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Enacting the entrepreneurial self

Public-Private Innovation as an actualization of the neoliberal market dispositive

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Enacting the entrepreneurial self: Public-private innovation as an actualization of a neoliberal market dispositive

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A B S T R A C T

Drawing on Foucault's writings on power, neoliberalism, and the dispositive, this article analyses the identity politics that is immanent in a new collaborative practice between the public and private sector called public-private innovation (PPI). We argue that PPI is an element in actualizing a neoliberal market dispositive through inclining subjects to work on themselves in order to actualize their entrepreneurial self, thereby disconnecting them from their public service identity. The construction of two narratives supports the constitution of the political space of PPI: the fiery soul narrative and the need narrative. An important part of this identity politics is the construction of the narrative of the individual entrepreneur. Rather than expressing new public governance in the public sector, PPI actualizes a dispositive that marketizes public services as part of a neoliberal agenda. The narrative of PPI distracts from the marketization of public sector and leaves no other space for public-sector employees than to constitute themselves within contradictory feelings of enthusiasm and anxiety, determination and self-blame, responsibility and inadequacy, and bustle and confusion.

1. Introduction

This article analyses a new Danish collaborative work practice between the public and private sector called public-private innovation (PPI). In the literature, PPI is often seen as an expression of a shift in public governance discourse away from new public management (NPM) towards new public governance (NPG). Thus, NPG is an alternative to NPM and the neoliberal agenda that NPM is associated with (Hood, 1991; Klijn, 2012; Pettersen, 2001). NPM is perceived as a child of neoclassical economics and particularly rational/public choice theory. It emphasizes efficiency and effectiveness accomplished through competition, the price mechanism, and contractual relationships (Osborne, 2010). NPM expresses a neoliberal agenda, where neoliberalism is understood as 'that form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms' (Brown, 2015). In contrast, NPG is located within institutional and network theory (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). It posits a plural state, where multiple actors contribute to public service delivery, and a pluralist state, where multiple processes inform the policy-making system (Bevir, 2012; Osborne, 2010).

Since PPI is a public-private partnership, its legitimacy is embedded in a narrative of being more collaborative, network-based, and targeted towards innovation and learning. However, instead of entailing a break with NPM's market and performance-based concepts and models, we suggest that PPI entails another extreme mode of marketization that remakes public service through targeting and remaking the public service subject. Therefore, we suggest looking at PPI as an actualization of a neoliberal market dispositive (Foucault, 1980a, 2008) in targeting the framing of entrepreneurial selves. This kind of marketization in which we have to remake ourselves into entrepreneurs with missions and visions of our own is more extreme and can, according to Bröckling (2016): xi), top Deleuze's (1992a, 1992b) remark that the idea that corporations have a soul is the most terrifying news in the world.

Looking at neoliberalism through the lens of the dispositive is important because it presumes a less deterministic relationship between power and the subject than most Foucauldian inspired power analyses (Deleuze, 2006). It puts the subject back into the centre of analysis (Milchman & Rosenberg, 2009). The dispositive allows us to understand how control is more immaterial in working through inclining subjects to work on themselves to become entrepreneurial, project-minded, innovative, and (most importantly) market-oriented (Berglund, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2020). Thus, our analysis shows how PPI works through articulating particular narratives of desired subjectivities as well as

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through incorporating strategies of judgment concerning whether public-sector employees actualize these entrepreneurial codes of conduct in their daily practice.

We ask the following research questions: (1) what kind of subjectivity is staged through the politics of PPI, and (2) what are the implications for remaking public service as well as public service subjects? We analyse the discursive setup of PPI and suggests that the enactment of the entrepreneurial spirit is accomplished through the staging of a particular permissible subjectivity embedded in two apparently contradictory narratives – the *fiery soul narrative* and the *need narrative*. These narratives produce particular political and economic relations (Jones & Spicer, 2009, p. 14) and serve three purposes: (1) they isolate responsibility for the narratives' enactment within individuals' self-work; (2) they discretely reinforce the necessity of a marketization of the public sector; and (3) they legitimize downsizing the public sector. In the next section, we position the article within public governance studies. This is followed by a discussion of Foucault's notion of power and its connections to neoliberalism and the dispositive. Thereafter, we conduct an analysis of PPI as a framework that promotes the marketization of public sector, inclines its employees to enact entrepreneurial selves, and works through affective subjectivation. We then discuss the findings.

2. Public-private innovation, public governance, and power

PPI is said to express a change from NPM to NPG in the discourse on the management and governance of public services. Klijn (2012) and Osborne (2010) argue that NPG has developed into a new paradigmatic regime for public service delivery, one that needs to be distinguished from both the traditional public administration (PA) paradigm and NPM. Because NPG works from a perception of a plural state influenced by multiple actors and multiple processes, it focuses on interorganizational processes and the governance of processes where the quality and effectiveness of public deliveries rely on the networks of collaboration and interactions they establish with actors and institutions outside the organization. These elements are central in PPI, which emerged around 2009 and is presented as a new innovative collaborative work practice. There is no single authoritative definition of this partnership model, but reports and websites generally describe it as mutual, non-buyer-supplier cooperative arrangements between public and private organizations. In order to avoid future demographic and economic 'catastrophes', the overall objective of PPI is to innovate public welfare solutions and create new business opportunities in the private sector (Lassen, Bønnelycke, & Otto, 2015). PPI is thus presented as a win-win situation. For public organizations, the advantage is that arrangements like PPI can help manage and solve grand challenges like sustainability, digitalization, and other major societal problems, which require interorganizational collaboration (Bason, 2018).

PPI goes beyond the traditional relationship between private and public companies, which is based on public procurement. Instead, an intense collaborative engagement is imagined between the private and public sector. The key elements in PPI are user involvement, continuous transfer of ideas and knowledge (Weihe et al., 2011: 14), and development of new shared knowledge (Abildgaard & Hosbond, 2014). This requires the involved parties to draw up a common vision to achieve both their own and each other's goals. Thus, PPI is consistent with the NPG model of public governance, in which collaboration and co-creation concerning public services are emphasized (Greve, 2012). PPI incorporates a new collaborative logic that seems to be different from the market logic of NPM. In lieu of performance, innovation across boundaries is one of the buzzwords (Torfing, 2012). PPI is associated with a more positive discourse concerning public service deliveries, which differs from the standardized performance goals of NPM. Learning, innovation, co-creation, democratic participation, and active citizenship are some of these positive words that are being used about NPG and that are also associated with the visions of PPI. However, the ultimate test of PPI is to attune to the micro-politics embedded in the lived stories of PPI instead of being seduced by grand narratives (Jørgensen & Boje, 2010).

2.1. Public-private innovation and identity politics

Foucault uses the term *discursive practices* to refer to how discourses are being inscribed into the small, petty, grey, and localized details of government (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014; Foucault, 1977, pp. 139–141). Thus, the 'truth' of a governmental program like PPI does not lie in how it is being legitimized but in how it is being exercised or performed. Foucault's tools for writing history, the archaeology and the genealogy, serve the role of confronting the narratives of the present with the relentless critique of history (Bauer, 1999; Foucault, 1977; Haugaard, 1997). This article will use a different tactics and will instead confront the grand narratives of PPI by attending to how PPI is represented in statements in articles, reports, and blog posts. We suggests that such statements are mobilized by actors to produce particular political and economic realities. The analysis of such statements is important for 'unmasking' (Jones & Spicer, 2009) power. Thus, our analysis seeks to contrast the legitimizing narratives of a concept like PPI by creating a counter-narrative (Lueg & Wolff Lundholt, 2020) to dominant narratives. Such inquiry at once discloses the 'true' strategic function of government as well as resistance (Caygill, 2013).

In this article, based on an analysis of the identity politics embedded in these statements, we suggest that PPI entails another extreme kind of marketization of public service deliveries. PPI is a practice that is both a continuation of and a cunning and sophisticated development of a neoliberal market dispositive, which pervasively remakes the state and the subject (Brown, 2015). While NPM in its early days focused on structural interventions into the design of positions and contractual relationships and the implementation of numerical standards (Jørgensen, Hsu, & Hersted, 2019), PPI entails another brutal form of marketization; it targets the self in order to internalize a corporate spirit and turn people into human capitals (Brown, 2015). Such human capitals are embodied in the figure of the entrepreneur. Namely, PPI predisposes everyone to model and transform themselves into an entrepreneur according to the idea of homo economicus (Bröckling, 2016: xiv). PPI thus inclines subjects to become self-improving and self-commercializing (Berglund et al., 2020).

Therefore, our analysis not only questions but also rejects the idea that PPI implies a more humanistic, collaborative, and co-creative work environment in the public sector. The analysis also questions whether NPG replaces NPM as it has been suggested (Thorup, 2016). NPM has been criticized for not delivering on its promises concerning higher effectiveness and quality of public services (Hood & Nixon, 2015; Torfing, 2016). However, NPG does not necessarily replace nor supplement NPM. Seen as an example of NPG, PPI may instead be a more sophisticated instrument in a neoliberal dispositive. Our analysis of PPI suggests that it is another element in the multitude of governmental concepts and methods which add to the complexity of public organizing and that it confirms the unquestioned acceptance of the normality and goodness of the discourse of the enterprise for organizing and delivering public services (e.g. Du Gay & Salaman, 1992, p. 615). We will make these arguments through looking at how PPI is staged and exercised and discerning which kinds of subjectivity formations are possible within the ensemble of discursive practices that constitutes PPI. However, before looking at the case, we will in the next section provide a more detailed account of Foucault's notions of power, the dispositive, and neoliberalism.

3. Power, neoliberalism, and the dispositive

In this article, we claim that PPI is another element of the neoliberal market dispositive. Foucault's work concerning the subtle connections between neoliberalism and 'freedom' plays an important role for our

claim. These connections are expressed through what Deleuze (1992a, 1992b) has called 'practices of control', in which freedom of the subject is a central principle (Bager, Jørgensen, & Raudaskosski, 2016). Thus, practices of control do not work through what Deleuze calls 'spaces of enclosure'. Instead power is actualized through the mundane and subtle ways in which subjects through seemingly active and 'free' choices turn themselves into market actors. Disciplinary societies fostered compliance, while practices of control foster individual self-creation and innovation modularized in relation to market demands. This is accomplished through competitive schemes, challenges, contests and visible numerical standards (Deleuze, 1992a, 1992b, p. 4–5). In turning freedom into an individual matter and constructing economic systems for rewarding individual performance and private initiative in competitive market economies, the 'brashest rivalry' among individuals is inferred as an effective control mechanism that also prevents effective resistance and collective action. This freedom 'from' others as well as structures and communities stands in contrast to contingent and relational notions of freedom (Arendt, 2006) where action is conditioned on mutual relations of reciprocity and collective structures targeted towards societal rather than market concerns (Berglund & Johannisson, 2012).

Practices of control gathered Foucault's attention from the seventies and onwards. These subtle practices supplemented the classical and bureaucratic disciplinary technologies of power that worked through 'confinement' and 'normalization' achieved through authoritarian hierarchy, surveillance, observation, and writing (Du Gay & Salaman, 1992; Townley, 1994). In contrast, practices of control set individuals 'free' by giving them more responsibility and autonomy in the performance of work. In exchange, they subject bodies to kinds of visibility that, instead of direct physical observation, employ different kinds of assessment technologies which measure and evaluate individuals' performances according to a potentially dynamic, complex, and variable grading scale (Jørgensen, 2018). Importantly, practices of control do not replace disciplinary practices (Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, & Thaning, 2016); rather, they add another layer to the complex, heterogeneous, inconsistent, and paradoxical ensemble of practices that constitutes governance of public organizations today. On the other hand, practices of control have become increasingly important for governing the subject.

Central to the development of the term practices of control is Foucault's analysis of Gary Becker's (2009) classical work on human capital. This work is important because it defines the *active economic subject* that, according to Foucault, sets neoliberalism apart from classical economics (Foucault, 2008, pp. 222–224). Bringing this active economic subject into the centre of analysis implies focusing on work as an economic conduct, that is, as a practice that is rationalized and calculated and in which income is seen as a return of an investment. Thus, Foucault (2008) defines capital as 'everything that in one way or another can be the source of future income' (p. 224). This remake of homo economicus performed through the theory of human capital is central for constructing an economy made up of individual enterprise units in which active economic subjects always have to work on themselves to maintain competitive advantage (McNay, 2009; Scharff, 2016). While such subjects were exchange partners in the classical conception of economics, in neoliberalism, they become entrepreneurs who are them for themselves and who are their own capital, their own producers, and the source of their earnings (Foucault, 2008, p. 226).

This notion of entrepreneurship has had decisive consequences for the articulation of desired organizational subjects. The desired character and conduct of the managers themselves are rephrased along entrepreneurial lines (Du Gay, Salaman, & Rees, 1996). The ideology of entrepreneurship lies underneath learning technologies within education (Edwards, 2008) as well as HRM practices (Townley, 1993), organizational learning (Jørgensen et al., 2019), workplace learning, and life-long learning (Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Nicoll & Fejes, 2008). Such technologies are seen as a source for improving the capital of the

organization through the employees. It is through a combination of customer culture (Du Gay & Salaman, 1992) and through participation in learning, in projects, and in innovation that employees gradually position themselves as subjects of the organization and internalize the corporate spirit under the veil of self-development and self-actualization (Berglund et al., 2020). Such a combination of customer culture and learning technologies is central in what Rhodes and Price (2011) call post-bureaucratic organizations. Newheiser (2016) notes that neoliberal governance implies a focus on statistics applied as an indirect form of control, which allows behaviour to be governed by a 'light touch' (pp. 4–5). Additionally, he notes that for Foucault, the freedom central to neoliberalism, paradoxically, functions as a means of power by which individuals are governed (p. 5). Explained differently, freedom is a smokescreen for a power that works through manipulating the ranges of choices and entails a politics of competitiveness, individual enterprising, and recognition according to market value. In organizations, such normalization is embedded in learning technologies that use hard statistics – such as performance management, key performance indicators, and the balanced scorecard – and in soft individualized technologies like coaching and personal development (Louis & Diochon, 2018; Painter--Morland, Kirk, Deslandes, & Tansley, 2019; Townley, 1995).

3.1. The dispositive and neoliberalism

Foucault's notion of the dispositive is important for understanding how neoliberalism is staged in practice because the dispositive emphasizes the necessity of an active subject. The early application of Foucault's work in organization studies focused on exploring how power relations in organizations shape knowledge, identities, decisions, and events (Alvesson, Bridgman, & Willmott, 2009; Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2011). This Involved decentring the subject (Newton, 1998; Wray-Bliss, 2002). In contrast, the dispositive works with an idea of an active subject through focusing on the possibilities of self-creation within power relations (Jørgensen, 2020). In his later work, Foucault (2000) emphasizes clearly that the presence of power is conditioned on an active subject.

The understanding of control embedded in the dispositive is important, because neoliberalism works through staging conditions for entrepreneurship. The dispositive has only received scarce attention in Foucauldian organization studies, potentially due to a problem of translation of the French term *dispositif* into English. Translations have tended to use the term *apparatus* (see e.g. Agamben, 2009; Deleuze, 1992a), whereas *dispositive* is more appropriate for capturing the idea of a heterogeneous, inconsistent, and moving social and material field that dispositions people to do particular things (Bussolini, 2010; Raffnsøe et al., 2016). The dispositive is thus more flexible and suitable for capturing the more subtle, invisible, and yet pervasive ways that power works in organizations.

Foucault (1980a) explains that what he is trying to pick out – or spot – with the term *dispositive* is a heterogeneous ensemble 'of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions' (pp. 194–195). He stresses that the dispositive itself is the 'network of relations' established between these elements. Deleuze (1992a) suggests that a dispositive is composed of four fluid lines that are subject to changes in a mutual interaction with the social field: (1) *lines of visibility* generate or eliminate an object that cannot exist without them; (2) *lines of enunciation* influence what is utterable; (3) *lines of force* constitute the dimension of power; and finally, (4) *lines of subjectivation* constitute a dimension in which the self is not necessarily subject to the pre-existing determination of the other lines but can escape from them through a process of individuation.

Looked at through the lens of the dispositive, organizational practices are where overall governing structures are inscribed in bodies of strategies, knowledge, subjectivities, techniques, measures, arrangements, strategies, technologies, routines, systems, procedures, laws,

guidelines, and so on (Bager et al., 2016). Such practices include the potential ways in which organizational phenomena should be perceived (lines of visibility), talked about (lines of enunciation), and acted upon. The immaterial web of relations between these social and material elements constitutes the concrete identity politics that conditions the possibility for how people should appear as subjects. Furthermore, these practices are linked with the *strategic function* or the urgent need for which organizations were created (Abildgaard, 2017; Ahonen & Tienari, 2009; Foucault, 1980a; Legg, 2011). In our case, this overall strategy is the remaking of the public sector according to neoliberalism.

The final line of the dispositive, subjectivation, becomes important for understanding neoliberal exercise of power. Subjectivation pertains to the relation of individuals to themselves (Milchman & Rosenberg, 2009, p. 66) and entails an active work of the self on the self. However, this work on the self is performed on a stage defined by neoliberalism. Central to this strategy is continuously putting people in situations of uncertainty and insecurity by exposing them to judgment according to brute market force. The purpose is the production of what we, with inspiration from Butler, call *affective precarity* (Butler, 2015, p. 15): a heightened sense of instability, social isolation, anxiety, expendability, disposability, and moral failure in people, which are productive for the framing of desired subjects and for centralizing power (Berlant, 2011; Bjerg & Staunæs, 2011; Valero, Jørgensen, & Brunilla, 2019).

4. Analysing PPI as part of a dispositive

We now turn towards our case study of public-private innovation (PPI). The full case study comprises 40 'diagnostic' analyses of how PPI evolved and was part of one of the authors' doctoral thesis work (Abildgaard, 2017). The material consists of partial public material like official reports and blogposts and partially confidential material like interviews, minutes and agendas from meetings, email correspondence and so forth. The material covers the early PPI period from 2009 to 2014 and encompasses three levels: the policy level, the debating level and the practical level. The material is summarized in the table below. We refer to the PhD study for a more detailed and precise account of this material (see Abildgaard, 2017, pp. 58–64) (Table 1).

At the policy level, The Danish Commerce and Construction Agency (In Danish, Erhvervs- og Byggestyrelsen) publishes the first report about PPI in 2009, initializes an interregional project to promote PPI in 2011, and launches a website with PPI advices and tools in 2014. From 2010, other government agencies and institutes make PPI reports from mostly intellectual and consultant-based perspectives. The second level is the debating level. Here, important politicians, key actors from labour market organizations, and managers from private and public sector discuss how to implement PPI in blog posts and articles. These actors encompass among others the Minister of Business and Domestic affairs, the Minister of Finance, regional directors of the Danish Regions,

representatives from unions and employer representatives and managers and representatives from some of the major corporations in Denmark. The third 'practical' level consists of two concrete PPI cases with actors from private companies and public care homes and consultants and evaluators from educational institutions. In both of these cases, as in PPI in general, the project manager is a public employee.

The discourse analysis follows PPI from when it is inserted as a new model for public and private innovation. The analysis is inspired by Foucault's (1980b, pp. 81–83) term 'erudite' knowledge, which refers to what Jørgensen (2002, pp. 33-34) calls local knowledge. The point is to allow the material to speak for itself through reading texts as 'monuments' instead of burying it in functional coherence and systematicity (Walker, 2018, pp. 10–11). Through this process researchers are capable of discovering small details and phrasings that are otherwise often overlooked. This is connected to the chronological principle in Foucault's method where the first step is to perform a simple detailed reading and rewriting of the text for the purpose of conducting what Foucault calls an 'ascending analysis' (Foucault, 1980b, p. 99; Jørgensen, 2002, p. 41). The point of this analysis is to allow the larger patterns to emerge from below. In her PhD study, Anne thus worked as a 'cartographer' where she carefully mapped the 'rhizomatic' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) relations between statements in relation to questions like who speaks, from where actors speak and from where they gain their authority to speak (Abildgaard, 2017, pp. 165–167, p. 171) for mapping the subtle dispositioning within the complex network of relations.

The two narratives around which we organize the analysis, 'the fiery soul' narrative and 'the need narrative', are crystallizations of the detailed readings of texts within the archive collected for the analysis. While discourse denotes whatever constrains and enables what we can legitimately speak, write and think in a given period (Mchoul & Grace, 2002, p. 31), narrative constitutes what is actualized as larger patterns of connections that emerge across the fragmented bits and pieces of texts in the archive. The collection of material was not particularly strategic. Rather, 'erudite knowledge' implies broadness and non-systematicity in searching for material. In wanting to 'unmask' power, there is a need for exploring small unofficial and 'hidden' tellings and sayings that are revealed in informal documents like mails, notes, agendas and similar material because this hidden material changes the picture and confronts official tellings. Searching for the material at the three levels of analysis was a simple way of ensuring broadness and organizing the collection of the material while the narratives were results of the patterns that emerged across the levels.

The discourse analysis is however organized around the insertion of PPI as a new dispositional device. We believe that such organization has important implications. Our analysis for example discloses both a continuity in the operation of this dispositive but also a break into new lines of subjectivation. As noted by Raffnsøe et al. (2016, p. 271), dispositional analysis articulates a history of social technologies that through their interrelation organize how we relate to each other. A dispositive is a web between heterogeneous elements in which every single element enters into a complex and changing web of relations. While a dispositional analysis can target the understanding of the whole network of relations, it also opens for a more specific understanding of how power is reorganized and mobilized through single technologies like PPI.

PPI is an example of how a social technology is used as a strategic device to cut through the existing web of social and material relations for discretely mobilising attention towards articulating other desired subjectivities in a way that at the same time disconnects the subject from her former subjectivity. Under the cover of innovation and co-creation, PPI is inserted into the micro-political game where it prescribes unquestionable and yet 'blurry codes of conduct' targeted towards splitting the subjects for the purpose of having them remake themselves as entrepreneurial selves. The fact that the dispositive is at once being criticized for being vague and praised for being a powerful tool that cuts through static categories and dichotomies (Raffnsøe et al., 2016, p. 273) is perhaps exactly an indication of the subtle, blurry, intangible and yet

Table 1
Summary of empirical material for the case study.

The policy level	−13 reports from government agencies and consultancies. - The homepage opiguide.dk published by the Danish Business Authority (DBA) - a large amount of documents from an interregional PPI project initialized by DBA
The debating level	−15 blog posts written by politicians, key actors from labour market organizations, and managers from the private and public sector −4 articles with opinions from consultants and private and public actors
The 'practical' level	Two concrete PPI cases: −7 interviews with actors from private companies and public care homes and consultants and evaluators from educational institutions - all available written materials and videos from the two PPI cases

effective work of power in neoliberalism.

5. Enacting the entrepreneurial self through a politics of disconnecting

We will now perform a detailed analysis of the emergence of public-private innovation (PPI). In accordance with the conceptual framework, we focus at power as immanent in PPI, and have been particularly interested in how discourse as represented in diverse texts sets up the stage for the appearance of organizational subjects. It is not coercive power in the sense that people are forced to do particular things. Rather, power works through the freedom of the subject by prescribing particular moral codes for subjectivation.

We find that especially two apparently contradictory narratives support the constitution of the space of PPI: *the fiery soul narrative* and *the need narrative*. Both narratives are parts of a dispositional tactic towards a new corporatized politics in the public sector. The fiery soul narrative works through an 'occupation' of the public actors' attention towards a struggle to achieve the aims of PPI. At the same time, the need narrative makes public actors visible as subjects that need to change by constructing a collection of truth claims about the public sector. Together the two narratives form an essential ingredient in the creation of the entrepreneurial public sector subject. Consequently, they pave the way for a de-politicized and almost unnoticed marketization of the public sector that includes an unreflected acceptance of the superiority of the private sector.

The construction of the, at once, needy and fiery soul subject is an actualization of both discursive and non-discursive practices. PPI actualizes a neoliberal market dispositive by displaying the public sector for the market by inviting private actors to meetings and product testing in public organizations. As a result, private actors gain insight into public sectors' logics and procurement procedures. The physical presence of private actors in public organizations is made possible by a large ensemble of other non-discursive practices. For example, different public organizations have been equipped with physical living labs, and both national and EU-based funds have financed PPI projects to support innovative collaboration. These non-discursive practices enable the meeting between public and private actors; support the private actors' insight in the public sector as a costumer; and create a focus on private companies' expectations when the public living labs are being equipped. Such practices pave the way for a discursive construction of private actors as experts and public actors as humble hosts.

We find that the field of PPI develops in the period of investigation but without any dramatic changes. The development is not in the direction of more innovative non-buyer-supplier cooperative arrangements between public and private organizations. Instead, the discourse concerning traditional buyer-supplier relations between public organizations and private organizations is strengthened in the blog posts through the years of 2013–2014 where private actors begin to define PPI as the same as pre-commercial procurement, functional offers and partnership models. The three goals of PPI are marginally changed from "increased effectiveness in public processes and supplies", "increased quality in public services", and "strengthened democracy, legitimacy and security in society towards "increased quality of public welfare solutions", "effectivization of public welfare solutions" and most importantly "growth and economic profit for private companies". Neither private nor public actors comment on this development.

5.1. The fiery soul narrative – a tactic in the movement towards a new corporatized politics of space in the public sector

The fiery soul is one of the highly rated subject positions within the discourse of innovation in cross-sectoral partnerships. In particular, the public employee who enthusiastically participates in public-private development projects without reacting to extended working days or unprecedented contradictions between the organization's daily operations and the innovation tasks has become a natural part of the work environment. Born out of contemporary highly developed capitalist societies' claims for 'social competences, life skills, soft skills, emotional competence, emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, communicative skills, etc.' (Jensen & Prieur, 2016, p. 92), the fiery soul seems to be a mutation of the entrepreneur, who, traditionally, was an industrial owner with a self-interest in his business (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; Jones & Spicer, 2009). It is a mutation in that the fiery souls develops from this traditional notion of the entrepreneur but also breaks with it into fitting the public governance context. According to Hjorth (2005), the intense pressure to be innovative operates through the stereotype of the entrepreneur, which 'has been recycled as an emblem of the proper employee'. Furthermore, Hjorth (2005) stresses, 'normalizing forces make people practice self-regulating technologies, helping them fit into the prefabricated molds of the enterprising employee' (p. 396).

However, in the case of PPI, we find that the figure of the entrepreneurial public actor serves an additional role. In this case, the public sector fiery soul is part of a set-up that occupies the attention of public managers and employees and prevents them from paying attention to the discreet penetration of the market into the public sector. As noted by McNay (2009, p. 56), Foucault saw neoliberalism as an exemplar in the indirect style of social control. Importantly, power does not operate through imposing social conformity but through proliferating individuals' differences in the marketization of social relations. It is characteristic that such marketization is de-politicized and, thus, that its value implications stay unquestioned.

To demonstrate how this works, we present the 'genealogy' of the fiery soul of PPI. We find that more than half of the reports that inform about PPI from 2009 to 2014 talks about fiery souls. The Danish Commerce and Construction Agency sets the agenda in 2009 by stressing that one of the crucial components in the best PPI practice is 'fiery souls with decision-making power in both sectors' (Erhvervs- og Byggestyrelsen, 2009). In 2010, a consultancy unfolds this statement in a report to this agency and The Danish Agency for Financial Management and Administrative Affairs:

> [I]t requires a special courage – and 'real innovation heroes' – to grow ambitious and visionary projects […] Former inquiries have concluded that a central condition of successful innovation projects are fiery souls or so-called champions. (Consulting report, 2010)

From 2010, the fiery soul becomes associated with the public employee. This implies that the fiery soul subject is no longer associated with decision-making power but with a lack of time, resources, and managerial support. A research institute launches this new PPI subject on behalf of The Confederation of Professionals in Denmark (FTF):

> [In public organizations], time and resources are first and foremost spent on core tasks, which is, of course, what provides these organizations' basic legitimacy. PPI-projects are often carried out by fiery souls who also use their spare time to accomplish the projects. Therefore, PPI projects are often conducted as a countermove to daily operations. (Research Institute report, 2010)

However, FTF still actualizes the fiery soul as a positive and obvious subject position, and this understanding of the fiery soul as a constrained public employee is – literally – reconstructed by a consulting agency that, in a report made for a Danish Region, uses exactly the same words as cited above.

It is noteworthy that the two reports that initialize the discourse about the public fiery soul and criticize the public sector for its approach to PPI are made by consulting agencies, which by their 'power without authority' (Sennett, 2007) actually write on behalf of public authorities. Nevertheless, this combined positioning of struggling public fiery souls and a public sector unable to support them is adopted as a self-evident truth on all three levels of the PPI field. The Danish Chamber of Commerce, The House for Growth Zealand and The Forum for Growth

Zealand (Vækstforum Sjælland & Væksthus Sjælland, 2012) problematize that PPI projects are often dependent on individuals, but no one reflects on the organizational spaces that construct the 'breeding ground' of this subject. This serves two purposes. First, responsibility for becoming a fiery soul relies solely on the individual. Second, this individual is made to turn against his or her former 'I' in order to attain the proper entrepreneurial spirit.

The fiery soul thus constitutes a new entrepreneurial subject in the public sector that works through 'projectifying the self' (Berglund et al., 2020). The struggling fiery souls working in a public sector unable to support them are thus the embodiment of enterprising selves perpetuated by what Berglund et al. (2020, p. 368) call 'prosumption' and who thus work on their selves to improve their worth and to be 'consumed' by others. This attention-demanding struggle works along with the self-evident nature of the new entrepreneurial ideal type, which is a materialization of social conduct and self-concepts. The identity politics, which constitutes the public sector fiery soul, can only create this specific subject by circulating, moving, and enacting public sector actors through combining the taken-for-granted understandings of the demand for increasing personal, communicative, and innovative skills in the public sector together with the public actors' preoccupation with getting PPI and its highly rated corporate logics to work.

Thus, the fiery soul embodies a normativity articulated by a neoliberal market dispositive and materialized as an 'accelerating corporatized regime' that accumulates subjectivities with the increasingly innovative, social, communicative, and corporative competences of the entrepreneur. PPI is only an element in a far larger dispositional framework that includes not only public governance and management frameworks but also education and life-long learning. In Sweden, entrepreneurial education has been introduced since the turn of the millennium for the purpose of making Swedish citizens more entrepreneurial, that is, more flexible, creative, enterprising, and independent (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2017; Dahlstedt & Hertzberg, 2012). This discloses a 'stealthy' (Brown, 2015) and persistent remake of the subject in which the marketization of social relations becomes an unquestionable truth. In our case, the circumstance that PPI does not lead to many concrete results for neither the public nor private sector is seemingly part of the discretion required of the PPI actors. Only few voices are raised against the PPI subject. A CEO from a private company asks in a blog post, 'Why isn't this PPI thing up and running' (See Dalum & Allentoft, 2014). In an article from 2014, a public company executive expresses his impatience with the lack of PPI results. However, this article concludes, 'PPI is an effective framework' (Denoffentlige.dk, 2014).

Another PPI aspect surrounded by discretion is the private companies' motivation for participating in PPI projects. In 2012, The House for Growth Zealand and The Forum for Growth Zealand published statistics stating that 48 % of private companies participating in PPI projects are motivated by 'establishing networks and contacts with the public sector'. Motivation factors such as 'access to user knowledge', 'access to test of prototypes', and 'test of market potential of specific products' are all rated as important for less than 25 % of the companies (2012, p. 22). Following Foucault (1988, p. 27), our analysis tries to determine the different ways of not saying things, which means focusing on the distribution of those who can and those who cannot speak and mapping the types of discourses that are authorized. The ways of not saying anything about missing PPI results and the private companies' apparent lack of interest in cooperative development ironically reinforces the discourses of PPI as commonsensical – the only game in town (Fougère, Segercrantz, & Seeck, 2017, p. 821).

Following Fougère et al. (2017), we see this form of discretion as an indicator of one of three moments: The first is the 'roll-with-it' moment, in which a dispositive of neoliberalism imposes its strategies and intervenes into social field. The other two moments are 'roll-back', which refers to a decrease in public expenditure and market intervention, and 'roll-out', which re-legitimizes neoliberalism in the face of crisis. PPI's success or failure is not important here for these three moments.

Actually, the way of not saying or talking about things is revelatory. In this perspective, the things that are subject to discretion indicate how PPI and the embodiment of the public sector fiery soul cover up the marketization of the public sector, which is one of the neoliberal market dispositive's effective strategies. Within this strategy, the achievement of fiery-soul competencies is subject to a profound disciplinary effect. This effect emerges from the individual's 'desire to secure the acknowledgement, recognition and confirmation of self, to practices confirmed by others as desirable' (Townley, 1994, p. 142). This constitutes a particular 'freedom' that can be performed within a predefined normativity of neoliberalism.

Following Townley (1995, p. 281), this freedom does not require public sector actors to consider why they adopt and struggle to fulfil the fiery soul position. On the contrary, the embodiment of the public fiery soul is supported by public actors' work on themselves to objectify and change themselves according to prescribed moral codes. Through such confessional practices, public actors recognize themselves as needy in relation to an entrepreneurial narrative that is hailed as the ideal subject of growth and efficiency. This scenario serves the political purpose of degrading the public sector as always inferior and of lower esteem than the private sector. Further, it reinforces the myth that innovation and change reside in private corporations and that public organizations are hopeless in this regard.

5.2. The need narrative – disconnecting from the traditional public service subject

Within the space of failure of PPI, we find the need narrative supported by different discursive constructions. First, a barrier discourse discreetly places nearly all PPI barriers in the public sector. Second, blurry cooperation and innovation concepts make it difficult for public sector actors to operate. Third, these discourses construct the public sector subject as needy. The barrier discourse is almost exclusively directed towards the public sector, and it permeates the whole PPI field. A good example of this discourse is a case study report conducted by a consulting agency for a Danish government authority to inform the Nordic Council of Ministers about PPI. The report stresses that its study only encompasses positive examples of PPI cases. However, its entire section about cultural and organizational differences in PPI only addresses public sector barriers:

> General cultural and organizational differences between public and private organizations are also described by stakeholders as a barrier for cooperation. Project participants point out issues such as bureaucracy or the nature of public organizations, a reluctance to work with private companies, administrative structures in public sector partnership organizations and different cultures and timeframes of decision-making in public and private organizations. […] Private partners sometimes perceive the public partners as slow and bureaucratic. Public and private firms do not always speak the same language or have the same time horizon. [I]mplementation of new solutions in the public sector was emphasized as a barrier, as the dissemination of good practice in the municipalities is key to sustaining growth in the company and limit the costs associated with parallel development of the same solutions in different municipalities. Moreover, the public sector can sometimes […] be a competitor in the sense that the public partner can establish competitive products, making it difficult for the private sector to be included in the market. The barriers perceived to be due to organizational and cultural differences are not surprising, since public and private organizations come from inherently different systems with different institutional logics. (Weihe et al., 2011, p. 61, references to specific cases are removed)

Most PPI reports analyse concrete PPI cases. In several of these cases, public actors express scepticism about private companies' unilateral

interest in making money. However, these stances do not appear as a barrier in the reports. They are presented as a lack of understanding of the private companies' basic conditions. Findings like these reveal that the reports are not value neutral but full of attitudes, interests, and a mythology of suspicion against the public sector. This mythology also speaks through the actors at the debating level. Here, seven private sector representatives, each asked to write a blog post about PPI on a web-based news media outlet, disclose the public sector as 'failing in the attempt to play a new role', 'messy', 'uncoordinated', 'an unprepared host', 'naïve', 'unstructured and incoherent', and 'still only demanding for existing products'. In contrast, the private sector is described as 'a traditional supplier', 'economic expert', 'development expert', 'knowing', 'visionary', 'adaptable', and 'astonished by the public sector's unstructured and incoherent approach'.

In the two small, concrete PPI cases, this discourse is reconstructed by consultants and private sector actors as a narrative about the public sector's slowness. Unlike the strategic and debating level, we also find a counter-discourse at this level. It comes from public non-managing PPI participants who would like private actors to take part in the practical PPI tasks. However, the overall absence of speech about barriers in the private sector works as a strong constituent force because it constructs the private actor as the ideal subject we should all strive to become. The second aspect in the creation of the needy public sector subject is the inherent expectations of blurry cooperation and innovation concepts. In 13 PPI reports, 88 innovation concepts are used, and in the six-year period that we analyse, the PPI definitions are exposed to 'several attacks' trying to transform the mutual cooperation configuration into buyer-supplier arrangements. Within these blurry constellations, a whole bundle of claims about what the public sector ought to take responsibility for occurs.

Several of these claims are hard to connect to the prevailing understandings of PPI. On the contrary, they promote expectations that are almost impossible for public sector actors to meet. For instance, the public sector is expected to take responsibility for private companies' business models and risks; contribute to the companies' marketing; and demonstrate expert knowledge about opportunities at the international market. No one reflects on whether these tasks actually should reside in the public sector. On the contrary, one consulting agency writes on behalf of a Danish region, 'many public entities admit that their employees lack the necessary PPI competencies – in particular when it comes to incorporate commercial aspects' (Report from a consulting agency).

No counter-discourses occur to any of the reports written by consulting agencies for different public entities. On the contrary, public actors at all levels also talk about PPI barriers as something that resides in the public sector. Moreover, because these barriers that are agreed upon across the different sectors predominantly concern a lack of competency in acting as and understanding the private sector, they make a strong indication that PPI is a noteworthy actualization of the public sectors' will to marketization. Foucault (1982) describes the modern, liberalistic government as based on an unprecedented 'tricky combination in the same political structures of individualization techniques and of totalization procedures' (p. 782). While the totalization procedures consist of laws, taxes, and the like, the individualization techniques address individuals' interior and their management of their own bodies and psyches. Thus, to prevent society from too many deviations, these techniques try to intervene in ways that make the individuals discipline themselves to act within normalizing boundaries of power.

The result of the individualization procedures could be 'the assimilation of a floating population found to be burdensome for an essentially mercantilist economy' (Foucault, 1988, p. 195) or, as in the case of PPI, the assimilation of a public sector found to be burdensome for a market economy. The social actions dispositioned by these procedures often manifest in seemingly insignificant social actions. It appears inconsiderate when a public actor in a small PPI partnership has both a

wondering and a disciplined approach to PPI:

> In theory, public organizations should gain something from PPI. I just don't know what it is. I have to admit that. (Interview material)

In the same interview, the public actor talks about how she, despite time shortages, manages the practical trial of the product that the private PPI partner is testing in the public institution; how she supplies materials to modify the product; and how she compiles feedback to the company, even though she feels this company is not responsive to her. This is a significant example of the way a certain politics of space uses a subtle combination of self-governing techniques to discipline oneself towards market values. Indeed, in the PPI field in general, this needy and disciplined corporeity is exclusively seen among public sector actors.

6. Discussion

PPI is often associated with NPG and is embedded in narratives of collaboration, innovation, and co-creation between public service and private business. PPI is another type of innovative arrangement that has emerged public governance discourse in relation to delivering social welfare services. Other kinds of innovative arrangements are social enterprises and social entrepreneurship (Dey & Steyaert, 2018). These arrangements have become popular tools for governments to address societal challenges. There is a myth behind such enterprises and entrepreneurship that they are driven by social objectives rather than maximization of profit (Mason & Moran, 2018; Teasdale, Lyon, & Owen, 2018). However, research has shown that such social innovation frameworks reinforce neoliberal hegemony. Fougère et al. (2017) argue how European innovation policy is a (re)actualization of neoliberalism. Such neoliberal innovation policy also resembles the United Nations' innovation policy regarding the sustainability development goals (see e. g. Business & Sustainability Development Commission, 2017). Nevertheless, just as the idea of the social entrepreneur is, at least partially, a myth, the ideas of collaboration, innovation, and co-creation associated with NPG and PPI may also constitute a myth that obscures the truth that the neoliberal entrepreneur has become the grand hero of public governance and service deliveries. Therefore, we witness the emergence of a supporting framework for shaping arenas in which public employees should rework their identities to fit the image of the entrepreneur.

Thus, rather than PPI being about collaboration, innovation, and co-creation, we argue that it is about (1) marketization (e.g. Du Gay & Salaman, 1992); (2) dissociation from the public service identity in favor of subjectivation to the market; and, as a consequence, (3) the active construction of neoliberal economic subjects, who are always on the look-out for accumulating human capital (e.g. Scharff, 2016). The active economic subject of the entrepreneur plays an important role in PPI. This relates to the key relationship between a dispositive of neoliberalism and the freedom of the subject. Bröckling (2016) argues that the message of neoliberalism is that 'I am going to produce what you need to be free. I am going to see to it that you are free to be free' (p. 44). Therefore, neoliberalism works through subjectivation.

6.1. PPI as marketization

A central conclusion is that the discrete intrusion of marketization that operates through PPI seems to be sheltered by a politics in which the constitution of the entrepreneurial public sector becomes both possible and likely to be accomplished. This is achieved through de-politizising the PPI-driven changes of the public sector and suppress any attempts to question the masquerade surrounding PPI as a collaborative and innovative partnership model that has huge potential. Second, a discourse introduced in the early PPI period about the private sector fiery soul becomes abjected. The way of not speaking about certain things and the abjected discourses reveal substantial aspects of what the strategy of the market dispositive needs the PPI actors to perceive as true

and desirable. These unreflected truths are that the public sector needs to be like the private sector is presumed to be. It needs to be effective according to market values, to incorporate corporate values in its ways of working, and to be entrepreneurial. The marketization thus passes unquestioned.

The identity politics embedded in PPI works discretely to construct a space that recognizes the simultaneously enthusiastic and needy public sector subject. Thus, PPI works as a discrete, taken-for-granted, and hence invisible source of control of the subject in creating a particular space for the appearance of a corporate entrepreneurial subject. It is only natural that the construction of this space entails a 'mocking' of the old traditional public service subject. This 'mocking' is important to notice because it implies that the unquestioned truth of the entrepreneurial narrative is so strong that nobody dares to react to the devaluation and degradation of the public service identity. One has to speak the language of entrepreneurship in order to be recognized as a subject. Despite being invisible in the sense that we cannot locate from where control is exercised, this control is no less 'real' or 'material'. It appears in expressions, symbols, gestures, body language, and silences and through ignoring critical voices.

6.2. PPI as a set-up for renouncing the public service identity towards reconstructing as an entrepreneur

The construction of a new ideal type of subject entails a dissociation from traditional public service identities and a reconstruction of identity according to entrepreneurial stereotypes. Transforming a sector or an organization often implies the dissociation from, and sacrifice of, the old favoured subjectivity (Jørgensen, 2007, pp. 72–73). That such processes are represented as natural qualities of private sector subjects adds to the humiliation and degradation of public sector subjects and the constant ambivalence in which the latter are positioned. PPI promotes modes of subjectivation in which the subject in reality objectifies the self in accordance with processes of subjectification – that is, how one is objectified as a subject through the work power/knowledge relations (McIlvenny, Klausen, & Lindegaard, 2016, pp. 18–19). Such active self-work has the function of renouncing the self (Foucault, 2005, p. 333; Townley, 1995, p. 276) and internalizing a discourse that is defined by an outside authority and has the status of an unquestionable truth. The result of such technologies of self is 'effective obedience' (Gros, 2005, pp. 509–510; Milchman & Rosenberg, 2009, p. 69) to, in this case, the truth of the market.

The modes of subject formation cannot simply be ascribed to subjectification but require the active work of subjectivation. This is illustrated by the fact that the moral codes of conduct offered by PPI are blurry and ambiguous. These codes also compete with other codes of conduct that belong to the 'old' perceptions and arrangements of the public sector. That PPI has to be realized through a narrative of a fiery soul tells us that no additional resources are actually granted. PPI has to be actualized through over working, by breaking traditions, and probably even by bending rules (Dempsey & Sanders, 2010). The entrepreneurial subjects are not only risk-bearers and innovators; they are also the managerial revolutionizers (Bröckling, 2016, p. 72) that make strategic decisions and coordinate processes and capital. Because no organizational space is created to afford entrepreneurship, only self-work is left to attain the attributes and characteristics of the entrepreneur.

6.3. PPI as staging 'affective subjectivation'

PPI is embedded in narratives that emphasize innovation across boundaries, user involvement, and sharing of knowledge and ideas between public and private actors. This includes narratives of improving the lives for the elderly; people with acquired brain damage; the blind, deaf, or hearing impaired; and other vulnerable groups. These are valuable arenas for social innovation projects and PPI projects because

entrepreneurship is embedded in a positive discourse (Verduijn, Dey, Tedmanson, & Essers, 2014) and often works through other-oriented compassion (Berglund, 2018, p. 183). The public service agents (i.e., the educator, nurse, teachers, caretaker, etc.) often legitimize their activities in a strong narrative of meaningful work in the desire to help and improve the life of others (Dempsey & Sanders, 2010). However, such compassion can be exploited in social innovation and entrepreneurship as well as PPI fields and may even be exposed to mockery and laughter in societies of control. In our case, whereas PPI in the beginning was described positively, it is later narrated as a field of barriers and institutional distrust. It reveals a deliberate 'politics of distrust' directed against the public sector. This mirrors a general tendency for institutional distrust in public-private arrangements (Greve, 2007; Saz-Carranza & Serra, 2009; Soininen, 2014). This distrust is an element in inclining public actors to scrutinize and work on themselves in order to attain recognition as proper subjects. In line with Valero et al. (2019), we use the term *affective subjectivation* for such self-work.

PPI involves a particular interlacing of public entrepreneurship and public actor failure. Therefore, PPI dispositions the appearance of a new subject by dividing and turning the subject against him- or herself. The re-entering of the subject and the practices of subjectivation that we have emphasized in this article are important here. Foucault's ethics is often seen as a possible pathway for emancipation – an ethics of freedom (Foucault, 2005; Starkey & Hatchuel, 2002). He discussed them as practices of self-formation (Townley, 1995), in which the subjects can fashion themselves based on reflexive practices. McNay (2009, pp. 56–57) argues that it is surprising that Foucault turned towards an ethics of the self, and she questions if such individual practices can pose a serious challenge to neoliberal social control. Regardless, it is clear that the process of self-formation is 'uncomfortably close in structure to governance through individualization' (McNay, 2009, p. 57). Nevertheless, it is not the work of freedom we trace in PPI. Instead, the narrative of the fiery soul and the need narrative articulate an image of the entrepreneur that is even more effective, because the entrepreneur is what Jones and Spicer (2005, p. 235) call an 'empty signifier': a highly variable, ambiguous, and even non-existent fantasy. Such disposition is both affective and has been shown to be highly effective (Scharff, 2016). On the one hand, the image of the entrepreneur is positioned as an unquestionable truth that public employees have to actualize; on the other hand, the codes of conduct embodied in this image are extremely vague and blurry. Instead of being an important element in collective action and collaboration, the emergence and growth of self-work indicates individualization, loneliness, and stress in increasingly competitive and materially defunded work arrangements within a competition state (Genschel & Seelkopf, 2015).

7. Conclusions

This article has performed an analysis of PPI. We have analysed this work practice as an actualization of a neoliberal market dispositive and hence as a mode of identity politics that deliberately disconnects public employees from the traditional public service identity in order to disposition them to become entrepreneurial. Thus, we have presented practices of control as immanent in complex heterogeneous social and material networks and relations and are shifting, ambiguous, and fluid phenomena. We have argued that the control of action is tied to a social and material world and to the possibilities for action that this world recognizes as desirable. This kind of control is immaterial, fluid, and dynamic, but it needs not be less conforming, nor is it necessarily less restraining. Instead, power and its potential negative effects are perhaps even more pervasive in terms of what one can do and what one can be. The neoliberal market dispositive uses the entrepreneur as a universal comparator who is represented as thriving and flourishing in private corporations.

The effect is often more or less fragmented and split subjects divided among and against themselves. This is because the subjectivities offered

by arrangements like PPI are in reality complex, paradoxical, and contradictory but also because there will always be a split between these subject positions and the possibilities of the appearance of the unique subject (self-formation). This split is intensified and exploited in new work arrangements like PPI in the public sector. The combination of a blurring of clear markers for moral action, inconsistent codes of conduct, and the insistence that these are individual and not organizational problems provides an image of an increasingly affective, fluid, incidental, and schizophrenic mode of control that works to disconnect and to turn subjects against themselves.

Author statement

We, the authors, hereby certify that we have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for the content, including participation in the concept, design, analysis, writing, and revision of the manuscript.

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