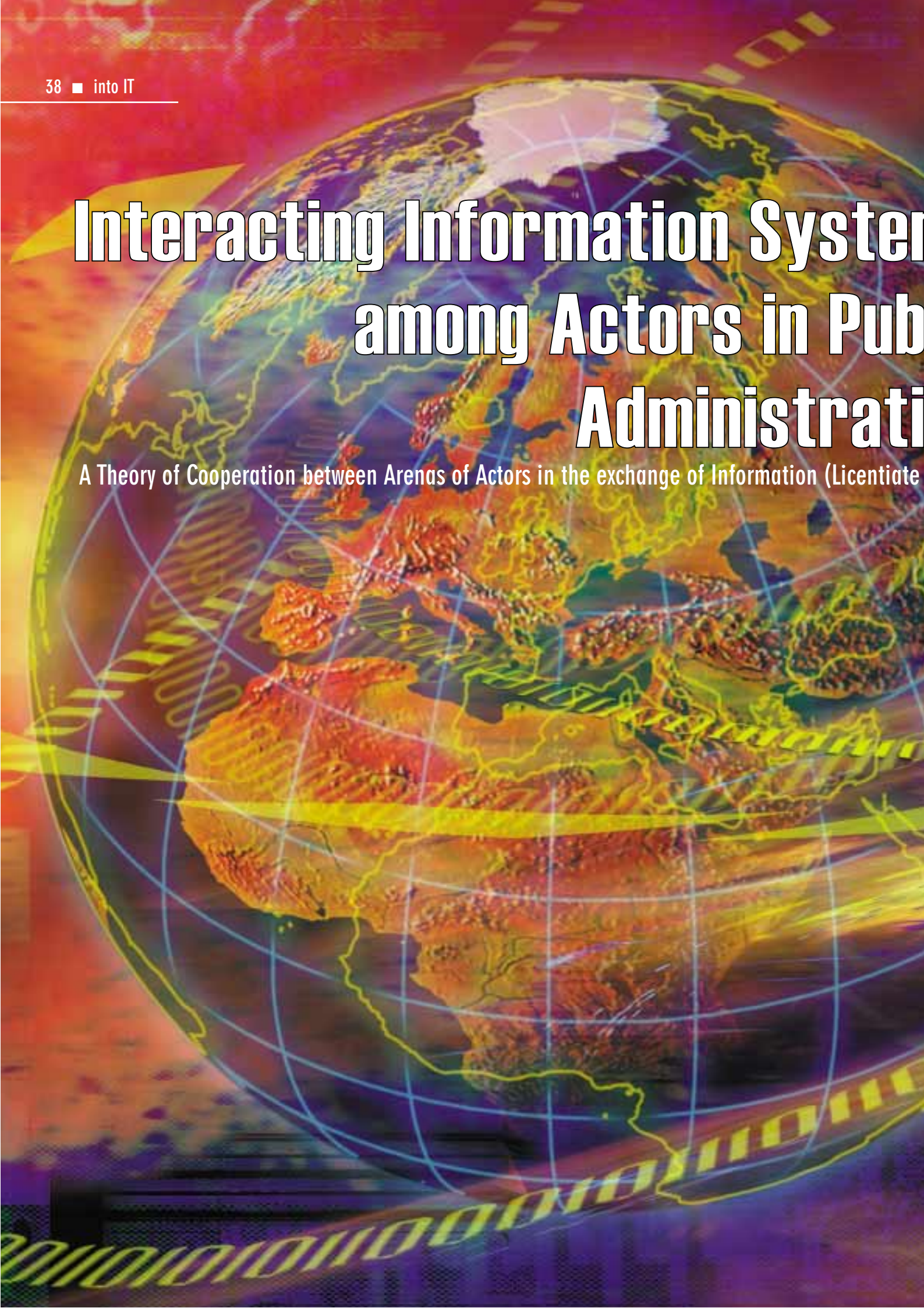


Interacting Information Systems among Actors in Public Administration

A Theory of Cooperation between Arenas of Actors in the exchange of Information (Licentiate)



Background, aims and questions

In order to be able to perform their public undertakings, government agencies collect information on citizens, companies, other agencies, organisations, the environment, conditions and other phenomena in society. For this purpose information in the form of numerical data, texts, pictures, sound is exchanged between citizens, companies, other organisations and agencies, between agencies, between agencies and the Government, between Government and Parliament etc. The exchange of information can thus take place between chains of participants which are dependent on each other in order to perform a public undertaking. Each exchange of information of this type between two participants is designated "an exchange of information between participants in public undertakings". During recent years rapid developments have taken place in IT-based exchanges of information.

Several audits performed in the 1990s have indicated a striking difference between the actual outcome and what was originally intended in exchanges of information between organisations in the public sector. At the RRV we were soon asking questions such as: What are the characteristics of an efficient dialogue (including the exchange of information) between agencies? Are there normative guidelines? What are the obstacles and difficulties in the exchange of information? Can the difficulties be expressed in economic terms? Are the parties concerned aware of the shortcomings? What are the main reasons for the problems which arise in the exchange of information?

At the RRV we established that there was a great need for new knowledge where exchanges of information between participants in public undertakings were concerned.

Implementation

Further understanding in the issues discussed above has been developed within the framework of a programme of cooperation between the Performance Audit Department at the RRV and the Department of Computer and Information Science at the University of Linköping, Sweden. In this programme the RRV has formulated the questions which need to be asked and the University has been responsible for providing scientific guidance for the programme. As part of the programme the Performance Audit Department implemented a special audit of IT-based exchanges of information in the field of environmental protection (RRV 1999:59). The research work has included the analysis of a large number of audit reports, evaluations and the texts of statutes, as well as scientific reports on the exchange of information between parties.

Results

The result of the study has provided a theory on the exchange of information. The theory describes aspects of the phenomenon which can be seen as different, but related, perspectives on the exchange of information. This makes it possible to select, in a performance audit, different perspectives and thereby different audit questions in studies of the exchange of information between parties. The following perspectives can be used:

Contextual points of departure

- the legitimacy of the use of exchange of information between parties
- the social context in which the exchange of information takes place
- the conditions laid down by controlling authorities for the exchange of information.

