

Abstracts

Hanne Foss Hansen

Only in the dark are all cats gray. Reflections on copycat practice and its effects

We know examples of copying practice way back in history, for example the administrative reform in Denmark in 1848 introducing ministerial responsibility. However, only recently have social scientists started to analyze this copying practice, so we still do not have a satisfactory understanding of why organizations and organizational fields copy each other or of the effects of this practice. Copying practice may be both rational and symbolic. It is intensified by positions of dependence, by uncertainty concerning organizational tasks and identity, by high levels of ambitions, by professionalization as well as by networking. The literature often expects copying practice to result in homogenization across organizations and organizational fields. But recent empirical analyses show that copying often results in differentiation due to local constructions of solutions. Talk about organizing and about policy solutions is more easily homogenized than practice.

Kurt Houllberg

Expense political isomorphism –Danish municipalities in the power of key figures?

Over the past 14 years, policy outputs in Danish municipalities have become more and more equal. At the same time as the regional differences have been reduced, the tendency towards policy isomorphism is also found within the various regions, especially with respect to spending on daycare and cultural activities. A major part of the development is due to coercive isomorphism based on central government regulations, while only a minor part seems to be related to socio-demographic changes. Also there are some indications that the use of financial indicators by individual municipalities creates isomorphic pressure on local policy decisions.

Peter Dahler-Larsen og Hanne Kathrine Krogstrup

Evaluation and institutional standards: Neo-institutional reflections on evaluation as contemporary ritual

Evaluation defines itself as systematic data collection with the instrumental objective of improving performance and outcomes in a public organization. This article examines evaluations as organizational rituals, primarily driven by their

congruence with legitimizing cultural patterns. Institutionalized standards of evaluation take on varying forms. They are often formed outside actual democratic forums, and institutional theory helps identify unnoticed effects. This is an inspiration to develop new concepts about the symbolic and constitutive effects of evaluation.

Martin Marcussen

Independence is sweeping Europe: Reform of the central banks in France, Sweden and England in the 1990s

This article attempts to explain central bank reform in Great Britain, France and Sweden with a reference to 'the power of ideas'. It is argued that European macro-economic elites feel that they belong to an international macro-economic community and that they share a common belief system based on the 'sound policy' concept. The international macro-economic community provides them with a sense of belonging which they will aspire to maintain through 'appropriate' policy discourse and action. If there is a perceived misfit between the ideas on which the European macro-economic organizational field is build and a particular set of domestic structures, macro-economic elites will, as a result of this search for continued international legitimacy, aspire to undertake domestic reforms where and when it was not otherwise expected. However, national macro-economic elites also have a legitimacy game to play at the national level. Through their domestic policy discourse they will have to construct a fit between the domestic institutional context and a set of EMU ideas. The timing of domestic reforms called for by EMU ideas, therefore, depends on whether the domestic institutional context is facilitating or constraining such an undertaking.

Erik Kulavig

The soviet "sub-society" in theory and praxis

Were the Soviet citizens subdued and loyal nonentities or did they cheat the state every time it turned its back on them? That is in a few words the question this article deals with. The analysis draws on new archival evidence from the Second World War. The findings indicate that society or rather the "sub-society" played a much more active and much more destructive role for the Soviet system than is normally believed.