Dialogued based activation – A new dispositif?

Asmund W. Born, awb.lpf@cbs.dk
Per H. Jensen, perh@socsci.aau.dk

Abstract:

Job plans are a relatively new phenomenon in social policy. Job plans are made in the form of a contract, and the foundation of the plan is the interview and the dialogue in social work. Through the dialogue and contract, the citizen is drawn into the exercise of authority. The involvement of citizens outlines the contours of a new kind of citizenship, i.e. administrative citizenship, which creates the citizen as a reflexive and self-regulating decision-maker.

A job plan is to be based on the individual’s needs and abilities, and the job plan is created through the future-oriented and reflexively based dialogue. On this background, the article claims that job plans and job interviews represent a new societal phenomenon – a new social order – and the article reflects on what kind of a society (the human resource management society) invites the steering of the world via interviews and dialogue. In conclusion, we discuss whether a new dispositif is being established and the consequences this has for our understanding of the character of inclusion and exclusion.

**Introduction**

Contractualization in the form of written agreements is a new and growing trend in the social policy area (Andersen, N.Å. 2003). In relation to unemployment, individual action plans were introduced in Denmark in 1994 for those receiving unemployment insurance, while it became practice to draft written plans for those receiving social welfare benefits in 1998. With the “More in employment” settlement which resulted in the Activation Act¹ in 2003, all persons receiving unemployment insurance, social welfare benefits, so-called start-help², and persons in rehabilitation is to be offered a job plan (JP). A JP is a written agreement (between the individual in question and the system). The JP is based on the interests and needs of the individual in question and describes the individual’s goals for employment and the opportunities concerning the improvement of qualifications, development of skills and competences, learning or the rehabilitation of technical, social or linguistic skills that can and shall contribute to the attainment of the goal. A JP is generally aimed at creating or restoring the individual’s relationship to – and integration in – the labour market, and the JP is grounded in the notion that there are actually two parties that can and will mutually oblige one another in the form of the contract.

Job plans are developed in a meeting and through dialogue between the system and the individual in question. This meeting is thoroughly analysed by a number of different authors, who have paid particular attention to the asymmetry and power in the relationship between the public authorities (the case worker) and the citizen in social work (for a survey of the comprehensive literature, see e.g. Olesen 2007). In this article, however, we do not deal with how good intentions (from the side of the social worker) in social work become coercion, discipline and violation. Instead, we focus on the JP interview as a new technology in the organization of social policy. The JP interview is a technology that draws the citizen into the exercise of power. Through the interview, the citizen becomes the “co-owner” of how their problems are defined and solutions found. The advantage is that the measures can be adapted to the interests and needs of the individual. At the same time, however, this need-orientation co-produces individualization¹.

The article seeks to couple the new technologies in social policy to some fundamental conceptions about society. The postulate is that the JP is closely coupled to the post-industrial society, where the individual is emphasized in the array of discourses. The JP-interview can be

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¹ *Lov om aktiv beskæftigelsesindsats.*

² *Starthjælp* is a form of social welfare for persons who have immigrated to Denmark after 1. July 2002. Start-help is considerably lower than ordinary social welfare benefits.
perceived as a response to how the collective conceptions of the industrial society – which served as an institutional framework for the encounter between people – has disintegrated; e.g. shared conceptions about where society is going, what the good life is all about and the associated rights and obligations. Instead, we will claim that what is common and shared is determined in the very encounter and planning; and that the common (that which we can agree to on the micro-level) attains contract-like forms.

This development occurs while the very content in the individualization and subjectivation changes. The subject is no longer perceived as being stuck in a system of social coordinates. Instead, the subject has become a self-sustaining and self-constituting process: the one moment you are responsible for your own health, the next for your own integration into the labour market etc. In the course of this constitution of the self, the individual encounters new technologies. These new technologies have an impact on the internal subjectivation processes by emphasizing the individual as an object to be formed by the very same individual – as a subject. It is this general societal development combined with the development of new self-technologies (the contractual self-observation) that is in focus when we discuss the JP.

A general point is that the JP forms – and itself is formed by – individualization processes in post-industrial society, and the article is organized along two dimensions. First, we discuss how the JP and JP-interviews redefine citizenship, i.e. the vertical relationship between state and citizen. In a sense, the JP interview thus contributes to the citizen becoming their own caseworker. Moreover, when the individual is included in the exercise of authority, the contours of an administrative citizenship emerge which is anchored in ad-hoc dialogues and decisions (nothing is given beforehand), and which constitutes a number of new ways of being a citizen. Hereafter, we go about things more horizontally. We show how the JP and JP interviews are not merely social policy phenomena. They involve a number of special features, that assert themselves in other sectors and spheres of society and in the (ordinary) labour market, e.g. in the form of the employee development interview, which is anchored in the human resource management philosophy and supports the interview-regulated world, where the self is the object of the interview. On this basis, the changes in the fundamental self-technologies are also discussed. We thus believe that it is possible to trace a shift from the “know yourself” in industrial society to the idea of “care for thyself” in post-industrial society. Finally, we make a number of concluding remarks with which we attempt to account for the emergence of a new dispositif, i.e. new ways to organize our lives, and how this changes the character of inclusion and exclusion.
Changing citizenship

Citizenship serves as a marker for the relationship between the state and the individual. As already mentioned, however, the JP and JP interview represent a new way of being a citizen, and this shift in citizenship is closely coupled to the post-industrial society. It is thus possible to distinguish between the “passive” citizenship of industrial society and a more “active” or administrative citizenship in post-industrial society.

Citizenship in industrial society

In the industrial society, citizenship was founded upon three pillars, i.e. economic, political and social citizenship (cf. Marshall 1950). Economic citizenship contributes to constituting the market economy principles. To paraphrase Marx, economic citizenship refers to the freedom of the labourer in a dual sense, i.e. freedom from capital goods and freedom to sell oneself on the labour market as a good. Political citizenship involves political rights, i.e. democratic rights in the broad sense such as the right to assemble, freedom of association, parliamentary rights etc. And finally, social citizenship is about the citizen’s access and right to a number of aspects of living conditions and standards of living that are normal or at least commonly acknowledged in the society to which the individual belongs. These three pillars of citizenship correspond to three different arenas, i.e. the market, political sphere and welfare society.

In all three arenas, citizenship has three dimensions: (a) rights/obligations, (b) participation and (c) identity (see e.g. Andersen, J.G. 2003:20f). Rights and obligations are about the rights and obligations you possess as a citizen in a given society, e.g. the right to vote and the obligation to pay taxes. According to Marshall (1950), however, citizenship is more than a mere bundle of rights. Citizenship is not fulfilled until the rights are converted into practice, i.e. the rights and obligations are first in effect when the citizens actually participate in the various arenas and spheres in society. What is e.g. democratic citizenship worth if the democratic rights are not exploited? Finally, the identity dimension is both about how the individual persons perceive themselves and how the individual relates to other citizens in society. Self-perception can e.g. be expressed in terms of self-loathing, which emerges if the individual in question is labelled as a social deviant in order to receive social benefits. And the relationship to others is about e.g. whether
the recipients of social welfare benefits, unemployment insurance or start-help themselves feel as though they are part of an equal and symmetrical relationship with other citizens in society.

In the industrial society, citizenship has had a generally “passive” character. In the industrial society, citizenship has been embedded in paternalistic and disciplining structures, where the form of communication is that of regulation and authority. The transition from industrial society to post-industrial society (or human resource management) has been accompanied by a shift in the perspective on the citizen. The citizen has come to be regarded far more as an active citizen who is autonomous, responsible for herself, flexible and mobile (Sennett 1998), and able to create her own individual biography and continuously adapt to new life circumstances (Beck 1997). Parallel to this, the character of citizenship has changed. The economic, political and social citizenship is actualized in the administrative citizenship, which unfolds when the citizen becomes involved in the dialogue in which their own case is dealt with (see section 4 in the Retsikkerhedsloven). The citizen has thus become a self-regulating and reflexive decision-maker in a temporary city.

**Administrative citizenship in post-industrial society**

The JP interview builds on the assumption that the unemployed individual is actually interested in long-term employment. The JP interview can therefore be regarded as an opportunity to clarify the possible measures in relation to an employment-focused perspective. According to this optic, the JP interview involves a “learning-to-labour” perspective. But it is also possible to consider the JP interview as a technology that fortifies administrative citizenship, because the JP interview even renders the self a topic as a self-reflexive decision-maker in late modern society. The legislation pertaining to active employment measures prescribes that the JP interview is to be based on “the person’s interests and abilities” (section 27, stk. 2). In other words, the JP interview builds on a premise that the individual must make their interests clear in a self-reflexive manner. Then the compulsory question becomes: What do I want to do with my life? In other words, the JP interview forces the unemployed person to reflect on their own place in the social sphere.

If the person cannot or will not do this, it is impossible for the person to play a role in making the decisions in all aspects of their own case. The JP interview is thus an incredibly important event, a so-called “fatal moment” (Giddens 1991), which involves both opportunities and risks. The ability to present oneself as being worth investing in triggers favours and resources that are tailored to the individual. If you are not able or willing to engage in a constructive dialogue, you are considered irrelevant, i.e. a person society does not deem necessary to sacrifice resources on.
Those refusing to participate usually lose the right to unemployment benefits for a three-week period.

The JP interview institutionalizes new expectations to the citizen, namely that they are to be reflexive and responsible for themselves. In relationship to citizenship, this means that the unemployed person has the right and obligation to become pointedly activated on the basis of their own interests and needs, while the welfare state has become responsible for involving those concerned in the administrative processes. In other words, the JP interview opens up for new channels of influence and forms of participation as the citizen is invited to actively participate in the exercise of authority. And finally, the JP involves a new type of identity production. The JP institutionalizes certain expectations in relation to how the individual person is to be and act, and the JP has an impact on the internal subjectivation processes, e.g. that the unemployed individual has to consider herself as an object to be formed or constructed anew.

With the emergence of the administrative citizenship, citizenship can no longer be regarded as a universal and geographically defined phenomenon. Instead, citizenship has become an event or process anchored in the individual’s competencies, actions and planning abilities, and it is this very ability to plan and act which becomes the admission ticket to the economic, political and social arenas. The dialogue and planning activities determine whether the unemployed individual is enrolled in the activation apparatus in the welfare state.

It thus becomes obvious that the material contents of citizenship are no longer given beforehand. The benefits provided by the welfare state (social citizenship) are no longer guaranteed “externally". Conversely, the provision of benefits depends on the ability and willingness to engage in dialogue, including the ability to construct and present yourself as being an investment in the future; as such, the location at which political decisions about the distribution of resources in society (political citizenship) has also shifted. The JP interview has effected a decentralizing – if not an individualization – of the politics. The JP interview has become a policy-forming as well as a policy-implementing arena. This contributes to the erosion of the traditional distinction in industrial society between employment and unemployment (economic citizenship). In stead, new lines of demarcation emerge between those who are willing and able to be their own entrepreneur in a constructive manner and those who are irrelevant and can be excluded from the welfare state benefits system without further adieu.

In other words, one’s ability as negotiator determines the access to participation in the various societal arenas. You first become a citizen upon entering the dialogue, and it is in the
dialogue that the material content of citizenship is negotiated and determined. For example, the dialogue determines whether you can be employed with a wage subsidy, can receive an internship with a business etc, or whether you are regarded as irrelevant because you refuse to participate in the dialogue in a constructive manner. In this light, the JP is not merely a contract between individuals or between the system and the individual person. It is far more a productive machine – functioning as an arena – in which you learn and develop the person’s social sensitivity and the person’s social competencies. Through the practical combination of subjectivation, choice of the object of the interview, the assessment of the effects and the strategies, the JP serves as the foundation for what has become called “learning through legitimate peripheral participation”; in other words, the participation that provides access to a community of practices in the late modern ad hoc society (Lave & Wenger 1991), which is characterized by our social position being constantly (re)negotiated and redefined.

As already indicated, reflexive and dialogue-based job planning is not a narrow phenomenon practised in the activation industry alone. In the following section, we will therefore claim that JP-like interviews have spread horizontally in a viral manner to practically all areas of social life. For example, job planning is practiced in the “ordinary” labour market via so-called employee-development interviews. And in the following, we will similarly claim that the asymmetry in these interviews is not due to the participants’ institutional affiliations alone (civil servant in a bureaucracy vs. citizen/client), but due to the actual object of the interview: the development of the interviewees themselves.

The HRM society

You can only become a subject and individual via self-observation and dialogue, and we all can and must be constantly redefined. Danish school children now develop formal, written strategies for themselves together with their teacher as coach and contractual partner for the coming teaching period, and every second programme on television seems to include self-presentation and reality-negotiations of the self. As there is no stable unit for the self – as we claim – this instead emerges in the continued observation and presentation of the self as a self, and dialogue and contracts are precisely the dominant media in which self-observation and self-presentation might be actualized.
Dialogues addressing objectives for planning and development currently take place in forums far removed from the social and labour market policy arenas. Human resource management (HRM) has become a widespread management philosophy, which focuses on the development of the employees, strategies for the individual, career planning, competency development and other relevant tools for the development of the self (Spencer & Spencer, 1991; Beardwell & Holden 1997). These technologies, e.g. in the form of employee development interviews, have also found their way into most public and private workplaces, where the personnel are called into annual interviews with the management. The individual’s strong and weak sides are addressed in these assessments of performance in order to stimulate reflection with respect to relevant ambitions, skills and competencies and opportunities. In such performance assessments, the language created by the industrialization and collectivization (“we would like”, “we demand” etc) is not useful. Instead, a new idiom is used – a self-strategizing language. By using this idiom, the employee can articulate that they, as individuals, have defined an objective to get from A to B in X number of different ways; and it is in this very plan that they establish the contours of themselves.

The form and content of these HRM interviews for career plans are in many ways similar to the JP interviews. They are future-oriented dialogues, where dialogue-related power is constituted in the modal form of planning, but where both parties find themselves in situations of mutual dependency. The employer/social worker controls the economic dimension. If the citizen/client/wage earner can or will not, the proverbial cheque book is closed. Conversely, the citizen/client/wage earner possesses an expertise, which in its own right is also a form of power; they are the experts in their own lives and conceptions about the future, which the employer/social worker depends upon if there is to be any contract. Regarded as dialogue, the interaction is nevertheless marked by deep asymmetry. The one part acts as a “role-in-action” (a manager/social worker), while the other is the actual topic of the interview (that which is being talked about and is to be activated). On the one side is a system administrator, who can step in and out of the role. On the other side resides a participant (an administrator?), who consists of a self which has just become a subject in her dealing with herself as an object-entity; a subject, which only becomes a relevant role-bearer as long as the client’s/wage earner’s expertise unto itself is accepted as the basis for the interview.

It thus seems as if there are logics recurring in both the ordinary labour market and the “activation market”. Both performance interviews and JPs are about self-reflection. The two areas draw upon the same language and same objectives for the negotiations. Both types of arenas require
deliberate and reflexive participation on the social level, and self-reflection and the accompanying self-promotion are necessary requirements. The sequential individualization is the machine that gets everything running, while the dialogue, planning and contract represent the technologies. In the background, the voluntary ideal and risk-running obviously lurk as a life form, for ultimately the questions become where, how far and at what price (Giddens 1991; Sennett 1998; Beck 2000; Baumann 2001, 2003)?

The meeting is strategic

The description of the orchestration of the meeting as strategic has an impact on the relationship between action, language and experience in different ways. First, there is a change in the relationship between classification concepts and their social references. Universal categories (e.g. “work”) dissolve and re-emerge with new and shifting significance through the negotiations, such that the meaning of words and concepts is established and transformed through these negotiation processes (what signifies work, internship and improved skills is determined through negotiations). Instead of being based on institutions and taken for granted, the semantics and contents of the concepts result from the negotiations and are therefore re-negotiable in the next and following dialogue.

Second, there are also changes in how we perceive people’s labour market opportunities. In the industrial society, the cause-and-effect relationship could be understood on a linear time axis, where the conditions for the future almost necessarily depended on past actions. The social welfare interviews therefore often revolved around information and the placement of responsibility and guilt (“self-inflicted” or “self-induced”). In the HRM society and planning dialogue, where the subject is continuously constructed, the relationship between past and future changes from being a necessary cause-and-effect relationship to being a manipulable variable. The imagined and planned future thus defines what becomes the relevant past (Sennett speaks of the winners as those who are able to manipulate their past Sennett (1998)).

During the actual negotiation process, the subjects that are to be activated or engaged in career planning can never be certain whether it is their abilities as negotiating subjects or their actual plans that are in play and at stake. The time horizon is therefore only future-oriented as long as the administrator believes in the counterpart’s negotiating position, i.e. believes that the individual in question has a realistic self-perception and is able to manage what is being planned.
Should the manager or social worker begin to doubt, the past takes over and the administrator begins to question the subject’s capacity. Consider, for example, a 53-year-old man who has had problems with alcohol, dropped out of school in seventh grade and has been out of work for the last 17 years. If he starts talking about an interest in teaching upper secondary school, he is seemingly displaying a lack of insight regarding his own abilities, and the caseworker might begin to question his subject capacity.

It is incontrovertible, however, that any and every past-future relationship can be redefined in any dialogue at any level; and that the power to define is unevenly distributed regardless of whether the interview is proceeding within the context of social policy or in a private business. As indicated, this uneven balance is not just because the one part possesses the resources and right to judge, while the other only has the alleged expertise in her own person. The uneven balance is linked to the fundamental feature that renders the actual interview about development and planning meaningful to begin with, i.e. the self-technology which is in play.

The HRM-society self-technology

When the world and its participants are created in the conversation about who/what is relevant and what is to be done, a distinctive universe emerges in which something is at once made given and malleable. On the one side emerges the place from which the plan gives meaning and on the other side the plan itself, and these two sides are so closely connected that it becomes difficult to assess what determines success or failure. This forces the individual rationality even further away from the classic decision-making rationality towards what Luhmann refers to as the new rationality, i.e. future-oriented risk assessment, in which even the risk connected to making decisions at all is at play in the dialogues and decisions, regardless of whether you are inside or outside of the labour market (Luhmann 1991).

While we have used JP interviews as our point of departure, it is natural to note that we perceive them as being indicative of a much broader tendency; the same kind of interviews and conversations take place in many different places, but also because the form and machinery of the interviews is generalized. The JP interviews are indicative of a general shift towards individualization and system-induced reflexivity. By focusing on dialogue as an occasion to create an identity and on the work as the predominant reason to act, the interview becomes a positively charged opportunity for self-reflection. Regarded as a technology, this also indicates a solid shift in
the self-technologies in general. Here, “self-technologies” refers to the ways we typically can observe ourselves and act in relation to ourselves (Foucault 1988; Mik-Meyer & Villadsen 2007).

The fundamental self-technological concept in industrial society was the classic Greek “know thyself”, while the post-industrial “translation” would be more in terms of “care for the self” (Townley 1995). In the self-technology “know thyself”, the individual is understood as a stable unit and the dialogues focus on this stability and deviations from the stability. The methods will typically be the clinical and control-oriented intervention of e.g. the care-giver, therapist or social worker. The technology in “self-care” builds upon an alternative conception of the self. Here, the self is a movement, an ongoing handling of the relationship between the past and the future for the individual – within the individuals themselves. In the late-stoic spirit, this is about registering what you are interested in doing, what you actually did and then consider the reasons for and implications of what has been done. In this process, the self emerges as an output of and input to the very same process (Foucault 1986, 1988; Townley 1995, 1998).

In the JP perspective, the alleged technological shift towards a subject, which is to be the responsible observer and act upon themselves, indicates that the individual is allocated autonomy together with new rights and obligations. It is not just about a job; it is also very much about relating to how one relates to a job. Giddens has spoken about “politics of second chances” as an integrated element in life-policy arrangements (1994). The JP and JP interviews are an expression of “politics of second chances”; they can always be repeated. However, this kind of politics of second chances is not about the individual being able to try again and again (e.g. to become a neurosurgeon) until successful. Instead, the second-chances politics means that you receive a new chance to present or narrate yourself in a new manner in forms which render you a participant in the social contracts.

In connection with activation, “a second chance” does not mean that you are given employment with a wage subsidy for six months if you have not previously “stepped up”. Instead, it means that in six months you will again be able to articulate yourself in relation to a world of plans and opportunities. It is a new chance to be able to do what we all are doing, i.e. to create and maintain an identity through the reproduction and renewal of the autobiographical narrative. In this perspective, the differences crumble between JP interviews and other HRM-society interviews, and the built-in asymmetries come to appear as though they are generalized conditions for the actual participation in society. It is in the combination of the self-technology and accountability that the new citizenship assumes form; a form that all at once renders the administrative attainable and
desirable in general – bordering on being outright pleasurable, the gist of becoming subject.

**HRM society and a new dispositif**

This article has attempted to present reflections about the JP and HRM interviews as phenomena that become current in the post-industrialization of society. Attempt is made to anchor the JP and HRM interviews in the basic conceptions about society, i.e. as practices that first make sense and attain meaning upon the transition from industrial society to post-industrial society. In this sense we shall maintain that the JP and HRM interviews represent a new societal order, which places a number of new conditions for action and being a part of society. You can begin to trace the contours of a new society in which the relationship between people and work/life is a self-created and – to some extent – planned relationship actualized and reproduced in recurrent interviews and dialogues.

The article has carried out an ongoing juxtaposition of the industrial and HRM societies, which has contributed to the formulation of a taxonomy in the table below that illustrates a number of the fundamental features in these two types of society. The table reveals that the JP interviews express a general phenomenon in society extending far beyond the domain of social policy. The JP and HRM interviews represent a number of new, general logics and principles that have won terrain and impact in the various areas in society, i.e. as new forms of steering and casework, new self-technologies etc.

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<th>Industrial society</th>
<th>HRM society</th>
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<td><strong>Subjectivity</strong></td>
<td>Position in the coordinate system</td>
<td>Constant reflexion</td>
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<td><strong>Self-technology</strong></td>
<td>Know thyself</td>
<td>Care for thyself</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political competencies</strong></td>
<td>Central and hierarchical</td>
<td>De-central, almost individual</td>
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<td><strong>Steering</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Casework form</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Basic political concepts</strong></td>
<td>Rights and obligations</td>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td><strong>Citizenship</strong></td>
<td>external framework, which ensures participation</td>
<td>Participation creates its own externalities</td>
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These new logics and principles are expressed as new structural conditions for human activity. Capable people in the HRM society are subjects that are flexible and continuously able to present themselves in new ways through a self-technology that can be labelled as “care for thyself”. On the steering level, this obviously requires the decentralization and individualization of the political competencies; a transition from detail steering and rule steering to management by objectives, as well as the emergence of dialogue and negotiations in social work. These changes manifest themselves as a new type of citizenship, where participation instead of rights and obligations has become a basic political concept; that the citizen is actively included in the casework and the exercise of authority renders the individual subject the master over their own self-creation.

These couplings between institutions, mechanisms and logics are precisely what Foucault called a dispositif. The dispositif concept directs the attention towards the regularities permeating arguments and actions. The regularities do not determine the actions, but they provide support to a number of arguments and actions, while at the same time others are weakened. The regularities indicate that a given phenomenon in a given epoch, e.g. the JP interview, is easier to articulate than other phenomena (e.g. external force). In other words, dispositifs are not provided by nature. They are historical and local and can therefore be both phased out and developed (Foucault 1975; Raffnsøe 2008).

The new dispositif shifts the well-known mechanisms for discipline and socialization into the little space for interaction and the body. Instead of the panoptic observation and the disciplinary mechanisms that belonged to the industrial society, where they had solid support in schools, universities, institutions, hospitals etc, we now find an array of interviews and networks running both transversely through the known institutions as well as circumventing them. The new development implies that the disciplining has been internalized in the individual as self-discipline; not merely as a means to adaptation, but as the very condition for the existence-in-the-world. Instead of disciplining with reference to an absolute (God or human reason), it occurs as actualized subjectivation, where the individual is doubled in an observing self, which uses planning technologies, and a self as object. Instead of the prison as the panopticon based on the surveillance economy, we are currently living in a synopticon, where the actual surveillance and citizenship are privatized: choose yourself, choose your social reference, and leave the active second-order support to the public policies (Giddens 1991; Deleuze 2006).
From a sociological perspective, one of the negative consequences of this development is that the collective becomes vulnerable. The vulnerability of the collective owes to a dialectical process in which the JP, HRM and the administrative citizenship form – and are themselves formed – by the individualization processes in post-industrial society. The growing tendency to individualize through reflexive, self-promoted processes in the form of microscopic spaces for negotiation renders it increasingly difficult to collectivize language and meaning. All statements become polysemic in the sense that their semantic possibilities are not fixed through a general institutionalization. Instead, they become fixed in the actual process in which the contract is drafted, step by step.

Thus, inclusion and exclusion also change character. Exclusion and marginalization no longer necessarily follow well-known systemic lines (e.g. one’s position in the education system, profession, time working, age and gender). Inclusion and exclusion are instead linked together with isolated interactions and actions and to visions about the future and the willingness to accept risk (e.g. how you choose to use the education system). Consequently, exclusion and marginalization become collectively invisible. Exclusion, marginalization, and social problems are regarded as a function of individual choices and/or planning errors. But such planning errors are not necessarily inevitable, as the unemployed constantly receive new opportunities to present themselves in the social; i.e. individual planning anew in the next JP interview.

It is this very feature of the new sociality which increases the capacity of society to absorb exclusion while maintaining integration (Luhmann 1997; Born & Jensen 2002). Furthermore, this practice is the core in the new dispositif. It operates exclusively on the level of local and temporary processes, where it functions together with the difference between risks and possibilities. The exclusion is a latent threat which conceals itself in the spaces between processes and plans.

References:


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1 Jørgensen (2007) and Dyring (2007) have pointed out that executive orders, guidelines, manuals and a new visitation system have contributed to re-standardizing the social policy measures. We do not address this debate; partly because it is difficult to determine whether it is right or wrong, as there will always be controversies as to how institutionalized practices are to be described and understood; and partly because the purpose of this article is to present ideal-typical reflections addressing JP, which since the beginning of the 1990s has incontrovertibly played a very important role in the activation efforts.

2 Employee development assessments have been introduced in all large companies and almost all public institutions in Denmark. See Holt Larsen et al. (1989) for a description of the language used in these assessments and their purpose. For a Foucauldian critique, see Townley (1999).

3 Richard Sennett discusses this point empirically (1998, Chapter 3)