



ISPSO 34th Annual Meeting, Copenhagen 3rd - 9th July 2017: Dreams always take place: Spaces, Places, Rooms, and Furniture, inside and around us

**PARALLEL PAPERS II**  
**FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JULY 1600-1715**  
**ROOM I - 7.0.01**

**Marie-Louise Bjørn:**

*Physical structures and wicked mandates in the administration of child protection*

The public governance and administration of child protection is based on a political idealistic thinking of how a democratic society ought to take care of those children that in some point of their lives find themselves lost and in deep need for support, help and protection from the social authorities.

Despite of this legislative, administrative and political rhetorical mandate in pursuing the best practice to support, help and protect these vulnerable children, we are repeatedly witnessing horrifying system failures in both governance and administration in these cases. Cases where fundamental rights, values and norms crack up in brutal thinking and lack of action in a wicked game of real political priorities and slovenly administrative practices.

How can we explain that? Assuming no one in this “business” want to hurt these extremely vulnerable children but indeed help, protect and support them best as possible. Why is it that the just opposite happens again and again? How can we understand the actual scenario in which it seems like most critical analytical thinking and administrative practices disappear down a funnel of persecutory anxiety!

One way to look for answers is to look at the structuring of the issues at stake. History relentlessly shows us, that the structuring and organizing of our public systems and organizations, influences our behavior, moral and ethics. In relation to the conference theme, this leads to the questioning of how the organizational and physical structures may affect the people working within them.

Due to an assumption of an emotional distress derived from the complexity and conflict ridden characteristics of the task it is important to take a deeper dive into the impact of our emotional reactions and motivations when we are

to make sense and judgemental decisions on an ambiguous or even “wicked” mandate.

The paper presents the framework of the industrial PhD research project “Good Will Hunting - strategic contradictions and managerial challenges in the administration of child protection” and some early findings of special social defense mechanisms, dynamic inconsistency, economic myopia and political disruption.

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