

On the trail of the Calculator Boys

This article investigates the multiple enactment of “the economy” as an object that demands and determines parliamentary decisions. A pivot node of this investigation is the Treasury’s macroeconomic models, since these models seem to be junctions for a wide ensemble of constitutors of “the economy”.

The investigation mobilises two intertwined modes of performativity - the *ontological* and the *theatrical* - that participate in and strengthen each other’s performances of “the economy”. The ontological mode is characterised by activities of statistical institutes, economic research institutions and think tanks that perform the economy as a scientific object, while the theatrical mode involves politicians, civil servants, journalists and voters in iterative plays, such as press conferences, negotiations, informal meetings and votes; all part of the multiple process of policy-making.

The entrance to my investigation is the somewhat mysterious term the Calculator Boys. This term is often used in Danish media to signify people in the Treasury that work with economic calculations, and as such it signifies people closely connected to the Treasury models and the process of economic policy-making.

Through interviews, document analysis and field observations I try to uncover the enactment of “the economy” as a parliamentary object and to get closer to understanding why some economic policies have the character of unavoidable necessities, while others are rendered impossible.