



FÖRVALTNINGSHÖGSKOLAN

När idéer får liv

Om intraprenader i tre kommuner

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Abstract

In the early 2000s an idea regarding how to organise the Swedish public sector, called internal contracts, attracted attention from many different public authorities in Sweden.

Organising in the form of internal contracts means that units within a public authority are given more autonomy to run their own affairs. A distinct feature of the internal contracts model is that it is said to combine characteristics from both public and private organisations, combining the best of both worlds. However, the popularity of internal contracts was short-lived, and just a few years later it seemed to be out of fashion. A few municipalities, however, constitute examples of where internal contracts were subscribed to and supported for a longer period of time. These municipalities showed that theories relating to fashions for ideas, and what causes fluctuations in fashions, are not sufficient to explain variations in the lifecycles of ideas. There are variations in the life cycles of fashionable ideas, with some seeming to disappear as soon as they arise while others remain influential over a longer period of time.

Why is this? The popularity and use of ideas is not only the result of gaining legitimacy in an institutional environment, as has long been suggested, but also the result of individual interpretations of ideas, in the context in which they are introduced. Ideas are changed and modified, or translated, as they travel in and between organisations. In turn, translations affect the ways in which ideas are perceived and whether or not they are considered legitimate and supported by the people who receive them. The fate of ideas thus lies in the hands of people, each of whom may accept, modify or deflect them, as well as add to them or let them drop. The study suggests a model for how the life-cycle of ideas can be understood based on how, by whom, when and where they are translated. It illustrates how (1) the receiver of ideas, (2) the carrier of the ideas and (3) characteristics assigned to ideas affect translations and thereby, whether their life-cycles are to become short or long. The study also highlights the fact that ideas are often revivals of earlier ideas rather than new ones, suggesting that ideas seldom die, but are instead given more or less attention in different times and spaces. In addition, in studying the process, not just the ups and downs in popularity, the study shows that what makes ideas come to life, and stay alive, is the result of continuous work. People need to be convinced on a continuous basis that ideas are attractive. Finally, the study contributes to further understanding institutionalisation. What affects translation also affects whether actions are repeated, and over time become taken for granted in an organisation.

Nyckelord: Intraprenad, idéer, organisering, översättning, mode, institutionalisering, mottagare av idéer, bärare av idéer, förändring inom offentlig sektor, organisatorisk förändring.