

## From one Raft to another

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### **From one Raft to Another**

The editors of this farewell publication have set a task that may appear obvious but did not seem entirely easy to me: to write in an academic booklet a piece related to my working community with Katrin. We have known each other "always" - from an admittedly somewhat inconsistent origin in "Noordic Studies" (local dialect) at Aarhus University to a many years of joint involvement in a research group in Dubrovnik, but actually we have most of the time worked in our respective tracks one. It has often been about the same subject areas, but with quite different theoretical and methodological inspirations and interests. One can perhaps metaphorically speak of the fact that we have slipped away on a relatively broad stream, and standing on our respective rafts maintained some communication on the basis of a personal friendship and a general political interest. Even though it is not an easy task, I take great pleasure in carving Katrin a suitable rune, and recognize that in the given context it must be of an academic nature. In order to live up minimally to the editorial regulation, I must first say a little about how our two professional life stories have, after all, become tangent to each other - our world is not bigger either. Next, if it is to be professional, I must say something about how we, despite common interests, have thought differently, and why I have at some points wondered how differently we still think. On the given occasion, I thus make an attempt to identify what professionally separates and unites us. However, I am far from sure that I have always understood Katrin's thoughts - and therefore do not quite know how far apart we are.

### **Shared past - shared experience?**

I first met Katrin in 1976 in the form of her and Leo Andersen's mammoth master dissertation on "The History of the Danish Folkeskole" ((Andersen & Hjort, 1975) when I taught the elective subject didactics at Danish (Language and Literature) Studies, Copenhagen University. It is a demarcation of the transformation of the subject Danish that had taken place since 1968 when I was recruited to the Danish National Union of Students. At that time, the student uprising in Aarhus mostly consisted of supporting the amanuenses against the professors' monopoly - in Copenhagen it was the student uprising at floor level that drew the picture: demands for study boards, new forms of study and what was later codified as *subject criticism* - and in the national union DSF we quickly realized that it was in the local mobilization and the critical discussion of subjects and teaching the potentials lay. Therefore, as a student political veteran, I returned to Danish Studies a few years later. Now the study was liberalized, and this meant not least that the subject had become an umbrella for a broad and general humanities professionalism, and also pedagogy and educational research had become central topics in the subject. When we at one point tried to create a national coordination of educational research between all universities, we came to see that around the table all delegates with one exception were trained in Danish Studies. Katrin and Leo made exemplary use

of this development and themselves contributed to it with a well-founded basic humanistic research work: historically concrete school research with a societal perspective.

This crossroads between the Danish Language and Literature subject and educational research has drawn long threads for both Katrin and me, but in a slightly different way. While I went on with educational research, Katrin's further career took place initially in the LANGUAGE environment (Language and Economics) at the Copenhagen Business School, which is interested in languages as a carrier and key to cultures in the commercial exchange. For Katrin, it worked out, among other things, in research into the cultural dimensions of societal change in the history of Eastern European countries before, during and after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The practical recognition interests of the business school community were productive in this, as in other areas, for a holistic professionalism, and Katrin was thus early on with the emerging understanding of the importance of language use for the great societal relations and political processes. At first she followed Norman Fairclough, but later the more Foucault-oriented directions, as in my somewhat ambivalent summary of the French tradition, perceive language as "the all-important difference" - in the movement from deconstruction to power analysis.

When Katrin, after joining RUC's adult and continuing education group (EVU) she came to deal with learning and organizational development and later professional research. Methodically primarily rooted in discourse analysis she entered into an interesting collaboration with researchers based in the Frankfurt School and Oskar Negt's political and pedagogical thinking, where the central categories were (social) experience and the subjective aspects of work and learning. I heard and belong to this theoretical orientation, which in pedagogy and educational research in particular was a theoretical effort to build a bridge between a Marxist social theoretical framework and a humanistic understanding of subjectivity through a materialistic theory of socialization. Empirically, we focused primarily on the subjective handling of the incorporation of sociability into the individual subject as opposites in learning processes and in work. The discourse analysis brought a stimulating contribution to this endeavor.

One of the thematic areas where I myself worked directly with Katrin was in research of professions, and especially professionalisation of welfare work (Hjort, 2004; Salling Olesen, 2004). Theoretically, this field immediately contains a common interest in the discursive nature of professional knowledge and learning - embodied in the relationship between the concepts of discourse and experience (Salling Olesen, 2006). Professionals' areas of work can be said to be discursively constituted - through the respective professional knowledge bases - but at the same time they contain a stubborn materiality in the form of emotional and bodily involvement in work practice which does not automatically "go up" in this discourse. As Katrin wrote afterwards: "The discourse analysis has helped me to understand political and organizational processes in the field of welfare, but not just to conceptualize the special nature of the welfare work that takes place between professionals and clients. How does "working with people" develop as a special kind of work, how does it develop - and unwind (?) ((Hjort, 2012b, p10). It gave rise to some excursions into the subjective dimensions of pedagogical work and pedagogical educations together with Kirsten Weber and Steen Baagøe Nielsen. differences between a culturalist / discourse analytical and a materialistic and social psychological understanding of the relationship between the professions' "theory and practice".

It is probably this difference that has kept us in each other's tracks ever since.

### **The political perspective of discourse analysis**

Katrin's "lifelong love" in the discourse analysis ((Hjort, 2012b, p. 13) has resulted in a number of analyzes of different areas of the welfare state that are inspired by their own variant of discourse analysis. This empirical work is driven by a solid political interest in the Danish development of welfare work and welfare institutions

from around the turn of the millennium. Here, the welfare state thinking that had shaped the welfare state since the 1950s, with strong delegation of power and responsibility to professions in health, pedagogy and education and social work, was seriously attacked by neo-liberal governance models. This was where Katrin's interest was focused. Where a number of profession-critical research has had the defining power and privileges of the professions as its object, Katrin focuses on the new governance models that take over power over the welfare institutions. In her central works on the welfare professions, Katrin leads this development to an almost apocalyptic message, as also expressed in a pun in the doctoral dissertation summary "Farewelfare State".

There is for me a connection between the methodological approach and this political way of thinking. Although the discourse-analytical approach that Katrin herself emphasizes is epistemologically justified, and not ontological, it is hardly a coincidence that she quickly moves from the analysis of the specifics of professional work, cf. the quote above, to an empirical area where social realities in some extent is rightly perceived as a result of "discourse power", namely through politics and governance models. Why is this interesting now? This is because the empirical view is directed towards uncovering the discursive exercise of power, and not towards the field of practice that the exercise of power is aimed at, ie towards the governance model and not, as in this case, towards specific welfare professional fields and their uniqueness. Thus, the material realities of these fields and different subject dynamics slide into the background. This applies, for example, to the clients / users and their options for action, but it also easily means that the professionals' options for action are primarily seen as a result of the discursive power of the management models. While discourse analysis as a critical method is admittedly very productive in uncovering policies and other linguistic / cultural exercise of power, it is less suitable for discovering field-internal contradictions and dynamics. You lose to the endogenous political potentials, and in a way you free the professionals from the challenges that lie in it. The political space is dichotomous, for example between the welfare state and the "welfare state", or between professionalism and managerialism. One can say that it is a political consequence of a methodological difference between a culturalist and on the other hand a materialistic critical social science.

This is probably also what has kept us on our respective rafts.

### **Discourse and subjectivity**

Explicitly portraying the Foucault tradition through its favorite enemies, Katrin joins the reception history of this tradition, which is its strengths and weaknesses: being a critical alternative to bad Marxism, outdated psychoanalysis, and structuralist essentialism. Foucault is in some respects better than his reputation, or rather: than that part of the poststructuralist tradition which, i.a. justified by feminism, has come to play a crucial role in Danish critical social research. Although Foucault is not the only man to have invented the discourse analysis, it is his thinking about the discursive nature of social relations that has made the discourse analysis something different and more profound than the forms of empirical power research and revelation that prevailed in (and partly with) Faircloughs version of discourse analysis. In poststructuralist analytical practice, this was often translated as an (almost) ontological fallacy leading to a form of cultural determinism, and politically to a dichotomous opposition between a societal power and subjective possibilities of action. My presentation of this, of course, is an educational simplification.

Foucault himself has emphasized that power should not be understood as something in itself negative, and that it is not central to his thinking (Foucault, 1994). Discursive power consists in enabling certain possibilities of thinking and action, and thus subject positions. The discourse analysis examines (purely epistemological?) Which discursive regime prevails (ontological? Or socially constructed, ie integrated in the epistemological practice?) In a given text or social situation, and which subjectivation possibilities it sets aside. Seen in this

light, my critical question for poststructuralist discourse analysis is how it examines the driving forces and the content of how these subjectivation possibilities are fulfilled? In particular, the question can be concretized into a question of body, emotions, materiality in this theory of subjectification. Sometimes analyzes of subjectivation appear as almost vulgar psychological rationalities of action, for example the pursuit of social prestige in a status. So I guess that's not Foucault's fault?

An important critical point in the concept of discourse is that it challenges the integrity of the individual subject and the notion of the free autonomous individual, but without referring to a structural determination, as poststructuralism precisely perceives psychoanalytic and Marxist theory to do. Now, as I said, it is based on a polemic against what I would call "bad Marxism" and very early and one-track psychoanalysis. But let me maintain the logic of discourse analysis. Precisely if one is to maintain the performative gaze and avoid a form of deterministic understanding of the discourses - or worse yet: see them as a tool for arbitrary externalities - one must of course bring the intended destabilization of the concept of individual to the bottom. The discourse analysis only opens up for critical destabilization in relation to a cultural formation. It has typically not examined the bodily-emotional aspects of performativity or material aspects of social space that could also be included in a critical examination of the concept of the individual. Until recently. In recent years, however, new theoretical buns have appeared on the poststructuralist soup. There is a new interest in materiality, probably mostly in a rather airy (!) Form ((Barad, 2018) and in emotions in the form of affect theory. It will be exciting to see what theoretical and methodological developments it can get.

It seems in itself very productive that poststructuralist analysis has taken up the meaning of emotions. But I have a bit of a hard time with the very concept of 'affect'. It refers to the material / bodily precondition for human influence and action. Massumi, who takes the concept from Deleuze and Guattari, writes about affect at "It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act" (Massumi's introduction in (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. xvi). The recognition of the significance of this bodily intensity is probably a radicalization of the "destabilization effort" - but peeling into the pure body intensity ("prepersonal") leaves the most exciting question open. It is about what I would call the social formation of subjectivity and in this how this "arousal" is regulated by and exerts an active influence on actions and consciousness - that which is also the domain of discourse theory.

We agree on the starting point: the critique of the notion of the free, autonomous individual is crucial for theoretical understanding and empirical research in the "sociability of subjectivity" and for a better understanding of what we immediately perceive as individual actions and relationships between individuals. I do not feel convinced that affect theory can give discourse analysis the same help in understanding the intertwining of social relations and the psychic dynamics that a psychoanalytically inspired hermeneutics offers. I have sought concepts for this link through "psycho-societal" analysis - a combination of Marxist critical social theory and psychoanalytically informed psychodynamic social psychology. It is a thinking that perceives Marxism as a non-deterministic and non-structuralist theory of a historical development of human relations - including the establishment of unconscious and non-transparent dependencies and influences, and it is translated into an interpretive practice that strives to understand the socialized bodily realities, i.e., incorporated traces of in-transparent social and emotional contexts into the social history. The crucial questions then become how this incorporation takes place and how the non-conscious dynamics manifest themselves in consciousness, actions and relationships, and this must be examined concretely through interpretations of everyday (performative) expressions (Salling Olesen, 2012, 2020).

With my theoretical skepticism as a starting point, I have waded to Katrin when we flowed through the stream of concrete analyzes on each of our theoretical rafts, and she has waded back with her confidence in the theory of affect.

### **The place of emotions in political economy**

When I was an opponent of Katrin's doctoral defense a few years ago, I was both surprised and somewhat duped by the reflection work she presented (the summary paper in the dissertation ((Hjort, 2012b). It was both a link between threads in her previous research - as such must be - but it was also an attempt - as I saw and see it - to harmonize the theoretical and political contradictions between her childhood learning from Marxism and her lifelong work with the critical discourse analysis in a poststructuralist frame of mind. Katrin has her background in Marxist theory more or less modus The Frankfurt School, but finds in Michael Hardt a theoretical inspiration which itself declares that it wants to build a bridge between Marxism and poststructuralism. Almost en passant Katrin declares (2012b, p 14) that her interest in the Foucault oriented discourse analyses is not only due to their fertility in the analysis of governance models and the exercise of power, but are also linked to an idea about a subversive "bio-power from below". That is, the possible breaking through of lived life through a societal power, which in this way of thinking unfolds in discursive formations.

Michael Hardt is shown to have invented the concept of "Biopower from below" as a counterpoint to the Foucault-inspired analyzes of biopower from above, and links this power to the biopolitical work, ie the work of producing and reproducing life. Hardt thus sees "The potentials of affective labor / the biopolitical potentials of labor" as a way to reconcile poststructuralist thinking with Marxism and critical theory, and in answer to the question all poststructuralist discourse analysts should be vigilant about: How materializes critique in social liberation? Or simply: How can critical analysis help to identify the material dynamics that might drive liberation from "the assault of biopolitical technologies" (Hardt quoted after Hjort (Hjort, 2012a, p. 179). Katrin herself says that it is strictly speaking an impossible project, but takes it on anyway. I'm not entirely convinced that it's possible, nor that it's the optimal way to go - I should try to explain why not. But in the first place, we can follow each other along.

It is Marxist capital logic classic that work has a potential economic and political power due to the fact that capital is dependent on the creation of surplus value by the living labor force. Not least with the help of good feminists in the tradition of critical theory, it has also become theoretically understandable that this power is based on the "unproductive" but necessary work of producing and reproducing life (Becker-Schmidt, Ulrike Prokop). This special work, which is carried out outside the sphere of capital, has been carried out in particular by the women and since then also in the socialization of care work through the division of labor and institutionalization of professionalisation. The welfare professions are a matter of opinion: here the political economy of capitalism in the form of wage labor directly clashes with basic human needs that have hitherto been met in special spheres - family and local communities. Together with the restructuring of gender relations, the development of welfare work is an expression of a critical breach of the social order of capitalism, which in the first instance sets women free to become wage workers and necessitates the unproductive work of society. And the big question is whether capitalism can cope with the challenge of replacing the family as a supplier of usable labor with another form of reproduction - and what kind of compensation it will be.

Katrin recalls the minefields of the gender policy discussion: How to talk about these topics without reproducing the gender stereotypes that are perhaps the strongest starting point for poststructuralism - at least in Denmark. She goes back to Prokop and her background in critical theory - Alfred Lorenzer, Oskar

Negt. Although Prokop in line with, but also as a provocation to, the Marxist jargon of the time spoke of "female productive forces", she referred to a completely un-essentialist and historical understanding of these productive forces. They have in historically variable forms to a particular extent been worn by women but are fundamentally the result of socialization processes ((Prokop, 1975, 1978). Although I have never worked specifically with Prokop - but with her close peers Alfred Lorenzer, Thomas Leithäuser, Oskar Negt and others - it seems to me to be an obvious starting point to think further about how to concretely explore this "biopower". Katrin rightly emphasizes empirical research into the development of femininity (Nielsen, 2011) and its significance for the welfare professions ((Eriksen, 2004). I envision a productive continuation of a discussion of the peculiarity of professional work and a movement to analyze the significance of this peculiarity within a critique of framework.

This is where Katrin Hjort picks up the concept of "the affective work" from Michael Hardt. In the book of the same name, which was published at the same time as her doctoral defense ((Hjort, 2012a), this term is used to connect the lines in Katrins many years of researching the welfare professions. This choice is allegedly motivated by the fact that Hardt wants to do away with the "discourse determinism" of Foucault-inspired theorists, i.e. solve the problem with discourse analysis that Katrin herself acknowledges. Chapter 8 of her book, with inspiration from Hardt, develops a subsumption-logical understanding of the central importance of affective work as the latest and all-dominant value in society. This is where Katrin returns to her general line of argument: the marketization of the welfare state. It becomes an analysis of how affective work is subsumed under a capitalist economy - literally through the privatization and commodification of welfare work, or care as this work is now called - and access to affectivity becomes the new value hub of capitalism. Therefore, the analysis of marketization culminates in the affective economy creating a new divide in society between the included and the excluded.

### **Societal dynamics and psychodynamics**

This apocalyptic analysis of the current political development trends in the welfare state (marketization, affective economy) is thus about the increasing domination of capital not only over the Danish welfare state but as a globalized control over access to care. Of course, the analysis of the forms of subsumption has a certain statistical visibility - several, more emotionally charged work functions, including the welfare professions - are apparently increasingly commercialized. The trend of changes described is also captivating. But it makes the analysis blind to the contradictions in this process. In all phases and areas of the subsumption process, opposites are set aside as potential and materialized resistance, as alternative actions and visions - e.g. in the field of welfare work. In this argument, however, it is not obvious why this total subsumption should imply that precisely the affective work should break through the social control and fulfill the hope of "biopower from below".

Then I do not really know if it is the construction of a concept of an affect economy, or it is the very concept of affect that is problematic. The notion of the tendentiously decisive importance of an affect economy is at least very schematic, but the analysis of the affect economy is probably based on the notion that affect is relatively immediately subject to the market and the capitalist form. But critical research into professional work and feminist research into the "female productive forces" have in their own way tried to show that the emotional and relational capacities that are only historically particularly female, can not so easily be "subsumed" under capital, but neither are resistance forces that lie outside the capitalist economy. On the contrary, they can be seen as counter-currents *within* an otherwise capitalist social system, ie as an expression of the complexity of the social expression and organization of the bodily and "life processes". It seems to me that the concept of affect is perhaps less applicable to this, that it becomes either a

dichotomous counter-pole to the discourse regime, or even an easy prey for discursive organization - as non-specific value.

In contrast, psychoanalytically inspired thinking opens up to challenge the integrity of the individual subject through an interpretation of the subject's inner emotional contradictions and unconscious dynamics. In combination with critical theoretical understanding of society - such as with Ulrike Prokop, it opens up a way of thinking about societal change that can better form the basis for searching for a possible "biopower from below". If one were to develop this line of thought methodologically, one would ask the question of how these socialization processes develop, where these productive forces are in a societal change of gender relations, and to what extent they unfold as a societally changing force. One of the exciting practical-political questions of our time is where and how this can happen - and this includes an empirical question of whether it happens and in what forms it could happen. I see this as the challenge to critical research.

Without getting completely lost, one might just remember that together with this immediate gender policy issue, there is also an ecological discussion about where and how the basis of life can be preserved and renewed.

I do not quite know where Hardt stops and Katrin begins - but the whole presentation on the affective economy is in any case an expression of Katrin's fresh arm-twisting with the very big contexts - theories as well as the global world. And very inspiring. But as I have argued, it seems to me that it is in a blind spot. It thus seems in part to be a result of the poststructuralist way of acknowledging emotionality theoretically - but it is also the result of an apocalyptic analysis of the current political development trends in the welfare state (marketing, affective economics). Exciting and promising, but politically I would not run for that vision. I would prefer a more open approach to the political processes, and a methodological sensitivity to the everyday microprocesses through which world history takes shape, which was probably also Foucault's critical cognitive interest. That's why I like to wave Katrin's raft closer.

### **Common future**

It is (also) part of Katrin's research life story that for many years she has participated in a scientific community in the "Dubrovnik group", which is organized around the psycho-social cultural analysis I mentioned above expressions (Salling Olesen, 2012, 2020). In this community, which is an important point for me too, the socio-material framework is primarily Marxism in the bottling of the Frankfurt School and the analytical interest is deeply hermeneutical of the interaction of everyday life and the psychodynamic aspects of practice, not least in the empirical organizations and institutions. subject of professional research. Despite the fact that Katrin, in accordance with her poststructuralist compass, has joyfully declared that she does not "believe in the unconscious", she has thus faithfully participated in work to analyze unconscious dynamics, the interaction between the societally repressed and the individual unconscious, and the theoretical understanding of the tension between concrete sensory experience and language use. Perhaps Katrin is more than she states challenged in her declared approaches as I may also be in mine.

We can talk about this together on a common raft.

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