

Normerande idéparadox

– en studie av tillväxtpolitikens intertextualitet
och dess samhälleliga innebörd

English Summary

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

För avläggande av ekonomie doktorsexamen i företagsekonomi som med tillstånd av Handelshögskolans fakultetsnämnd vid Göteborgs universitet framlägges för offentlig granskning fredagen den 12 september, 2008, kl. 13.15 i C-G-salen vid Företagsekonomiska institutionen, Vasagatan 1, Göteborg.

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Abstract

A Discourse Analysis of Innovation Policies for Economic Growth

A subject in the political debate is how to formulate and implement innovation policies that may result in economic growth. In this context, different concepts, such as innovation systems, triple helix, and clusters have become keywords, which are often confusing in their definition and content, but are nevertheless spread worldwide and often taken for granted as successful instruments. From a national policy level, action programs have been developed based on concepts, such as clusters (Porter, 1990, 1998) and triple helix (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1997, 1998, 2000), which have received greater recognition as “ready-made” tools to create economic growth.

This study analyzes the texts embedded in a Swedish policy agenda, and the data has been collected during five years, from 2002 to 2007. From a national level, the study analyzes the Government of Sweden’s innovation policies and its action programs, and from a regional level, it investigates the text from two different regional growth initiatives, Västerås Technology Park and the Biomedicine initiative in Western Sweden. By describing and analyzing how the policies for economic growth are formulated and implemented, the study aims to contribute to the development of an idiom and a problematization of *how* innovation policies and action programs for creating economic growth are constructed, thereby, exploring *how* the government intends to generate economic growth. Furthermore, the study discusses the consequences and how policies and action programs can be viewed as an idiom of a broader social phenomenon and how this can be understood.

The study explores the set of discourses in which policies and action programs for economic growth are embedded. The study highlights the relationships among texts, discourses, and institutions by using a critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; 2002) to investigate the processes underlying institutionalization. An intertextual perspective enables the identification and analysis of specific micro-level discursive action and their placement in the context of other macro-level discourses (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000a). This study puts forward three forums, the discursive action where texts are interconnected, the “church-hill phenomena,” “revivalist meeting,” and the “pilgrim voyage,” and identifies four characteristics in a macro-level discourse named “the glazy-society.”

The study argues that at a national level, a social-engineering innovation model has been created, which implies a best idea – a best practice – for organizing innovations. This idea appears as an established discourse and constitutes an institutionalized mindset of text imbedded in innovation policies for economic growth, which the regional level conforms to, in order to be recognized as successful. This creates a discourse practice “dressed-for-success,” which leads to a demand for spin-heroes and the need of illusions. The political discourse of innovation policies can be described as “semi-policies,” in need of text at a regional level to become guidelines for concrete practice. New and old texts are combined with respect to its purpose. Paradoxically, the best-practice model’s disadvantages turn out to be its advantages – it opens up a local process for semi-policies to become concrete practice.

This study has introduced a framework that sensitizes institutional theorists to the critical role of language and texts in the institutional processes. In doing so, the study aims to provide a more coherent framework for understanding the formulation and implementation of innovation policies that intend to stimulate economic growth – that seem to be taken for granted by governments.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, innovation policy, the practice of language, intertextuality, cluster, triple helix.