

Development of E-government in Sweden

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SUMMARY

This paper describes the possibilities created by using the Internet as a tool for the citizens to access to geographical and cadastral information, but also their ability to access to, and participate in, the cadastral processes by interacting with government agencies while a case is in progress. The paper describes how Lantmäteriet, the Swedish mapping, cadastral and land registration authority, is working with e-governance and shows examples from the authority of different e-solutions that make it easier for the citizens. It also includes general visions on how e-governance can be used in the future.

The paper discusses different steps of giving access to information and services. The first step is about providing access to records, such as the property register, historical maps, diaries et cetera, which makes the authority more transparent.

The second step is to enable the citizen to get access to ongoing cases, being able to do the applications online, and to get information about the actual process and how they can play a role in the process. This includes access to information about basis for the final decision of a case.

The third step is to enable the citizen a full participation in the process by having a possibility to interact with the authority during the case. This could be made by having chat functions, e-conferences etc. where the citizen can make its voice heard, but also support two way communication solutions, such as being able to share an online map where you can draw figures to explain what you mean, and the government official can see it, respond to it instantly and also draw an explanation.

The citizens can also provide important information to the authorities. The more access the citizen gets to the authorities' information and services, the more access the authority can get to the citizen and his information and knowledge, thus being able to use this extra information for decision support. And when the citizen is allowed to have they say about the issue during the procedure it tends to accept the final decision better. The paper shows examples of how Lantmäteriet has been working with involving the citizen in the process and how this also has changed the way we work ourselves.

The paper also identifies challenges connected to the increased access to data, for example integrity issues and other legal obstacles.

SAMMANFATTNING

Den här uppsatsen beskriver möjligheterna som skapas genom att använda internet som ett verktyg för medborgarna att få tillgång till geografisk information och fastighetsinformation, men också deras möjlighet att ta del av, och delta i, en lantmäteriförrättning genom att interagera med myndigheten under pågående ärende. Uppsatsen beskriver hur Lantmäteriet arbetar med e-förvaltning och ger exempel från myndigheten på olika e-lösningar, som underlättar för medborgarna. Den innehåller också generella visioner om hur e-förvaltning kan användas i framtiden.

Uppsatsen går igenom i vilka olika steg man kan ge tillgång till information och tjänster. Första steget är att ge tillgång till befintliga handlingar och information, till exempel till fastighetsregistret, historiska kartor, myndighetsdiariet et cetera, som gör myndigheten mer transparent.

Ett andra steg är att möjliggöra för medborgarna att ta del av pågående ärenden, genom att till exempel ansöka online, få ta del av information om ens ärende och hur de kan bidra till ärendets genomförande. Man kan också lägga ut förslag till beslut online.

Tredje steget ger medborgarna full tillgång till ärendet online genom att man lägger till en möjlighet att interagera med myndigheten online under pågående ärende. Detta kan ske genom chattfunktioner, e-konferenser et cetera där medborgarna kan göra sina röster hörda, men också genom att erbjuda mer avancerade tvåvägskommunikationslösningar som till exempel möjligheten att dela en interaktiv karta där man kan rita och förklara, medan den ärendeansvariga på myndigheten ser vad som beskrivs och omedelbart kan svara och till och med rita en förklaring i kartan.

Medborgarna kan också bidra med viktig information om ärendet till myndigheten. Ju mer tillgång till myndighetens information och tjänster medborgaren får, ju mer tillgång får myndigheten till medborgaren och den information och kunskap den sitter på, vilket kan vara användbar information för ärendets utgång. Också faktorn att ju mer medborgarna tillåts säga sin mening innan beslut, ju mer tenderar de att acceptera utslag spelar roll. Uppsatsen ger exempel på hur Lantmäteriet arbetat med att involvera medborgarna mer i beslutsprocessen och också hur det har ändrat sättet vi själva jobbar på.

Uppsatsen diskuterar också de nya utmaningar som utökad tillgång till information skapar, till exempel integritetsfrågor och juridiska hinder.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of the Internet to in just about a decade become spread to almost every citizen in Sweden has changed the way we live. But it could – and should – also change the way we work; especially in the government sector. The change has given the citizen a new, better chance to get access to the government, but also for the government to get access to the citizen.

In our area of expertise, geographical and cadastral information, there are many ways e-governance can be used to both simplify and improve our work. For example letting the citizen access to, and participate in, the cadastral processes by interacting with government agencies while a case is in progress.

2. STEPS TOWARDS E-GOVERNANCE

As in all other areas, there are many different steps to take to obtain different levels of e-governance. Depending of what the aim is, different steps can be taken, and different levels will be reached. It can also be a question of economic resources; how much money is available and how will it be used best.

Below, three steps are presented that can describe a usual development of e-governance.

2.1 Access to existing records

The first step, and probably the most common startup when someone starts working with E-governance, is to publish existing data online. Depending on how much historical record there is in place, the approach will be different. Whether or not it is an information heavy history the first question to ask should be “are there any benefits with publishing this data online?” Just unloading lots and lots of material on a website won’t make a government an E-government. Of course there can be some transparency benefits with showing the public that the government has nothing to hide. But if that distrust does not exist the reason for publishing more should be that there is already an analog demand of the records that can be facilitated by making them available online in digital form.

In the cadastral area, making government diaries, the property register and historical maps available online are some examples of what can be done.

2.2 Access to ongoing cases

Another step towards a full e-governance is to enable the citizen to get access to ongoing cases. Here, the agency leaves the history, and begins to focus on how the Internet can be used as a tool

If the first step was communication in one way; the agency giving out already existing information to an asking citizen, this second step is more of a two way communication. With the right applications in place, the citizen now can use the Internet to reach the agency and put in new information to the government.

The clearest example of this step is enabling the citizen to make applications for services online. Within this, there are several levels of development on the government side of the communication. All the way from only receiving the online made application as paper copy, handled as an old time application, to having it automatically go in to a fully integrated management system. Another example can be to create a special home page for the case where the citizen can log in to get information about the process and how they can play a role in the process. On this site, all kinds of documents can be published, from general information about the laws and other information that will be used as basis for the final decision of the case to previews of final decisions put up to get comments.

2.3 Full participation in the process

The third step is to enable the citizen a full participation in the process by having a possibility to interact with the authority during the case. Examples of this is having chat-functions, e-conferences etc. where the citizen can ask questions to an agency official, for example being able to get instant help when filling in an online application. This has become more and more common in other sectors, where the support of for example broadband companies no longer rely only on telephone support and answers through e-mail, but also offers instant chat services. This can be seen as answering a demand from the younger generation, which is used to be able to do everything with the computer, not having to pick up and talk in the phone.

The thing that often lacks when you describe a problem that you want the agency to solve is a platform where you can explain what you mean when words not are enough. A two way communication solution that could really help this out is a system where you are able to in real time share an online map where you can draw figures to explain what you mean and the government official can see it, respond to it instantly and also draw an explanation.

3. LEGAL AND INTEGRITY ISSUES

Increasing the access to data cannot be done without at the same time having legal and integrity issues in mind. Government records are often filled with personal data, and those can't always be published. There is also a risk when different data is published that although it is harmless separately, it can expose much when put together. In Sweden, much of this is controlled by the Personal Data Act.

For example, because of this act, although the Swedish property register is considered a public document, and all public documents should upon request be held available according to the fundamental law of Sweden, all of it isn't put out free on the internet. Instead, the service to get information from there is locked in behind a password protected service where you have to register. Another example is the publication of the cadastral archives online, in which only documents older than 1927 is published, due to the regulations concerning personal data of still living persons. The Personal Data Act makes the Internet a limited source for obtaining public documents.

There are also legal obstacles that make the conversion to e-governance harder. Many laws are written before the digital era. For example is it right now in Sweden perfectly correct to sign documents with e-signatures, but the property laws are written with so specific language that e-signatures is not accepted as identification on these kinds of documents.

4. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN SWEDEN

In Sweden, Lantmäteriet has been appointed as one of four developing agencies in the Swedish Government program for E-governance. They are responsible for the areas property information and geographical information.

Since about 75 % of public procedures include at least one graphic component, there is also an important role to play for the government to provide geographical data to other parties on the market that can use it to connect their information to a map and make it more accessible and understandable. One of the main goals set up by the government is that the e-services should be easy to use. Therefore, Lantmäteriet has an important role to play also indirect in the development of E-services. The citizen doesn't only need a map when it is seeking the governments help in cases about cadastre and property; the map can also play a big role in other areas as an information bearer.

One of the active steps that have been taken in Sweden is the geo data cooperation. It is a cooperation between government agencies, municipalities and other organizations with official duties that structures the sharing of different Swedish geo data so that it becomes more available for the users.

5. STEPS TAKEN BY LANTMÄTERIET

Lantmäteriet has for some years actively invested in E-services both for internal and external use, with the common goal to make it easier for the citizen. The external services gives easier access to information and the internal promotes a smoother process for the citizen to get the case at the authority solved.

5.1 E-services at Lantmäteriet

5.1.1 The diary

On the public homepage of Lantmäteriet there is a possibility to search for public documents registered at Lantmäteriet since October 2005. The information available is key info about the documents; the documents themselves are not accessible, but you can still get info about what the case is about, what decisions have been made, who has applied, and which public documents that exists in the case.

5.1.2 Access to maps

Since mapping is one of the main tasks of Lantmäteriet, there are also some E-services directly connected to this. The Geolex application gives the user information about the status of all the geographical info that Lantmäteriet provides.

In the section “Success” the user can browse the national satellite image database for free and a registered user can also pay to order high resolution images.

The service Map search and place-names could be seen as Lantmäteriet's e-atlas where all the geographic places in Sweden can be searched for and pin pointed on the map. All the different layers that Lantmäteriet provides in its printed maps can be chosen here to, for example road map, terrain map, or for the northern of Sweden a detailed mountain map.

5.1.3 Ask the surveyor

Under this heading, Lantmäteriet has collected the communication options the citizen has with the cadastral surveyor, together with basic information about the cadastral procedure. One of the objectives with this section is to canalize questions from the public from phones to the internet. This is one example of how an e-service can make the work more efficient by collection information in a sort of FAQ-library for the user to self find instead of answering the same questions over and over again by phone. The service can also be used to ask questions about specific properties and what actions that is possible. This can be done together with a supporting map, where the user can identify the right property and also draw figures in it to explain.

5.1.4 Create applications

For both cadastral procedures and title registration matters there is a section for helping the user to create an application for such case. Because the current law makes it impossible to sign this kind of applications with e-signature; the step to send in the application is not available yet. For cadastral procedures, the service can be described to everything but this last step. You can log in to the system with e-identification, getting access to property information and getting behind the bar of hidden personal data. There is also the map connection, where the user can attach a map to the application to explain.

5.1.5 Ongoing cadastral procedure

For all ongoing cadastral procedures, the cadastral surveyor can choose to activate the e-service “Ongoing cadastral procedure” to be able to communicate with the interested parties in the case. Having activated this service, all persons and corporations will receive a username and a password the next time something is sent out to them. By using these, they can log on to a case specific homepage, where the cadastral surveyor can choose to publish documents and short messages to the users. By doing this before meetings the user can be more prepared but also already has gotten the answers to many questions. The service can also be used to put out proposals and decisions instead of sending lots of paper with post.

5.1.6 My property

As a general service, Lantmäteriet offers a service where the user, after e-identification, for free can access all the property information for property units owned by the user.

5.1.7 Cadastral archive online

Beginning in the middle of the last decade, Lantmäteriet has scanned all of the material in the cadastral archive. For paying customers all this data, reaching from beginning of the 17th century until today, is available online. In an ongoing process, all the new cadastral dossier originals are digital, which makes the dossiers available online instantly after registration.

5.1.8 Historical maps

The above mentioned scanning project has also been made available for free to the public. Because of integrity issues this excepts dossiers newer than 80 years. Also maps from different ages has been scanned and made available. The section has especially become popular among genealogists since maps and cadastral documents reveal a lot of information about the persons who lived on the place.

5.2 Working more digital as a cadastral surveyor

Many of the e-services mentioned above have changed the daily work as a cadastral surveyor. The biggest impact could be the scanning of the cadastral archives. This has made thousands of documents available just one click away instead of stored in dozens of local archives around in Sweden, facilitating the historical research done on every property unit that is undergoing a cadastral procedure. With mobile data connection, complementary research can even be done during for example the surveying and demarcation instead of having to go back to the office and then return another day.

The ongoing case home page has made it easier to communicate with the involved parties. Public documents can be made available there. Another effect of this is the environmental effect – less paper used.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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