

Abstracts

Peter Bogason

A Fragmented Postmodern Public Sector? A Problem for 'Modern' Social Science

The trends towards a postmodern development leading to a fragmentation of the Danish public sector is described on the basis of a) new channels of influence for service users (particularly by user elected boards of directors); b) increasing use of limited, but earmarked state grants for particular purposes in the locality; c) increasing focus of interest on the recipient of services and d) increasingly blurred border between public and private by increasing use of contracting out and use of non-profit organizations for service production. Several competing explanations of the development are found; it is argued that the typical concepts of "modern" social sciences really do not suit an in-depth analysis because they are out of step with postmodernism.

Eva Sørensen

User Influence and Democracy

Will an increase in user influence strengthen Danish democracy? A study of the recent introduction of user democracy in the primary school system indicates that it is going to take considerable time to transform formal to real user influence in the primary school system. If, however, real user influence is not implemented within a considerable period of time the current remodeling of public governance institutions will result in a weakening of Danish democracy.

Lars Hulgård

The Individual and the Polycentric Society

The decentralization of the danish public sector have taken place during the last 20 years. The entrepreneur or the "fiery soul" is one of the main actors, when we are going to understand the decentralization and restructuring of the Danish welfare society. This new social character came indeed into focus when the Danish Social Development Programme was evaluated. The programme represents the most comprehensive effort within the tradition known as the experimental strategy in the area of social policy. The concept of "fiery soul" can be used as an important dimension of the citizen engaged in his local community. But important features also indicate that the concept represents a kind of role model for the new civil servants acting as supervisors for those actors who are carrying the responsibility and the competence in the local communities.

Henrik P. Bang

The Individual and Lokal Politics

The problem of local government is normally understood as revealing the modern tensions between hierarchy, anarchy and security in the welfare state. Today, however, a new approach is needed to the locality which focuses on self-government as evidence of the capacity of citizens for prudent decision and action. This shows the importance of nourishing a democratic community dedicated to popular sovereignty rather than to self-ownership and social solidarity.

Søren Risbjerg Thomsen

Political Public Opinion Polls

A survey of the six largest producers of political opinion polls in Denmark shows wide variation in applied methods, i.e. design, sampling, questioning and non-response. In contrast, the predictions of the outcome of national elections 1984-94 by the different polling agencies were quite similar. However, a few days before the three latest elections of 1988, 1990, and 1994 the Gallup Institute came closest to the election result.