



Morten Nissen

Practice Research and Utopia

SUBSTANCE
Subjects and Standards

Morten.nissen@psy.ku.dk

Why Practice?

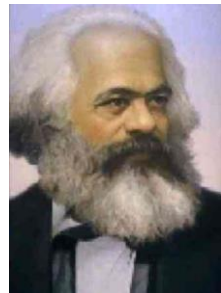


- Understanding practice is understanding science
- Science and practice
 - Science is a kind of practice, although
 - Science is unlike other kinds of practice
 - Science must produce relevant products (like any practice)
 - Science is in exchange (dialogue and collaboration) with other practices
- Methodology suggests ideals but is first of all cultural reflexivity
- As any other practice, research should be approached by analysis – with theory

Tradition



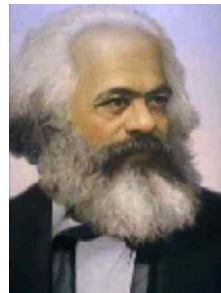
- The dialectical traditions from Hegel and on
 - Via Marxism, structuralism, pragmatism, phenomenology, etc. ...
 - ... to poststructuralism, Science and Technology Studies etc.
 - E.g. “Praxology” (Annemarie Mol)
- The concept of Praxis
 - Collective reproduction and transformation of conditions and of ourselves
 - From Aristotle’s free citizens through Spinoza’s ethics of power through Hegel’s objective Spirit to the standpoint of producers
- Marx’ Theses on Feuerbach
 - Grounding idealism in practice (“subjectively”)
 - Revolutionary practice
 - Articulating standpoint



Traditions



- The dialectical traditions from Hegel and on
 - Via Marxism, structuralism, pragmatism, phenomenology, etc. ...
 - ... to poststructuralism, Science and Technology Studies etc.
 - E.g. “Praxology” (Annemarie Mol)
- The concept of Praxis
 - Collective reproduction and transformation of conditions and of ourselves
 - From Aristotle’s free citizens through Spinoza’s ethics of power through Hegel’s objective Spirit to the standpoint of producers
- Marx’ Theses on Feuerbach
 - Grounding idealism in practice (“subjectively”)
 - Revolutionary practice
 - Articulating standpoint





The Logic of Care

I am after the rationality, or rather the rationale, of the practices I am studying. Here the term 'logic' helps. I ask for something that one might call a style. It invites the exploration of what is appropriate or logical to do in some site or situation, and what is not. It seeks a local, fragile, and yet pertinent coherence. This coherence is not necessarily obvious to the people involved. It need not even be verbally available to them. It may be implicit: embedded in practices, building, habits and machines. And yet, if we want to talk about it, we need to translate a logic into language. This, then, is what I am after. I will make words for, and out of, practices. And I will do so comparatively, using contrast as a way of gaining insight. This book articulates the logic of care through a detailed comparison with the logic of choice.

Annemarie Mol: The Logic of Care, 2008

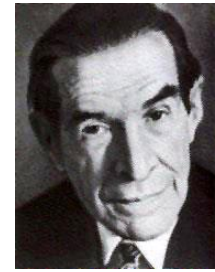
Traditions



- The dialectical traditions from Hegel and on
 - Via Marxism, structuralism, pragmatism, phenomenology, etc. ...
 - ... to poststructuralism, Science and Technology Studies etc.
 - E.g. “Praxology” (Annemarie Mol)
- The concept of Praxis
 - Collective reproduction and transformation of conditions and of ourselves
 - From Aristotle’s free citizens through Spinoza’s ethics of power through Hegel’s objective Spirit to the standpoint of producers
- Marx’ Theses on Feuerbach
 - Grounding idealism in practice (“subjectively”)
 - Revolutionary practice
 - Articulating standpoint



Practice is mediated



UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

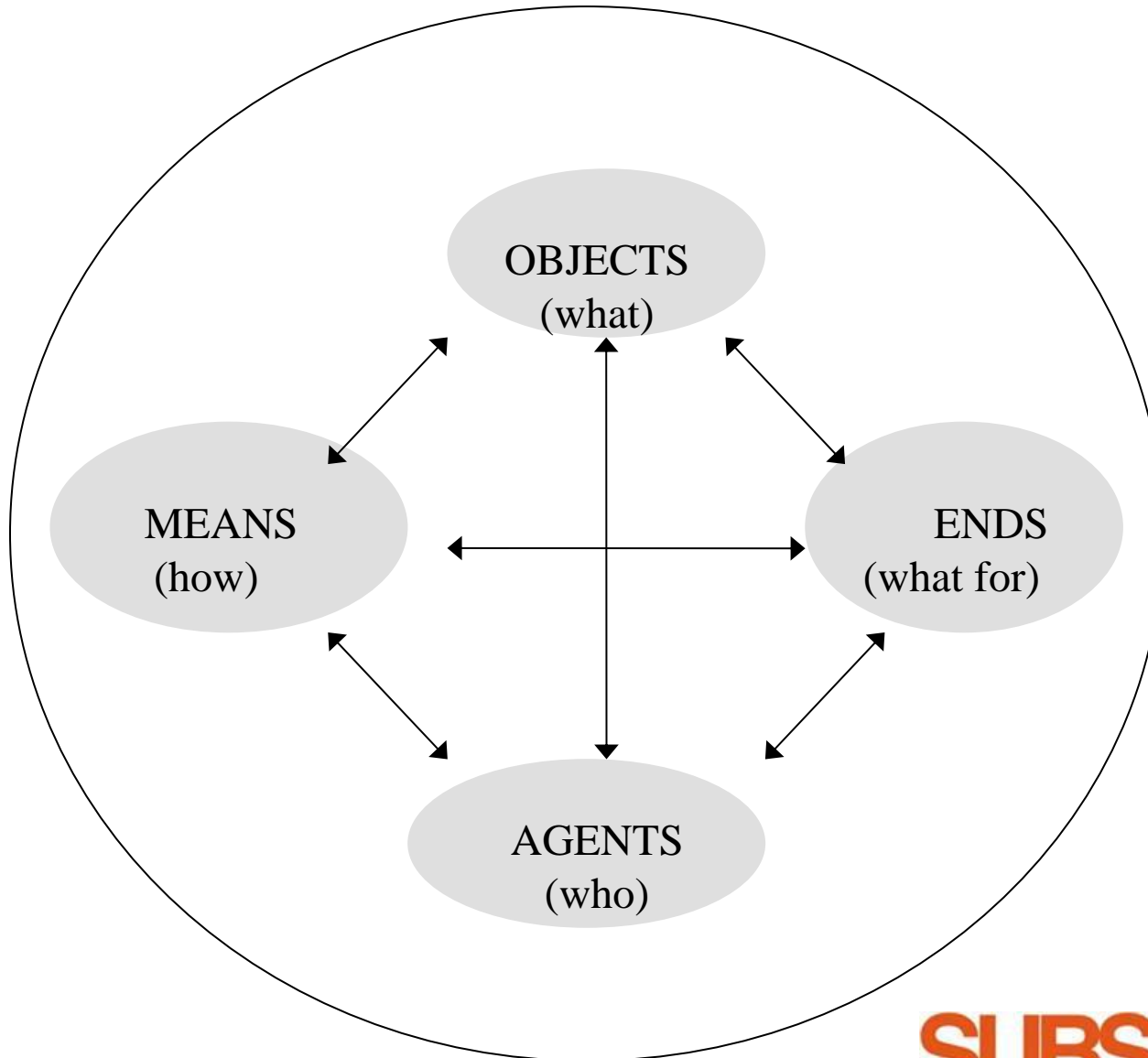


- Intentional structure
 - Agents, Objects, Ends, Means
 - 2 recent versions
 - Foucault's "technologies of the self": Mode of subjection, substance, telos, techne
 - Engeström's "Activity system": Subject, Object, Outcome, Tool,
 - Semantic networks – networks of meaning (differences that make a difference)
 - Immanent standards
- Objectification of standards
 - Artifacts are meanings created as things
 - Artifacts imply intentional structure (prototypes – cf. Wartofsky)
 - Artifacts are exchanged: Generalized

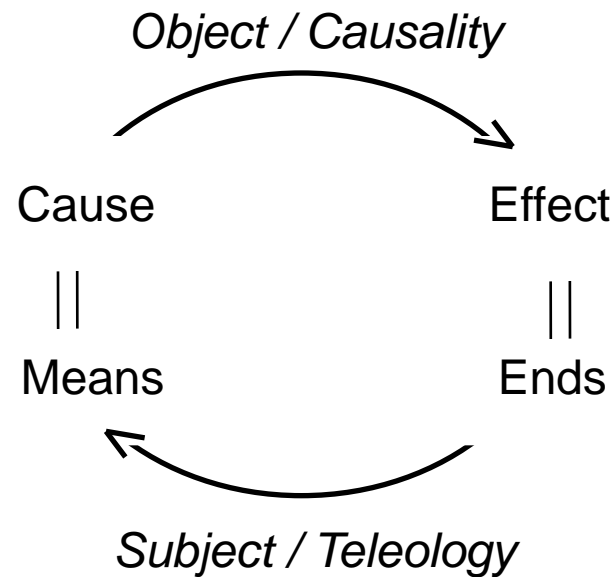




Intentional structure



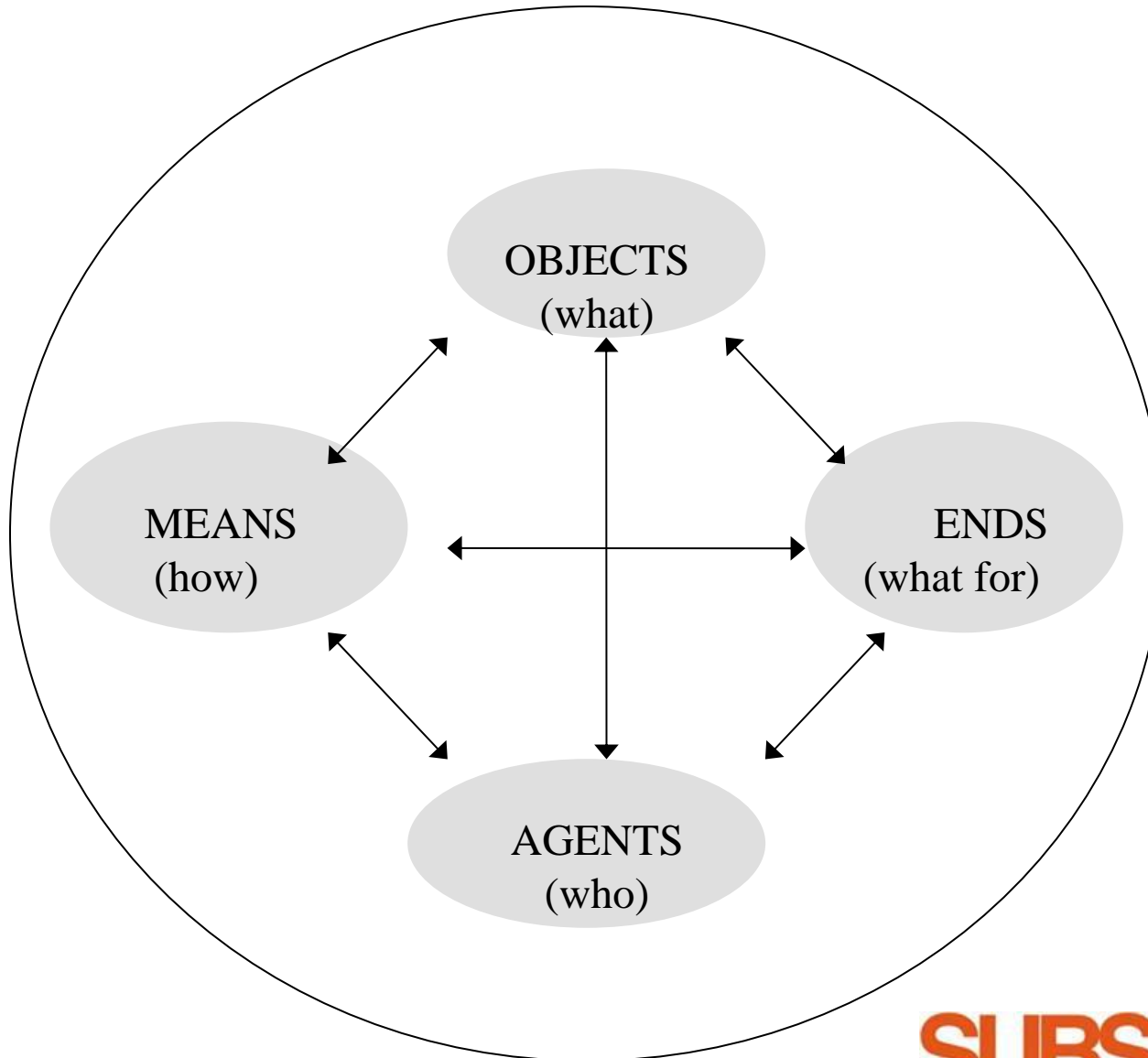
Hegel's logic



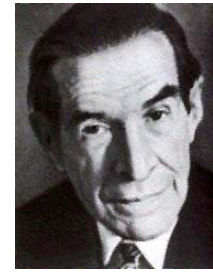
cf. Højrup, T. (2003). *State, Culture and Life-Modes. The Foundations of Life-Mode Analysis*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.



Intentional structure



Practice is mediated



UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN



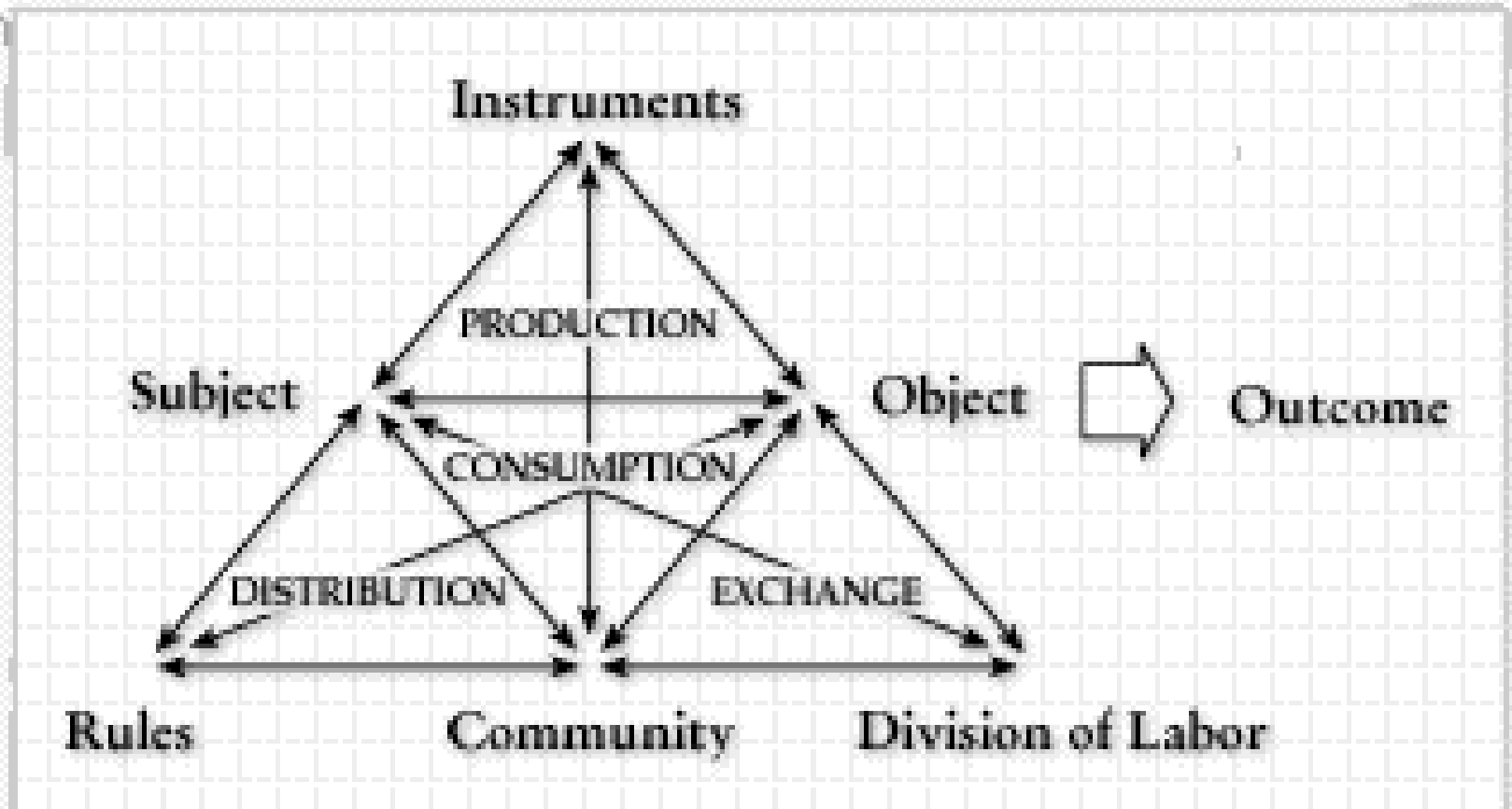
- Intentional structure
 - Agents, Objects, Ends, Means
 - 2 recent versions
 - Foucault's "technologies of the self": Mode of subjection, substance, telos, techne
 - Engeström's "Activity system": Subject, Object, Outcome, Tool,
 - Semantic networks – networks of meaning (differences that make a difference)
 - Immanent standards
- Objectification of standards
 - Artifacts are meanings created as things
 - Artifacts imply intentional structure (prototypes – cf. Wartofsky)
 - Artifacts are exchanged: Generalized



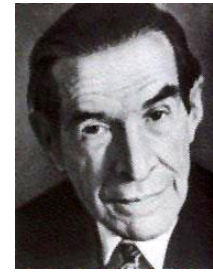


Engeström's Activity System

3



Practice is mediated



UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN



- Intentional structure
 - Agents, Objects, Ends, Means
 - 2 recent versions
 - Foucault's "technologies of the self": Mode of subjection, substance, telos, techne
 - Engeström's "Activity system": Subject, Object, Outcome, Tool,
 - Semantic networks – networks of meaning (differences that make a difference)
 - Immanent standards
- Objectification of standards
 - Artifacts are meanings created as things
 - Artifacts imply intentional structure (prototypes – cf. Wartofsky)
 - Artifacts are exchanged: Generalized



Practice is situated

- The local practice
 - Unit of Praxis (a contradiction)
 - Here & Now / Infinite structures
- Meaning and sense
 - From semantics to semiotics
 - Sense can be collective!
 - Indexicality
- Subjectivity of participation
 - Cultivation as appropriation: Learning and subjectification
 - The ZPD – zone of proximal development
 - The I and the We – and the Me and the Us



Morten Nissen
The Subjectivity Of Participation
Articulating Social Work Practice with Youth in Copenhagen



SCHAT / Action Research



- Knowing comes from changing
 - Marx 11th thesis (and Günther Anders' addition)
 - Research as “general labor”, innovation (Marx)
- Kurt Lewin
 - The unity of education, development, research
- Vygotsky's experimental-genetic method
 - Producing the “higher functions”
 - Tool and result



Changing the World



- Karl Marx

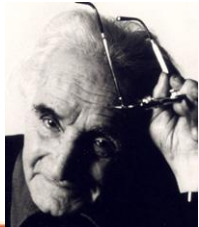
The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.

(11th Thesis on Feuerbach)

- Günther Anders

The point is not to change the world – we do that all the time anyway. The point is to know what we're doing when we change the world, so that we don't change it into a world without us.

(The Obsolescence of Humans)



SCHAT / Action Research



- Knowing comes from changing
 - Marx 11th thesis (and Günther Anders' addition)
 - Research as “general labor”, innovation (Marx)
- Kurt Lewin
 - The unity of education, development, research
- Vygotsky's experimental-genetic method
 - Producing the “higher functions”
 - Tool and result



Research creates communities



A proposition that has been accepted is not necessarily the object of a consensus of a community that preexisted it. It creates this consensus, as well as the community that corresponds to it.



Isabelle Stengers, 1997: *Power and invention. Situating science.* p. 85

Research Creates Subjects



UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN



Both psychology and psychoanalysis have a peculiar power in modern society to produce what they find, and to do so within particular institutions and cultural practices such that they are able to incite, mobilize and recruit human subjects who will testify to the “truth” of their investigative procedures and their determinate knowledge.

Ian Parker, 2008: Psychoanalytic theory and psychology: Conditions of possibility for Clinical and Cultural Practice. *Theory & Psychology*, 18, p. 149

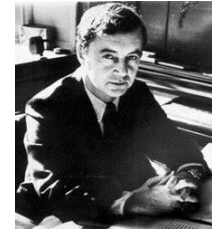
Models and prototypes



- Models (Wartofsky)
 - Model *of* and model *for*
- Tertiary artifacts: Tool of tool of tools...
 - Writing, money, etc.
 - Conventional
- Core contradiction of research
 - Convention vs. invention
 - Consistency vs. relevance
- The 3 aspects of the prototype (Jensen)
 1. **Practice** or Event – the local, singular practice (experiment)
 2. **Model** – the artifacts that re-present it, articulate it
 3. **Relevance** – the general points / reasons



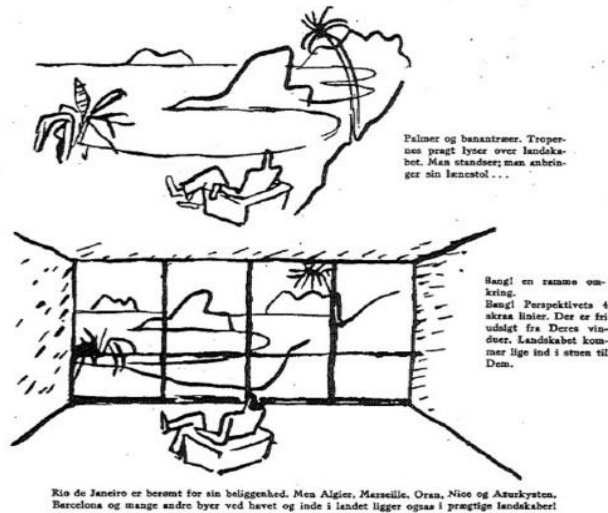
Standards and social engineering



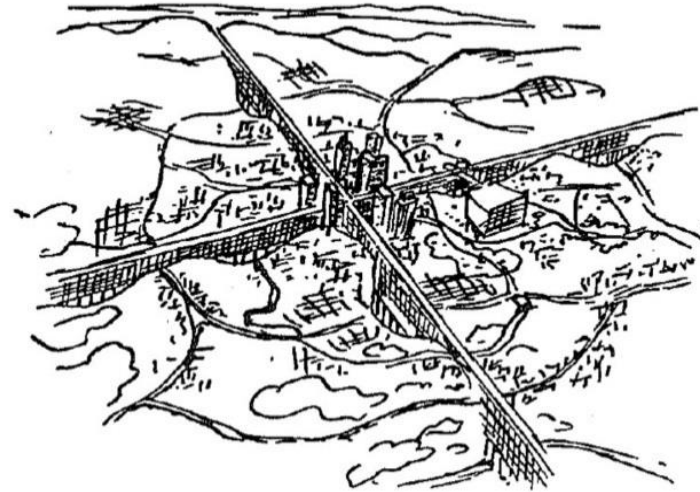
- Institutionalization of meaning
 - Framing: Taking structure to regulate practice (Goffman)
 - Fixing conventions – power and artifacts (Smith)
- Standardization
 - Meta-standards – production and things
 - Cancelling (or ignoring) indexicality
 - Ceteris Paribus (All other things being equal)
- Knowledge society
 - “Social engineering” – Hubris or Hope?



Complexity and simplicity



— Og i Sao Paulo i Brasilien skitses en radikal løsning af indviklede trafikproblemer.



- Le Corbusier: Human Dwelling

- Darrin Hodgetts: Social Psychology and Everyday Life
- Clifford Geertz: Thick description



Democratic prototyping



- The joint venture of action / practice research
 - Transforming references in local collaboration
 - Dialogicality (Bakhtin)
- Nothing is neutral
 - Contentious practice, disputed models, **suggested** relevance
 - Articulating practice is taking and making standpoint
 - Relevance must be built: Infrastructure, education
- Narrativity and hope
 - From canonical / standard narratives to blues hope (Mattingly)
- Abstract and concrete utopia (Bloch)



Critical Psychology



- Three strategies
 1. Using psychology in social critique
 2. Critique of psychology as ideology
 3. Building an alternative psychology
- Humanism or post-humanism?
 - The inhuman and the human
 - Historically constructed or universal?
 - Revolutionary practice poses the question of humanity over and over
 - Humanism as creative foundationalism (Brown & Stenner)
 - Theory never stops being relevant....
...that is: Ideological!



Power and science

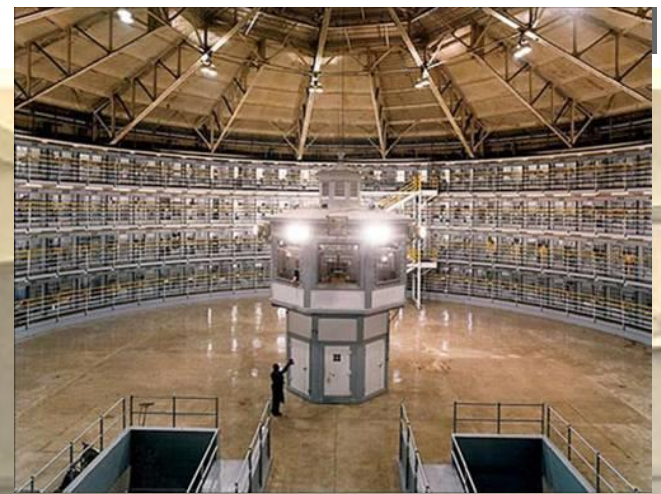


UNIVERSITÄT



- Knowledge (discourse) is power
 - Action upon action: Ways of dealing with people (including ourselves)
 - Intentional structures (e.g. doctor-patient/disease-medicine-cure)
- Discourse and ideology
 - Ideologies are ways of defining who We are (Billig)
 - Ideology is a critical term – it defines standpoint ... and creates another ideology
- Standpoint and critique
 - Genealogy or rear-view mirror image
 - Re-embracing social engineering as politics
 - Critical articulation
 - Thickening the thin narrative of standardization

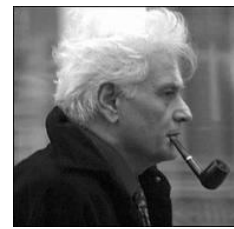




ology



Power and science



UNIVERSITÄT



- Knowledge (discourse) is power
 - Action upon action: Ways of dealing with people (including ourselves)
 - Intentional structures (e.g. doctor-patient/disease-medicine-cure)
- Discourse and ideology
 - Ideologies are ways of defining who We are (Billig)
 - Ideology is a critical term – it defines standpoint ... and creates another ideology
- Standpoint and critique
 - Genealogy or rear-view mirror image
 - Re-embracing social engineering as politics
 - Critical articulation
 - Thickening the thin narrative of standardization





Haug's Memory Work

- Writing and critiquing memories (or utopia)
- Subject-science as self-critique
 - Memory as the mediated self
 - Common sense is who and what we are until we work with it
- (Common) Sense and ideology
 - Ideology is the fixing of sense
 - Dichotomies that veil contradictions
 - Ideology critique: Overcoming common sense
- Working with
 - Popular culture
 - Science
 - Everyday common sense
- Who are “we”?
 - The collective as constituted in ideology and in ideology critique



User-Driven Standards in Social Work

- U-turn and Helsingung
 - Long-lasting collaboration, articulating ‘methods’
 - Beyond “treatment”: Narrative approaches
- Tendencies in the field
(~ “standpoint of civil / bourgeois society”)
 - Addictions (and autonomy) run amok
 - Evidence-based standardized models
 - User involvement: Harm reduction, 12 steps
- Transformation of references
 - Ask the same questions (e.g. narrative models; space)
 - Ask different questions (e.g. from common sense to meaning; the utopia of the empowerment “we”)
 - Many producers of data

HELSTINGUNG.NU

TIL UNGE I HELSINGØR OM ALKOHOL, HASH OG STOFFER



Vi bor på Gl. Banegårdsvej 29,
kig ind eller ring
25313593. Lav en aftale. Du
kan få 5 samtaler anonymt.:

"Det er lige som at gå
hjemmefra og komme
hjem....."

[Klik her →](#)

INTERESSERER DU DIG FOR RUSMIDLER?

Har du en ven, nabo eller kæreste,
som du synes bruger lidt mange
stoffer? Kunne du tænkte dig at blive
bedre til at hjælpe? Har du selv brug for
nogen at tale med om alkohol og rusmidler?
Så kom videre her

KONTAKT OS:

HEJ@HELSTINGUNG.NU
RING TIL 2531 3593
(ELLER SMS)

VIDEO





Against the Light

- Sequence of events
 - Pocket films project: Preferred narratives
 - Gala premiere event
 - Creation of fiction movie with users as consultants
- Data
 - The film, writings etc. from the field
 - Structured dialogues (recorded)
 - Ethnography
- Critical writings
- <http://youtu.be/1LwxwzgwgdS>