

Research projects

Think tanks and the organizing of global markets: knowledge, ideas, and new forms of governance

The globalization of markets and corporate activities opens up new possibilities as well as new risks for citizens as well as for states. The organizational structures and forms of influence and governance that exist face huge challenges pertaining to the social effects of the global economy. In this process, think tanks, or policy institutes, have assumed a greater role as arenas for analysis and diffusion of ideas and knowledge. Think tanks often play a prominent role in analysing the current financial and social situation in the world and to create scenarios for possible future development trajectories. Such representations often play a role in political debates and in decision-making processes in corporations and in global, multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They also often influence the allocation of financial resources, agenda setting, and the definition of priorities.

The project focuses on the role of think tanks in producing knowledge and ideas about, and representations of, future markets. Some research questions are: How is knowledge produced in think tanks? How are ideas and knowledge diffused to other, relevant actors? How can think tanks influence political processes and decision making through their activities? Fieldwork is being undertaken in Washington DC, in Paris, and in Stockholm.

The project, which is led by Christina Garsten, is part of the research programme Organizing to create and shape markets, coordinated by Nils Brunsson (Stockholm School of Economics/Uppsala University). Christina Garsten, Göran Sundström and Nils Brunsson constitute the management team for this research programme. The research programme is financed the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond), and is located at Score.

See <http://www.score.su.se/pub/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=14028&a=75197>

Improving the state of the world?

World Economic Forum as a global actor between market and politics

In a globalized economy states as well as multilateral organizations face tremendous challenges in governing and shaping the market in the desired direction. Other actors than states have come to assume crucial roles in the regulation of markets and new 'soft' forms of governance are being tried out to motivate corporations to regulate themselves. The World Economic Forum is an important organization for these 'soft' forms of governance. Departing from the motto 'Committed to improving the state of the world', the WEF organizes activities for its members (transnational corporations) aiming to enhance market dynamics and develop forms for social responsibility. By way of a large number of activities, all year round, and in different part of the world, the Forum seeks to find solutions to global problems, in order to spur financial and social development. The organization runs activities around free trade, deregulation/reregulation of markets and market based solutions as basic answers to the many problems in focus, but is at base religiously and politically independent.

The project studies the WEF as an actor aiming to influence the shaping of global markets by way of its authority. The aim of the project is to increase understanding of the type of activities that the WEF are engaged in. How is authority for their activities created? How does the WEF create influence for itself as a political actor? What significance can this kind of organization have on the shaping of markets at global level? The World Economic Forum is not unique in its interest in influencing global politics by way of informal channels, but it is an organization with a uniquely influential role. The project aims to contribute to knowledge about the kinds of influence that these types of organizations may have in global politics at large.

Christina Garsten leads the project in collaboration with Adrienne Sörbom (Score). The project is financed by the Swedish Research Council and located at Score.

Policy intellectuals in the welfare state

One of the most important changes in Swedish democracy over the last decades is the weakening of the political parties, by way of the decreasing number of unpaid politicians and shrinking membership numbers. The professionalization of politics has meant that new forms on influencing politics have gained increasing importance. In this multidisciplinary project we investigate a partly new and increasingly central group in this respect, which we call the 'policy intellectuals'. These are persons that are employed in various forms and have as their occupation to do politics. With the term policy intellectuals, we do not mean that many elected representatives have become salaried, but the fact that they are employed without being elected. These people are to be found in the Government Offices of Sweden, in political parties at both European, national, regional, and local levels and within the party organizations in the Parliament. They are as well to be found in regional and municipal governments, in many interest-based organizations, and in some politically affiliated PR-bureaus and think tanks.

In this project, we aim to investigate the implications of the fact that an increasing number of people, appearing to have a decisive impact on the political agenda in Sweden, are people who, instead of being elected, are now employed to engage in different forms of politics.

Theoretically, this development towards a professionalization of political power raises a number of questions. The project aims to map and analyse the policy intellectuals and their role in a number of welfare state policy areas. Three aspects are particularly focused:

- The work of the policy intellectuals as *a form of political influence*: What resources are used in their work?
- The *vocational and career choices* of the policy intellectuals?
- The policy intellectuals as a group with *a specific labour market*

Apart from these three specific aims, we also aim for the project to contribute to a wider problem area, namely what this development may mean for the democratic form of government and its legitimacy.

The project is run jointly by Stefan Svallfors (Umeå University) Bo Rothstein (University of Gothenburg) and Christina Garsten. The project is financed by Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation and located at Score (project leader Christina Garsten), and by the Swedish Research Council, located at the Institute for Future Studies (project leader Stefan Svallfors).

Govemark – the Governance of Markets

In the social sciences, politics and markets are usually studied as separate systems. In recent decades, however, market actors are entering into partnerships with state actors to regulate areas previously considered as pertaining to the state, and to politics. These changes can in general terms be described as a move towards governance, and more specifically as the development of a new public domain in which the boundaries between the two systems are not as clear.

Govemark is a network project with the purpose of stimulating research on market-based actors (such as transnational corporations and their research institutes and think tanks) and their activities within a global public domain. Research questions for the network concern the organizational attempts to frame the decision-making agenda on behalf of these kinds of actors. How do they create authority and legitimacy for themselves as political actors? What do the global organizational forms look like: who takes part, what issues do they pursue, and what solutions are put forward? How do actors balance economic rationality and social responsibility? How do they balance market priorities and political priorities?

The network is led by Christina Garsten in collaboration with Adrienne Sörbom (Score). Partners are Bo Rothstein (University of Gothenburg), Peter Miller (CARR, London School of Economics), Hervé Dumez (Centre de Recherche en Gestion, CNRS), and Melissa Fisher (Georgetown University). The network is financed by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond).

Processes of organizing: the shaping and reshaping of control, knowledge and agency

The aim of this program is to gain an improved understanding of current transformations in society by a refined analysis of processes of organizing in a number of empirical fields that are subject to political and economic transformations. The programme focuses on three themes: The control state; The organization of knowledge; and The politics of markets.

The program is funded by STINT (The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education). The directors of the program are Christina Garsten (Score), Olivier Borraz (CSO) and Peter Miller (CARR, LSE).

LOCALISE – Local Worlds of Social Cohesion

The activation of long-term unemployed and otherwise disadvantaged groups is one of the most important challenges for social cohesion in Europe. These groups are confronted with complex problems (e.g. low income, low qualifications, health problems etc.), which require multiple employment and social services tailored to individual needs, particularly at the local level. The institutional, organizational and individual dimensions of these social cohesion policies deserve particular attention. The focus of LOCALISE is to analyse in detail the organisational integration of social and employment policies at the local level and its regional, national and European context as well as its impact on the beneficiaries. Crucial questions are: How do different institutional contexts influence local worlds of social cohesion? How do local actors deal with the conflicts and dilemmas caused by integrated social cohesion policies? What impact do these policies have on social inequality and the conception of social citizenship?

LOCALISE brings together researchers and stakeholders from six European countries and has a comparative dimension. The project is financed by the 7th EU Framework Programme and is coordinated by Martin Heidenreich (CETRO, Universität Oldenburg). Other partners are Score (Stockholm University), ENU (Edinburgh), PAM (Milan), and CEO (Bordeaux). The Swedish project is led by Christina Garsten in collaboration with Kerstin Jacobsson (Södertörn University College) and is placed at Score.

See <http://www.localise-research.eu/>

Forms of sociality in organizations: boredom and associated emotions among managers

In the last decades, a significant body of literature has emerged to direct attention to the emotional aspects of organizing. Organizations have been investigated as sites for the enactment of humor, fun, eroticism, irony, and cynicism, to mention some of the important contributions. Taken together, these have shed light on the social and emotional dimensions of organizing and contributed significantly to our understanding of organizational life. In this nexus, boredom, as a sense of emptiness and lack of meaning and direction, also has its place. Boredom, as *ennui*, has been described as one of the central features of modernity. It is intrinsically linked to routines, institutions, and repetition – aspects that are central in the constitution of organizations. Boredom constitutes a threat, in that it implies a lack of meaning, purpose and direction, and hence reveals the workings of power. Hence, organizations tend to pretend not to be boring, but to engage in a variety of 'boredom strategies' that keep people engaged and focused. Among these strategies a remarkable one is making the organization 'a place for fun'.

This is an area of strategic concern for scholars in social anthropology and organization theory, since it concerns directly the social contract between individual and organization and brings to the fore issues of subjectivity and control, as well as emotional responses to organizational constraints and work assignments. Research has focused mainly on the more positive dimensions of emotional response, such as humor, fun and play, and much less so on the negative dimensions, such as lack of motivation, boredom and *ennui*. It has been stated that boredom and its associated emotions

constitute a threat to management, since it risks averting the energies and foci of employees towards productivity loss and resistance strategies. We argue that these aspects of organizational life are clearly under-researched and that they merit further investigation. This is also an area which is increasingly attracting the attention of researchers at global level, and thus of strategic value.

The project involves interviews with managers in corporations in both Sweden and France. We also rely on media studies, such as documentaries and fictions relevant for the research purpose. The project is run in collaboration with Hervé Laroche (ESCP, Paris) and has received funding by ECSP, Paris.