenced.

Furthermore, Dalen (2015), argue that it is essential to describe how the researcher approached the empirical materials for the study to increase the replicability or and reliability. During the analysis of the material, I have used the thematization approach. Most parts of the interview guide contained some specific themes based on the interested area of research, such as Coordination, Collaboration, Organization, Mandate, Challenges, and Opportunities. Even though the central themes in the interview guides provided some guidance to the objective of the research, several other themes discussed during the interviews are considered, allowing flexibility and further enrichment (Dalen, 2015).

Dalen assures the importance of not strictly sticking to the predetermined themes and therefore encourages openness throughout the process of analysis to discover new findings in the materials. A conviction that resulted in consideration of other themes that occurred during the interviews. Themes like *Dissemination of knowledge*, *Communication*, *Shared knowledge*, *Professionalism*, and *Leadershi*p appeared in the materials. Therefore, the materials are thematized according to these themes, which will be analyzed in the substantial analysis. Interviews are a valuable source of information for researchers who are interested in replicating the study since interview sources provide transparency (Dalen, 2015). Therefore, the empirical results in this paper contain citations from interviewees to allow transparency for future researchers, as the Dalen suggests. The interview excerpts also contribute considerable empirical evidence for the researcher to support or disapprove an argument.

4.5 Ethics

Social research must fulfill three ethical aspects: informed consent, confidentiality, and consequences in dealing with ethical aspects during the research processes (Kvale, 1997). The researcher informed the interviewees about the general purpose of the research. That means those who participated in the research could themselves decided whether they wanted to participate in the interview and cancel their participation without any further conditions. However, none of the participants canceled the interviews, which allowed the researcher to continue the study. It was necessary to record some of the interviews, and therefore, the researcher informed the participants about it and requested their consent through either information letter or by saying it orally through the phone call. The researcher has thus also obtained consent from the interviewees for recording the interviews.

According to (Kvale, 1997), confidentiality assumes that the researcher must handle the information and tasks that identify the interviewees and their identity (ibid). Therefore, interviewees in this study have been promised anonymity because of the ethically sensitive information they may give out. The thesis interviewers' information has been anonymized. Anonymizing the interviewees would not have any consequences on this research. The aim of the paper has not been to gain a deeper understanding of the Government agencies per se, which may or may not jeopardize the interviewees' reputation in their workplaces. In general, personal information of the respondents is dealt with under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2016/679), which is a regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy in the EU and EES regions.

4.6 Reliability and validity

Reliable and valid research is a vital ingredient in social science research. However, depending on the chosen research methodology and the epistemological viewpoint of the researcher on the real-world plays a crucial role when it comes to two these criteria (Bryman, 2012). For example, the concept of validity is mostly associated with the positivist approach's perspective, or in other words, researches based on quantitative methods, which are concerned about issues of validity, reliability, and generalizability (Noble and Smith, 2015) see also (Bryman, 2012).

From a quantitative perspective, research is valid and reliable if the findings fulfill three main criteria: 1) that there is consistency between the theoretical denotations and the operational indicators, 2) that the research measures what aiming to measure, 3) that systematic errors are absent, 4) that the findings are generalizable to a larger population

(Esaiasson et al., 2012). Hence, qualitative research, like this paper based on a constructivist and hermeneutic approach, will be unable to claim such an achievement.

However, Noble and Smith (2015) argue that there are substitutional strategies that can be applied in the process of qualitative data collection, including trustworthiness, neutrality, and transparency. During the whole process of data collection and analysis, much attention was paid to these aspects through a constant critical reflection upon personal biases and the relevance of methods of analysis. However, given the fact that this research is based on interpretation of interviews and other primary or secondary sources, the researcher's experiences and analytical capacity may have their consequences in this research (Bryman ,2012).

5. Empirical results

This chapter provides descriptive empirical results from the interviews and other analyzed materials. For transparency and authenticity of thesis, some of the interviewees' responses are cited and interpreted.

5.1 DG forum as Joint action for collaboration

The DG forum is a formally organized platform for the heads of the agencies. Meaning, the role of other actors from business or nonprofit sectors is not included in the actual processes of the Forum. No private companies or civil society organizations signed the letter of intent to collaborate on the achievement of 2030 Agenda. However, the role of private and nonprofit organizations was in consultative character.

In this research, the four agencies are members of the DG forum, a platform in which over seventy agencies are members and signed the Declaration of intent. The main intention of the DG forum is to facilitate collaboration between Swedish authorities for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The DG forum fills three main functions, namely; knowledge enhancement, exchanges of experiences through dialogue, and sharing solutions as well as an inspirational platform. These activities can enable coherence and collaboration that facilitates the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden.

However, collaboration among Agencies can be challenging to achieve when the mandates given by the governments are very different.

> "*In some cases, the collaboration between different government agencies can become more difficult when these agencies have mandates in very different sectors. This does not have to be a problem per se since there can still be relevant areas for collaboration in terms of e.g., change processes. However, in*

some cases, collaboration can become more difficult if the partners involved have very different mandates since each government agency is obliged to work within the framework of its strategy" (Respondent E).

5.1.1 Creation of common knowledge

One primary purpose for the inception of the DG forum is learning to enhance knowledge to understand the problems and solutions to the 2030 Agenda. Systems thinking, team learning, and building shared visions are some essential aspects that the DG forum addresses. Through collaboration, learning will contribute to the authorities' capacity to implement the Agenda 2030 within their respective missions.

> "*The DG Forum conducts a strategic dialogue, enable greater coherence, and develop forms of concrete collaborations around the implementation of Agenda 2030. We contribute expert knowledge in the dialogue and the work for sustainable development*" (Respondent F).

Another collaborative plan in which the most critical and challenging aim of the collaboration is also is the development of innovative methods. In this area, the main aim is to contribute a faster transition to a sustainable society by working, testing, and designing new ways of dealing with challenges with the spirit of togetherness and collaboration.

According to the DG forum, the second collaboration plan is to create Information Bank to solve the challenges of a shared digital workspace. The prevailing Information Bank will be used to assemble and share different policy documents and best examples of 2030 Agenda's work.

> "*The idea with the DG forum is to share information about how the 2030 Agenda policies are integrated into the authorities' operational activities and annual reports. It may also enhance learning between the authorities regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden*" (Respondent F).

Experience exchange is another function that the DG forum tries to fill in. The director generals, together with their operative team, meet once a year to exchange experiences and sharing good examples, smart solutions, and even challenges concerning the Agenda.

However, to concretize their collaboration, the DG forum adopts collaboration plans to enhance the power of actions by focusing on three main areas. The authorities adopt a sustainability barometer, which is based on self-assessment, in order to make their words into action. The barometer contains several indicators that are used to measure how involved individuals experience and can assess themselves about sustainable development and particularly the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Such measuring indicators are based on whether the Agenda is prioritized, communicated, or incorporated in the policy strategies.

> "*The idea of the Sustainability Barometer is to create a tool for mapping the authorities' sustainability work, its strengths, and areas of development. In addition to self-esteem and dialogue, it contributes to increased learning between authorities on sustainability work*" (Respondent F).

This means that the sustainability barometer and its usage by the authorities will help the authorities evaluate their strengths and weakness when it comes to how far they have come with the issue of 2030 Agenda and the challenges they face. Practically, those agencies with higher scores on the barometer will share their experience and knowledge with others with fewer scores. Hence learning and knowledge are enhanced between the authorities.

5.2 Professionalism

During the interview and material collection process, the research aimed to understand the role of professionalism and how the agencies try to work with the coordination of 2030 Agenda into their operational activities. Although there have some other actions or schemes to integrate the 2030 Agenda policies into core functions of the agencies, professionalism and the role of professionals were visible in all the four public agencies studied. The agencies hired professionals who have long experience in the field of sustainability.

> "*I have long experience in communication and sustainability from previous work, and I think it is my competence and experience that led me to be here.*" (Respondent B).

From the citation, one can understand that the person has long experience in sustainable development and communication. Experience in sustainable development is described as the most crucial skill or competence that seemed valuable for the work of the 2030 Agenda in all agencies in this study. Another respondent gave a similar account.

"*I have experience and knowledge about the Agenda and sustainable development, I worked, for example, with these questions in nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and universities, whereby I had different roles, for example, as coordinator and program manager.*" (Respondent E).

In most cases, the respondents mentioned that their role with 2030 Agenda is relatively new. Most of these individuals who are responsible for the 2030 Agenda are recruited in the last two years, or their previous roles in the agencies are modified.

This means that knowledge about the 2030 Agenda among the workers in the agencies was somehow limited. One of the respondents was clear when describing the level of knowledge about the 2030 Agenda in the Agency before they took the new role.

"*I realized that my colleagues, including managers, are satisfied with the limited definitions of sustainability, which is mostly only from an environmental perspective. Nevertheless, the main key driving force for contributing to sustainable development for our organization should not only be how we travel or sort out garbage; it should be more of how we can influence the Labor market, Moreover, how can we enforce labor market policy decisions to achieve a sustainable labor market.*" (Respondent B).

It has been shown how colleagues defined or understood the 2030 Agenda from one dimension. The 2030 Agenda has been linked only to the environment. It means such a perspective omits the other two dimensions, like social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. Another aspect that can be derived from the above citation is that the fact that it was not only the employees who had seen sustainable development from an environmental perspective, even the managers perceived the term of 2030 Agenda as something related to only the protection of the environment. Someone with broader knowledge in sustainability was therefore needed.

"I *can understand that there was the need to hire a new person who works with 2030 Agenda. Because if the responsibility of the 2030 Agenda is placed on the table of the existing environmental strategists, the Agenda work would focus on environmental issues. When I was employed, I was assigned a mission to bring*

forth a strategy for the Agenda. Before there was someone who worked with this issue in project form whose primary role was to do basic pre-studies about what is the 2030 Agenda, so there was no clear written strategy for 2030 Agenda."
(Respondent B).

Before hiring the Agenda 2030 coordinators or in some cases as it defined sustainable strategists, there had been others who were responsible for questions related to sustainability in the organizations. However, those individuals were only associated with environmental issues. Before that, the 2030 Agenda was not included in the daily operations as it is today. Nevertheless, when the new function for the 2030 Agenda is adapted, more work with the Agenda has initiated.

In one case, there was no function for neither the Agenda nor Sustainable development in the organization before the current person is for the coordination of the 2030 Agenda.

"*Before me, no one has worked with the 2030 Agenda in our organization. To be honest, our agency has not acted yet on the 2030 Agenda. However, our General director signed the letter of intent for the DG forum, and we are now working to integrate the Agenda into our new management model, but we have not done much than that.*" (Respondent C).

One out of the four agencies studied has shown distinguishable characteristics, which is not having someone who worked with the 2030 Agenda precisely, which means that respondent C is the first person assigned for the 2030 Agenda in that agency.

5.3 Dissemination of knowledge

To deal with the 2030 Agenda's integration into the agencies' daily activities, spreading knowledge about the 2030 Agenda was considered an essential step for the agencies. Knowledge is a vital area that is important for the work of the 2030 Agenda. That was noticeable from several respondents.

To fulfill this, several mechanisms such as communication, benchmarking, measurement, and evaluation of the work of agencies on 2030 Agenda have been endorsed.

Communication and sharing information about the 2030 Agenda are deemed very important, according to the respondents.

"*Communication is also important to spread information and knowledge and share best practices.*". (Respondent A).

Here, respondent A confirms that communication about the Agenda is crucial. It believed that clear communication about the Agenda within and outside the organization could contribute to spreading information and knowledge enhancement among the workers but also among agencies. Moreover, communication has been identified as one of the most crucial tools to use.

"*We identified seven areas that are important to us. These areas include leadership and governance, communication, increasing knowledge, and network and collaboration. We see opportunities in these ways, but I also meet critics who question what is new within these strategies*" (Respondent B).

Benchmarking is another mechanism that appears to be necessary for the work of the 2030 Agenda. The previous quotation was clearly said by respondent A when referring to sharing the "best practices." Moreover, even Respondent B has expanded the issue of sharing best practices or making a comparison between how different agencies and the Government Offices of Sweden are dealing with coordinating sustainable development in their daily operations.

"*When we compare our agency with other agencies, it is clear to see differences. Some agencies have a clear mandate from the government, while others lack such clarity. This problem can be related to the knowledge difference within governmental departments. We hear that the government offices of Sweden itself have coordination problems. Compared to the private sector, if a company decides to work with sustainable development, it should reformulate the whole business ideas with sustainable business ideas*. (Respondent B).

Such comparison may enhance learning from others and be reassuring for one to appreciate that they are in an excellent position to deal with challenges compared to others who work with the same challenges. To make in agreement with the core mission, these agencies translate the Agenda following their core missions. Since the Agenda is too broad, agencies extract those goals that affect their work as clear from the following citation.

"*We have 17 different thematic programs, whereby each thematic area has its change theories and strategies, and they should answer how their programs contribute to the Agenda.*" (Respondent E).

However, agencies that work sectorized issues have developed their ways of dealing with the integration of their agencies. For example, the following respondent clarifies how their agency translates the Agenda's goals in their contexts.

"*We identified these goals cover these goals for our work equality, gender equality, education, our target groups such as migrants, youth, and women. Goal 12 is relevant for public procurement and routines around it, and the climate goal is essential for us since we are a large organization that has an impact on the climate, customers, and our employees who travel all the time.*" (Respondent B).

5.3.1 Common language use

The use of common language and terms was another feature observed. Words, slogans or phrases such as "collaboration" "the 2030 Agenda", "three dimensions" "governance" "partnerships" "communication" "knowledge enhancement" "dialogue and innovative methods" "leave no one behind" and many others were observable during the interview but also when analyzing the materials. From a sociological point of view, the use of common language to describe the common problem has its essence in understanding how institutions work to survive in a demanding environment.

5.4 Leadership

Leadership and commitment are other factors that have been highlighted by all informants. The interviewees have mentioned that the leadership and commitment showed by Director generals is what set the wheel for agencies collaboration on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda 2030. The Director-general forum (DG forum) is a product of the leadership demonstrated by the director generals of the Agencies' to initiate partnerships. The DG forum and the characteristics of its leadership and responsibility have been appreciated nationally and internationally. For example, the government praised the director generals'leadership in the report sent to the UN and the National Plan of the 2030 Agenda.

Moreover, agencies identify leadership as a critically important aspect that can be used to enhance the implementation of SDGs.

> "*We identified seven areas that are important to us. These areas include leadership and governance, communication, increasing knowledge, and network and collaboration. We see opportunities in these ways, but I also meet critics who question what is new within these strategies.?" (*Respondent B).

Moreover, Gabriel Wikström is appointed by the government as the national coordinator for 2030 Agenda, whose role can be considered as a leadership role. The national coordinator role consists of strengthening, promoting and deepening the various actors' work in implementing the Agenda by collaborating with municipalities and regions, regional and local actors, businesses and civil society, and collaborating with authorities, universities, and colleges. Communication and stimulation of actors' contribution to achieving the SDGs is a vital role of the current. National coordinator for Agenda 2030. Gabriel sees his role "as a leader and even more than that by describing as:

> "*My role can be as coordinator, facilitator, and a leader in the coordination of 2030 Agenda's implementation, a role that can I can describe as Spider in the web*" (National coordinator for Agenda 2030).

From the Agencies' perspective, the appointment of the national coordinator is viewed as a positive gesture since it shows the government's ambitions of contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, it is also seen as the government's extended arm, which symbolizes the government's vehemence and commitment to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden.

5.5 Matching the Agenda with the context

Since the 2030 Agenda is a new phenomenon with indivisibility and complexity, most agencies map their operational activities against the SDGs. This was clear from the interviews and the officials' reports (see SOU 2019:15).

When the relevance of Agenda's contents is understood in the organization's context, the governance documents are revised with the consideration of the Agenda.

> "*We identified eight sustainable goals that are relevant from Agenda; these goals may include SDG 4, 5,8,10,12,13,16 and 17*" (Respondent B).

What respondent B refers to are those SDGs from the 2030 Agenda, which are relevant for Agency's operational activities and visions. Respondent A and E, however, have pinpointed that the whole Agenda 2030 policies are relevant for their organization while respondent C's Agency has not come so far.

5.6 Challenges and opportunities

All the interviewed individuals pictured similar challenges that hinder their organizations from coordinating the 2030 Agenda into their daily operations. However, the Administrative Board of Stockholm faces one more unique challenge, like unclear responsibility with the Stockholm region. These challenges are categorized into different categories to offer a thorough picture of these challenges and where they come from.

The 2030 Agenda consists of 17 goals and over 169 targets. These goals are mostly categorized as social, economic, and environmental dimensions that are indivisible during the implementation process. Even though agencies have translated and contextualized the contents of the Agenda in accordance with their core missions, they still face challenges when it comes to how to concretize all the three dimensions into their operational activities.

> "*The Agenda 2030 is tricky because we have our daily operations which we should work with, and at the same time, we should contribute to the implementation of 2030 Agenda as it is clear in assignment from the government side. Moreover, all things we do are affected by the Agenda, for example, equality, gender equality, accessibility, information availability, environment, and climate. However, the challenging part of it is how we can work convergently overall. Moreover, that is what is new with 2030 Agenda, to work tri-dimensionally, namely Ecologically, socially, and economically.*" (Respondent A).

Two of the four agencies in the study lack any mandate from the government to work with 2030 Agenda.While the other two have an unclear mandate concerning the work of 2030 Agenda and its implementation.

The interviews emphasized the lack of governance and a clear mandate from the government. For example, Respondent E explained how clear mandates from the government could increase the ability and willingness for agencies to work with the Agenda and how clear mandates and follow-ups can help the government govern the agencies.

"interesting that on the one hand, the Swedish government states that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is highly prioritized, but on the other hand, many governmental agencies neither have a concrete mandate or a clear description in their policy documents that they should work with the Agenda. Also, government agencies' progress with implementing the 2030 Agenda is usually not followed up by the responsible departments. So, there usually is no concrete demand from the government." (Respondent E).

A similar challenge was depicted by Respondent B whereby the respondent emphasized the importance of clear assignment from the government regarding the Agenda.

"There problem is often the steering style from the government, and we were clear with this in our consultation responses to the 2030 Agenda delegation." *(*Respondent B*)*. The respondent continues to explain how the problem can be solved.

"There is too much to do by the agencies, and if there no clear assignments from the government regarding the 2030 Agenda, which says that we must work with this, then no one is going to find either the time or resources to work with the Agenda 2030. The appropriation direction from the government should not contain, for example, which specific goals of the Agenda we should work, or how we work with it. However, it should be mentioned that we have to work with it and that we must present how we work with it, and we should incorporate the Agenda into core operations. Now that is in 2020 still too unclear, and therefore, as a society, we lose valuable time." (Respondent B).

What Respondents B demonstrates is that clear mandate from the government would have helped the Agency to prioritize the work of 2030 Agenda even in situations with fewer resources and too much work to do.

Difference between agencies in terms of mandate and responsibility was portrayed as a challenging factor that may undermine coordination since this may hinder collaboration.

> "*The problem is that different agencies have different mandates, some are sectorized, others have a general area of responsibility like ours, so this makes collaboration difficult, namely, to collaborate on a specific area of interest*." (Respondent E).

E illustrates that agencies' core missions can hinder collaboration since some agencies are responsible for specific sectors. Other challenges were also discussed during the interviews. Naming several of them is secrecy, which hinders Agencies from sharing information among themselves through Information bank initiated by the DG forum.

Lack of IT-platform for the agencies hinders the agencies from communicating and sharing information quickly because of some other challenges such as secrecy. This is particularly challenging and may halt some agencies to participate fully in collaboration with other agencies because of the sensitivity of core responsible areas.

> "*The government agencies were not accustomed to working in this way before. It was not a habit of agencies to share their documents or policies. Another problem that agencies face today is the lack of common technical IT-platform, where documents can be shared or saved. Furthermore, for many state agencies, it impossible for secrecy reasons*." (Respondent B).

6 Analysis and discussions

This section provides an analysis and discussions of the empirical results of this study. Since the previous section only provided a description of what sources have to say about the formulated research problems, this section will try to use the theoretical frameworks used in the thesis to shed light on how these agencies work with the Agenda 2030 and what challenges and opportunities they face.

6.1 DG forum as Joint action for collaboration

Collaborative governance has become the ideal way for achieving policy coordination in public administrations (Emerson et al., 2011). In the literature review, coordination is related to partnership. To coordinate policies like the 2030 Agenda requires partnership since the Agenda touches vast policy areas. Henceforth, partnership and collaboration are inseparable, at least in the 2030 Agenda and the development cooperation. Andersson et al. (2006) listed three different phases of development of the partnership.

The authors called the first phase "initiation" phase. At this stage, much attention and energy focus on building the partnership itself (ibid). It is this first phase where the structure and objectives of the collaboration are formulated. The initial phase is significant because everything done at this stage will have substantial impacts on other stages.

Relating to how Swedish public agencies work, they are engaged in a partnership to collaborate in the search for learning and skills development. One great example is the DG forum, a platform for the Director generals of over seventy Swedish public agencies who are willing to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden in which the four agencies in this study are members of it. The forum acts as an arena for learning and skills development. Most activities in the forum focus mainly on three main areas: the usage of sustainability barometers, the achievement of innovative approaches to attain synergies, and the productive exchange of experience and information.

However, it is noteworthy that the partnership and cooperation in this phase rely on external and internal support in the form of coordination and resources. That means that the collaboration would not develop itself but needs to be nurtured.

The director-general and other managers in the agencies are actively developing collaboration by creating a leading group responsible for the operative and strategic issues of the forum.

The second phase, according to the authors, is the most prolonged and most intensive juncture. It is labeled as the "during" or the implementation phase. It is in this phase where most of the operational works take place (ibid). For example, stakeholders or partners test the agreed methods or designs to achieve common objectives.

The last stage is what Andersson et al., 2006, call "after phase," in which all gained experiences and knowledge are disseminated and utilized. Putting it differently, it is in this phase where the impacts of the whole process of cooperation are expected (ibid).

The DG forum fills an essential function as joint action for collaboration on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The respondents in this study have described the forum as a common platform that paves the way for enhanced coordination for 2030 Agenda.

However, the DG forum description is not in line with Ansell and Gash's six principles that needed to be fulfilled in collaborative governance. For example, the DG forum does not consist of representatives from different sectors; rather, it is only for Government agencies. According to Ansell and Gash (2008), collaborations that lack any of these principles or criteria cannot be considered as collaborative governance but something else.

Ansell and Gash (2008) argue that collaborative governance differs from other similar collaborations because, in collaborative governance, public agencies should initiate or put forward the need for collaboration with other stakeholders. It means that if the collaborative governance initially originates from other actors rather than public agencies, such collaboration cannot be referred to as collaborative governance.

Looking at how the government agencies work with coordination of the 2030 Agenda policies, one main feature captures this research's attention, which can be related to the principles mentioned earlier. That feature is the DG forum, which is initiated by the public agencies themselves to share experience and learn from each other. One can argue that the first criteria posited in the Ansell & Gash model of collaborative governance are relevant to the Swedish government agencies' collaboration on 2030 Agenda. The collaborative forums, for example, the DG forum is initially founded by the public agencies to collaborate on the issue of 2030 Agenda, and therefore this can be considered as collaborative governance, according to Ansell & Gash (2008).

Furthermore, Ansell and Gash pinpointed that the second pillar of collaborative governance is that participants or the engaging actors should consist of public, private, and non-profit actors who are affected by addressed issues. The second argument is partially accurate when it comes to the examined agencies. The four agencies engage in partnership and cooperation with non-profit as well as profit actors concerning a range of issues.

However, this paper confines itself to the common collaboration arenas that agencies are commonly contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, agencies collaborate mostly on such arenas. Since nonstate actors have diminished roles or are merely for consultative purposes, the collaboration between the agencies through different networks such as the DG forum does not seem like a form of collaborative governance.

Another pillar for effective collaborative governance concerns how decisions are made in collaborative engagements.

Ansell and Gash (2008) mentioned that decision-making processes should be inclusive and based on consensus. Two main issues are considered essential in the process of decision-making, inclusiveness and consensus. Inclusive decision-making occurs when public agencies not dictate decisions, but the other collaborative actors are allowed to participate in the decision-making process on equal terms, resulting in consensus-based decisions (Ansell and Gash 2008).

The six collaborative principles suggested by Ansell & Gash (2008) do not fully cover how Government agencies work with the implementation of 2030 Agenda policies since the DG forum does not include nonstate actors.

Other scholars in the field of collaborative governance present another picture of how collaborative governance can be applied in theory and practices (Emerson et al., 2011). Compared to Ansell and Gash (2008), collaborative governance is defined differently, whereby the six principles presented in Ansell and Gash's articles gain critics for limiting any further theory development. For example, Emerson et al., (2011) defined the term collaborative governance broader construction in the field of public administration than others. It is defined as:

"*The processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished*." (Emerson et al., 2011).

Such a broader definition sees collaborative governance as a process and structures of not only public policy decision-making but also in management that engage "people" constructively across divisions of public agencies and government levels. Collaboration remains the same; to solve a public issue that could not be solved by a single organization or actor. Governance in this context can be understood as a set of coordinating and monitoring activities that enable the survival of collaborative partnerships or institutions (see Emerson et al., 2011; see also Bryson, Crosby, and Stone 2006). Collaborative governance, therefore, contains several areas where researchers can understand the internal dynamics, contexts, impacts, and results of the collaboration.

It is necessary to look at collaboration on the agency level to understand how the agencies work with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. If the role of the DG forum is considered from a broader collaborative governance perspective unlike Ansell and Gash's definition, then one can see that the DG forum as a form of collaboration intended to coordinate the 2030 Agenda across agencies.

6.1.2 Creation of common knowledge

For collaborative governance to work, there should be governance committed to facilitate and lead the change to the desired goals. In their article, Emerson et al. (2011) presented three different operating forces that are more important for collaboration. First, leadership is an important driving force for a successful start. The leadership itself should have different criteria where one of the most crucial criteria is problem solving and impartiality. Second, incentives that relate internally or externally, such as resources or and situational/institutional, are needed for collaborative measures (ibid). Funding and resource are essential for the process to move forward. The third driving force, according to Emerson et al., (2011), is the interdependence within organizations or collaborating actors. In this case, leadership and uncertainty are the most driving forces that necessitated the creation of a collaborative DG forum. On one hand, most of the respondents in this study associated the DG forum with the directors of the agencies whose commitment and motivation in the implementation of SDGs have led the creation of the collaboration between agencies.

On the other hand, the complexity of the 2030 Agenda policies also created uncertainty when it comes to knowledge and capacity in how to integrate the SDGs into the agencies' daily operational activities. It thought that through collaboration and partnership, such uncertainty could be mitigated. It is, therefore, imperative that the Swedish government agencies understand that neither the state nor the individual organization can solve the 2030 Agenda's challenges.

The uncertainty that cannot be defeated by an individual organization can only be mitigated if the parties work together to reduce the costs and diffuse risks associated with the problem. (ibid). That is very important for the public policies as a general because it eases the responsibility of an individual agency since they can share the risks and costs of the irresolvable problems with other organizations. When this is accepted, the actors seem to be aiming to collaborate and engage in collaboration. The role of the DG forum can therefore be ascribed as a good example of such sprit.

As mentioned earlier, the driving forces will make the participants agree to cooperate. Then comes the collaboration dynamics that, according to Emerson et al., (2011), contain three different related elements: principled commitment, shared motivations, and the capacity for joint action. According to Emerson et al., (2011), the principle commitment through the iteration of four important process elements, discovery, definition, deliberation, and determination, which will lead to collaborative efforts and social learning process. In this phase, the agencies develop a common theory and action to achieve such goals.

When principled commitment is generated and maintained by the interactive process mentioned above, a shared motivation arises mutual trust, understanding, internal legitimacy, and commitment. (See Ansell and Gash 2008).

Cross-cutting problems that require different sectors' actions are often prone to conflicts because of different interests, mandates, administrative boundaries, and competition for resources. With knowledge of various sectors, actors tend to lead to different views of the development solutions and challenges. In considering and defining a problem, authorities generally embrace information from their partners as relevant to acting in solving problems.

The most pressing operational challenges in cross-sectoral coordination are., achieving a more comprehensive, more common view and understanding of the difficulties with the 2030 Agenda and its solution, as well as understanding which sectors should collaborate; and keeping the inherent tension between self-interest and collective interests.

Related to the DG forum, one can argue that the DG forum provides its members with a platform in which a common understanding of the SDGs and how they interrelate with one another is developed. Those agencies who work on a specific sector, as the labor market like the Employment Public Agency, can obtain knowledge about how the environment and social factors can influence the decisions or policies made about labor market issues or vice versa.

Likewise, other agencies whose roles or missions cover general issues, like Sweden's Innovation Agency, can receive a more in-depth understanding of how to contribute or learn from the challenges that Agencies with sector-specific assignments face. Such interactions and engagement can pave the way for a deeper understanding of how the 2030 Agenda can be integrated into public agencies' core assignments through collaboration and learning from each other.

The agencies carry out several activities to spread information and knowledge about the 2030 Agenda. These activities take place within and between agencies. Swedish authorities collaborate to achieve the 2030 Agenda. On a collaborative level, the agencies focus mainly on three main areas to strive for the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development; social, economic, and environmental into the core missions.

Most of the collaboration takes place on the DG forum, whereby sustainability, innovative methods and experience, and knowledge sharing are predominantly focused. It is on this forum where the head of the agencies and managers enter into strategic dialogues on exchanging experience and learning as well as creating opportunities for concrete collaboration and partnership at an operational level.

It is through this forum whereby the director generals of the Swedish government agencies show responsibility and leadership to contribute to realizations of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden.

During the process of data collection, the DG forum's importance has been noted on several occasions. For example, the GD forum is mentioned in Sweden's action plan for 2030 Agenda, referring it as an interlocutor to the government, through expertise and analysis. The GD forum is also mentioned in Sweden's report to UN High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF), a platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. That makes the DG forum as a high-ranking forum which is recognized not only nationally but also internationally.

6.1.3 The role of institutional designs, leadership and motivation

The lack of a clear mandate, scarce resources, and complexity of the 2030 Agenda goes hand-in-hand with other opportunities that facilitate or stimulate agencies in attempting to implement the 2030 Agenda in Sweden. Such opportunities include leadership, individual motivations, as well as the Swedish model. The agencies have given the 2030 Agenda great account. Some agencies receive a mandate for implementation and coordination of the 2030 Agenda. Others have not been given a mandate linked to the implementation of the Agenda. But they all showed commitment and engagement to contribute to sustainable development. Agencies have not reached the level of interest and involvement with Agenda 2030, which has been shown by the local governments (See SOU 2019:15) work with the Agenda 2030 moved from civil servants to a political direction. However, since the government agencies were not politically driven organizations, their role has been to implement the policy programs assigned by the government.

When clear governance and leadership backed by the government are lacked, the agencies have developed other ways to deal with the challenges brought by the 2030 Agenda in which motivation and leadership were considered the driving forces for the current collaboration between agencies on 2030 Agenda issues.

In the last decades, governments around the world had been trying to cope with the growing scale of new challenges with expansive demands for public services and needs (Tang & Mazmanian 2008). The previous global challenges consisted of the need for better security, promoting economic development, environmental protection, and other social and political problems (Tang & Mazmanian 2008).

The same previous challenges are concretely assembled even in the 2030 Agenda adopted by the UN 2015, though demanding a global engagement for the implementation and achievement.

Historically, governments adopted different ways to deal with the challenges, for example, by adopting different management models such as business-like management or reforms to modify the collective authority-based management to ease the tensions (Pollit and Bouckaert, 2011). Nevertheless, what is different from the 2030 Agenda is that the call for all partners' involvement and responsibility to take part in the race and contribute the implementation globally without leaving anyone behind. (UN 2015, or see even the 2030 Agenda resolution). The current arrangements and activities available with government agencies entail collaborative governance. Then there is a great need to understand how this can be done onwards to reach a fruitful and long-lasting organized collaboration. Therefore, scholars point out three main levels of analysis that should not be underestimated. Such levels of analysis include institutional designs, managerial principles, and individual motivation.

In her analysis, Elinor Ostrom (2005) highlighted eight principles on how commons are managed. Since her work was mainly based on villages and communities, it brings a contribution to the field of public management and, more specifically, in the practice of collaborative governance and institutional designs.

Firstly, collaborating actors need institutional designs that promote and sustain collaborative governance among stakeholders. According to Ostrom (2005), there are main institutional designs necessary for sustainable and durable maintenance of the commons. Firstly, there is a need for clear definitions of the group boundaries. Secondly, the governing rules should correspond to the local needs and conditions. This can be vital for the Administrative Board of Stockholm and Stockholm region as well as other government agencies where division of responsibility is blurred. Ostrom (2005) explained that there is also the need to let those affected by the created rules to participate and modify these rules and contextualize them into their conditions. The author means that the rules by the collaborating actors should be respected by the authorities (ibid). The fifth argument of Ostrom (2005) is that the actors' development of a monitoring system has to enforced to control or supervise the collaborating actors.

The sixth institutional design concerns the establishment of what Ostrom (2005) calls "the use of graduate sanctions for the rule violators," meaning that there should be gradual punishment to those who break the given rules. The seventh is the provision of accessible and low-cost ways of conflict resolution (See also Ansell and Gash 2008).

Lastly, responsibility and leadership in governing the commons is essential. (Ostrom,2005). Government agencies, therefore, need to build a durable collaboration for the 2030 Agenda's implementation. However, the sixth criteria presented by Ostrom may appear to be inappropriate in the Swedish public management model that is characterized as cooperative and consensus-seeking (Bouckaert et al., 2010). Nevertheless, one can wonder whether the sharing of best practices and comparing the how far agencies have come with the question of sustainability, isn't itself a sanction? Whether the answer is yes or no, the DG forum and its internal dynamics among its member agencies are intended to foster a competitive fellowship in which agencies are exposed to the dilemma of the name and the shame where organizations are required to prove their capacity of sustainability or get improved (see Jacobsson, 2004).

Whatever the case, unless stakeholders show responsibility and ownership of the collaboration process and safeguard the agreed decisions, it is hard to achieve what has been agreed to implement.

Apart from institutional designs, there a second level that should be considered in collaboration, which tells us much about how inter-agency collaboration can interact and coordinate with one another consistently (Mazmanian & Tang 2008, Thomson and Perry 2006). In collaboration, adequate management is essential. Thomson and Perry (2006) argue that the managerial level allows the collaborative process to provide interaction both explicitly and implicitly since organizations develop commitments with each other by creating frameworks that permit them to act together and address issues of common interest. Likewise, collaborative actors would develop new ways to reconcile conflicting organizational interests and, therefore, acquire trust and reciprocity among themselves (Thomson and Perry, 2006). Furthermore, inclusiveness and reaching beyond their organizations is encouraged. Therefore, collaborative governance with well institutionally designed needs proper management to be effective and sustainable (Page, 2003).

Another aspect of being considered is individual motivation. Thomas (2002) studied this issue in the background of inter-agency collaboration in biodiversity preservation. Although Thomas pinpoints the importance of individual motivation in collaborative, others argue that motivation is advantageous only when the collaborative network benefits the interest of individuals in different positions within the agencies (Tang, 2005). All informant in this study highlighted the importance of motivation, not only from the workers but the managers as well.

6.2 Professionalism

The role of professionals has been given a great deal in the field of Institutional theory's core topics (such as legitimation, symbolism, and isomorphism) (Leicht and Fennell 2001 in Greenwood et al., 2008). As we have seen in the empirical chapter of this study, all the four governmental agencies have employed individuals responsible for the work of the 2030 Agenda with given titles such as sustainable development strategists or 2030 Agenda Coordinators. However, not only experience in sustainable development seemed the only relevant experience or knowledge for the public agencies.

Instead, skills in communication were necessary too for the recruitment of the responsible individuals or, in other words, Coordinators for 2030 Agenda. Such experience and knowledge are regarded as very important by institutions in constant changes and demands.

Institutions consist of cultural, normative, and regulative elements as well as resources (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). These elements provide stability and meanings for institutions' continuity.

Since professionals have their own cognitive, conventions, frameworks, and internalized behaviors about how things should be done, institutions need to hire professionals to gain social acceptability for survival (Will and Cathy, 2013). Employing professionals who possess both knowledge and experience in specific questions can, on the one hand, symbolize how serious the organizations are when implementing specific policies. On the other hand, professionals have ideas and, therefore, can act as change agents pooling the organizations towards the yearned goals; in this case, the achievement of 2030 Agenda, and sustainable world.

The individuals responsible for the 2030 Agenda in each agency engage in several activities such as formulating strategies and plans that integrate the 2030 Agenda into the core missions of the agencies. That brings the SDGs into the day-to-day activities of the organization. It is, therefore, the professionals who translate and map the Agenda's policies in accordance with their agencies' core missions and visions.

6.3 Dissemination of knowledge

Another mechanism applied by governmental agencies to work with coordination of the 2030 Agenda is spreading Knowledge about 2030 Agenda. Knowledge about the 2030 Agenda is disseminated on two different fronts. Firstly, the Government agencies and their workers must understand the meaning and contents of 2030 Agenda in their context.

Secondly, if the level of understanding is limited, there should be other areas where helpful Knowledge and experiences can be derived from, like DG Forum. Starting with the first expression, three of the four agencies in this study conducted internal activities to disseminate Knowledge and spread information about the Agenda 2030. For example, it has been mentioned during the interviews that, the held workshops and seminars about the 2030 Agenda were mostly directed to the managers to increase their Learning and understanding about the 2030 Agenda.

Similarly, the workers of these agencies also gained opportunities to learn more about the Agenda. Although sustainable development has been implanted and prioritized in Sweden for long period (UN, 2017), there is still bewilderment among managers and workers regarding how the SDGs differ from those of previous environmental work. To tackle this, some agencies like the Swedish Public Employment Agency, uses communication as a tool to solve these discrepancies.

Furthermore, one agency that is described capable in terms of knowledge capacity about the 2030 Agenda contents is Sweden's Innovation Agency, which also views the role of communication as valuable tool in dealing with 2030 Agenda.

Communicational activities take place both within and outside the organization. These activities can be in different forms: such as putting SDGs pictures on the walls or websites as well as by incorporating the 2030 Agenda into the strategies and the daily operational activities of the Agencies. Outside the organization, Knowledge is also disseminated through other mechanisms such as benchmarking and informal comparisons among agencies with the help of existing networks or forums. The DG forum is one of the main forums that all the interviewees stressed its importance concerning how Knowledge and experienced are disseminated among actors. The importance of the DG forum is also depicted in all the reports analyzed. Agencies share information, experience, and best practices to enhance Knowledge and learn from each other, paving the way for a common understanding of the problems related to the 2030 Agenda.

From sociological institutional perspectives, knowledge dissemination through different mechanisms such as communication, benchmarking mechanisms can be used as subtle regulations to intensify the non-binding coordination agreements (Jacobsson, 2004). The 2030 Agenda's global implementation rests on world states.

However, no sanctions or penalties will follow if these states are lagging behind or even not implementing the 2030 Agenda in their territorial jurisdictions (Jacobsson, 2019).

However, the shame and name matter in global politics with institutionalized international norms.

6.3.1 The use of common language

Agencies use a common language to define the joint problem and propagate knowledge through communicational mechanisms.

Joint action presupposes a high degree of common problem definitions (Jacobsson, 2004). The most concepts or terms that have repeatedly been mentioned during the interviews or written in other materials include words like; collaboration, the 2030 Agenda, three dimensions of sustainability, governance, partnerships, communication, knowledge enhancement, dialogue, and innovative methods.

In collaborative governance, a shared language is used to create a broader understanding of the problems and their solutions (Emerson et al., 2011). However, from Sociological institutionalism's perspective, common language use has its essence in policy coordination, especially in contexts where organizations lack a legislative capacity (Jacobsson 2004), or perhaps a lack of clear mandate from the government, at least in the case of Swedish agencies.

In her article, Soft regulation and the subtle transformation of states, Kerstin Jacobsson (2004) argues that the use of common language is vital in policy coordination since it steers the thoughts and frames the conception of the reality. What Jacobsson's analysis implies is that the establishment of common language use develops common frameworks through which a collective policy thinking is achieved. Therefore, one can argue that the use of common concepts like innovation, collaboration, and partnerships fill a function in the coordination of the 2030 Agenda policies.

6.4 Challenges and opportunities

The government agencies face several challenges in their attempts to integrate the 2030 Agenda in their daily activities. These challenges come from different directions and are similarly described by the interviewees. However, the County Administrative Board faces a further challenge, which is an unclear division of responsibility between them and regions since the inception of regions in Sweden. The 2030 Agenda comprises of 17 indivisible goals and 196 targets interlinked and, therefore, indivisible. Such complex and cross-cutting issues, social, economic, and environment, leave most agencies perplexed to understand the content of the Agenda 2030 and their contexts. People associate the 2030 Agenda with environmental work and refer to the 2030 Agenda as an old habit.

Such an attitude towards the Agenda can undermine its core message, which is; considering it from three sustainable dimensions. Therefore, as respondents A, B, E has told, knowledge enhancement through communication and spreading information are the essential activities to mitigate the condition of seeing the Agenda in its narrowed version.

As we have seen in the previous sections, the Swedish government agencies enjoy some independence from ministerial interference, but at the same time, these agencies' core missions are assigned by the government through the annual appropriation directions. Agencies whose missions contain the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should have worked with the Agenda to a greater extent than the agencies whose mandate does not contain any specific assignment concerning the Agenda 2030. However, such perception was absent in all the agencies in this study. Agencies who have received instructions to work with 2030 Agenda describe their mission as still as unclear and demand clarity from the government.

Sweden's Innovation Agency and the County Administrative Board of Stockholm are good examples. The former is encouraged to report on how the Agenda 2030 is used as a tool to contribute to implementation (see appropriation of directions given to the four Agencies for 2019-2020).

Likewise, the County Administrative Boards, based on the respective authorities' area of responsibility, have to report how they have developed their work to contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030. The other two agencies, ESF Council and the Public Employment Agency lack any government mandate linked with the Agenda 2030. Such an absence or general, albeit unclear mandate, generate uncertainty among agencies. According to Emerson et al., (2012), uncertainty can, therefore, act as a driving force for collaboration to solve societal problems collectively. One can, therefore, argue that the Swedish public agencies engage collaboration because they lack a clear direction or mandate from the central government. What this means is that uncertainty can drive organizations to collaborate to solve problems together, an attempt that the Swedish agencies are making to realize the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, regardless the unclear mission and scarce resources. Moreover, changing demands and the existence of cross-cutting problems like SDGs and its implementation in Sweden can stimulate the need for coordination among the agencies (Guy, 2018).

What is more specific with the County Administrative Board of Stockholm (other Counties can be included) is the fact that the regions were created in 2018. They (regions) took over the growth, and regional development responsibility, an area mostly linked with the 2030 Agenda and now is in the situation of rivalry between the County Administrative Board of

Stockholm and the Stockholm region. The regions claim to assume responsibility for the Agenda, and therefore responsible for the implementation of the Agenda, which brings disputes and sensitivity.

Despite all the challenges, opportunities were mentioned too. Motivation, commitment, and leadership have been several factors identified as opportunities. Leadership comes from the director generals of the agencies who have shown both the courage and commitment to engage their respective agencies in collaboration with other agencies who face similar challenges. The DG forum is a great example of leadership initiated from the managerial level.

7. Conclusion

In 2015, the United Nations adopted a resolution unanimously by the name of 2030 Agenda, which contains seventeen indivisible sustainable development goals aimed to reach a socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable world. The UN member states are said to be responsible for the Agenda's accomplishment on the national and global levels. According to Statistics Sweden, compared to other countries, Sweden is in a good position when it comes to the implementation of Agenda's all dimensions. However, despite the excellent reputation that Sweden enjoys, recent researches have shown that 2030 Agenda's complexity also has puzzled Sweden to reach a harmonized and coherent implementation of SDGs nationwide (Jacobsson, 2019; SOU,2019:13).

Swedish government agencies have a crucial task to ensure that the laws that the parliament and the government have decided to become a reality and therefore have a central role in the implementation of the Agenda. This role is muted in current research. Therefore, the thesis has aimed to understand how the government agencies work to achieve a coordinated implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden and what challenges and opportunities they face.

With the help of collaborative governance and sociological institutional theories, agencies undertake both implicit and explicit steps to reach harmonized and action policies that facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden.

From the interview sources and other materials analyzed, the agencies work with the Agenda in several ways to enhance and stimulate its implementation through different mechanisms like knowledge dissemination, collaboration, and employing professionals who can influence the organizations' work with the Agenda 2030.

The four agencies examined by this thesis have conducted several activities to integrate the 2030 Agenda in their daily operations.

The ESF council has not done much in its work with the 2030 Agenda. The agency has no mandate from the government in working with the Agenda. However, the new function is established and collaboration with other authorities through the DG forum is initiated. That means that the ESF Council is in its initial phase concerning the work of 2030 Agenda. Through collaboration with other agencies, professionalism and knowledge sharing are main mechanisms applied by the ESF Council to understand the Agenda, and how it relates to its core mission. That means that the ESF Council has not yet reach the level that other organizations reached, which is to integrate the Agenda into their governance documents and strategies that describe the vision and operational plans of the agencies in sustainable development.

The County Administrative Board of Stockholm has carried out activities intended to enhance knowledge about the Agenda 2030 from all three dimensions. Communication and spreading knowledge occur within and out of the agency to inform the importance of the Agenda through workshops, seminars, and lectures.

The County took one crucial step in developing a statement program that aims to describe the agency's role and how the agency concretizes its work with 2030 Agenda under the period of 2018 – 2020. This move is thought to clarify many things for those who work with the agency and, more specifically, the responsible persons for the 2030 Agenda. The statement program focuses on three main areas that can facilitate the authority's work with the Agenda under these periods. These areas include collaboration, communication, and performance/ implementation. The Agency collaborates with other actors for knowledge and experience exchange not only on the DG forum but also with other stakeholders like regions and municipalities. These are cross-cutting issues that the County Administrative considered vital to integrate into all decisions or activities carried out by the County Administrative Board.

The role of professionals is vital in all these activities because they are ones who responsible for the integration of the Agenda into the Agency's day-to-day operations.

Communication is also used to enhance knowledge and spread information on how to implement the 2030 Agenda in the County administrative boards (SOU 2019:15). The agency tries to integrate the cross-sectoral perspectives into the whole County of Stockholm. In the statement conducted by the County Administrative Board emphasizes how cross-sectoral issues such as gender equality, human rights, the environment, the public health, children, and the disabled's rights are integrated in decisions making processes.

Notwithstanding all these activities, both the interview sources and analyzed materials pinpointed that the Administrative Board of Stockholm and other Administrative Boards are on the initial phase of integrating the Agenda into operational activities, and much work is left to achieve.

Despite the scarcity of resources (time, money, and knowledge), several other factors impede the work of the County Administrative Board of Stockholm. Apart from the complexity of the 2030 Agenda policies, there is an unclear assignment in implementing the SDGs from the government, and the unclear division of roles between regions and County Administrative Boards. That can dwarf the County's work with the implementation of Agenda 2030 since there is no clear distinction between how the region and the Administrative Counties work with 2030 Agenda and who should be responsible for what policies in the Agenda. Therefore, The County administrative boards demand from the government a more accurate task when it comes to work with Agenda 2030.

The Swedish Public Employment Agency tries to integrate the Agenda policies in similar ways. The authority's appropriation directions do not contain something that can be related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It was also astonishing that the Public Employment Agency's representatives in the interview pointed out that not even the word of sustainability is mentioned in the government's annual regulation documents. Whatever the agency does is mostly initiated by its own initiatives, meaning that no mandates or directives from the government coerced the agency to work with 2030 Agenda. Therefore, whatever is done by the agency about the Agenda can be ascribed to the Leadership and commitment of managers and workers who wanted to make the organization more sustainable and modern and attractive. Such a description makes the Public Employment Agency a bit unique compared to other agencies.

The Public Employment Agency uses some similar coordination mechanisms, like other agencies. To disseminate knowledge through communications and other activities are used to educate the workers and managers. Since the Agenda is a new phenomenon, the agency translates the Agenda in the context of its missions whereby around eight SDGs are deemed relevant. The agency has also developed a policy strategy that entails how it works with 2030 Agenda in the coming years. It allows the workers and managers of the agency to gain a full understanding of the policies of Agenda and how they are related to the core mission of the agency.

Sweden's Innovation Agency has incorporated the Agenda policies into its operational activities whereby the agency is organized into seventeen thematic areas based on the SDGs whereby each area has its change theory.

When it comes to the level of knowledge about the Agenda' contents, the Innovation Agency is said to have better prerequisites since the agency has a general mission in which research and innovation in sustainability are the core operational activities of the organization.

From Sociological institutionalism, the Government agencies try to enhance the coordination and achievement of 2030 Agenda using several mechanisms. Since the Agenda is complex, Agencies carry out some internal activities such as workshops, seminars, and lectures intended to uplift and enhance knowledge of managers and workers about the 2030 Agenda.

Communication is considered one of the most vital instruments used to spread information about the 2030 Agenda. The creation of a shared knowledge base and language were also noticeable. According to Jacobsson (2004), organizations use to create shared knowledge using common language to define the common problem to create a shared understanding of the problem and its solutions. That may enhance the integration of policies into the core activities since a joint knowledge base is created, allowing organizations to share ideas through mechanisms like benchmarking. On the collaborative level, agencies developed a platform, in which knowledge and experience are shared. For example, on the DG forum, the agencies developed a sustainable barometer and somehow limited information bank through which agencies can share knowledge.

Leadership is also another mechanism that is being discussed by most of the respondents. For example, most agencies lack clear mandates from the government regarding how they should contribute to the Agenda 2030 (SOU 2019:15). The leadership role and the commitment shown by the director generals contributed much to the agencies' engagement and contribution to the implementation of the Agenda. The director generals of all agencies have signed the declaration intent even when there is no clear directorship from the government.

According to Emerson et al., (2011), Leadership is one crucial driving force for collaborative governance. Leadership can, for example, facilitate the collaboration, or it can also initiate it and nature the whole process of collaboration. Here, one can assume that the Swedish public administration model is a catalytic possibility for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda than hinder, reflecting on the neutral and dualistic characteristics of the Swedish public administration. Leadership, commitment, institutional designs, and excellent

management skills are more critical for collaborative governance to be fruitful (Thomson and Perry,2006; Page, 2003; Ostrom, 2005).

Contextualizing the Agenda's policies in regard with the agencies' core missions and revising some of the agencies' governing documents have been conducted by most of the Agencies. In these ways, the Agenda's policies permeate the core missions and visions of the Agencies. Though not all agencies did so.

To realize all these, the agencies have established new functions for the coordination of the Agenda. Therefore, one can argue that professionalism is deemed beneficial for the integration and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Professionals have their own cognitive, conventions, frameworks, and internalized behaviors about how things should be done, therefore institutions need to hire professionals to gain social acceptability for survival (Will and Cathy, 2013). With the absence of skills and experience of the experts in sustainable development, workers would have been baffled to recognize that the meaning of sustainable development is beyond environmental protection.

As a researcher of this case study, I have been receiving two interactive evocations of responses throughout the writing of this thesis. Firstly, the General Theory of Planning of Rittel and Webber's (1973) analysis and what they call the non-rational problems or, in other words, the "Wicked problems" with no stopping rules. Would it be possible that agencies are working with the 2030 Agenda without knowing whether they are doing it correctly and whether they will achieve the ambitious SGDs? When individuals or organizations encounter such unmanageable challenges, argues Alexander (1998) that four different ways of thinking can be adopted to cope with such wicked problems. According to Alexander (1998), these techniques include the use of communicative practices, deliberative rationality (capacity of reflective choice), coordinative arrangement (organizational level), and frame setting (through meaning and shared understanding of the problem).

They are aimed to create both descriptive and normative guidelines about how to cope with the irresolvable problems.

The second evocation is whether the agencies have changed the ways of communicating to the public. Therefore, one can wonder whether their engagement in collaboration and visualizing their actions related to SDGs is to gain legitimacy from the public through the adoption of decoupling strategies that permit the organization to be flexible inwardly and look more intense outwardly? However, the question will then be, why decoupling?

Well, from the sociological institutionalist approach, organizations engage in decoupling to preserve their leaders or avoid implementing specific policies or many other factors, including politics and power (Guy, 2018).

The activities engaged by the agencies show some institutional isomorphisms that exist in terms of institutional arrangements or, for example, the establishment of new functions for the 2030 Agenda and how experience and knowledge are shared through the collaboration that takes place on the DG Forum.

Whatever the reason could be, the research questions in this thesis have asked "how" organizations work with the 2030 Agenda phenomenon rather than "why" they work with it. These questions are therefore left to be answered by future researches.

7.1 Reflection

In the last centuries, the New Public Management Reforms changed how the Swedish public administration is governed and organized (Karlsson, 2017). That resulted in sectorized and siloed arrangements of gencies and Departments (see Jacobsson, 2019).

Specialization and the reduction of seeing the government's role as a whole organization was part of the effects of NPM. Although Sweden is a unitary but decentralized country with its different institutional levels (supranational, national, regional, and local), the 2030 Agenda increased the pace towards collaborative governance, where the monopoly of the state in the public sector is no longer holding.

In the government bills (prop. 2009/10:55; Sweden' action plan for Agenda 2030 for 2018 -2020), the importance of private companies or the most critical role of business in collaboration and coordination is emphasized. It can be noted that there is no one single organization or agency that can implement the 2030 Agenda without coordination with other actors. That makes the Agenda's policies common concerns, where everyone has their part to play to achieve an efficient and coordinated implementation of SDGs.

From a new public governance perspective, there is a need for new reforms or some way of restructuring public organizations. Networks, partnerships, and consultations are some of the alternatives advocated for building collaborative and more efficient management in public policy (Pollit and Bouckaert, 2011).

In a pluralistic country like Sweden, collaborative governance emphasizes the emergence of multiple actors. They have mutual interdependence and collective goals. When all these actors are allowed to participate in political and decision-making processes, they can contribute to a sustainable and long-term collaboration. The 2030 Agenda's realization relies on the involvement of multiple actors. From a collaborative governance theoretical point of view, engaging with the non-profit sector is essential for the management and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Volunteerism and goodwill are the bedrocks for SDGs' achievement, making the role of the non-profit sector pertinent.

Moreover, unless the Swedish authorities are given clear instructions to work with the 2030 Agenda actively, and specific government assignments on specific initiatives related to the Agenda's implementation, the efforts of the agencies circulate the dissemination of knowledge and information which of course, are good ideas but limited. However, the time framework set by the Agenda and the urgent need for sustainable Sweden and the globe, demand long term leadership from the politicians, an incentive that would facilitate the government agencies work with the 2030 Agenda by taking concrete actions. Right now, most authorities lack such a clear direction from the government.

In 2019, Sweden's prime minister's government declaration pledged,

"When other countries reduce their efforts for global sustainability, Sweden increases them. We are going to break ground for Agenda 2030."

A declaration whose promises became just a word of mouth, at least in the context of the Swedish government agencies and their work with the 2030 Agenda.

It is, therefore, essential that the government agencies support each other in their work to incorporate the Agenda's policies into their core missions. By Continuing building knowledge in the field and collectively following up through evaluating developments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, will bring useful learning and adaptations until when coherent governance and clear mandates about the 2030 Agenda unfolds from the government side.

7.2 future research

The role of government agencies in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a relevant subject, socially, politically, and environmentally. It needs an attention from the epistemic communities to research the area, an attempt this thesis tried to do. However, this thesis has its limitation in several ways. Firstly, the paper did not provide a thorough answer to how Swedish government agencies work with 2030 Agenda.

Instead, it provided a preliminary understanding of how the 2030 Agenda is approached by the Swedish government agencies to enhance the implementation of the Agenda in Sweden. Such understanding can pave the way for further research. Secondly, this paper did not mainly focus on a specific area of the SDGs; rather, it looked at the Agenda as a whole object, which also affected the intensity and consistency of the thesis.

Thus, the researcher recommends a future research with similar research questions and theories focusing mainly on one or two SDGs from 2030 Agenda against several agencies who administrate cross-sectoral policy areas.

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Appendix 1: Questions to the Agencies (in Swedish)

Hur samordnar svenska myndigheterna sitt arbete med genomförandet av Agenda 2030 i Sverige?

Bakgrundsfrågor

- Kan du berätta kort om din roll och ditt arbete?
- Vad är syftet med din roll?
- Vilken är din uppfattning om hur arbetet och samverkan fungerar på myndigheterna idag?
- Vilka är problemen, enligt din uppfattning?
- Vilka är möjligheter, enligt din uppfattning?

Er organisation och genomförandet av agenda 2030

- Vilka som arbetar med Agenda 2030 på myndigheten?
- Arbetar ni med något projekt eller program nu som syftar att samordna genomförandet Agendan i Sverige?
- Hur ser arbetet kring materialet ni har tagit fram sett ut? T.ex. Olika program.
- Har den organisatoriska strukturen någon betydelse i genomförandet av agendan?
- Skulle du kunna beskriva organisationen som de/centraliserad?

- Finns det en tydlig arbetsfördelning? Är det positivt eller negativt i relation till genomförandet av Agenda *2030 ?*

Samverkan och samordning kring Agenda 2030

- Hur koordineras Agendans policys i er verksamhet intern och externt?
- Hur upplever du att samordningen inom myndigheten fungerar? Är det något som fungerar bättre /är problematiskt, och i så fall vad och på vilket sätt?
- Hur ser samarbetet mellan er myndighet och andra myndigheter ut?
- Hur samverkar ni med andra aktörer t.ex. civila samhället eller näringslivet?
- Vilka mål, delmål inom Agenda 2030 jobbar ni med? Och varför just det?

- Har ni kontakt med andra organisationer utanför GD forumet för att samverka och samordna Agenda 2030? Vilka är dem?
- Hur ser dessa kontakter ut? Är de formella och strukturerade? Informella?
- Vilka funktioner har sådana kontakter har i ert arbete?
- Hur skulle du beskriva att arbetet med Agenda 2030 ser ut inom myndigheten i jämförelse med andra myndigheter?
- Finns andra arenor/plattform som ni delta förutom GD forumet? Kan du ge ett exempel?
- Finns exempel på myndigheter likt, som har många omvärldskontakter och där samverkan blir central för genomförandet?

Uppdrag från regeringen och agendans målsättningar.

- Vad betyder Sveriges handlingsplan för Agenda 2030 för er?
- Hur ser ert uppdrag från regeringen ut det gäller samordningen och samverkan kring Agenda 2030?
- Är uppdraget från regeringen tydligt när det gäller ert arbete med Agendan?
- Hur ser regeringsstyrningen ut? Detaljstyrning eller lite mer "hands off" just på frågan om agendans implementering/samordning i Sverige?
- Hur ser den horisontell samordning ut, tex inom myndigheten, med andra myndigheter, eller civilsamhället, näringslivet mm?

<u>Möjligheter och utmaningar</u>

- Vilka möjligheter finns för genomförandet av agenda 2030 i Sverige?
- Vilka utmaningar står ni inför när det kommer till genomförandet och koordinering av olika inkompatibla intresse och policys som ni hanterar som myndighet?
- Tycker du att du agendan är genomförbar tanken på takten ni arbetat med den?
- Har du exempel på myndigheter som fått detta att fungera väl? Och omvänt de där det inte fungerar?
- Är det något som du skulle lägga till?
- Har du rekommendationer till mig t.ex. någon som du tycker bör kontaktas av mig?

Appendix 2: Questions to DG Forum coordinators (in Swedish)

- Kan du berätta kort om din roll på GD forum?
- Kan du berätta kort om GD forum och vilken funktion uppfyller det, tanken på myndigheternas arbete med Agenda 2030?
- Varför startades GD forum i första hand?
- Är civila eller privata aktörer delaktiga eller medlemmar i Forumet? Varför är de inte medlemmar idag?
- Vilket typ av beslut fattas på GD forum idag och hur detta går till handling eller inkorporeras i myndigheternas dagliga verksamheter?
- Vilka utmaningar eller möjligheter står GD forum inför idag? Enligt din uppfattning?
- Hur kommer GD forum utvecklas i nära framtiden, enligt din uppfattning?

Appendix 3: Questions to the National coordinator for 2030 Agenda

- Kan du berätta kort om din roll och ditt arbete?
- Vad är syftet med din roll?
- Vilken är din uppfattning om hur Agenda 2030 arbetet och samverkan fungerar på myndigheterna idag?
- Vilka är problemen, enligt din uppfattning?
- Vilka är möjligheter, enligt din uppfattning
- Har du exempel på myndigheter som fått detta att fungera väl? Och omvänt de där det inte fungerar?
- Finns exempel på myndigheter likt , som har många omvärldskontakter och där samverkan blir central för genomförandet?
- Har du något mer att lägga till?