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Editorial

The third Nordic Activity Conference (ISCAR) took place in Copenhagen in 2004. To the editors it is important that this event is reflected in the Outlines, given its Nordic roots. Four of the five articles in this issue of Outlines are papers from this conference. These papers are of course all "activity oriented", even if, as can be seen, the approach is variously described as a sociocultural approach, an action theory approach, or a cultural-historical activity theory approach (CHAT). Despite this diversity in the four articles in the conceptualisation of activity as action, activity system, or as a cultural process, the focus on societal and institutional practices, and on how changes in institutions or activity systems influence persons' doings and developments, are central as in all activity approaches. In this, moreover, they match closely with the fifth article (Mik-Meyer's) which was submitted independently and on the background of different community of researchers almost completely unrelated to the ISCAR. Overall, the present selection may be either regarded as evidence of how the "activity oriented" community behind the Outlines continues to multiply, and / or conversely, how quite varied off-mainstream traditions in current social theory appear to merge and are able to use Outlines as platform.

The first three articles can be seen as developing different aspects of precarious socio-historical identity, intersubjectivity, and recognition.

In Sven Mørch's article *Learning to become Youth. An action theory approach,* the focus is on the activity of youth and the changes in youth identity, as well as on how changes

in the societal conditions create new ways of becoming youth. In the article Sven Mørch gives a historical introduction to how youth has developed in Western societies. He analyses how the demands of social integration into adulthood and individualisation as a person have other conditions in late modern society than in modern society. It is these changes in the societal conditions that have led to an orientation of youth towards other youth to appropriate competence and becoming knowledgable and reflexive subjects.

The socio-historical constitution of identity is also a central concern in Peter Musaeus' article *A sociocultural approach to recognition and learning*. Musaeus' argument is nothing short of an empirical concretization of Hegel's dialectics of recognition in contemporary apprenticeship learning. We witness how goldsmith apprentices are at one and the same time instrumentalized, accepted as concrete particular human beings, and, by mediating their master's relation to the world, able to sublate dependency into recognized self-mastery. And as in Mørch's contemporary youth, proving autonomy requires putting one's known form of life at stake.

Nanna Mik-Meyer's *Identities And Organizations. Evaluating the Personality Traits of Clients in two Danish Rehabilitation Organizations* builds on feminist action theory and interactionism to demonstrate in detailed analyses how organizational categories organize work and rule interpersonal relations to form institutional identities of clients in Danish rehabilitation practices. This is shown be the case even with categories long outdated

but maintained in the "textual realities" that co-constitute the institutions as realized by staff in embodied knowledges and practices.

In this work, as in several earlier Outlines, the sociological tradition of an "institutional ethnography" that questions categories in practices comes close to an activity theory tradition in psychology which investigates objects and identities as socio-historical and seeks forms of knowledge relevant to practitioners in institutions and organizations.

In May Britt Postholm's & Janne Madsen's article *The researcher's role: An ethical dimension* we again encounter aspects of this theme of the importance of mutual recognition of the other as special and respectable. Postholm and Madsen give an overview of how the meaning of ethical codes changes in the different approaches that have dominated educational research. They argue that the approach of interventive research provides both the researcher and the researched with a shared objective, and that they become partners through realising the educational objective, even if they are not research partners since they each are in different institutions with different objectives that reach beyond the shared objective of research itself.

Jakko Virkkunen's article *Hybrid agency in co-configuration work* can be viewed as giving a concrete example of Postholm and Madsen's reflections. The article is about the shared objective of intervention of two activity systems, as seen from the perspective of both; about how changes in one implie changes in the relation to the other, and how these changes create conditions for learning. Thus, when information technology gradually changes the conditions of production of a pulp plant, those changes in this production system, in turn, change the information technology itself. In Virkkunen's article the historical changes are illustrated as a microgenetic analysis of how a platform for interrelated activities is created to promote development within two different activity systems.

Enjoy the activity and identity of a reader!