

Unpackaging IT Governance

A study of Chief Information Officers in Large, Swedish Organizations

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ABSTRACT

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Information Technology (IT) has during the last decades become a central tenet in the infrastructure for value-creation. To manage and successfully ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of IT as a corporate resource, organizations have turned to what is referred to as "IT Governance". IT Governance integrates the governance of IT in the overall corporate governance processes. This integration is intended to align IT with business, ensuring that the supply and use of IT is both efficient and effective. Successful IT Governance will, according to its propagators, ensure increased competitive advantage and bottom line financial results for the organization. Previous studies of IT Governance have reportedly suffered from over-simplifications and an overly normative outset. Today, IT Governance is one of the key activities related to the strategic management of Information Systems (IS, a term used to address the IT function within an organization) in large organizations. Many organizations apply the same type of "recipes" for IT Governance, yet at the same time, IT Governance practice is far from uniform. Building on Scandinavian Institutional Theory, the aim of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of the translation of IT Governance as a management idea. The translation of IT Governance is studied with a particular focus on the personal unpackaging of the management idea by Chief Information Officers (CIOs). The CIO is defined as the executive utmost responsible for IS. Furthermore, the management idea is regarded as comprised of a set of norms. The thesis consists of two sequential studies. Study 1 focuses on identifying and validating a set of IT Governance related norms through the perspectives of Consultants, Professional Analysts and Academics. The empirical material for Study 1 consists of a questionnaire, scientific articles and professional analyst reports. Study 2 takes a cross-sectional approach towards studying how CIOs in Large, Swedish Organizations unpackage the norms identified and validated in Study 1. The empirical material for Study 2 consists of transcribed interviews. The findings are summarized into three conclusions: (1) The unpackaging of IT Governance related norms is closely tied to the securing of legitimacy. Hence, the personal and professional agenda of the CIO influences an instrumental unpackaging of IT Governance related norms. (2) CIOs use different forms of motive talk to justify and excuse their stance towards IT Governance. These different strategies of legitimization offer the CIOs a means for upholding legitimacy without problematizing or following the norms to the letter. This facilitates heterogenic adoption of the management idea. (3) The unpackaging of IT Governance related norms displays variance on account of the strategies of legitimization that the CIOs employ. This variance is observed on a per-norm basis. In its contribution to theory, this thesis adds to the previous research on translation. By infusing concepts such as norms, legitimating accounts, strategies of legitimization, professionalization and marginal man, a new approach to understanding translation is applied.

Key Words: IT Governance, Translation, Unpackaging, Chief Information Officer, Legitimacy, Institutional Theory, Marginal Man, Professionalization