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Time, power and resistance

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Redaktörer: Christofer Edling & Sara Eldén
Ansvarig utgivare: Katarina Jacobsson

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Adress
Sociologisk Forskning
Sociologiska institutionen, Lunds universitet
Box 114, 221 00 Lund
sociologiskforskning@sverigessociologforbund.se
www.sociologiskforskning.se

Sveriges Sociologförbund

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Innehåll

CHRISTOFER EDLING & SARA ELDÉN

Redaktörerna har ordet

SENASTE NUMRET AV Sociologisk Forskning är här, ett temanummer och därtill dubbelnummer med en introduktionsartikel och fem spännande originalartiklar att läsa. Gästredaktörer för detta temanummer med titeln TIME, POWER AND RESISTANCE är Majken Jul Sørensen, Satu Heikkinen och Eva Alfredsson Olsson vars inspirerande call for papers lockade skribenter som på olika sätt analyserar tid och temporalitet i relation till makt och motstånd. Vi får läsa om digitala mediers roll i den Tunisiska revolutionen (Brown); om minimalism-ideal i amerikanska livsstilsbloggar (Uggla); om utmaningar mot kapitalismens temporalitet i form av arbetskooperativ och ”timebanks” (Sørensen, Wiksell); om städningens temporalitet och potential som vardagsmotståndshandling (Ambjörnsson); samt om sjukskrivna kvinnors motstånd mot diskursiva konstruktioner om ”återgång till arbete” (Wall, Selander, Bergman). Därtill får vi en fullödig och inspirerande introduktion där bidragen sätts i relation till varandra och där även nya utmaningar för forskning i fältet identifieras. Framförallt ställer sig Sørensen, Heikkinen och Alfredsson Olsson frågan: När övergår det oorganiserade vardagsmotståndet till organiserat motstånd? Vardagsmotståndet kan, som de påpekar, många gånger stanna vid att vara icke-strategiskt, men organiserat motstånd föregås alltid av och samexisterar med vardagsmotstånd. Författarna föreslår att begreppen ”coping” och ”resistance” kan vara behjälpliga för att förstå distinktioner mellan olika former av motstånd. Temanumrets artiklar öppnar för och inspirerar till fler empiriska och teoretiska analyser av detta.

Andra – och också det högaktuella – former av motstånd diskuteras i Klas Borell och Marco Nilsson debattinlägg om samhällsvetenskapernas, och de samhällsvetenskapliga forskarnas, utsatta position i Turkiet. Debattinlägget utgår från intervjuer med avskedade turkiska samhällsvetare och samhällsvetare som lever under hot om avsked, och vittnar om allvarliga kränkningar av den akademiska friheten. Inlägget från Borell och Nilsson visar både på resignation och motstånd, det sistnämnda tydligt exempelvis i de Gatuakademier som avskedare lärare organiserar.

Numret innehåller också två recensioner; Sverre Wide har läst Carl-Göran Heidegren, Henrik Lundberg och Klas Gustavssons bok *Sverige och filosoferna: Svensk 1900-talsfilosofi i sociologisk belysning*, och Anna Tyllström recenserar Mikael Holmqvists bok *Handels – maktelitens skola*. I Sociologförbundets text skriver Katarina Jakobsson om en konferens som många av oss besökte i augusti, ESA i Manchester, och gör reklam för

den kommande nationella konferensen Sociologidagarna, som kommer hållas i Stockholm 18–20 mars 2020. Vi uppmanas också att titta in på förbundets nya hemsida: http://www.sverigessociologforbund.se – ett rejält lyft för den digitala kommunikationen av sociologi i Sverige.

Slutligen vill vi återigen uppmana er att sända oss era manus, uppslag till recensioner och idéer för temanummer. Sociologisk Forskning publicerar bidrag på svenska och övriga skandinaviska språk samt engelska. Sociologisk Forskning tillämpar ett s.k. double blind referee-förfarande och tidskriften indexeras i ett stort antal internationella databaser, publiceras med omedelbar open access och finns tillgänglig genom JSTOR (se tidskriftens hemsida för vidare detaljer). Dessutom är den numera enkelt tillgänglig genom vår webbplattform, sociologiskforskning.se.

Christofer Edling och Sara Eldén
Redaktörer

MAJKEN JUL SØRENSEN, SATU HEIKKINEN & EVA ALFREDSSON OLSSON

Time, power and resistance

– *Guest editors introduction*

Abstract
Time, power and resistance are all central sociological concepts, but only rarely have the intertwining between all three been explored. Here the guest editors of the special issue of *Sociologisk Forskning* called "Time, power and resistance" introduce five empirical research articles. The articles all investigate time and temporality in relation to forms of power, ranging from discursive power to dominant norms and state power. The resistances vary from organised, collective resistance to subtle and discreet forms of everyday and constructive resistance. Additionally, the guest editors point towards future avenues of research in the area and show sociologically interesting links between the three concepts.

Keywords: time, power, resistance, introduction, future research

IN JUNE 2019, the small island community of Sommarøy in Northern Norway issued a press release about its efforts to abolish clock time. Clocks create stress and with the midnight sun they are superfluous. Sommarøy is therefore planning to apply to the Norwegian parliament to become a time-free zone. The initiative is described as the result of a strong engagement among the islanders. They are simply tired of being governed by the clock when not needed. The story caught headlines around the world, with reports in the media such as The Guardian, Independent, CNN, Spiegel and India Today. However, a few weeks later it transpired that it was all a PR stunt organised by state-owned "Innovation Norway", in order to promote Northern Norway as a tourist destination (Press release n.d., NRK (2019).

The example above illustrates how time, power and resistance are intertwined. Clock time is a central organising principle in the industrialised world (Adams 1998; Jönsson 1999; Rosengren 2006; Wigerfeldt 1990). Through this temporality modern people have been disciplined and the "time is money" ideology has come to dominate, therefore also shaping how power circulates. Castree (2009) even claims that clock time is the very glue of a capitalistic social order. When the islanders apparently collectively resisted clock time it looked like a challenge to a fundamental order in modern societies. Perhaps that is why the story caught so much attention? The dream of abandoning

abstract and standardised clock time and returning to a more contextualised sense of time – sensitive to the rhythms in nature and subjective experiences – appears to be strong (Adams 1998; Jönsson 1999). With Jönsson (1999) we can say that the islanders apparently refused to be ”in the hands of artificial time” (1999:86). The revelation that the story was a PR stunt punctures the dream and leaves a bitter taste – after all, there was no organised collective resistance, it was simply another commodification of a dream to lure more tourists to consume more.

This special issue of *Sociologisk Forskning* focuses on the intertwining of time, power and resistance, and includes five articles which each explore some of the links between all three concepts. Studying time has a long history in sociology, and the close links between power and resistance have been well known since Foucault wrote his famous words, ”where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault 1990:95). However, how power and resistance are related to time and temporality has seldom been explicitly addressed (but see Lilja 2018 for an exception). Thus we see an obvious need to explore all three concepts simultaneously. Resistance has for decades been a theme of sociological inquiry (Hollander & Einwohner 2004) and many Swedish sociologists have contributed to developing the field of resistance studies (see for instance Baaz, Lilja, Schulz, & Vinthagen 2016; Johansson & Vinthagen 2016; Lilja & Vinthagen 2009). Nevertheless, since ”resistance” is the newcomer to sociology compared to power or time, we take this aspect of the special issue as the starting point for introducing the theme and the five articles.

The term ”resistance” is often associated with riots, protests and revolutions, and within sociology there is a long tradition of social movement studies investigating collectively organised efforts to further the interests of various groups. In the contributions to this issue, Brown’s article ”Digital media and the acceleration of resistance: Findings from the 2010/11 Tunisian revolution”, concerning the revolution in Tunisia which ignited the so-called Arab Spring, is an illustration of this type of resistance. Brown focuses on the use of digital media in relation to Rosa’s theory of acceleration. During and after the revolution, political commentators pointed out the use of social media like Facebook and Twitter as a decisive part of the revolution, which shaped and accelerated the dynamics of organisation and mobilisation. Drawing on interview data with participants in the revolution, Brown demonstrates how such an understanding of the role of digital media is simplified and ignores just how complex resistance is. Digital media was indeed a useful tool for the protesters, but the narrative about a ”Facebook revolution” reflects a western perspective. Exploring this in relation to Rosa theory of acceleration, Brown suggests this narrative of digital media’s prominence alludes to the broader assumptions over what these revolutions were for, namely economic and political modernity in accordance with ‘western’ understanding. Although this narrative reduces resistance in the so-called Arab Spring to a ‘frenetic standstill’, this overlooks a significant aspect of the Tunisian revolution that Brown draws attention to and which had little to do with digital media, the ”Councils for the Protection of the Revolution”. He analyses these as a form of ”constructive resistance”. Resistance can be much more than the openly declared rebellious intentions and organised protest

taking place here and now. It can work slowly, over a long time, dispersed and very subtle. In the emerging cross-disciplinary field of resistance studies, there is a growing interest in these kinds of subtler, fleeting, discreet and hidden forms of resistance, and a developing terminology to catch them for analytical purposes. The *constructive resistance* which Brown uses is one example of this. It refers to the efforts to build the desired society within the shell of the old, in other words bringing visions of the future into the present, independent of dominant power structures (Sørensen 2016, see also Koefeed 2018). Rather than protest and object to what they consider undesirable, the constructive resisters expend their effort on activities such as establishing independent spaces (like the aforementioned councils in Tunisia) and new norms concerning relationships with other people. Instead of demanding that others (such as governments, authorities and businesses) act, they themselves start to create what they want here and now. The concept has overlaps with the part of social movement studies exploring the prefigurative aspect of movements (see for instance Maeckelbergh 2011; Yates 2014), although it includes types of resistance that are not organised in social movements.

Two other contributions in this issue explicitly refer to constructive resistance; in the contribution called ”Taking back control: Minimalism as a reaction to high speed and overload in contemporary society”, Uggla has analysed the narratives that well-known American minimalist bloggers convey about their journeys towards a minimalist lifestyle as a way to achieve personal autonomy. Her conclusion is that although minimalism is attracting a growing interest and can be combined with criticism of consumption and higher resource awareness, in its present form minimalism is not particularly challenging or threatening to the system and the focus is clearly on improved personal well-being for the person who chooses to resist the consumer culture by owning less. Although minimalism can be understood as constructive resistance against a discourse of consumption, the individualisation entailed means that in the present form, minimalist narratives are not threatening the discourse of economic growth. When it comes to time and tempo, Uggla finds that the minimalist narratives include two contradictory temporalities. On the one hand, minimalism appears to be a critique of the temporal norms of capitalist society. A major explanation for why the minimalist authors have abandoned their previous way of life is because of the stress caused by time pressure at work and in relation to managing possessions. This is obviously an implicit critique of the capitalist norm, and the narratives include ideas about living in the moment and being free to live at a slower pace. On the other hand, the minimalists advocate time management strategies that demonstrate how the capitalist norm of not wasting time has been internalised. As is central in capitalist temporality, time is a commodity which should not be wasted, and the minimalist authors present ideas about how personal autonomy can be reached through routines, self-discipline and efficient time management.

Sørensen and Wiksell in their article ”Constructive resistance to the dominant capitalist temporality” also write about constructive resistance. Whereas Uggla’s focus is on individualised forms of resistance, these authors bring attention to the complexity of organised and collective efforts to resist the dominant aspects of capitalist tempo-

rality. Sørensen and Wiksell use the two illustrative cases of worker cooperatives and timebanks to discuss the complexity of constructive resistance. Both worker cooperatives and timebanks are explicit attempts to cooperate around work and leisure in non-capitalist ways, but the authors' conclusion has parallels to Uggla's – the efforts are so small and far apart that they are not posing any threat to capitalism. As Sørensen and Wiksell write, this is unsurprising, given capitalist temporality's increasing dominance over the centuries. The way Sørensen and Wiksell illustrate the complexity is to first identify two dominant aspects of capitalist temporality, which they draw from Adams (1998) work. One aspect is the decontextualized and abstract clock time which developed alongside capitalism, best symbolised by the clock. The other aspect is the way capitalism has commodified time, caught by the absurd phrase that "time is money". Sørensen and Wiksell show that even when groups such as the worker cooperatives and timebanks have explicit intentions of resistance and manage to do that in one of these temporal aspects, through their practice they might nevertheless contribute to upholding the status quo from another aspect. Although their cases are very different, Uggla as well as Sørensen and Wiksell's articles show the complexities involved in resisting capitalist temporality even with explicit and intentional attempts.

Another development within resistance studies is the growing interest in *everyday resistance.* In their influential attempt to develop an analytical framework for analysing everyday resistance, Johansson and Vinthagen (2016) focus on everyday resistance as an everyday *practice* which is entangled with forms of power. In the contributions in this special issue, this is exemplified by Ambjörnsson's text "Time to clean: On resistance and the temporality of cleaning". Ambjörnsson suggests embracing the practice of cleaning as a form of resistance to dominant norms which delegate cleaning to be the least attractive household chore. Cleaning has a low status both in the home and professionally, as a result of traditionally being women's work, while also being despised by feminists. Whereas other domestic activities such as child rearing, home decoration and cooking now have a higher status, cleaning is still relegated to the bottom. Ambjörnsson explores how this is related to its temporality – cleaning is repetitive and does not create anything new, it is always sideways and backwards, meaning that it cannot be part of the growth and forward-looking activities which are so cherished in late modern capitalist society. This is where Ambjörnsson's suggestion that we embrace cleaning as a form of resistance comes in. She is basing her argument on the critique of chrononormativity proposed by authors such as Baraitser (2017) and Halberstam (2005), who are using the notion "queer time". Chrononormativity refers to the culturally privileged way of living a life temporally – to move from adolescence, to early adulthood, to marriage, reproduction, child rearing, retirement and death. This temporal standardisation serves to naturalise heternormative as well as capitalist power structures and consequently force a sociocultural other into a peripheral temporal position. In contrast, within a "queer temporality", the "here and now" is celebrated, resisting the future orientated focus on family, reproduction and accumulation of capital found elsewhere. Ambjörnsson suggests that embracing cleaning and its backwardness and dealing with

decay (which is nevertheless also a form of care) might be another feminist way to formulate a starting point for our common needs.

The interest in everyday resistance has its origin in James Scott's work on poor peasants in Malaysia (Scott, 1985), and subsequent studies (both those inspired by and critical of Scott) have frequently focused on everyday resistance of the poor and/or the so-called third world (see for instance Abu-Lughod 1990; Adnan 2007; Bayat 2000; Jenkins 2017; Scott 1990). Recently there has been a growing number of studies taking their point of departure in welfare societies, for instance in relation to mothers with disabilities (Frederick 2017), and care for the elderly (Grenier & Hanley 2007; Ward, Campbell & Keady 2016). However, there remains much to investigate about the meaning of everyday resistance in a welfare society, not least how it evokes narratives, practices and technologies related to time and temporality – an obvious sociological area of inquiry.

Everyday practices of resistance have been studied within several disciplines, such as feminist studies and work studies, where the term *organizational misbehaviour* covers much everyday resistance which takes place in the work place (Ackroyd & Thompson 1999; Karlsson 2012; Lindqvist & Olsson 2017). However, the term "misbehaviour" in itself clearly has an employer perspective (although this might not be the intention of everyone who uses it), whereas resistance studies – as articulated for instance in the *Journal of Resistance Studies* – takes the perspective of the subordinate (Vinthagen 2015). The naming of oppositional activities cannot be isolated from questions of power – the misbehaviour or laziness that the employer sees can just as well be termed time theft or liberation of time from the employee's perspective, a form of resistance against ever-increasing acceleration in work life, demanding higher productivity and more "efficiency" in both the private and public sector.

The attention to more subtle and discreet forms of resistance also raises the issue of exactly what is being resisted. In the Tunisian case that Brown writes about in this issue, the obvious power being resisted is the Tunisian state. In the other articles, the power being resisted manifests itself in more subtle ways, such as dominant discourses and social norms. Sørensen and Wiksell point towards the two essential aspects of dominant capitalist temporality – decontextualized and abstract clock time and the commodification of time as powerful temporal norms. Uggla writes about consumption norms and Ambjörnsson about cleaning norms. Most of the contributions are only writing implicitly about power, although Wall, Selander and Bergman write explicitly about how exercise of power can be linked to discursive practices and how individuals try to resist this. In their contribution, titled "Makt och motstånd i rehabiliteringsprocessen: Sanningen om tidig återgång i arbete utmanad", Wall, Selander and Bergman investigate power and resistance in the rehabilitation process of women who have been on long term sick leave due to psychological health problems. The SOU 1988:41 "Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering" was the core document for Sweden's 1992 reform of rehabilitation, and Wall, Selander and Bergman's Foucault inspired discourse analysis of this SOU reveals how the norm of paid work prevails, and how a discursive practice of "quick return" disciplines women's bodies. Statements regarding the importance of

early and quick return are linked to arguments about reduced sick leave and saving societal costs. They also find practises of categorisation which describe those who deviate from the norm as ”passive receivers” or ”slow” in recovering. The aspect of resistance in the article is taken from an open-ended question in a questionnaire, to which women repeatedly responded by asking for more time to recover at their own pace. They are highly aware of the norm of early and quick return which they encounter through their meetings with employers and Försäkringskassan, yet they still express wishes of being able to recover at their own speed and explicate the barriers to early and quick return. Based on Wall, Selander and Bergman's findings, we see great potential for further investigations into what other forms of everyday resistance people in the rehabilitation process engage in. This can both develop the field of everyday resistance and create greater understanding of the temporal aspects of individual rehabilitation at a time when an increasing number of employees experience depression and burn out.

In a recent theoretical article, Mona Lilja (2018) has analysed the intertwinings of time, power and resistance in Foucault's writing. The resistance of the women in Wall, Selander and Bergman's article mentioned above resembles what Foucault calls ”critique as the art of voluntary insubordination” (Lilja 2018: 429). Regardless of the disciplining practices which seem hard to avoid, it can be interpreted as resistance in the form of critique when the women express other wishes, point towards obstacles for a quick recovery and see the ”normal” rehabilitation process as problematic. How ”voluntary” their insubordination is might be questioned since the women's bodies say no, but the women are not just passive and accepting, rather they articulate the limitations of the system. Lilja shows the diversity in Foucault's articulations of crossroads of power and resistance as well as the temporal aspects involved. She points out how resistance as counter-conduct, such as resistance against governance, is often based on an image of Utopia or another future when the current governing has ended. She also speaks about the discursive resistance which is dispersed and consists of a diverse set of points of resistance in the network of power. These are not synchronised, but combined they might contribute to changes in the discourse after a time-lag. In Wall, Selander and Bergman's case, one can at least imagine the women's critique of the limitations of the system combined with other forms of resistance sometime in the future, thus building momentum and contributing to change. Lilja (2018) also introduce how resistance in the form of technologies of the self are often based on narratives about the past, present and future that the subject uses to transform itself. As illustrated, Foucault's thought can be used to analyse the intertwining of time, power and resistance in a multitude of ways, another future avenue of research with great potential.

Several of the contributions draw on Rosa's (2013) influential theory of social acceleration, where he describes how our experience of time has changed with the industrialisation and urbanisation which has driven modern and late modern societal development. Rosa identifies three aspects of acceleration—technical acceleration, acceleration of social change and acceleration in the pace of life. Time has always been important for human beings and their social life, but now it has acquired a special place in our lives and societies. Previously, changes did not take place within the same

generation, maybe not even several generations, but today change is increasingly accelerated across all areas of life.

Rosa (2013) is not explicitly writing about resistance to this acceleration, but he does mention forces of ”deceleration”. Some of these are natural (for instance there is a limit to how fast we can think); other forms of deceleration are dysfunctional results of acceleration, such as traffic jams which occur because of overload. Rosa has also identified ”islands of deceleration”, specifically mentioning the Amish as an example of a community where time appears to be ”standing still”. More interesting in terms of resistance are his examples of ”intentional deceleration”, which he divides into two: One is ideological motivated movements for deceleration, such as the slow food movement and the movement for voluntary simplicity. The other is ”slowdown as a strategy of acceleration”. By intentionally slowing down, people can find temporary relief through practicing yoga or mindfulness, and after a short break re-enter the rat race with renewed energy. However, Rosa is not advocating any of these as solutions to the problems associated with acceleration, but rather suggests that we create spaces where people can experience relatedness to themselves, other people and the world.

In his book ”Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World” (2019), Rosa presents resonance and alienation as two basic categories. Rosa’s starting point is that we are ”wired” towards longing for resonant relationships, indeed it is through resonance that we first experience and relate to the world. Resonance is a relational concept which describes a mode of being-in-the world where people and world respond to each other and the same time as each speak with its own voice. It is both a descriptive and a normative concept, since a life with many moments of resonance is likely to be experienced as a good life. However, Rosa is not first and foremost concerned with the individual experience, but with the factors which enable or inhibit the possibility for resonant spaces to exist and people to find stable axes of resonance. Some of the factors Rosa identifies as a hindrance to resonant relationships are acceleration and competition, which instead lead to alienation. Resonance is closely interlinked with alienation, which Rosa understands as a relationship of repulsion or indifference. During depression and burnout, which he identifies as major symptoms of alienation in late modern societies, ”all axes of resonance have become mute and deaf. A person may ”have” a family, work, social clubs, religion etc., but these no longer ”speak” to them” (Rosa 2019:184). In his previous work, Rosa (2010, 2013) also wrote about how people in late modern societies frequently experience alienation from the things, places and people around them, and even from time itself. Almost all things, places and people can easily be replaced with somebody or something, for instance when we move, change jobs and place of living or feel forced to buy new technical devices in order to keep up. The more flexible we are in this regard, the better we have adapted to living in the accelerated society. Thanks to TV, internet and social media people also have many ”episodes of experience” which have nothing to do with their own lives and leave few traces in their memory. Rosa thinks that late modern life is characterised by many such ”episodes of experience” but few ”experiences which leave a mark”. Time passes quickly in an endless stream of episodes, but it has little meaning for the late

modern subject and shrinks or disappears from memory. When people do not acquire their own lived experiences, they get alienated from the flow of time.

Since Rosa's book on resonance has just become available in English, the authors of this special issue have not been able to engage with it, but a future avenue of interesting research concerns how resonance as an answer to acceleration can be understood in relation to power and resistance. Rosa is very brief on the issue of what should be done about the crisis of resonance he describes so vividly, and only hint at where possible solutions for a better balance between a reified and a resonant relationship to world can be developed in what he calls a "post-growth society". However, he is very clear that solutions cannot be top-down but have to be developed bottom-up. Although Rosa is not using the vocabulary of resistance studies, what he calls for sounds similar to more experiments with constructive resistance, so they can develop from oases of resonance into more widespread structures. The timebanks and worker cooperatives that Sørensen and Wiksell write about, revolutionary councils in Tunisia and the minimalists attempt to develop another temporality can all be understood as attempts, however limited and unsuccessful, to develop more resonant spaces.

The five articles in this special issue can only provide a glimpse into the vast area of temporal aspects of power and resistance. As a way of concluding we would like to point towards one area that we find particularly interesting for future research, and which is only hinted at in some of the articles: When does sporadic and unorganised everyday resistance develop into strategic and organised resistance? Much everyday resistance will probably never be anything other than everyday resistance, but organised resistance is always preceded and accompanied by more discreet and subtle forms of resistance. An aspect of this is also to explore the borders between coping and resistance, a distinction which has yet to be empirically and theoretically developed. To give an example, in a study about the working conditions of social workers that Alfredsson Olsson participated in, the researchers found that it might be difficult to distinguish between coping and resistance. The social workers who participated in the study reported many shortcomings in their work environment when it came to stress and time. For instance, they described how they often had to work overtime without compensation, and that they frequently had to skip lunch or coffee breaks. Likewise, it was not unusual with long-term sick leave, high turnover of staff and shortcomings in how leadership was exercised. The social workers coped with the problems by shortening or skipping the regular breaks they are entitled to on scheduled time, working overtime, become sick or change jobs. To change job is an exit strategy which can be understood as individual resistance, while the others are examples of coping. However, there were also more subtle ways of coping which border on everyday resistance. In some work places it was the norm to be late for meetings, to recover through a few minutes of chatting with a colleague, taking mini breaks to eat an apple or grab a coffee at unscheduled times, go to the toilet "unnecessarily", use social media and so forth. These strategies might be understood both as coping and resistance, depending on the context. In one place, leadership might be completely aware that these microbreaks are necessary for the staff to keep

doing a good job. Employees who skip regular breaks but take microbreaks instead in order to cope are not considered a problem at all, and it is a grey zone whether this is resistance. However, in a different place, there might be an outspoken policy against unregulated breaks and the same activities then become obvious examples of everyday resistance. In relation to the theme of resistance, the most striking finding in the study was the lack of organised and articulated resistance. How come social workers are so quiet and careful in their protests? One explanation is solidarity with their clients, which makes it impossible to strike or ”misbehave” in ways that cause trouble for the clients (Astvik, Melin & Allvin 2013; Tham & Meagher 2009). This raises the question of who is in a position to engage in organised and articulated resistance? These are more areas for future empirical and theoretical research.

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Author presentation

Majken Jul Sørensen is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Karlstad University, Sweden. Her research focuses on everyday and constructive resistance, nonviolent social movements, humour and political activism, as well as people's agency and ability to create change from below.

Satu Heikkinen is Senior Lecturer at Karlstad University, Sweden. Her research has mainly dealt with issues of age, ageing and mobility. Theoretically her research has addressed issues of e.g. power, discourse and ageism.

Eva Alfredsson Olsson is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Karlstad University. Her research mainly focuses on various aspects of the significance of emotions and organisational issues such as resistance, working conditions and work environment.

Corresponding author

Majken Jul Sørensen, Karlstad University, Sweden
E-mail: majken.jul.sorensen@kau.se

CRAIG BROWN

Digital media and the acceleration of resistance

– *Findings from the 2010/11 Tunisian revolution*[1]

Abstract
This article is concerned with providing empirical evidence relating to the use of digital media and resistance during the so-called Arab Spring events. These events have been widely acknowledged as a case where digital media significantly contributed to the successful attainment of movements' objectives. The use of such innovative technologies has been tied to the characteristics and, ultimately, the ends of these movements, with their 'youthful', 'leaderless' and 'spontaneous' nature reflecting Western-orientated practices. However, the analysis presented here utilises interview data obtained from participants in the 2010/11 Tunisian Revolution, detailing their perspectives and explanations of digital media's role. The data and analysis show that while such technologies were a useful tool, their prominence has been exaggerated and offers a flawed understanding of the events. Rather, the social change being pursued during the Tunisian revolution was profound. Therefore, the deeper implications of the common emphasis on digital media in the literature is explored, with Rosa's (2015) assessment of social acceleration being informative for elaborating on the nuances of these technologies' use during the 2010/11 events. With technical acceleration linked to the prominence given to online networks' utility for resistance, Rosa's analysis of such acceleration in relation to acceleration of social change and the pace of life helps to clarify why looking beyond online technology for the implications of resistance during the so-called Arab Spring is so important. In this regard, one of these implications is introduced, namely the constructive forms of resistance that may provide a space for alternative understandings of modernity.

Keywords: Tunisian revolution, Arab Spring, resistance, acceleration, grounded theory

SOME OF THE explanations of the so-called Arab Spring, or the 2010/11 West Asia North Africa (WANA) events, have placed particular emphasis on the role and contribution of digital media for the activists and movements involved. As well as being considered useful tools, social media in particular has been deemed as fundamentally shaping and accelerating dynamics of organisation, mobilisation and opposition. This

1 The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers and Brian Martin for their constructive comments that helped to improve this article.

position is too simplistic, and I seek to show why this is the case. Accordingly, a key focus of this article concerns how the use of digital media in relation to resistance during the 2010/11 events is far more complex, as revealed through the analysis of interview data from the Tunisian context.

Relatedly, this article focuses on assessing the deeper implications of the common emphasis on digital media in the literature, with Rosa's (2015) theory of social acceleration being applied in this regard. Technology as an aspect of modernity has been analysed in relation to concepts of acceleration and indeed power, for example Curtis' (2016) fascinating assessment of 'hypernormalisation', or chrono-politics in relation to orientalism (Mignolo, 2011: 178). However, Rosa's (2015) *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* is a particularly useful means of exploring the actual significance of digital media as a signifier of modernity in relation to the 2010/11 WANA events. Thus, a further focus of my research here is positing one example of important action outside of the digital media emphasis, namely the constructive forms of resistance during the Tunisian revolution that may provide a space for alternative understandings of modernity.

Below I begin by broadly introducing digital media and resistance during the 2010/11 WANA events generally, and how the centrality of such technologies as defining resistance at that time and subsequently has been solidified as a narrative. Subsequently, Rosa's theory of social acceleration is outlined followed by an explanation of my grounded theory research method. After this I detail some of the interviewees' accounts of the role of digital media, then return to discuss Rosa's theory and the deeper implications of an emphasis on such technologies. Considering digital media not just in relation to Rosa's aspect of technical acceleration, but also acceleration of social change and acceleration of the pace of life, enables a much deeper critique of such technologies' role.

Digital Media and Resistance during the 2010/11 WANA Events

The 1994 Zapatista uprising in Mexico received significant attention for its exploitation of digital media and interaction with transnational civil society, being defined as a novel 'netwar' (see Holloway & Peláez, 1998: 9–10; Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001). Thus, although the focus on digital media during the WANA revolutions is not new, it did mark a significant trend in the media and literature. This may have reflected a quest for rapid, simple narratives around identifiable, perhaps 'westernised' figureheads, such as Google employee Wael Ghonim in Egypt (Giglio, 2011; Parvaz, 2012). Ghonim's (2012) personal account is somewhat more nuanced, emphasising aspects of communication beyond social media (143–148). In Tunisia, it was proposed that online activism merely reflected what was occurring offline (Filiu, 2011: 51,53). Ultimately however, the sense from early research on the 2010/11 WANA revolutions (see Ayari, 2011; Filiu, 2011: 51,53,66; Castells, 2012: 3,235,238,294; Fisher, 2011: 151) is an emphasis on two strands of digital media's role. First, alongside mobile phones and satellite TV, government and regime repression and brutality was more

easily exposed, typically via citizen journalists. Secondly, protest organisation was facilitated.

One dynamic to consider is how technology may have accelerated resistance at other times, and that digital media's use was not distinctive to the 2010/11 WANA revolutions. Thus, whether spatially or temporally, the notion of a linear 'learning' process is not necessarily apparent. The Zapatistas case has just been pointed to; notably, Stephan (2009) referred to a "so-called Facebook revolution" concerning WANA region activists' activities some years before the 2010/11 WANA events, while stressing that physical action on the ground would be necessary for change (308; Filiu, 2011: 9). Concerning the adoption of innovative communication technology alongside traditional networks such as mosques, this has been commonplace for example in Iran (Sazegara & Stephan, 2009; Salavatore, 2013: 9) and Egypt (Mansour, 2009: 210; Stephan, 2009: 10–11; Salvatore, 2013: 3). Indeed, Bamyeh (2012) noted whether in Iran in 1979, Palestine in 1987 or Tunisia in 2011, "the revolution appears to have taken place not because it had resources[, rather] when there is enough reason for it, a revolution invents the resources that are appropriate for it" (50; Stephan, 2009: 308; Zunes, 2011: 399). Thus, utilising digital media is just the current manifestation of this process (Filiu, 2011: 51).

Manuel Castells (2012) provided a prominent early theory of digital media's significance during the revolutions, noting the advantages posed by the rapid spread of information and ability to organise beyond governmental control (2–3). In Tunisia, he went as far to suggest that the "*preconditions* for the revolts was the existence of an Internet culture, made up of bloggers, social networks and cyberactivism [emphasis added]" (27). It is apparent that the emphasis on digital media is also tied to the impression of spontaneity, both in the leaderless sense (Castells, 2012: 17–18; Ghonim, 2012: 293; Manhire, 2012) and a lack of planning and organisation (Bamyeh, 2012: 50–51; Ghonim, 2012: 293). In this regard, academic articles have continued to quote heavily from news sources years after the events (Alvi, 2014: 39).

Tufekci's (2017) more recent analysis has solidified some of these earlier analyses, where 'acceleration' appears to be a significant aspect of the advantages of digital media, allowing "networked movements to grow dramatically and rapidly" (xiii). This is premised on the ability to act with a lack of prior planning, the "leaderless nature of these movements ("horizontalism")", as well as "dealing with issues only as they come up, and by people who show up ("adhocracy") (xvi).[2] Nevertheless, Tufekci identified that this creates problems for movements relying on internet technologies, as a lack of "prior building of formal or informal organisational and other collective capacities" can result in being ill-prepared for "inevitable challenges", while undermining tactical flexibility and "the ability to respond to what comes next" (xiii,xvi). Tufekci continues that such "tedious" preparation work "performed during the pre-internet era" played a significant role in that "it acclimatised people to the processes of collective decision making and helped create the resilience all movements need to survive and thrive

2 This reflects the perspective of one of my own interviewees in relation to 'actocracy'

in the long term" (xiii). Thus, some form of 'hollowing out' of movements heavily orientated around internet technologies seems apparent, which may indicate deeper problems signposted by narratives of 'internet revolutions'; whether the prominence and significance of such technologies is accurate must continue to be questioned, as we seek a way out of these more deleterious effects.

Accordingly, the long arc of discontent and resistance in Tunisia and the wider region is pertinent, with the events in 2010/11 underpinned by committed and organised activists who have campaigned around long-standing political and economic grievances (Mair, 2011: 185; Nepstad, 2011: 485). The resistance culminating in the 2010/11 revolution has been traced back in 'waves' or 'phases' to at least the early 2000s in some research (Ayeb, 2011: 468; Khiari, 2012 :229; Chomiak, 2014: 25,30), including campaigns for internet freedom, with interlinking of activists and mobilisation strategies emerging (Chomiak, 2014: 26,30; see Brown, 2019: 158–161), Concerning internet activism, a prominent initiative was 404Ammar, which on 22nd May, 2010, held *Tunisie en Blanc*, or *nhar a'la a'nar*—Day against Censorship—including a protest in front of the Ministry of Technology in Tunisia, in addition to a, "widespread citizen engagement calling for supporters to dress in white and have a coffee in one of the many cafes on Avenue Habib Bourguiba" (Chomiak, 2011: 73–74). Chomiak (2011) argued that the movement was notable for its ability to mobilise thousands of Tunisians both inside and outside the country, while utilising Facebook as a, "medium and space that was shielded from the government's unilateral oversight and control" (74). Again, the *Tunisie en Blanc* campaign had transitioned from social media into an innovative street protest, with complementary protests in cities across Tunisia (Chomiak, 2014: 37).

Acceleration

The suggested quickening of the revolutionary processes during the 2010/11 events due to digital media is worthy of consideration itself; was this actually the case? Marking some development in the nuance of explanations, Tufekci (2017) has noted that offline action cannot be overlooked, nor its interrelationship to online action (xxvi). However, why acceleration as a concept, and specifically Rosa's (2015) theory of social acceleration, is useful to consider in relation to the 2010/11 events is exemplified by a statement in Tufekci's (2017) work. The apparent quickening of time is strongly connected to a shrinking of space, as in Gezi park: "I was seeing the product of a global cultural convergence of protester aspirations and practices […] I felt that it could have been almost any twenty-first-century protest square: organized through Twitter, filled with tear gas, leaderless, networked, euphoric, and fragile" (xxiv). Regarding Tahrir Square, Tufekci suggests "Digital connectivity had warped time and space, transforming that square I looked at from above, so small yet so vast, into a crossroads of attention and visibility, both interpersonal and interactive, not just something filtered through mass media", whose pictures "felt cold and alienating" (xxv). The implications of this go beyond the simple utility of digital media as tools, raising deeper social questions elaborated by Rosa (2015).

The broad introduction I provide here to Rosa's *Social Acceleration* also focuses on the technology aspects. The pertinent implication of 'frenetic standstill' within Rosa's theory is also explained, with implications returned to in the discussion in light of the primary data findings. While Rosa suggested that 'everything going faster and faster' is not accurate, as there are related tendencies of slowdown and forces of inertia, he proposed that there are, "three fundamental dimensions of social acceleration, which are mostly not differentiated from one another in contemporary discourse about acceleration [which] can be distinguished in a way that is both analytically and empirically illuminating" (301). First, there is "the phenomena of *technical acceleration*, that is the intentional acceleration of goal-directed processes. From this perspective, the acceleration history of modernity essentially represents a history of the progressive acceleration of transportation, communication, and production" (301). Such acceleration:

> does not only bring about an alteration of the spatiotemporal patterns of usage, movement, and settlement and the very experience of space (space seems literally to shrink and lose significance in comparison to time). It also changes the quality and quantity of social relationships, practices, and action orientations. In short, technical acceleration always harbours a tendency to transform the objective, the social, and (mediated through these) the subjective world, because it implicitly transforms our relations to things (i.e., to the material structures of our environment), to our fellow human beings, and to space and time. For this reason, it also alters the form of our relation to ourselves and hence the mode and manner of our being-in-the-world. The linkage of growth and acceleration thus implies a tendential loosening of concrete ties to particular persons, places, or things as a result of increased speeds of change and exchange (304)

Therefore, the implications of increased use of digital media based on Rosa's assessment may be to make connections somewhat transient among individuals acting within a movement for change.

While the 2010/11 events in Tunisia will be considered in relation to this effect, there are deeper social implications given technical acceleration's interrelationship to two other phenomena of acceleration described by Rosa. Thus, the second is acceleration of social change, concerning "associational structures, knowledge (theoretical, practical, and moral), social practices, and action orientations", which may relate to anything from fashion to political affiliation (301). Thus:

> The intervals of time for which one can assume stability in the sense of a general congruence of the space of experience and the horizon of expectation (and hence a secure set of expectations) progressively shrink in the various domains of society, whether these are understood in terms of values, functions, or types of action (301).

This produces acceleration as increasingly transient action-related experiences and expectation in addition to ever-shorter time frames characterised as 'the present' (301). Acceleration of the pace of life is the third type, concerning "a reaction to the scarcity of (uncommitted) time resources […] expressed in the experience of stress and a lack of time […] an increase in the number of episodes of action and/or experience per unit of time" (Rosa, 2015: 301). Acceleration of social change and in the pace of life are worth bearing in mind in relation to technical acceleration as the interviewees' perspectives of digital media are related. Given the simplistic portrayals of digital media's role, the concept of 'frenetic standstill' is also relevant: "a *posthistoire* diagnosis in which the *rush* of historical events only provides scant cover for (and ultimately, in effect, produces) a *standstill* in the development of ideas and deep social structures [original emphasis]" (15). This has deeper implications for explaining the prominence given to digital media in 'western' treatments of the 2010/11 events.

Research Method

The primary data used in this paper was originally collected as part of my PhD research, which focused on the methods of protest during the 2010/11 Tunisian revolution. I followed a grounded theory method (GTM) as a means of collecting and analysing the data. Within peace and nonviolence research, which is the field my thesis was primarily situated in, the use of in-depth interviews has established use (Reed & Foran, 2002; Stephan, 2009; Pearlman, 2011: xi; Richter-Devroe, 2012), including grounded theory-based approaches (Eddy, 2012: 186). GTM involves the collection of data and developing analytic codes and categories from it, as opposed to fitting data to preconceived hypotheses (Charmaz, 2006: 2–3,5).

Ultimately, through my GTM I have sought to engage with grassroots forces of resistance (Khiari, 2012: 227), aiming to contribute to the emergence of a more open, bottom-up picture of the revolutions, while to the greatest extent possible reducing the chance of confirmation bias and avoiding my personal (mis)conceptions directing or influencing the participants' recollection or outlining of events (Bryant, 2017: 358). The researcher may consider themselves as an 'acknowledged participant' in the research process rather than being an objective observer, which means reflexivity is crucial (Clarke, 2005: xxiii; McCreaddie & Payne, 2010: 787,790). Mindful of the need to avoid simple and uncritical replications of assumptions about the 2010/11 WANA events such as the critical role of digital media, I followed Charmaz's (2006) constructivist and pragmatist variant of GTM (also Bryant, 2017: xi). Through the open questions used during the interview process, interview participants were able to relate what they believed were the salient issues, thus broad and diverse yet detailed data was subsequently collected on the Tunisia event. This has enabled me to draw on the collected data and its analysis to explore an array of topics and phenomenon.

The coding of interviewees' responses allows the identification of salient issues, in a process of "iterative moves between data gathering and analysis" (Bryant, 2017: 30). In this regard I undertook three stages of data collection based on participant interviews,

with initial or open coding of the first stage interviews being undertaken and the process of 'memo' writing, which is part of the constant critical engagement, reflection and analysis of the data, in order to develop preliminary categories or themes across the interview data. Subsequently, focused coding was undertaken during the second and third stage interviews to expand and refine these categories into 'theoretical concepts' (Charmaz, 2006: 11; Bryant, 2017: 32). Ultimately, what GTM offers is the systematising of long-practiced trends in qualitative methods (Bryant, 2017: 18,364,383); through my original research and for this paper, I considered the development of significant concepts as akin to positing 'assertions' rather than grand theoretical claims (Saldaña, 2015: 14–15).

In terms of the data collection process, this received ethical approval from Leeds Beckett University's Research Ethics Committee, and I participated in ethical research training as part of the PhD process. Non-probability, purposive sampling of Tunisian activists involved in the 2010/11 events was followed (Bryant, 2017: 32). Nevertheless, particular criteria guided the participants' initial selection, with the aim being to interview an equal number of Tunisian males and females from varied social backgrounds. Overall, I conducted 22 English language interviews with 10 females and 12 males in Tunisia, with a further three male interviewees who different participants had invited along with them being translated for from Arabic to English. Most interviews were between one hour and an hour and twenty minutes, with the shortest being approximately 25 minutes and the longest over 1 hour forty minutes. The three stages of interviews I carried out in Tunisia were: in October 2014 in Sousse; in March 2015 in Tunis, and December 2015 in Sousse.

During the initial interview stage, snowball sampling was also adopted (Clark, 2006: 419; Cohen & Arieli, 2011: 424–425), as within Tunisia's post-authoritarian context it was highly uncertain how willing participants would be to discuss their experiences and the level of established trust their participation would require. Given that three individuals provided contacts for my first stage interviews, then four of my first stage interviewees put me in contact with several other participants during the second and third stages, this helped to avoid the possible problem of insufficient representativeness, enabling "parallel snowball networks" to form (Cohen & Arieli, 2011: 428). Moreover, this provided the flexibility to determine where there was a lack of representativeness in my sample, for example women and interviewees from Tunisia's interior regions. Accordingly, I was able to reach prominent activists in Tunis during my second stage of interviews—permitting data collection on the 2010/11 events in the capital and the role of ICT—and during the third stage to reach participants who had been in the interior during the 2010/11 events, thus enabling a host of dynamics relating to resistance to be corroborated.

With fairness in representation in terms of class, income, ethnicity and religion factored in, a significant number of participants hailed from the interior of the country, from cities such as Gafsa and Sidi Bouzid, or from disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Tunis and Sousse. This fairness in representation was facilitated by the generosity and patience of certain interviewees translating for others who they introduced me

to. This assisted with mitigating a problem often identified in discussion with peers, that my limited Arabic knowledge may hinder inclusion, with interviewees' English language abilities potentially reflecting a higher level of education or particular class background. In the interests of transparency, I made my position clear as a PhD researcher, as well as being open about having not carried out research in the WANA region previously. The nature of the purposive sampling and open questions ensured that my main research focus, on the methods of protest, emerged within a rich data context, with various perspectives gained on nonviolence and many other issues.

Here I have returned to the relevant raw interview data on digital media and related issues, as well as my codes, categories and conceptual development to extract the information interviewees felt was pertinent. Interviewees are indicated in italics followed by a number, indicating relevant memos. Having not re-analysed specifically with acceleration and other concepts in mind, this is actually a useful means of assessing any significant issues that emerged relating to these issues in a more 'detached' manner.

The Use of Digital Media in Tunisia

Regarding the use of digital media in Tunisia, three major interlinked dynamics developed from the interviews: the established use of digital media both as a tool and space for activism in Tunisia; its significance as an information conduit for the population during the 2010/11 events, in addition to the activities of activists and their utilisation of digital media during the 2010/11 events. These findings will be considered in relation to acceleration below.

Pre-Revolution Use of Digital Media

When considering the phenomenon of acceleration in response to Tunisia's revolution, it is worth noting the long arc of digital media's use as a means of resistance in the country, and how this intersects with the waves of resistance noted above. *Ehsan* explained that when he left Tunisia to study in France, "I was making part of the earliest groups of young Tunisians [using blogging… By] the end of the 1990s there was the famous blog called Takriz that started to desacralise this regime" (*Ehsan14*). *Achraf* related how he began social blogging in 2003, with a significant politicisation of the movement during 2005: "I think that I am one of the first Tunisian bloggers in Tunisia. And I start blogging in English" (*Achraf2*). *Mariam* noted there was a collective of bloggers, which *Achraf* suggested was a "core […] about 20, 30 people maximum" (*Achraf2*, *Mariam10*). Rather than suggesting this negates a sense of 'acceleration', these early efforts that developed along with digital media's evolution do serve to contextualise the variations on a theme of 'Facebook Revolution'. Moreover, they qualify the sense that digital media and specifically online social networks are an immediately 'successful' tool without precedent or context.

Mariam's explanation of the 2008 Gafsa region protests—ostensibly over job allocations in the phosphate mining industry—was instructive, suggesting a process of learning and adaptation in its wake. Having begun blogging in 2007 "mainly to

express myself", *Mariam* politicised her blog in 2008, realising blogging's importance to challenging the regime-controlled media's manipulation (*Mariam1*). *Mariam* outlined how bloggers took a collective decision over this, suggesting collaborative activities. Furthermore, *Mariam* related how post-Gafsa, the usefulness of social media became apparent in being more difficult to censor than blogging (*Mariam12*; *Achraf11*; *Ehsan26*). This indicates that communication was simplified via such means, as opposed to being fundamental to the 2010/11 protests' success. *Ayoub* rejected that social media's adoption was a significant difference between the 2010/11 protest outcomes and Gafsa in 2008 (*Ayoub(3)1*). Yet although *Nader* suggested the Gafsa region protests where "bigger than this event [2010/11]", the dearth of traditional media coverage and capacity of the regime to regulate information online, "meant there was no revolution […] Al-Jazeera did not talk about, media did not talk about. Also Facebook, if you just think about, talk about it in about 15 minutes you find the police in your house" (*Nader/Ayoub4*). However, the increasing anger with the regime during 2008–2010 may have made the adoption of social media and the success in deposing Ben Ali partially coincidental. Indeed, various formal and informal networks, groups and communication technologies were already known, understood, established, operating and adopted prior to and during the Gafsa protests (see Perkins, 2016: 104). Instead, the 2008 Gafsa events offered opportunities for understanding to be honed by different activists and organisations, regarding how online networks may be utilised and regime control evaded.

A prominent aspect even of the early blogging efforts was the shunning of anonymity, as stressed by *Ehsan*, *Ridha*, *Mariam* and *Achraf*, all of whom were prominent bloggers. Although this does not seem linked to acceleration, it still established a visible example in terms of open resistance, showing tenacity and courage despite the severe risks. *Mariam* explained the importance of shunning anonymity as, "I usually want that people see me with them on the street, because it's easy to stay at home behind the screen and tell people to act" (Mariam10). From 2009, these bloggers and others began to challenge the regime more directly, with *Achraf* explaining: "I had no fear, because for me it was over, you know. I can't support it anymore" (*Achraf11*). The evident mutual impression of a growing malaise *Ridha* related as causing a convergence of activism in December 2010. Moreover, *Mariam*'s emphasis on the transition to and imperative of physical action on the streets is essential. Based on *Mariam*'s experiences and those of other 'online activists', the emphasis here should be 'activist', with the online sphere being a tool for organisation and information dissemination. Physical space seems particularly important in this regard.

The 404Ammar movement noted above is an example of this, which *Ehsan* described as a "nonviolent group, which was trying to oppose [internet] censorship" (*Ehsan24*). While dissent was vocalised via social media, a physical demonstration was also organised for 22nd May 2010, with *Ehsan* relating how "you announce these events you know on Facebook and you get, you have the demonstrators going to the ground". The subsequent demonstrations that entailed "wear[ing] a white shirt and then we sit in a café and have a drink" confounded the policemen who, "went totally paranoid,

you know they were chasing everybody wearing a white shirt". *Ehsan* continued that the police, "did not know how to handle all this movement", especially because they were not in the trend of "classical political opponents", meaning the Marxists and traditional leftist groups (*Ehsan23*). This confounding seemed to continue into the 2010/11 protests that removed Ben Ali, with the regime being thrown off-balance by the 'irregular', non-ideological movement.

The 2010/11 Events

The above narratives indicate that the duration of digital media's use was longer than previously thought, as well as showing the relationship with 'space' and spaces—physical sites of protest—prior to the 2010/11 events. However, there is still the question of a facilitation and acceleration of the fall of Ben Ali due to digital media and online communication networks, in terms of an 'expedited' process.

Digital Media as an Information Conduit

One aspect of this dynamic concerns how digital media may have sped up the process of mobilisation. *Ehsan* related that "from the very first day when Bouazizi immolated himself, I started writing actively on Facebook and sending emails and videos", including of protests at the faculty. This also involved sending material to "European deputies, politicians abroad" (*Ehsan14*; *Bassem14*). Notably therefore, regardless of regime actions like blocking phone and internet signals in Sidi Bouzid (*Nader29*), information relating to unrest was rapidly disseminated. Ehsan suggested in terms of mobilisation, "the good thing about social media is that you start from social media then you go to the street" (*Ehsan22*). Interviewees suggested that the regime's decision not to censor Facebook was a big mistake (*Kenza4*, *Bassem23*), because, "all it took was a communique, pass it on the internet […] as people were logged on the internet like twenty-four seven" (*Bassem23*). Similarly, *Ayoub* explained social media's utility in contacting those in the interior in places like Kasserine: "In this period we're in contact all this time. You can't get in [physically…] It was blocked by police" (*Ayoub(2)13*). While *Bassem* believed protests in Tunis were largely organised via Facebook and bloggers, he stated that there was a, "through the networks, word of mouth" component to organising protests (*Bassem23*), also reflected in *Eya*'s explanation of how one discovered protests (*Eya8*). These were physical networks, with the internet simply providing another useful medium.

The ability to disseminate information and expose events was clearly linked to mobilisation. The internet enabled, "sharing the pictures of the people you know massacred by the Ben Ali police regime, that people started to be aware of the ugly face of dictatorship. And then they said enough is enough" (*Ehsan19*). Ayoub recalled how Facebook, YouTube and Instagram's utilisation enabled "other people watch what's really happening in Tunisia" (*Ayoub45*). Tunisians were not the only audience:

> People were from all over the world […] supporting us because they were seeing I mean, people who were shot, directly in the head. I mean you could see half of their brains, coming out in front of your eyes. So this I mean, shocked people. And people went out in the street (Nazir27).

Nazir indicated that the shock factor of the graphic videos moved people to act, while emphasising the importance he attached to social media: "Thank God we had Facebook. Without Facebook we couldn't excite people or incite people or mobilise people" (*Nazir27*). *Hamza* also believed that without social media, the revolution would have been unsuccessful (*Hamza17*), which is ultimately unprovable. However, *Nazir* reminisced: "Imagine, a video being spread widely" (*Nazir27*), evoking the potential of such acts, alongside the satisfaction or surprise at the process' influence and innovativeness.

Actions of Citizen Journalists

Given that the traditional Tunisian media was state-controlled, established bloggers and 'social media activists' were considered to have made a particular contribution to exposing events and disseminating information, in the role of 'citizen journalists':

> Lina Ben Mhenni […] travelled to Sidi Bouzid and she announced it everywhere. 'I'm staying here and I'm taking pictures and making the videos, and I'm sending it all around'. And this is when we realised, we got touch of how brutal it was, and how serious it was (*Bassem15*).

This, *Bassem* argued, developed some kind of consciousness for the citizens, you started having the opposition parties moving you know, that is issuing communiques underground, once again but, on internet you could get it", alongside, "Tunisian opponents to Ben Ali in Paris talking about it" (*Bassem15*). When combined with more traditional reporting actions on the ground, online methods appeared most efficacious when used to disseminate information about these events. Thus, the term 'social media activist' is excessively reductive, which was clarified by interviews with high-profile bloggers *Mariam*, *Ridha* and *Achraf*, who confirmed that online activism was a beneficial tool, as opposed to *the* prominent dynamic. 'Citizen journalist' will be used below as more accurately reflecting their activity.

Reflecting what a traditional media organisation would claim, *Achraf* suggested that bloggers in particular "are really good to write, argue, correct information" (*Achraf4*). Indeed, *Achraf* considered his fundamental role to be engagement with traditional international media organisations, in addition to the use and expansion of his established national network of contacts to determine, "which police stations were burnt. What was the situation in any town. At some time I was having a map of Tunisia with all of the information" (*Achraf14*). *Achraf*, *Mariam* and *Ridha*, all communicated with international media organisations, believing they had a mutually supportive role; the international media gained access that would otherwise have been difficult, whereas

activists could expose protests and evoke solidarity (*Achraf5*, *Ridha19*, *Mariam6*). Exposing regime violence was stated by *Mariam* as being especially crucial, while challenging the regime's narrative of gangsters, violence and chaos (*Mariam6*).

Nevertheless, the bloggers expressed differing priorities. Although *Achraf* and *Ridha* stressed foreign media engagement, *Ridha* also emphasised how galvanising protests and overcoming fear was pursued (Ridha19). However, spreading "what I think is intelligent propaganda […] to bring people with me", *Ridha* stressed "was not planned [to] have the people of the ghettoes rise up" (*Ridha14*). Rather, having viewed online videos and other material people, "started calling each other what the fuck is going on, we have to do something". From that, "there's a demonstration in the passage, OK let's go" (*Ridha12*). This indicates a fluid, dynamic and symbiotic situation. The seeming ambiguity in 'incentivising' yet 'unplanned' activity, *Ridha* explained best himself, that "our revolution was a perfect act of actocracy. It's acts that decide what's going on" (Ridha12).

Although *Achraf* and *Ridha* were both involved in protests, *Mariam* most clearly emphasised her activist role—"demonstrating as a Tunisian citizen"—while covering events journalistically (*Mariam2*). *Mariam* became renowned for her international engagement during the revolution, yet she touched on this almost as an aside (*Mariam2*). Ultimately, *Mariam*'s journalistic activities were more internally-focused and directed towards Tunisia's citizens. *Mariam* also gained considerable recognition for directly reporting from Sidi Bouzid and Kasserine in early January, subsequently covering "the poor neighbouring areas of the capital where people were dying" (*Mariam5*). Again, *Mariam*'s concern was marginalised communities and exposing the regime's brutality via first-hand reporting. Other activists-as-citizen journalists also travelled to the interior, such as *Achraf* (*Achraf14*).

Concerning *Mariam*'s focus on marginalised individuals and groups, as well as the regime's violence, we come to a crucial statement regarding the role of internet activism. *Mariam* rejected the term "Facebook or internet revolution", stating the:

> people who took to the streets who faced teargas and live ammunition, with bare chests, did the revolution. And we helped those people. Well, I'm one of the people who took to the streets, I did. But we don't have to limit it to internet. Because we can't do a revolution of internet, we have to be on the ground to make a revolution (*Mariam7*, also *Ines20*).

Therefore, as much as *Mariam* fulfilled the journalist role, it was as a demonstrator within the wider movement of people taking action on the ground where she situated her biggest contribution. Likewise, *Ridha* stressed his two roles as activist and journalist (*Ridha5, Ridha6*), recalling *Ehsan*'s activities. The prominent bloggers I interviewed clearly contextualised their reporting activities within the protests, as a means of disseminating information and exposing the regime, rather than internet activism and technologies being emphasised as indispensable. Thus, citizen journalism was a much more engaged and situated process, rather than comprising of distinct 'tools', such

as social media. This leaves an impression of a movement clearly grounded in street protests (*Mariam7*; see also Sebystyen, 2011b).

The imperative requirement for digital media seems exaggerated, in light of the discussions of mobilisation and organisation beyond this which have been outlined above and the activities on the ground by individuals and organisations, for example mobile phone communication and activation of existing physical networks (*Bassem14; Noman2; Nabil7; Dalia8; Nader38*). Nevertheless, it is convincing that online tools proved particularly useful for communication and information dissemination, for example in circumventing the state-controlled mainstream media and its disinformation (*Hamza15*, also *Ines20*). Such rapidly and seemingly widely available communication means may have played a role in mitigating the regime's narrative of demonstrators as 'violent' terrorists and criminals, while exposing the regime's violence as comparatively more brutal. Given that Tunisians then seemed to be galvanised to act by the regime's violence, the means of exposing such violence were evidently useful; *Hamza* believed they contributed to a 'snowball' of protests (*Hamza16; Emna12; Bassem16*).

Participation and Post-2010/11 Problems

Although post-Ben Ali Tunisia's political, economic and social problems are incredibly complex, and can by no means be blamed on an overreliance on digital media and its typically assumed related characteristics—'spontaneity' and a lack of direction—it is worth considering its effect before returning to Rosa's (2015) broader assessment of acceleration. Although one may talk of online 'armchair activists', without dismissing this problem I would tentatively suggest that digital media may have broadened the sense of participation for those who could not physically attend protests. In Tunisia, this may have included younger individuals, perhaps females in particular from conservative families, or individuals with close family members in the regime's political structure, as with *Kenza* (*Kenza6*; also Tufecki, 2017: 9). One effect may have been to broaden the sense of 'ownership', inclusion and of having a stake in the revolutionary processes (*Kenza3*), alongside wider collective efforts and solidarity, thus positively shaping the post-Ben Ali movement. Another effect may have been in exacerbating the exploitation of online activism for misinformation and manipulation following Ben Ali's departure (*Nazir35*, *Ehsan22*).

Where digital media are concerned in this regard is the proliferation of information and the desire for information rapidly; the more immediate post-Ben Ali period seemed to herald issues that have become more salient in societies globally, 'post-truth', fake news and the ability to verify information. First, it should be noted how most interviewees stressed the strong sense of unity during the 2010/11 protests, and lamented its loss following Ben Ali's departure (*Bassem33; Khouloud6*). *Emna* explained it was "actually the first time we got to shout and start feeling that I'm Tunisian at heart", yet "later on when I saw the different factions in the society, this is not what I was part of" (*Emna9*).

Focusing strictly on how digital media potentially contributed to the loss of unity, it

is notable that *Nazir* suggested that despite social media playing a positive role during the revolution, post-revolution:

> Things started to become negative. Because you couldn't even know what was going on, what was true or false. Because as soon as Ben Ali left, people with different interests, people with different tendencies came to lead the country if you want. Because the youth had no leaders (*Nazir35*).

Tufekci (2017) spoke to activists who also "confirmed that such fake news—often aimed at discrediting dissidents—had gone viral in their countries too" (266). *Ehsan* focused on Islamist groups' use of social media, which produced, "a kind of deviation due to the whole violence thing, propaganda pages here and there" (*Ehsan22*). Yet he also acknowledged that, "actions started from Facebook and social media against the fundamentalists of Ennahda" (*Ehsan23*). *Nazir* described how post-revolution, "people started to classify. Islamists, Marxists, liberals, secularists […] this is wrong. This is divisive" (*Nazir65*; Tufecki, 2017: 266). Thus internet activism appeared to be a transient space for unity and solidarity, one where identities crafted in relation to a negative perception of a dialectical opponent could be played out

Freedom of expression and freedom generally were evidently cherished as positive outcomes of the revolution (*Eya1; Emna14; Arwa; Khouloud*); *Ehsan* stated outright that:

> Lots of positive things did take place. The most valuable thing is freedom of expression […] I think that it is a real bless, to wake up every morning to know that you have the right to write down whatever you want, without being persecuted (*Ehsan1*).

In the context of Autumn 2014 when my first stage of interviews were carried out, a tentative unity government was in power and elections were about to be held. At this time, *Taher* suggested that freedom of expression had also compounded tensions, divisions and ideological clashes in the political sphere:

> Everybody now is free to express himself, or express herself without any control and without any problem, you know. And this is the problem you know. Well we are not used to this kind of debate, you know. It is not like Europe where you have this tradition where you can say what you want (*Taher2*).

Taher was conscious that there must not be a descent into identity-based politics, "that people stop just criticising the other group you know, you are right or you are wrong or you are this or that. Because it's not what we need here in this country" (*Taher21*). In December 2015, *Emna* suggested Tunisians are "obsessed about one another, we're obsessed. I think that's the main cause, the main cause for this disunity" (*Emna14*).

Discussion

Dynamics introduced through the interviewee accounts, such as the long-term emergence of internet technologies' adoption, the interplay of offline and online methods of organisation and mobilisation, and the heavy emphasis reputed bloggers placed on offline action, qualify the simplified narrative regarding digital media use during the 2010/11 WANA events. As with the 'colour' revolutions that in Eastern Europe were perceived as marking a shift towards West-European liberal democracy and capitalism, the 'internet' revolution narrative of the 2010/11 WANA events in its modern youth-orientated and spontaneous nature was fundamentally perceived as 'western'-orientated (Noueihed & Warren, 2012: 6; Laiq, 2013; Zemni, 2013: 127–128), despite perhaps reflecting more grounded, grassroots and context-specific dynamics. Here it is fruitful to return to technical acceleration in relation to some of Rosa's (2015) dynamics of acceleration of social change and the pace of life (301), pointing to where their implications are relevant to challenging the digital media narrative in the Tunisian context.

Given Rosa's explanation of the dynamics of technical acceleration above, the basic essence of its effect reflects Bauman's (1997) explanation of the liquid state of modernity, with a transformation and "tendential loosening of concrete ties to particular persons, places, or things as a result of increased speeds of change and exchange" (Rosa, 2015: 304). In terms of acceleration of social change and focusing accordingly on Rosa's belief that the more contingent intergenerational and intragenerational identities that are produced through the process of acceleration may have implications for "cultural reproduction and social integration", and the "passing on of cultural knowledge" (305–306), such identities are interesting in the Tunisian context. Economic issues have proven so disruptive that some conflation of inter-generational discontent has resulted in the expansion of the 'youth' generation; the youth's problems of unemployment and unfulfilled social expectations are a wider malaise afflicting a much broader population. This does not negate the significance of acceleration dynamics but is a symptom in this particular context. It is one reason why we need to look beyond social media, technology and 'youth'-orientated revolutions. Moreover, through a simple emphasis on technology, assessments of the deeper change sought are actually hollowed out, deeper changes that may run counter to 'Western' processes of late-modernity and capitalism.

The second implication associated with this recalls the 'Machiavellian moment' (Trejo-Mathys, 2015: xvi), which Pocock (2003) originally defined as the point in time when a republic confronts its finite existence, realising it faces constant moral and political instability due to continuous, random threats of destruction (viii;). In this regard, Rosa (2015) deemed modernisation as "an accelerative project of national states" and their military apparatus as "nothing more than the political striving to preserve and accumulate power within a system of competing national states that took shape after the Treaty of Westphalia" (311). While Rosa suggested that the state is now in contention with "the very dynamising forces they themselves helped to unleash" (312), the state and democracy particularly in its north Atlantic conception remains domi-

nant as an apparent force of progress and modernity, and one analysis of this process has focused on how contingent securing within time and space (see Dillon, 2008; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero, 2008: 275) includes biopolitical approaches "concerned with the administration of the conditions of life of the population [...] interventions are made into the [vital life processes of] health, habitation, urban environment, working conditions and education of various populations" (Dean, 1999: 209; Foucault 2000: 217; Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero 2008: 267,275). As an exclusionary process of certain individuals and populations (Agamben, 1998: 101; Wahnich, 2012: 11), potentially as interminable threats (Dillon, 2008; Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero, 2008), this posits global liberal governance as, "the only remaining standard bearer of political modernity as a governmental project" (Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero 2008: 275; Rosa, 2015: 304). With these processes synonymous with a singular ideology of capitalism (Mignolo, 2011: 303; Dabashi, 2012: xx,245; Sayyid, 2014: 65,72) and its manifestation of neoliberal economics, exclusionary processes are also joined with acceleration's pressure on individuals to maintain pace with a particular way of being, "the *fear of missing things* and the *compulsion to adapt* [original emphasis]" (Rosa, 2015: 306). This is something technology has promised to fulfil once and for all, yet ultimately compounds this process as transient and contingent (308–309). Ultimately, these processes can narrow the existence of alternative practices; by focusing on digital media as emphasising technical acceleration and its purported advantages during the 2010/11 events, as a signifier of a particular conception of modernity, there are other processes of resistance being overlooked.

Indeed, this understanding appears as almost a self-fulfilling prophecy of 'frenetic standstill' (15). The portrayal of the 'Arab Spring' has at times been with a sense of inertia or an inability to change without intervention from 'the West' (Bradley, 2012; Brown, 2016; Mignolo, 2011: 296), and yet Dabashi's (2012) compelling exploration of the 2010/11 WANA events' significance suggested they marked a comprehensive paradigm shift, potentially transcending the false and violent binaries of 'East' and 'West', as well as 'Westernism' and 'Secularism' against Islamism' (243, Sayyid, 2014: 59). This evokes Sayyid's (2014: 59) belief that 'the West' should abandon or at least share the 'centre' in the act of decolonisation in the pursuit of 'multiculturalism'. Of course, this is a term not without controversy, but if multiculturalism is taken to concern concerted engagement and dialogue, spaces for such activities are essential.

Therefore, an important example of action outside of the digital media emphasis, which may offer a space for alternative practices under modernity, is the constructive forms of resistance during the Tunisian revolution. Both in terms of the unity that interviewees lamented was lost after Ben Ali departed—with politics descending into a manipulated split between secularists and Islamists (*Bassem32; Ehsan2(1); Nabil31; Emna4*)—and as a space for dialogue regarding deeper social revolution (see Johansen, 2007: 158) and ongoing resistance, the round of Kasbah protests and Councils for the Protection of the Revolution (CPRs) offered direct engagement and participation of the population and conferred advantages of unity, momentum and cohesion (*Noman11*; *Dalia9*) This reflects similar innovative structures emerging across the wider

region during 2010/11 and coalescing from grassroots activities during the Occupy movements and around Podemos in Spain, where "decision-making structures […] align with their participatory impulses (Tufekci, 2017: 277).

Underlying all of these movements has been the marginalisation more recently linked to 'globalisation', yet the deeper tensions in the Tunisian context prior to the 2010/11 revolution reflects the issues stemming from global neoliberal frameworks (Amin et al., 2012: 6–9,17; Challand, 2013: 176; Zemni et al., 2013: 905; Rogers, 2016: 181–182,196), linked to the growth and acceleration problems inherent in capitalism (Rosa, 2015: 299–300,309). Incidentally, Barrie and Ketchley (2018) recently suggested that protests in Tunisia might "channel disaffection" over economic marginalisation and prevent radicalisation of mostly young men by the Islamic State. The language of the 'safety valve' and lack of any sense of a failed democratisation process aside, this study further validates the suggestion that Tunisia's deeper problems would have benefitted from resolution in 2011, through such structures as the CPRs and protests at that time.

The implication for resistance is an orientation towards areas of research such as that of constructive work and programmes that is seeing greater attention in the nonviolence research, most prominently in the area of resistance studies (Chabot, 2015; Vinthagen, 2015). Accordingly, Sharp's (1973) advocating of constructive programmes and parallels organs of government to tackle structural violence and secure fundamental social change (5,430–431; Sharp, 1980: 58,152–153), drawing heavily on Arendt's (1963) criticism of liberal democratic structures originating with the French and American revolutions, as well as her emphasis on action as a manner of reinsertion into the political sphere in opposition to the people's disempowerment (239,247–248,272; Sharp, 1979: 78–79; Sharp, 1980: 146–147,152–154,220; Wahnich, 2012: 12; Bilgic, 2015: 277), should be seriously contended with. Significantly, the most prominent resurfacing of Arendt's position has come in relation to the 2010/11 WANA revolutions via Dabashi's (2012) radical appraisal (246; Arendt, 1969: 179–180), although the formation of alternative and parallel political, economic and social structures has occurred during various resistance campaigns (see Sharp, 1973: 803–804; Sharp, 1979: 81; Pearlman, 2011: 103,107; Norman & Hallward, 2015: 207; Vinthagen, 2015: 33,162–163). Moreover, they have been considered as offering a counter to economic neoliberalism's associated structural violence (Johansen, 2007: 157; Garton Ash, 2009: 377; Chabot, 2015: 246–247).

Conclusion

Drawing on the first-hand experiences of Tunisians of their revolution, I have contextualised the role of digital media in resistance. It was a useful tool, although it did not define the events, and to focus on digital media is to overlook important complexities. Some of these complexities relate to digital media itself. Since the 2010/11 WANA events the role of online technologies has continued to develop, which of course requires serious engagement and analysis. As the common narrative of the 2010/11

events shows and Tufekci (2017) has noted, digital media appears to offer exhilarating potential at times, with a common narrative emerging that quite disparate individuals and groups can come together rapidly on digital networks and act in a spontaneous or leaderless manner to foment political change. At the time of writing, a contemporaneous iteration of this narrative is the nascent media explanations of France's 'gilet jaunes' protests (BBC, 2018; Williamson, 2018; Fourquet & Manternach, 2018). Yet as with the immediate explanations for the 2010/11 WANA events, it may be found that dynamics such as 'actocracy' that I have identified from my empirical findings may better explain these events, with comprehension of these processes important to activists' learning. Given the complexity, contingency and what Tufekci (2017) acknowledges is the human tendency to have little grasp of the implications of new technology (263), actually overlooking these dynamics and offering simplified narratives may compound acceleration as modernity, playing into the process of 'frenetic standstill'.

Therefore, the deeper implications of the narrative surrounding digital media's centrality to resistance have been explored here. Although there may not be anything especially nefarious about some of the literature's over-emphasis on digital media, my empirical research has shown clearly the nuances of the activists themselves, perspectives which must be heeded. These perspectives, combined with the understanding of Rosa's (2015) theory of social acceleration, which thoroughly presents how technology is fundamental to Western processes and narratives of late modernity and capitalism, shows how the narrative regarding digital media's centrality during the 2010/11 events is deeply problematic. It reduces impressions of the pursued 'ends' to limited conceptions of European or North Atlantic states' political and economic modernity. In the context of this study, and perhaps in terms of practical action to respond to the troubling trends that have emerged particularly with regard to recent 'technical acceleration' through digital media, a prominent contribution from Rosa (2015) is his stress on:

> A critical diagnosis of *temporal structures* or *relations of time*. For these designate the site at which systemic imperatives are transformed into cultural orientations for living and acting, as it were, "behind the backs of actors" although reflective in individual collective identities or self-relations (315).

In an era where 'post-truth' and 'fake news' is considered exacerbated by digital media and seems to taint public discourse and social relations—which Tunisian interviewees also touched upon as interlinked with a rapid decline in unity in the country following Ben Ali's departure—the significance of physical spaces of engagement that increase popular participation to resolve political and economic discontent are increasingly necessary.

In this regard, the implications of the 2010/11 WANA events for resistance beyond the digital media narrative are significant, and one example was presented above. This relates to constructive forms of resistance, which in the Tunisian context were the decentralised, bottom-up democratic structures developed during the revolution in the form of the CPRs. The demands and aims that were manifested in these structures

were diverse and did not solely comprise of alternatives to capitalist and state-orientated systems—given that an internal weakness was their deference to established political parties. However, having a diverse space of political inclusion and exchange is an achievement in itself, as well as in the WANA context being a tangible challenge to orientalist discourse and framing of the region. In this regard, my findings from Tunisia build upon the open nature of Rosa's (2015) hypotheses on the ultimate implications of acceleration as modernity; mindful of Rosa's suggestion that "uncontrolled violence" is likely among "the masses excluded from the processes of acceleration and growth" (322)—and continuing the parlance of acceleration—such sites of social change may have posed some manner of brake on the direction of modernity, signposting a possible alternative to this descent into violence.

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Author presentation

Craig Brown received his PhD from Leeds Beckett University, where he is currently teaching. Craig is an assistant editor and book review editor for the *Journal of Resistance Studies*.

Corresponding author

Craig Brown, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK.
E-mail: craigsbrown1987@gmail.com

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Taking back control

Minimalism as a reaction to high speed and overload in contemporary society

Abstract
This paper examines the core ideas of minimalism as communicated in key writings of a selection of American bloggers and authors who have served as pacesetters for numerous people in several countries. The study examines minimalism based on narrative analysis, drawing on Hartmut Rosa's critical theory of social acceleration and the concept of constructive resistance. The message the authors convey centres on a lifestyle change that was instigated by the discontent they felt in their previous lives, and they commend minimalism as a means to freedom and autonomy. Although critical of contemporary temporal norms and consumption culture, minimalism is primarily an individual approach to dealing with situations of discontent. This can be understood as a consequence of a more general individualization of society, but it could also be understood in relation to the unclear centre of power in the case of social acceleration. Minimalists can be seen as performing constructive resistance through individual acts without calling for organization or collective mobilization of any kind, and without being particularly challenging or threatening to the system.

Keywords: lifestyle change, resistance, social acceleration, tempo, time

THE NOTION OF minimalism is now trending in countries characterized by affluence and consumption culture, such as Japan, the USA, and several European countries, including post-socialist countries (Zalewska & Cobel-Tokarska, 2016). The minimalist lifestyle is associated with decluttering and the gratification arising from owning fewer objects, but it can also include a broader perspective on how to reduce stress and live a simpler life. As the notion of minimalism has spread it has taken somewhat different directions, such as the nomadic lifestyle (e.g., Wright 2013) and the 100 things challenge (e.g., Bruno 2011). Some, minimalists tend to have a more aesthetic take on minimalism (e.g. Sasaki 2017 and Kondo 2019), whereas others merge the notions of minimalism with sustainability and environmental issues. In Sweden, numerous people are drawing on these ideas, and among Swedish minimalist bloggers, we find variation in the directions taken.[1] At

1 See e.g. Minimalisterna (http://minimalisterna.se/) Hildas: Minimalism, hållbarhet & ett fritt liv (https://hildas.se/) The Modern Nomad (https://www.themodernnomad.com/about/)

the same time, minimalism has maintained a recognizable core – as a tool to achieve freedom and a meaningful life. This paper examines the core ideas of minimalism as communicated in key writings of a selection of popular, well-known, and frequently cited American bloggers and authors who have served as pacesetters for numerous people in several countries.

The minimalist lifestyle shares features with, for example, downshifting and the practice of voluntary simplicity. However, whereas the concept of downshifting captures changes in consumption and quality of life resulting from voluntary and involuntary reductions in work hours and income (e.g., Kennedy, Krahn & Krogman 2012; Schor 1998; Schreurs, Martens & Kok 2012), the minimalist lifestyle change starts with conscious decluttering and reducing the number of possessions as a means to improve quality of life. Additionally, although minimalism is sometimes included in the umbrella concept of voluntary simplicity, the simplicity movement generally entails broader engagement and has societal implications. For example, voluntary simplicity is often connected with environmental engagement, including reduced energy consumption, second-hand purchases and salvaging, home food production, and consuming local food (Alexander & Ussher 2012; cf. Hsu 2015; Vostal 2017 on slow food and slow living). For many involved in voluntary simplicity, "it is the 'type of possessions' that matters most and the 'attitude' toward them, 'not the number'" (Alexander & Ussher 2012:74), but for the minimalist, the core idea is reducing the number of possessions and "getting rid of anything that's unnecessary" (Rodriguez 2017:1).

Although the notion of minimalism has recently gained increased attention and spread widely beyond the American context, there are to my knowledge, very few studies focusing on the phenomenon as such. One study of Polish blogs shows how the bloggers included in the study explain that they want to live without the excess of material objects and that they value independence and freedom, from both work and the pressure to consume. However, the Polish bloggers do not make any references to anti-consumption or moral motivations for their lifestyle choice (Zalewska & Cobel-Tokarska, 2016). Based on examples from the USA, another article (Rodriguez 2017) presents minimalism in terms of decluttering and how owning less saves both money and time. In addition, the article discusses to what extent minimalism represents a radical, anti-capitalist movement, concluding that although it represents a critical reflection of contemporary consumer culture, it lacks such radical potential.

The results of these studies indicate that minimalism represents an intentional lifestyle change that runs counter to contemporary consumption culture and contemporary norms of high speed and efficiency. However, minimalism does not seem to represent any radical critique of the contemporary consumption culture.

This observation raises the question of how we can understand the phenomenon of minimalism and the increased attention it is attracting. Does the preoccupation with decluttering simply represent a morally charged "battle against domestic mess" (cf. Löfgren 2017:1), or could it be understood as a likely reaction to the speeding-up of contemporary society and a way to resist contemporary dominant structures (cf. Rosa 2015; Sørensen 2016)?

The aim of this paper is to contribute a deeper understanding of the central ideas communicated by minimalist pacesetters in their stories of lifestyle change. What message do they convey to their audience? How do they describe and motivate the minimalist lifestyle change? Is there critical potential in the minimalist message, and if so, what is it? The study presented here examines minimalism based on narrative analysis, drawing on Hartmut Rosa's critical theory of social acceleration and the concept of constructive resistance (Sørensen 2016).

Special attention is paid to the construction of identity, time, and tempo in the minimalist narrative[2] and to what this, in turn, can tell us about people's experiences of and ways of dealing with high speed and overload in contemporary Western society.

The remainder of this paper is organized in four sections. The following section, "Social acceleration and constructive resistance", presents the theoretical framework. The next section presents the empirical material and analytical approach. In the section "The minimalist narrative", the results of the narrative analysis are outlined under three thematic headings: *Minimalist stories of lifestyle change*, *Construction of identity* and *Construction of time and tempo*.The concluding section discusses the key findings of the study.

Social acceleration and constructive resistance

High speed and progress are closely linked to the cluster of capital accumulation, capitalist competition, and the time discipline of industrialization. In this cluster, we see time conceptualized as a resource and commodity people can use, spend, or waste. This notion of time entails certain temporal norms, which put pressure on people to be effective and productive (Larsson & Sanne 2005; Lockie & Wong 2018; Rosa 2015:161ff.). High speed is valorised through modern core ideas of progress and "as a virtue associated with wit and intelligence" (Vostal 2017:4).

Although experiences of stress and time shortage in contemporary society are related to social acceleration, social acceleration is neither a new phenomenon nor a trend with entirely negative consequences (Rosa 2015; Tam 2008; Vostal 2017). The "acceleration imperative" is intertwined "with both liberatory and progressive promises of modernity" (Vostal 2017:3; see also Giddens 1991; Rosa 2015), i.e., the possibility of breaking with tradition and living one's life independently.

In his critical theory of social acceleration, Rosa (2015:71ff.) describes modernity as the speeding up of "all kinds of economic, social, and cultural processes and a picking up of the general pace of life" (Rosa 2009:78). The theory distinguishes between three analytically distinct but interconnected dimensions of social acceleration: technological acceleration, acceleration of social change, and acceleration of the pace of life. The first dimension refers to goal-oriented processes of transport, communication and

2 As mentioned in the introduction minimalism includes some variation. When I use the concept "the minimalist narrative" in this paper, it refers to the core ideas of minimalism the authors selected for this study communicate to their audience.

production. The second dimension refers to accelerated processes of social change, rendering "social constellations and structure as well as patterns of action and orientation unstable and ephemeral" (Rosa 2009:83). The third dimension refers both to escalation of the speed of action and to people's experience of time shortage.

In his theory, Rosa identifies three external drivers – the "economic motor", the "cultural motor" and the "structural motor" – of social acceleration. The most obvious driver is the capitalist economy, which entail the continuous introduction of new technologies (Rosa 2009:89). The "cultural motor" refers to dominant cultural ideas of modernity, where the "good life *is the full life*" (Rosa 2015:182, italics in original). The "structural motor" refers to the principle of functional differentiation in modern society, implying both efficiency and increased productivity and increased time scarcity because of the heightened complexity (Rosa 2015:186). Furthermore, according to Rosa, the three dimensions of acceleration are interrelated in a self-propelling process, i.e., a circle of acceleration functioning as a "self-reinforcing 'feedback system'" (Rosa 2015:151); acceleration of social change leads to time pressure and a sense of constant hurry, when people experience time scarcity, they may call for new timesaving technology, a technology that, in turn, entails increased social change (Rosa 2015:156). Although these three dimensions of acceleration are interconnected, in this paper, I primarily consider experiences of the acceleration of the pace of life because this is closest to people's everyday life experiences of time shortage and insufficiency.

It is the modern, progressive promise of freedom and autonomy that Rosa (2010a, 2015) used as a reference point in his critical theory of late-modern temporality. In modern society, social acceleration was originally a precondition for individual freedom, since "individual self-determination only makes sense in a world that moved beyond a supposed ontologically fixed social order" (Rosa 2010b:79). According to Rosa's theory, however, we have reached a point in modernity when social acceleration no longer sets people free. Instead, acceleration of the pace of life tends to relieve people of the possibility of reflexively constructing identities and leading lives on their own terms.

Rosa (2010b) argued that the powers of social acceleration to liberate people in modern society have instead become a source of enslaving pressure. In late modernity, the necessities of social acceleration have overpowered modernity's project of autonomy and self-determination, and "acceleration no longer secures the resources for the pursual of individual dreams, goals and life-plans" (Rosa 2010b:81). In contrast, Rosa claimed that social acceleration entails alienation and situational identities, making it difficult for people to construct stable identities, meaningful relationships, and long-term life plans. When people no longer have time for the important things in life and lose the ability of self-determination, both their identities and lives become situational, "experienced as a *game* or as *aimless drifting*" and "frenetic standstill" (Rosa 2015:314, italics in original). They experience a state of constant movement and activity without essential change or profound experiences.

According, to Rosa (2015), certain cultural phenomena have escaped "dynamization", for example, territorial or cultural oases such as monasteries or traditional forms of living and production. There are also deliberate forms of deceleration, which come

in two versions. First, people can choose activities that help them take a break from the race, for example, practising yoga or mindfulness to handle stress. Such activities are limited and temporary, however, and after the short break, people continue the race with renewed energy, implying that this form of temporary deceleration paradoxically keeps ”the hamster wheel” turning. Second, we find ideologically based movements of deceleration. Based on ideology and certain values, these movements resist the logic of the high-speed, affluent society. Rosa (2015) mentioned, for example, the ultraconservative, anarchist, deep ecology movements, and the ”slowdown movement”, which ”promises ‘a new well-being through deceleration’” (Rosa 2015:86).

According to Rosa, the different forms of deceleration cannot choke off the speeding up of society, which in late modernity represents a totalitarian power. Social acceleration is an all-pervasive and all-inclusive force in people’s lives; it is an abstract principle that represses ”all who live under its rule” (Rosa 2010b:61). Based on the theoretical framework of governmentality, however, it is reasonable to add some nuance to Rosa’s thesis of social acceleration as a new form of totalitarianism. Foucault’s governmentality concept does not offer a substantial theory but rather a useful approach to and way of thinking about how power works in liberal democracies (Stripple and Bulkeley 2014). The semantic linkage between the words *govern* and *mentality* indicates that people’s mindsets are at the core of this way of governing. Within a particular discourse, certain ”subject positions” are available, i.e., positions from which the discourse becomes intelligible (Hall 1997). For example, in a commercialized society people will frequently occupy the subject position of consumer. However, the available subject positions should not be understood as fixed formulas. Actors are never fully controlled by discourse. Foucault’s theoretical approach not only focuses on how we are governed but also offers possibilities for analysing various forms of resistance and counter-conduct at the micro-level (Death 2010:237f.).

To analytically capture resistance at the micro-level, this paper draws on the concept of constructive resistance, which ”covers initiatives in which people start to build the society they desire independently of dominant structures already in place” (Sørensen 2016:1). This type of resistance can be performed by various actors and does not need to be formally organized. Furthermore, it may entail outspoken critique (e.g. protest demonstrations) of contemporary power structures, but the critique can also be implicitly conveyed through the performance of alternative lifestyles. Constructive resistance ”focuses on creating, building, carrying out and experimenting with what is considered desirable” (Sørensen 2016:2). Accordingly, the fact that people are addressed in a certain way, for example, as consumers, does not mean that people act and define themselves as such (cf. Middlemiss 2014).

Empirical material and analytical approach

The empirical material in this study consists of key writings of a selection of popular, well-known, and frequently cited American bloggers and authors engaged in minimalism: Leo Babauto, Joshua Becker, Joshua Fields Millburn, and Ryan Nicodemus.[3] One reason for the selection of these authors was that their writings are often mentioned as sources of inspiration by other bloggers around the world. All of these authors report large numbers of followers and readers of their blogs (Babauta 2019; Becker 2019, Fields Millburn and Nicodemus 2019). They have all authored best-selling books and they all appear with their message in the documentary *Minimalism: A documentary on Important Things* available to a broad audience via Netflix. Another reason for the selection of these authors is that they, although with some differences (for example, Becker is a Christian and Babauta is inspired by Buddhism), talk about minimalism without representing a specific niche, such as the 100 things challenge. The three books selected for this study – *The Power of Less* by Leo Babauto, *The More of Less* by Joshua Becker, and *Minimalism* co-authored by Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus – summarize the main messages on minimalism from these authors.

The American context may be extreme in its level of consumerism (see e.g., Schor 1998; 2004), but the fact that the minimalist message is spreading to many other countries, including post-socialist economic and political contexts (Zalewska & Cobel-Tokarska, 2016), indicates that people in various countries have similar experiences of time shortage, work overload and affluence (see also Czarniawska & Löfgren 2013).

As the aim of the study was to capture the core ideas of minimalism as told in the authors' stories about lifestyle change it was based on thematic narrative analysis, which qualitatively examines content, but differs from thematic coding in its attempt to foster insight into the "story" of the text (Kohler Riessman 2008). In this study, the texts were analysed as narratives that organize diverse elements and normative assumptions, assigning meaning to certain courses of action (cf. Sandercock 2005), implying a focus on clarifying the situation before the current state and a turning point that explains the change to the current state. The germane feature of narrative in this context is that it makes sense of experience, assigns meaning, and imagines the future (Childs 2008). A compelling story is a vehicle for promoting engagement and action in a certain direction. Such a story expresses a certain understanding of a phenomenon, conveying distinctions and ideas about a contemplated or desired order. In a narrative, we can identify a temporal sequence (i.e., before, during, and after) and a plot (e.g., cause and effect). Based on this understanding, the narrative analysis was guided by the following questions:

3 Becker, Babauta, Fields Millburn, and Nicodemus are all active bloggers and authors; for simplicity, in the following I use "authors" when referring to them.

- What was life like before minimalism? (problem definition)
- What caused the lifestyle change? (turning point)
- What does it mean to lead a minimalist life? (solution to the problem and desired order)

In addition, the analysis was based on the following analytical tools for identifying the frame-shaping elements of the text (cf. Machin 2007):

- *repetition of information*, emphasizing how certain themes and items of information are repeated and thereby made salient
- *distinctions and contrasts*, emphasizing how distinctions and contrasts are used to make information salient
- *type of representation*, emphasizing how actors are represented

In analysing how the minimalist lifestyle change is narrated, special attention has been paid to how identity, time, and tempo are constructed in the narrative.

The minimalist narrative

This section presents the results of the study under three thematic headings. *Minimalist stories of lifestyle change* presents how the authors narrate their lifestyle change by describing a previous unsatisfactory and stressful life, a moment of awakening, and their new minimalist life, which is primarily characterized by freedom and passion. *Construction of identity* examines how different phases of this process are associated with different notions of selfhood. *Construction of time and tempo* elucidates a certain ambiguity in the minimalist narrative, which simultaneously resists and embraces the modern understanding of time and tempo.

Minimalist stories of lifestyle change

Minimalists tend to describe their paths to minimalism in similar ways. Their life stories tell of discontent and how work overload, stress, and owning too much stuff were taking over their lives (Babauta 2009; Becker 2016; Fields Millburn & Nicodemus 2011; see also Rodriguez 2017; Zalewska & Cobel-Tokarska, 2016). The co-authors Fields Millburn and Nicodemus (2011) tell rather dark stories about their lives of high-speed careers, stress, and overconsumption. The more they worked and earned, the more they consumed and the more dissatisfied and depressed they became. Although they were promoted in their successful careers and were well paid, they were not happy: ”Sadly, far darker things came with those promotions, as well: anxiety and stress and worry and overwhelm [sic] and depression” (Fields Millburn and Nicodemus 2011:15). Similarly, Babauta (2009:ix–x) tells of a stressful, unhealthy, and totally unsatisfying life. Becker (2016:76) tells about how he and his wife were frustrated by clutter and stuck in their finances, which he describes as ”a life of drifting, not focused direction” (Becker 2016:191).

The authors' depictions of their previous lives reflect Rosa's (2015) notion of the detemporalization of life in late modernity, implying that the "biographical course of life as a whole loses *its direction.* It can no longer be understood as *directed motion* and narratively constructed in the sense of a history of progress or development. *Life doesn't head anywhere; in the end, it goes nowhere (very fast)*" (p. 246, italics in original).

The minimalist authors also describe how, at some point and for some reason, they understood that all the stuff they owned would not make them happy. They describe realizing that they actually were owned by all their stuff and commitments. In his book, Becker tells of experiencing a moment of awakening. On a Saturday full of shopping, running errands, garage cleaning, and no time to play with his son, Becker had an enlightening conversation with a neighbour, who told him about her daughter who was a minimalist. Based on this experience, Becker (2016) realized that he did not want to go on accumulating more and more stuff and that it was time for a lifestyle change:

> In that moment, as I surveyed the pile of stuff in my driveway, another realization came to me: *Not only are my possessions not bringing happiness into my life; even worse, they are actually distracting me from the things that do!* I ran inside the house and found my wife upstairs scrubbing a bathtub. Still trying to catch my breath, I said, "Kim, you'll never guess what just happened. June said we don't need to own all this stuff!" And in that moment a minimalist family was born. (pp. 3–4, italics in original)

Minimalists' change of life course could be understood as an apparent reaction to discouraging experiences of contemporary consumption culture and high-speed society, in which autonomy and freedom have been lost. In the above quotation, Becker describes a certain day in his life when minimalism came alive to him. For Fields Millburn and Nicodemus (2011:17), the death of the former's mother and all the things she left behind helped them put their lives in perspective: "We decided to take an inventory of our lives. We wanted to find what was making us unhappy, and what we needed to do to change those things in our lives, so we could experience happiness, passion, freedom". The two friends later discovered minimalism, and they describe how they found out about Colin Wright, who owned very few things and followed his passion for travel. Fields Millburn and Nicodemus (2011:23) said that "it was like someone turned on the lightbulb for us for the first time and presented us with a tool to help us weed through the clutter in our lives to finally get to what was important".

Minimalism, in terms of owning less and reducing clutter, is not a goal in itself, but a tool for achieving freedom to pursue one's passion and the life one truly wants. The narrative constructs this as a causal relationship in which minimalism "can actually reveal, or at least clarify, what those passions are" (Becker 2016:39). The formula is to start with the material possessions and then move on to other areas in life. Minimalism is described as leading away from a dissatisfying state, i.e., being locked into consumer culture and contemporary norms of speed – towards an authentic life of freedom. Becker (2016:191), for example, concludes that the life he used to live was delusive: "I

was doing all the things I thought I wanted to do. But now I can see how my previous way of living was not improving my satisfaction".

When the authors write about what they consider really worth aiming for, they give their narratives impetus using various distinctions and contrasts, all echoing Rosa's description of a high-speed society. On one hand, there is what contemporary society offers and prescribes: There are the "empty promises of consumerism" (Becker 2016: 23), and efforts to improve one's sense of self-worth by obtaining praise for performing well (Babauta 2009:6; Fields Millburn & Nicodemus 2011:8). This is a multitasking world, where people have "learned to juggle tasks at high speed, worthy of this age of the Internet" (Babauta 2009:27–28), a world where expectations, demands, and accessibility continue to expand, producing busy unreflective lives (Becker 2016:193). According to this narrative, it is a world where wants are confused with needs and long-term goals are overshadowed by instant "kicks" and temporary highs. In this way, the authors express some critique of contemporary society. However, this critique is mentioned in passing and never elaborated in any detail.

In contrast to contemporary norms and demands, minimalism offers a way to escape the unnecessary accumulation of possessions and to help people find "real, lasting happiness or contentment" (Fields Millburn and Nicodemus 2011:15). The goal and passion can be almost anything; what matters is that one is true to oneself and finds a way to live intentionally. It is about "reducing the number of possessions to a level that sets us free" (Becker 2016:23). The minimalist narrative constructs a distinction between what could be seen as the authors' previous deceived selves and their current conscious, authentic selves. Thus, as narrated, the minimalist life represents constructive resistance against dominant norms and power structures in terms of creating and experimenting with an alternative lifestyle.

When the authors tell about their encounters with minimalism, they tell stories about change. There is a shared plot, including a turning point signalling some sort of enlightenment causing a profound lifestyle change. There is also a temporal aspect, describing an unsatisfactory life before minimalism (i.e., a stressful unhealthy life, encumbered by debt and deep feelings of discontent and frustration), followed by a new minimalist life. The authors no longer have debts, they have time for what is important in life (e.g., family and friends), they live a healthier lifestyle, and they feel free to follow their passions. According to this narrative, the new minimalist life is characterized by freedom, happiness, and fulfilment. This new life is certainly not without its struggles but is still constructed in profound contrast to the life before minimalism. What, then, does it mean to be a minimalist and what does it take to become one?

Construction of identity

Based on a theoretical elaboration of how social acceleration can in various ways affect people's sense of selfhood (Hsu & Elliot 2014; Rosa 2010b, 2015), this section examines the construction of identity in the minimalist narrative. In addition to this theoretical elaboration, the notions of *the deceived self* and *the authentic self*, identified in the minimalist narrative presented above, have been used in this analysis. Additionelly, the depiction

of what it takes to become a minimalist and to lead a minimalist life constructs the notion of *the disciplined self*, which will be elaborated on at the end of this section.

Hsu and Elliot (2014) theoretically examined how social acceleration can affect people's sense of selfhood, elucidating how various notions of selfhood can be linked to social acceleration. Based on this elaboration, they suggested five "images of the self" associated with social acceleration, indicating the paradoxes and complexities of selfhood in late modernity:

- *The reinventive self* alludes to a self that responds to a culture of reinvention, i.e., a culture that values flexibility, transformation, and reorganization. It is a culture that transforms people's sense of identity. The reinventive self becomes caught in an endless stream of changes and new options, making the concept of identity itself disposable.
- *The detached self* is an image of the self corresponding to Rosa's (2010b:96) description of alienation. It is a self attuned to the normative pressure to have a fast-paced life, whereby "novelty becomes routinized". Because of the rapidity of social change and a "hyper-stimulated" lifestyle, the detached self adopts a "blasé attitude" and cultivates a deep sense of indifference (Hsu & Elliot 2014:402).
- *The stationary self* corresponds to Rosa's (2015) notion of situational identity, in terms of a sense of lost direction. It is a situation of "frenetic standstill" in which the individual lacks the means and capacity to lead his/her life. The high speed of social change and the fast pace of life do not entail any real change for the individual's life course.
- *The reflexive self* is opposed to the detached and stationary selves passively adapting to the demands of high-speed society. The reflexive self is associated with self-awareness and the construction of the self, using social acceleration to facilitate self-making and autonomy (e.g., Giddens 1991), which, according to Rosa (2010b:61), is more or less impossible in late modernity because of the almost totalitarian character of social acceleration. Hsu and Elliot (2014) have given a more nuanced description of reflexivity and self-making, suggesting that self-construction in contemporary society takes place in a social context of "unruly" social acceleration. The reflexive self is neither a helpless victim nor in full control.
- *The decelerating self*, finally, implies that social acceleration should not be seen as a totalizing phenomenon. Whereas the stationary self can be seen as a fatal, unintended consequence of social acceleration, the decelerating self can also be seen as a self resisting the high speed of late modernity.

The minimalist narrative relates in various ways to the abovementioned notions of selfhood, as well as to the notions of the deceived, authentic, and disciplined selves, implying that different phases of the minimalist "journey" relate to different notions of selfhood (see Table 1).

In the minimalist narrative, *the reinventive self* is not as clearly pronounced as are the other images of the self. However, this image of the self is indicated, for example, when Fields Millburn and Nicodemus (2011) describe their life courses. They describe how, in their search for meaning, they restlessly tried various lifestyles – i.e., turning to and abandoning, for example, drugs, religion, and marriage – on their way to minimalism, implying the contingency and the revisability of their identities.

The minimalist authors' descriptions of their previous life situations more clearly resonate with the notion of *the detached self*. They describe themselves as constantly preoccupied, with no time for things that truly matter. For the *detached* or *alienated* self, meetings with others are shallow and confined to exchanging information. A recurrent theme in the minimalist narrative is how the authors' previously fully packed schedules, for example, had severely limited the time spent with family and friends.

In addition, the construction of the pre-minimalist self clearly resonates with the *stationary self*, alluding to a self that has lost its direction. Rosa (2015:314) ascribes this experience to the "'postmodern' antinomy", implying that although the pace of life is high, nothing is essentially changing or achieved. An illustrative example is that of Babauta (2009:x), who describes experiencing maximum stress every day, finding himself "going nowhere, fast", indicating experiences of both "aimless drifting" and a "frenetic standstill".

In hindsight, the authors have re-evaluated the norms of high speed they previously adhered to, questioning contemporary consumer culture. In this kind of reassessment of life before minimalism, the narrative resonates with an image of selfhood that I here call *the deceived self*. This image of selfhood alludes to the notion of "false consciousness", i.e., the possibility of being oppressed and suffering without being fully aware of it. Becker describes how his previous life "wasn't even close to the best one possible, for me or for those closest to me" (Becker 2016:191).

The turning point in the narrative alludes to enlightenment and insight, resonating with the *reflexive self*, i.e., a self associated with self-awareness and conscious self-construction, implying the possibility to resist contemporary dominant norms. According to the minimalist authors, to become free and autonomous one must start by getting rid of possessions and decluttering. The subtitle of Becker's (2016) book – *Finding the Life You Want Under Everything You Own* – is indicative of this central idea in the minimalist narrative.

The minimalist narrative also invokes the possibility of attaining an *authentic self*, alluding to freedom, autonomy, and the ability to be one's true self. Fields Millburn and Nicodemus (2011:4–5) declare that their book was written and organized to help "you" (i.e., the reader) think about your life and become "the real you, the passionate, loving, disciplined, happy *you*" (Fields Millburn & Nicodemus 2011:4–5, italics in original). Becker (2016:30), with great ease concludes: "We were free to craft our own style of minimalism in any way that suited us. What a relief!" The way to an authentic self is thus based on the notion of a reflexive, rational, and autonomous self that can conduct the necessary inventory work and independently make well-founded decisions about the future, and in doing so pursue an authentic life course.

However, as stated by Hsu and Elliot (2014), this type of reflexive self-construction occurs in social contexts characterized by ”unruly” social acceleration, making it an ongoing process. The minimalist narrative captures this aspect of contemporary society in its plot. The turning point – the decision to become a minimalist – is not the end of the story; instead, to become a minimalist one must be determined and consistent. This includes setting limits and creating new habits, establishing and sticking to rules (Babauta 2009:15–16, 88), making priorities and ”focus[ing] on these priorities above everything else” (Becker 2016:21). In this sense, the minimalist narrative constructs yet another image of the self that can be associated with social acceleration, i.e., *the disciplined self*. It is a self in control of itself and continuously working on its own improvement. It is this disciplined self that can perform constructive resistance against the normative pressure people face in contemporary society. The disciplined minimalist self can loosely be associated with secular asceticism (cf. Shepherd 2002). First, asceticism resonates with the way minimalists apply certain principles to every aspect of their daily lives. Second, it applies to the way minimalists are ”working on the self” by introspection and consistent self-discipline (cf. Rose 1996).

The self that takes back control over its own life resonates with the *decelerating self*, i.e., a self resisting the high speed of late modernity and engaged in intentional and enduring lifestyle change. However, as elaborated on in the following section, minimalism is not entirely about slowing down: although a slower pace of life is valued, the minimalist narrative conveys a more complex relation to tempo.

Table 1. The construction of identity in the minimalist narrative associates different phases of the minimalist ”journey” with different notions of selfhood.

Construction of identity in the minimalist narrative

Phases	Notions of selfhood	Identity
Life before minimalism	The reinventive self The detached self The stationary self The deceived self	A self that lacks awareness, control, and direction
Becoming a minimalist	The reflexive self The disciplined self	An autonomous and rational self that becomes aware and starts to take control
Leading a minimalist life	The authentic self The decelerating self The reflexive self The disciplined self	A free, passionate, and truly happy self that must maintain its awareness and continuously work on its own improvement

Construction of time and tempo

The minimalist narrative includes resistance against contemporary temporal norms and the norms of contemporary consumption culture, implying a critique of capitalist society. At the same time, the narrative also includes the notion of time as a finite resource and a commodity, in line with the logic of capitalism and the time discipline of industrialization. It seems that the minimalist authors have internalized the essence of the capitalist notion of time, i.e., time as something we ought to use wisely and not waste.

In the minimalist narrative, this notion of time partly appears in explicit statements, such as ”Your time is limited and precious” (Babauta 2009:105) and ”your most precious commodity – your time” (Fields Millburn & Nicodemus 2011:56). It is also implicit in the narrative, with its repeated time management strategies and advice on how to spend time meaningfully. According to the narrative, time can either be used wisely or wasted on meaningless things. When Becker (2016:76) tells of his frustration with clutter and stretched finances in his previous life, he concludes that he and his wife discovered that they ”were wasting time” managing their possessions. In his book, Babauta (2009) provides advice and numerous tips on how to ”save time” and ”stop wasting time”, for example, advising the reader to eliminate distractions, impose routines, and prioritize tasks, in what can be seen as the ”ordering of social life through temporal structures such as schedules, routines and calendars” (Lockie & Wong 2018:328). Fields Millburn and Nicodemus (2011:16) conclude that we have only ”a finite amount of time on this earth. It can be spent accumulating monetary wealth, or it can be spent in a meaningful way”.

By drawing such a contrast, the minimalist narrative inculcates a distinction between an aimless and futile life according to the norms of contemporary consumer culture and a fulfilled, intentional, and meaningful minimalist life with long-term goals. The minimalist lifestyle, thus, represents constructive resistance against the capitalist norms of competition and capital accumulation. At the same time, by emphasizing time as a finite resource, the narrative still adheres to the notion of a productive life, implying continued connection to the notion of speed as a ”virtue associated with wit and intelligence”, as well as an appreciation of effectiveness and an aversion to ”sluggishness” (Vostal 2017:4,12). What partly differentiates the minimalist and the capitalist notions of time concerns what this finite resource should be spent on.

Whereas the construction of time as a finite resource is clear in the narrative, the construction of tempo is based on a contrast between life before and after the lifestyle change to minimalism. The tempo of life before minimalism is unambiguously depicted as rushed, whereas the construction of tempo in the minimalist life comprises multiple temporalities.

As elaborated above, the authors describe their pre-minimalist lives as thoroughly stressful, strained by work overload and too many possessions to manage. In pre-minimalist life, high speed is associated entirely with life without direction. As described by Babauta (2009:x), he was ”going nowhere, fast”.

The construction of tempo in relation to life after the lifestyle change is somewhat ambiguous. In this way, the narrative oscillates between the ideas of resisting haste

by ”living in the moment” and the diligent focus on long-term achievement, with the latter being a dominant theme in the narrative (Table 2). On one hand, Babauta (2009:132) states that our bodies and minds ”are made for a slower pace of life”, arguing that we should learn to slow down and ”rebel against fast food and fast life” (p. 138). Fields Millburn and Nicodemus (2011:25) describe how minimalism helped them reclaim time and live in the moment. On the other hand, as elaborated above, the narrative centres on minimalism as an ongoing process that ”takes daily focus and a commitment to constant improvement” (Fields Millburn & Nicodemus 2011:121). Contrary to the idea of living in the moment, the minimalist life is mainly depicted as an intentional life in which ”we examine our options and make choices with larger purposes and long-term goals in mind” (Becker 2016:192). The minimalist narrative thus includes contradictory temporalities (cf. Lockie & Wong 2018). Whereas the notion of living in the moment and at a pace that suits our bodies and minds alludes to a temporality based on the idea of natural rhythms, the notion of focused activity based on long-term goals alludes to a temporality based on the idea of linear time and the time discipline of industrialization.

Similarly, the intention behind the minimalist authors’ lifestyle change seems ambiguous. According to the narrative, the minimalist lifestyle will free people to live at a slower pace, but it will also make us more effective and productive. Becker (2016:194) states that most of us unfortunately ”become busy over all the wrong things and we have allowed false assumptions to drive our schedules”. The minimalist narrative does not encourage a slow, unproductive life – or ”sluggishness” – but rather a focused, intentional life. The authors conclude that it is high speed without focus and long-term goals that is unproductive. The notion of a focused, intentional life is based on the idea of setting limits in order to be productive. Babauta (2009:xi) writes: ”Many of my readers have asked me how I can do so much, given that I have the same number of hours in the day as everyone else. My answer: It’s a matter of placing limits, and focusing on the essential.”

Fields Millburn and Nicodemus (2011:28) describe how, with the aim of helping others, they decided to create a website to document their personal journeys into minimalism. To do so, they were ”laboring vigorously until the last minute”, indicating that productivity and time discipline in terms of hard work and sharp deadlines are not a problem as long as they are devoted to intentional tasks that add meaning to one’s life.

As related in their stories, the minimalist authors want to achieve a lot (e.g., write books, start successful blogs, and contribute to society), but they want to do so at their own pace and based on their own passions and their own understandings of what is meaningful. The construction of tempo in the minimalist narrative resonates with Vostal’s (2017:12) concept of ”temporal autonomy”, implying uninterrupted periods of time, protection of unrushed time, and ”relative sovereignty over scheduling, planning and organization” in one’s activities. Accordingly, the Italian musical term for tempo *a piacere* (approximately ”at one’s pleasure”) can be used to describe the construction of tempo in the minimalist narrative, i.e., the tempo can vary as long as it is at the discretion of the performer.

Table 2. The construction of tempo in the minimalist narrative.

Construction of tempo in the minimalist narrative

Phases	Tempo	Lifestyle implications	Outcomes
Life before minimalism	rushed high speed	busy with the wrong things unable to focus on important things wasting time	A stressful life without direction, a life based on false assumptions
Leading a minimalist life	*a piacere*, at the discretion of the performer	rebel against fast living live in the moment set long-term goals and follow one's passions focus on essentials and set limits	A productive and intentional life with freedom, true happiness, and temporal autonomy

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to contribute a deeper understanding of the central ideas communicated by minimalist pacesetters in their stories of lifestyle change. The authors included in this study are Northern American, middle-aged men, which may imply a bias not least in regard to the link between careers, consumption and status they report on in their books. North Americans are generally hardworking, and long working hours have increased in the USA. The USA also represents a highly commercialized society where consumption and status are closely linked (Schor 1991; 1998; 2004). Furthermore, the authors have all been successful in creating platforms for themselves as minimalist bloggers and authors, making communication about minimalism to a broader audience part of their new lifestyle. However, at large, the life stories these authors share with their audience reflect how people in several countries seem to be caught in a constant struggle to cope with time shortage and excess, i.e., managing situations of "too much information, too many choices, too many commodities or tasks" (Czarniawska & Löfgren 2013:1, see also Zalewska & Cobel-Tokarska 2016). It is also likely that this common experience across national borders has made these authors successful in reaching a broad audience.

Despite some variations in their personal stories, the authors selected for this study communicate a coherent narrative of their lifestyle change, including their motives for this change and their experiences of what it takes to become a minimalist. The message they convey to their audience centres on a lifestyle change that was instigated by the discontent they felt in their previous lives. Looking back, they describe how they were deceived by contemporary norms of consumption and speed. They all commend mini-

malism as a means to freedom and autonomy, which we, according to Rosa's (2010b:61) critical theory, have lost under the "totalitarianism" of acceleration in late modernity.

In his theory, Rosa mentions ideologically based movements as deliberate forms of deceleration. Although minimalism includes a critique of the time pressure caused by the contemporary "cycle of work and spend" (Schor 1998:xiii), it is not simply a quest for deceleration. In line with previous research on the dynamics of social acceleration and with critical reviews of the fast–slow dichotomy, this study shows that the construction of tempo in the minimalist narrative is "far from even and one-dimensional" (Vostal 2017:16, see also Hsu 2015). The construction of tempo in relation to the minimalist lifestyle implies oscillation between conflicting temporalities, i.e., between "living in the moment" and a diligent focus on long-term achievement. In this part, thus, the narrative represents two mindsets. One is set on counteracting contemporary temporal norms, using minimalism as a means to reclaim individual autonomy (cf. Goodin et al. 2008), which can be seen as constructive resistance against the "enslaving power" of social acceleration that Rosa (2010b:80) associated with late modernity. The other mindset seems to embrace the diligence and time discipline of industrialization.

The narrative of the lifestyle change analysed here includes descriptions of life before minimalism, a turning point, and what it means to lead a minimalist life, the phases of which all construct identity based on various notions of selfhood. To free oneself from the normative pressure of contemporary society, one must be both reflexive and disciplined. The authors describe the turning point as an enlightening moment when inspiration comes from fellow human beings telling of their experiences of minimalism, but the narrative still depicts lifestyle change as an individualistic journey and a primarily autonomous and rational process. Although critical of contemporary society, the minimalist narrative suggests that it is up to each individual to make the necessary changes, taking back control over his/her life, and decide for oneself what direction the minimalist life shall take.

Minimalism seems to function as a "boundary object" that serves as an anchor and bridge between worlds or between actors from different contexts (Star and Griesemer 1989). "Boundary objects are entities that enhance the capacity of an idea, theory, or practice to translate across culturally defined boundaries" (Fox 2011:71). A boundary object can be any element that is understandable in more than one setting, that is, plastic enough to be adjusted to different settings and stable enough to retain its identity in these different settings (Fox 2011: 72; Star and Griesemer 1989: 414). This may be one possible explanation for the spread of the notion of minimalism across contexts. People with somewhat different motives for resisting contemporary norms of high speed and consumption can all be inspired by the core idea of minimalism as a tool to achieve freedom, yet still create their own version of it.

The increased attention paid to minimalism can be understood as an expression of discontent with the functioning of contemporary society, a discontent shared by numerous people across national contexts. This study suggests that the minimalist pacesetters capture this sentiment in their life stories but mainly inspire people to perform resistance by creating and/or "experimenting with what is considered desira-

ble" to themselves (Sørensen 2016:2). The spread of minimalism also shows that the suggested individual strategies for dealing with situations of discontent seems both reasonable and appealing to many people. This approach to dealing with situations of discontent can be understood as a consequence of a more general individualization of society, but it could also be understood in relation to the unclear centre of power in the case of social acceleration. Temporal norms do not have any obvious sender, but still govern our mentalities. As Rosa (2010b:77) puts it, "there is no moral or political debate about the powers of the deadline and dictates of speed at all". The normative pressure is often silent and hidden, entailing the notion that modern society is "almost sanction-free and minimally restricted in ethical terms" (ibid.).

One way to understand the social context of the type of resistance suggested by the minimalist pacesetters, which is to primarily focus on individual strategies for dealing with societal problems, is provided by governmentality studies and the interrogation of the post-political, in terms of the depoliticized conditions of neoliberal society (e.g., Kent 2009; Maniates 2001; Wilson & Swyngedouw 2014). In the course of this interrogation, the concepts of post-politics and depoliticization are based on the assumption that politics have traditionally been played out as conflicts or "more precisely as potentially irreconcilable disagreements about the values and direction of society" (Strand 2016:18). The concepts are used to describe what are understood as attempts to remove conflicts from the political agenda of Western liberal democracies, implying that "political projects are replaced by pragmatic adjustments within the existing order" (Strand 2016:19). From this perspective, minimalists can be seen as performing constructive resistance through individual acts, inspiring others without calling for organization or collective mobilization of any kind and without being particularly challenging or threatening to the system (cf. Sørensen 2016).

The potential for social change offered by this form of resistance must, however, be considered in the long-term perspective. The inspiration minimalism offers to people with various levels of engagement and various motives (e.g., environmental concerns) may in the long run give rise to both societal change – by the pure number of people involved – and to more organized mobilization. Not least, in light of the contemporary political engagement of youth in climate change issues, it will be of interest to follow and examine the spread of minimalist core ideas across contexts. This is one area of research that may provide insights and help us better understand the critical potential of this kind of constructive resistance based primarily on individual acts and social media communication.

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Author presentation
Ylva Uggla, PhD, is Professor of Sociology, at Örebro University in Sweden. Uggla's research concerns environmental regulation and management, including environmental communication. Methodologically her research draws on discourse, framing and narrative analysis, with a specific interest in allocation of responsibility and the construction of identities.

Corresponding author
Ylva Uggla, School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, Örebro University.
E-mail: ylva.uggla @oru.se

MAJKEN JUL SØRENSEN & KRISTIN WIKSELL

Constructive resistance to the dominant capitalist temporality

Abstract
The logics of capitalist temporality dominate western society today. Drawing on Barbara Adam's work, we explore two important dimensions of this dominant temporality. Standardised and abstract clock time involves a detachment from seasons and the life-world, closely related to the *commodification of time* exemplified by expressions like "time is money". Many initiatives attempt to challenge the dominance of capitalist temporality, amongst which we present: (1) worker cooperatives that organize work and its temporality as alternatives to capitalism; and (2) timebanks where people exchange services with each other based on time rather than money. We investigate how these illustrative examples differ from the dominant capitalist temporality, and in what ways they depend on the same logic that they resist. The analysis shows that the initiatives divert from the dominant temporality in important aspects, but also reproduce it in other ways. Thereby, this article contributes to theorizing resistance in connection to time and temporality, and gives insights in the potential and elusiveness of constructive resistance to dominant temporality.

Keywords: time, capitalism, constructive resistance, worker cooperatives, timebanks

IN THE 15TH century, capitalism started to grow in Europe and opposed the then dominant feudalist economic order. Today the logics of capitalist temporality dominate western society, involving features such as *abstract and standardized clock time*, a standardized detachment from seasons and the life-world, and a *commodification of time,* exemplified by expressions like "time is money" (Adam 1998; Martineau 2015). These aspects of capitalist temporality not only dominate in the operation of capitalism itself, but has seeped into almost all aspects of life, supressing other temporalities connected to the lifeworld. For instance, the drive towards efficiency and time segmentation has resulted in a view that time is something to "save", even outside work, involving a decline in private social relations, devaluation of private life and the outsourcing of what was previously private matters (Hochschild 2001; 2012). Nevertheless, a considerable number of individuals and organisations attempt to counter this dominance by constructing alternative ways of living and relating to other people. We explore two of these alternatives and aim to answer the following questions: 1) In what ways do the alternatives differ from the dominant capitalist temporality?

2) How do these alternatives construct resistance that may have the potential to mitigate the dominant capitalist temporality in the short and the long run?

Resistance is often conceptualized as open forms of protests, riots, revolutions and the like, practiced from a subaltern position. We take a different point of departure and draw on the concept of *constructive resistance* to investigate some of the links between time, resistance and capitalism. Constructive resistance is people's attempts to build, organize and construct the social relations and society they want, rather than attempts to tear down and destroy what they object to and confront. The desire for something different is an implicit critique of the status quo, but instead of waiting for the perfect conditions to construct the new society "after the revolution" they start here and now to create alternatives within the shell of the old society (Sørensen 2016). This involves an interesting temporal aspect in itself, but the aim of the present article is to explore how examples of constructive resistance against capitalism relate to the dominant temporality of the contemporary capitalist society that they confront.

The relation between resistance and power has been conceptualized in many different ways (See for instance Baaz et al. 2016; Hollander & Einwohner 2004). Two of the pioneers in resistance studies, Stellan Vinthagen and Mona Lilja, have defined resistance in their entry on "resistance" in *Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice*:

> Resistance is a response to power; it is a practice that challenge and negotiate, and which might undermine power. Depending on the definition of power, different types of activities will count as resistance. (Vinthagen & Lilja 2007:1214).

Vinthagen and Lilja conceive of resistance as relational, specifically concerning the relation between resistance and power. When power turns into perceived dominance that creates subordination, for example through discourses that create boundaries, label identities and order performance, resistance practices to change such hierarchies and stereotypes are likely (Vinthagen & Lilja 2007:1216). We follow Vinthagen and Lilja in this wide definition of power and resistance, that action is resistance if it has the potential to mitigate dominance.

But what is dominance? Within a certain sphere or field, one can identify the dominance of a norm, a discourse, a conception of reality, or a type of organizing that potentially marginalizes or rules out alternatives. When it comes to capitalism, its dominance is presently being enacted in many different aspects (see e.g. Castree 2009; Harvey 2006; Illouz 2007; Mjøset 2011; Moran 2016). Capitalism is becoming increasingly widespread, not only geographically, but also regarding aspects of life which are being commodified, for example reflected in the present-day possibilities to buy organs on the market or rent a womb to carry one's child.

The spread of capitalism has led to counter movements of greater resource awareness and sustainability efforts. An early example of initiatives of constructive resistance to capitalism and its temporality is the slow-food movement, originating in Italy in the 1980's as a direct reaction to the growing popularity of the fast-food industry. Today it is a diverse global movement promoting high quality locally produced food and

criticizing industrial food production and exploitation of labor and the environment (Hendrikx et al. 2017).

In this article, we study two illustrative examples of collectively organized constructive resistance against the dominance of capitalism, namely: 1) *worker cooperatives* (co-ops) that organize work and its temporality as alternatives to capitalism, and 2) *timebanks* where people exchange services with each other based on time rather than money. We have picked two examples of collective organizing where there has been an explicit intention to create social practices and ways of relating to other people which differ from the mainstream. In that way, the participants in the timebanks and co-ops can be understood as challenging capitalism in their attempts to act otherwise. Such constructive resistance has the possibility to make the dominant system obsolete and could potentially lead to the emergence of a new society. However, many initiatives of opposition to capitalism risk drawing on aspects of capitalist temporality, which brings forth the need of studying to what extent resistances to capitalism challenge and/or reproduce the temporality of the dominance that is being resisted.

Capitalist temporality is complex, but the two dimensions, *abstract and standardized clock time* and the *commodification of time,* are essential parts of capitalist temporality (Adam 1998). We investigate how the illustrative examples of worker cooperatives and timebanks relate to and differ from these two aspects of the dominant capitalist temporality. The analysis shows that initiatives that challenge capitalist ways of organizing work and time reproduce the dominant capitalist temporality in some ways, at the same time as they do divert from the dominant temporality in other important aspects. We also explore what potential these alternatives have, in the short and the long run, to undermine the dominant capitalist temporality. Thereby, this article contributes to research on the relation of resistance and power, specifically in connection to time and temporality, and gives insights in the potential and elusiveness of practicing constructive resistance to dominant temporalities.

Below we start by presenting our methods and illustrative examples, followed by an introduction to the theoretical approach and previous research. The subsequent analytical section is structured according to the two dimensions *abstract and standardized clock time* and *commodification of time* of capitalist temporality. We conclude with a discussion of the article's results in relation to further theorizing of constructive resistance and implications for future research.

Method

The aim of this article is to explore the complexities involved in engaging in constructive resistance. We do this by focusing on how examples of constructive resistance against capitalism relate to the dominant temporality of the contemporary capitalist society that they confront. In order to do so, we set out to identify as many and different examples as possible of such initiatives. We started from theoretical assumptions based on the literature about time and capitalism and searched for empirical phenomena we thought might be insightful in order to explore the relation between time, resistance

and capitalism. Originally, we included cases of individual resistance for analysis, but due to lack of space we here use the two collective examples of worker cooperatives and timebanks because we think collective efforts have the greatest potential creating long term change. The two examples are not directly comparable due to the different types of data, but our intention has been to theorize about constructive resistance rather than make a comparative study. We purposefully selected these two examples because they are organized, collective efforts with an explicit and outspoken attempt to provide an alternative which in theory and practice have a potential to undermine the dominant capitalist order. Capitalist notions of time and temporality are expressed within both initiatives as part of their resistance against capitalism. The timebanks are publicly explicit in how they relate to time, and we have therefore been able to use secondary material available on their own websites and previous research in the exploration of how their practices possibly differ from capitalist temporality. As for how worker co-ops relate to time, the issue is not discussed on their websites or in previous research. The empirical example of worker co-ops is consequently explored using first-hand material generated mainly through qualitative interviews by the article's second author.

By having two examples to illustrate our theoretical argument (discussed in further detail below), we demonstrate attempts to deal with time in different areas of life, but can also illustrate how one example might succeed in being an alternative in one aspect, while the other will succeed in another aspect. Other cases would of course have provided different details, but would with all likelihood not have changed the main conclusion to any large extent – that all attempts at constructing alternatives will still have to relate to and to some degree incorporate the dominant capitalist temporality.

We have employed a theoretical approach in this article inspired by literature that connects time and the modern world of capitalism (Adam 1989; Hochschild 2001; Rosa 2013b). Specifically, from Adam's (1989) investigation about the links between time, science and economics, we have chosen two general dimensions, namely, 1) abstract and standardized clock time and 2) commodification of time. We do not wish to reduce capitalist temporality to these two, but they are very essential for the conceptualization of time in capitalist societies. Through these two dimensions, we look at how the timebanks and the worker cooperatives relate to capitalist temporality in their resistance against capitalism. Analytically, we have constantly moved between our theoretical assumptions and empirical examples in an organic analysis. In our approach, we have been inspired by Swedberg's (2016) proposal for analytical creativity and the call to work on the theorizing which precedes theory. Following Swedberg, we consider this a prestudy of constructive resistance to capitalist temporality and hope it can inspire future theory development in resistance studies. The empirical examples helped us develop our understanding of the theoretical concepts, and they serve to illustrate the points we want to make regarding the challenges of practicing constructive resistance within the shell of the dominant society.

In the following sections, we present the selected illustrative examples in more detail – timebanks and worker cooperatives.

Timebanks

A timebank is a network of people who exchange services based on the time the members contribute and use, rather than money. If one member walks another member's dog for one hour, this person has "earned" one hour of time. This hour can be spent on getting someone else in the network to help in the garden or repair the car. The system is not based on direct reciprocity but can be conceptualized as a formalized general exchange (Whitham & Clarke 2016), so time can be earned and spent independently of who one has exchanged with previously.

The idea of timebanks are usually traced to Edgar Cahn who developed the scheme in the US in the late 1980's (Lee et al. 2004). Timebanks are just one example of many types of locally based alternative exchange systems and they have been explored from the perspective of local currency and collaborative consumption with numerous examples from the US and different European countries, for instance the UK, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands and Finland. (See for instance Laamanen, Wahlen, & Campana 2015; Papaoikonomou & Valor 2017; Valor & Papaoikonomou 2016; Whitham & Clarke 2016).

Those who work on organizing community exchange systems globally have a rather sophisticated theoretical critique of money and profitmaking. Some timebanks organize their exchanges through the webpage www.community-exchange.org, and here one can read how they understand alternative ways of organizing exchanges as a radical alternative. Although the webpage does not use the word "resistance", it is a devastating critique of global capitalism and money systems based on debt. Under the heading "why we need a new exchange system" it says:

> The money systems we use are not neutral, non-partisan, services provided by our governments. They are a 'service' provided by private financial institutions (banks) specifically for their own benefit rather than those who use them. Our conventional money systems only work for those who already have money and marginalise the rest. They are also the fuel that powers the growth imperative of our economies, forcing us all to compete and having disastrous consequences for the health of our planet. (https://www.community-exchange.org accessed June 6 2018)

The contemporary money system is a condition for capitalism to exist in its present form, and the quote above shows how those who develop alternatives to it raise issues of how capitalism and banks exploit both people and nature.

In the existing studies of timebanks, there is surprisingly little focus on temporality, and the aspect of resistance that we are interested in is either completely missing or briefly mentioned in passing. The term "timebank" is also used to cover a quite diverse range of practices. In a study of Greek and Spanish timebanks, Papaoikonomou and Valor (2017) identified four prototypical timebank logics. In the Political Logic, the resistance to capitalism is explicit and the timebanks in their empirical data grew out of the 15 M movement (Spain) and the Syntagma Square movement (Greece)

in connection with the financial crisis in 2008. These timebanks are organized in egalitarian and democratic ways, there is no money involved, and roles are rotated. Timebanks which follow the Social Logic focus on strengthening local communities, and compared to the first category this is more reform oriented. In the timebanks belonging to this category there is usually a management team which might control the agenda. In timebanks following the political and social logic, everyone is expected to give and take equally and no charity is involved. Timebanks which have developed according to the Social Welfare Logic, of which there are many in the UK and US, are explicitly directed towards those who are socially excluded. However, they are not based completely on egalitarian principles since different types of members have different status and not everyone is expected to use services, some can be ”volunteers”. Finally, Papaoikonomou and Valor (2017) have identified a few timebanks following a Market Logic which are explicitly preparing the members to find work or start a business. In our study, we are interested in the timebanks which belong in the first two categories in Papaoikonomou and Valor's typology, Political and Social Logic, since they are the ones that can potentially provide constructive resistance to the dominant capitalist temporality.

Our illustrative example of timebanks is based on a secondary analysis of existing literature on the phenomenon. We used the search term ”timebanks” in academic databases to identify possible articles and also searched webpages of organizations organizing timebanks. We read the collected studies with a particular focus on competing temporalities and resistance to capitalism, a reading which also led us to some sources that briefly discuss the issue of resistance in the broader literature on community currencies and collaborative consumption. Our findings are presented in the analysis below.

Worker cooperatives

Worker co-ops are organizations run and owned equally by the members who work in the organization, in contrast to traditional capitalist enterprises often owned by external capital owners. Worker co-ops can be described as a form of self-government where the workers rent capital, rather than workers selling their labor power to an employer. Besides the management principle ”one member, one vote”, co-ops are guided by seven cooperative principles such as democratic member control, autonomy and independence, and concern for community, outlined by the International Co-operative Alliance (2018).

The cooperative values and principles can be understood as a challenge to capitalism by for example opposing profit acceleration for potentially external owners (Satgar 2007) in favor of emphasizing democratic member control, economic democracy and independence (Paranque & Willmott 2014; Rothschild & Whitt 1986). Other studies show how co-ops through self-government have the potential to oppose dominance (Vieta 2014), for example challenging state power and neoliberalism by taking control of policy implementation and design (Pahnke 2015). However, cooperative self-government reflects a ”dual reality” by emphasizing social ideals and participatory

democracy but still practicing economic business within existing capitalist markets (Diamantopolous 2012; Puusa, Hokkila & Varis 2016; Vieta 2014), and "is not a ready-made solution for liberation from capitalist exploitation" (Vieta 2014:800). Even Marx paralleled Bakunin's warning that co-ops, "if limited to a 'narrow circle' of private work disembodied from greater struggles against capital, 'will never be able to arrest the growth… of monopoly, to free the masses" (Marx 1992:80). This highlights how worker co-ops involve a potential to undermine capitalism but at the same time have to relate to a surrounding society of economic markets dominated by capitalist temporality.

The empirical material analyzed in this article has been generated from five Swedish worker co-ops through a qualitative study with interviews, document collection and observations conducted by the article's second author (Wiksell, in press). The five co-ops have up to 11 active members and work in different sectors (transportation, heritage, drama, environment, and art) in different parts of Sweden. All co-ops are organized as economic associations that understand themselves as worker co-ops, where the members are those who work in the organization and receive income from that work (Pestoff 1991; Vamstad 2012). Such organizations can be understood as a marginal form of organization in Sweden, comprising less than 1,4% of all registered businesses (Bolagsverket 2019).

Although the capitalist temporality of industrial wage-labor has been transformed in many sectors with the acceleration of time (Rosa 2013a, Rosa 2013b; see also Adam 1998) and the Swedish labor market of today is frequently characterized by flexible working hours (Allvin 2006), the co-operators who engage in alternatives against capitalism often contrast their practices with a traditional 40-hour week and strict working hours. Despite this paradox, this illustrates how the dominant idea of capitalist temporality with standardized clock time and commodification of time is a target of the constructive resistance of worker co-ops. All five co-ops included in the present study articulate resistance against capitalism, where the present dominance of capitalist ways of organizing and understanding time and temporality is expressed as one associated aspect. Each of the five co-ops emphasize reduced working hours and value work according to other values than monetary ones. Worker cooperatives are thus an example of an attempt to transform the dominant capitalist order by organizing and valuing time and work differently.

In sum, the illustrative examples of timebanks and worker co-ops can be understood as collective, explicit initiatives that may have the potential to challenge dominant capitalist temporality. In the following section, we discuss the theoretical approach employed in this article in order to analyze how these two initiatives practice such constructive resistance.

The temporal aspects of capitalist society

To investigate time is nothing new in social science – already Marx' analysis of work and capitalism included temporal aspects (Castree 2009; Nyland 1986), and in 1981 Thrift (1981) analyzed how the contemporary time consciousness, where time is linked closely to a future-oriented calculating rationality, has evolved together with the rise of capitalism. Thompson writes how the value of time in industrial capitalism is reduced to money and must therefore not be wasted: "Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent" (Thompson 1967:61). Recently Castree has argued that time-space is an integrated part of capitalist accumulation, where time and space cannot be separated from each other. Building on the work of David Harvey and Doreen Massey, Castree argues that "capitalism (…) is an economy of time-space that *by necessity* makes history and geography together" (Castree 2009:52, emphasis in original). With the rise of global capitalism in the 1990's and early 2000's, the demand for increasing speed in profit generation also rose, disrupting previous ideas of long term planning and investment for the future (Hope 2011). Zygmunt Bauman (2007) refers to this presentism as a liquid modern condition where time has become pointillistic or punctuated, characterized by an inconsistency of moments to be fulfilled in the now. Analyzing the financial collapse in 2007–2008, Hope (2011) concludes that the crisis was a "crisis of temporalities", and that this type of crisis is likely to recur because it is built into the system of global capitalism. He points towards three aspects of this "crisis of temporality": 1) The temporal contradiction which exists between the short-term interests of the financial market and the long-term strategies needed to handle a crisis, and 2) the speed of decision-making processes in political parties and national assemblies which marginalizes them, and 3) the difficulty in translating macro-economic alternatives into practice. Hope does not consider the current unregulated financial capitalism to be sustainable over time, at the same time as he does not see any alternatives emerging.

The capitalist economy has brought forward a close connection between time advantages and competition advantages, identified by Hartmut Rosa (2013b) as an economic engine that contributes to the ever-increasing social acceleration of the late modern society. According to Rosa (2013b), acceleration takes three different forms. First, there is the technological acceleration, which we see in areas such as communication and transportation. Secondly, people experience an acceleration of social change, and thirdly, the individual tempo of life is accelerating when more activities have to be carried out in a shorter amount of time. That people feel rushed and stressed and pressed for time both in private life and work life is also overwhelmingly documented by numerous empirical studies (See for instance Southerton 2003; Wajcman 2015). Arlie Russell Hochschild (2001) acknowledges that corporate notions of thinking about time that premier efficiency and speed have entered the private realm as "a domestic version of "office hours"" (Hochschild 2001:230). With increasing acceleration, time becomes something to save, which makes quicker versions of "quality time" worth the same as it's slower counterpart.

In our analysis, we will take the point of departure in Barbara Adam's work. In her

book "Timescapes of Modernity", Adam (1998) investigates how the environmental hazards facing us today cannot be understood by using traditional perceptions of time. Through the concept of timescape, Adam highlights the problems which arise when people's understanding of time is reduced to "clock time", and argues that clock time has become commodified with the rise of capitalism. Thus, clock time and capitalism are closely associated, which can be seen in the ways that capitalism is discounting the future. Based on Adam's analysis, we have identified the two essential temporal dimensions in capitalism which we use to analyze the empirical examples of workers cooperatives and timebanks, namely: 1) *abstract and standardized clock time*, and 2) *commodification of time.*

The first dimension, *abstract and standardized clock time*, refers to the tendency to associate the concept of time with clocks and calendars. This tendency has a long history which Adam (1998) traces back to Newton. Newtonian science emphasizes linearity, and time is reduced to motion and is decontextualized from the living processes which reality is. Clock time is abstract, standardized, and "atemporal". It ignores the fact that people's experience of time is connected to changing seasons, special holidays, life, death and fear, and hope for the future. In Newtonian science, a detached observer records from a distance, focusing on cause and effect, isolating parts from the complex whole, searching for certainty and proof. This linear perspective permeates our everyday existence, from science, journalism, and politics to the general public. Although newer fields of science, such as thermodynamics and chaos theory, approach time differently, the Newtonian perspective is still very much engrained in our societies, with devastating consequences for the environment as a result.

The equivalent to Newtonian science can be found in neo/classical economic thought. The second dimension, *commodification of time*, draws on Adam's (1998) investigation of how time is deployed in the capitalist economic system. In economics, the role of nature is to be exploited, and not to exploit resources is equivalent to losing money, although nature remains outside calculations of profit and loss. Time as a natural resource is also closely linked to money and can be exploited – labor is often paid by the hour, and machines have a certain lifetime that has to be calculated. One of the most well-known expressions of this perception is Benjamin Franklin's saying that "time is money". Although it is widely spread and quoted, such an idea is only possible as long as both time and money are something abstract and without context, when time is turned into a commodity with exchange value. However, as Adam (1998) points out, time is not like money at all, because time passes outside of our control, bringing us closer to death, while money can be stored and passed on to future generations. And within a capitalist logic it is only the time associated with productive work that is valuable. The time of the unemployed or in the old people's home is worthless.

A central aspect of Adam's analysis of the commodification of time, and its consequences for the environment, is the way speed is important in the production process when time equals money. In order to compete, it is essential to get first to the market with a new product and avoid having products waiting in storage or spending long periods in transport. But speed is a question of energy, and this energy is not included

in the economic calculation. In our examples, the effort to build alternatives is not only related to time, but simultaneously attempts to undermine other aspects of the rat-race, such as consumption and a culture where wage labor is the norm. Adam's analysis shows how they are onto something when they see these links. This meshes well with Rosa's (2013a) work on acceleration where he is reformulating the concept of alienation to probe what has happened when such high numbers of people express feeling forced to spend increasing amounts of time doing things they do not really want to in so many areas of life. He suggests that the late modern society's demands to keep up alienate people from their experience of space, things, their own actions, time and consequently also from themselves and who they would like to be.

Similarly, Hochschild (2001) acknowledges that through the modern capitalist incorporation of domestic values into the sphere of paid work, such as social relations and leisure time, the alienating attributes of work are being transferred to the devalued realm of home. She stresses that "the more women and men do what they do in exchange for money and the more their work in the public realm is valued or honored, the more, almost by definition, private life is devalued" (Hochschild 2001:198). Hochschild concludes her thorough study of work-life balance in an American company by noting that the workers were pulled into this hurried rat-race despite family-friendly policies. When it comes to constructive resistance against the capitalist temporality, however, we have only found a scarce number of examples in previous research. We discuss some of these in the following section.

Research on constructive resistance and temporality

As long as capitalism has existed, it is reasonable to assume that workers have tried to resist and undermine the efforts to control their time. Subsequently, there have been many temporal aspects to workers' resistance against exploitation. Stopping work through strikes is of course an obvious deceleration of the capitalist logic where time equals money and all delay in the production and transportation of goods is a disaster. However, workers also have more subtle decelerations at their disposal. Roland Paulsen's (2015) study of how people spend their time at work on other things than work is one among many examples of this. In contrast to the protest-oriented resistance of strikes and individual 'disobedience', our aim is to explore collectively practiced constructive resistance as a "prefigurative" politics and organizing (Reedy, King & Coupland 2016), where people resist a perceived undesired dominance by simply starting here and now to create alternatives within the shell of the old society (Sørensen 2016).

Literature that explicitly explores the temporal dimension of constructive resistance is very limited, but in her article "Time against Time", Davina Cooper (2013) presents a study of LETS (Local Exchange Trading Schemes) in the UK, a "cousin" of the timebanks popular in the UK in the 1990s. Cooper's study is interesting because from a temporal perspective, she has investigated why LETS failed, in spite of being promising in theory. Her conclusion is that there were "competing temporalities" within the initiative. On the one hand, in LETS there existed a discourse about "community time"

which was a contrast to the compressed, controlling and demanding capitalist temporality. LETS focused on local communities, generosity, sharing and repairing. This ”community time” also meant that there was a slower pace and that services and goods were not always available. In contrast, LETS also include a discourse of ”labor-market” time, where time was valued because of its labor and the participants constituted themselves as sellers of goods and services. Cooper writes that ”LETS depended on time functioning as an alienable resource” (Cooper 2013:41). Thus, within LETS there were two different temporalities – one part of it seen as a resistance to capitalism, the other part as a bridge to capitalism. These two temporalities were not compatible, for instance it became problematic when it took a long time to arrange a trade.

With this overview, we have presented some key aspects concerning characteristics of and resistance to the dominance of capitalist temporality. Turning to the analysis, we investigate how timebanks and worker co-ops practice constructive resistance to capitalist temporality with the potential to mitigate its dominance, but in some aspects depend on the same logic that they attempt to confront.

Abstract and standardized clock time

We begin by analyzing the illustrative examples of timebanks and worker cooperatives according to the first dimension *abstract and standardized clock time,* referring to the tendency in the dominant capitalist temporality to associate the concept of time with clocks and calendars which entail an abstract and standardized, ”atemporal”, understanding of time (Adam 1998). This is followed by the analysis of the illustrative examples concerning the second dimension of capitalist temporality, *the commodification of time,* before we discuss the resistance potential of these alternatives in the short and the long run.

Timebanks and clock time

The timebanks do count clock time, one clock hour is one timebank hour, with some variations. Sometimes, they call it something other than clocktime – for example, in the Finnish case they call it a ”tovi”, which means ”moment” (Joutsenvirta 2016). Nevertheless, even if it is called something else it is still a unit to account for time and a certain value is associated with that unit. Thus, the timebanks attempt to oppose clock time but are still dependent upon it. However, a study of Spanish timebanks has showed that the timebanks are more symbolic than practical. The number of transactions is very limited, and most members have never carried out a single transaction (Valor & Papaoikonomou 2016). The problem with a limited number of transactions is also reported from Greece (Papaoikonomou & Valor 2017). People seem to join because they like the idea, but the timebanks do not offer the services people want or the transactions are difficult to carry out in practice.

A major problem for the timebanks is that the users are part of the surrounding society and its dominant standardized clock time. The time transaction often entails that the involved individuals have to be at a certain place at a certain time, which

must be coordinated according to their clock time schedules, as compared to turning to someone who offers the service as a full-time job. A quote from one of Valor and Papaoikonomou's (2016) respondents can illustrate this:

> For instance, my mother is a member of the time bank and she cannot handsew, she needs someone to handsew her trousers. But this means: she has to call us, then she has to give the information, we find the person, they arrange when to meet, she brings him her trousers and then the other person does it for her. And in this case it is for free, but it is a slower process. And my mother has credit, like 5 hours, because she has participated doing different things. But she will probably just take the trousers to the shop and have it done for 5–6 euros. The rhythm of society is fast. You probably prefer to pay the 6 euros and have it done now! And this is a problem that we have, everything is like fast food! (Valor & Papaoikonomou 2016, no page number).

The coordination of the timebanks' transactions can take some time to achieve in itself, something Cooper identified as a major problem for keeping LETS viable. It simply means that different forms of temporality have to compete. This is probably also the reason why most timebanks described in the literature appear to have a very limited number of transactions. Apparently, people like the idea of being a member of a timebank. In a Spanish study of timebanks, almost half the members report that they have joined for political reasons such as "protesting against the system" or "setting an example", which was also the case for timebanks not created for an explicitly political purpose (Valor & Papaoikonomou 2016). However, in a Greek study about the four most active timebanks that emerged as citizen's initiatives during the financial crisis, a timebank which has 120 members only has an average of 90 transactions per month (Amanatidou, Gritzas & Kavoulakos 2015).

In some ways, timebanking is radical and can be seen as resistance to capitalism and the acceleration in our societies today. Most timebanks apply the principal of one hour for one hour (Papaoikonomou & Valor 2017), and when everyone's time is worth the same, it is a huge contradiction to the wage labor economy where some people's time is worth so much more than others. On the other hand, as Papaoikonomou and Valor (2017) point out, timebanks use a terminology of banks, credits and accounts which is borrowed from capitalism. A few timebanks in their study has abandoned the practice of registering accounts and keeping track of transactions, but it is not clear how the timebanks then function.

In an article about institutional trajectories of degrowth, Joutsenvirta (2016) uses the debate about the Helsinki Time Bank to illustrate some of the obstacles that initiatives meet when they try to work in ways that is implicitly critical of the current economic world order and try to scale up alternative economic activity. Helsinki had a quite small but growing timebank in which the tax authorities took an interest in 2013. At its busiest month, it had an average of 10 daily transactions of 40 hours. In spite of this quite moderate activity, the taxman decided that timebank activities

should be taxed because of the risk of it contributing to illegal underground economic activities. No involvement in money laundering or corruption had been uncovered, and many people and institutions protested. Nevertheless, timebank activities are now taxable, something which makes it less attractive to take part in the timebank, because when you exchange a service, you have to pay tax on it even if no money is involved (Joutsenvirta 2016).

The situation in Sweden is similar to the one in Finland, making legal timebanking an unrealistic alternative, since it requires money to be involved in an exchange where the logic is to get beyond money. Thus, the only Swedish experiment which has taken place has been in Bergsjön in Gothenburg where TidsNätverket I Bergsjön organizes different kinds of group activities and avoid the one-to-one exchanges which would have to be taxed (Molnar 2011).

Worker cooperatives and clock time

Members of the five worker cooperatives in this study express explicit opposition to having strictly controlled working hours and being forced to work full-time, that is, 40 clock time hours per week. They articulate how the co-ops resist such dominance by practicing a democratic self-governance in which the members can plan and structure their time freely. Some of the members in the worker co-ops also express relief about not having to monitor clock time connected to their work, illustrated by the following quote from a member in the Heritage Co-op:

> Something for example, that we've discussed and would in that case decide, is that I work 60 percent, period. Then I would like, then I'd have to keep track on it all the time, that I didn't work more or less than that. It would be preassuring to clock and keep track on that like… so I'd rather not. (Member 3, Heritage C-op)

The member expresses opposition to the idea of working a specific time percentage per week since that would add a pressure to keep track of the time. However, instead, the co-op pays wages for the members' work according to the time reports, in which the members actually note how many hours, counted in clock time, they have worked each month. This holds for most of the co-ops and means that they have not departed from abstract and standardized clock time. Even if the members can work when and where they wish, they note their working hours and receive salary according to that logic. A text from the work manual in the Transportation Co-op exemplifies how clock time is adhered to in the co-op:

> One fills in the time reports with one line for each category of work. There are four categories: Driving, administration, reparation and sales. It is not super important with exactly correct distribution of the time if one mixes several tasks at one day. […] Time is written as hours with quarters in decimals. 0,25 is one quarter, 1,5 is one and a half hour, and so on. (Work manual, Transportation Co-op)

The time reports and work time percentages require that the co-op members keep track of clock time. If the members lose track of time while working, they have to reflect upon it afterwards. Some of the interviewees commented that members may not report their working hours in the same ways, for example, that one hour of work may involve unequally effective work for different members. This shows awareness that one clock hour can be qualitatively different for the members, but it also indicates that the members are concerned with assuring as much equality as possible regarding how clock time is exchanged into money.

Thus, the co-ops do not fully resist clock time. They explicitly oppose the strictly controlled nine-to-five working hours connected to a perceived dominance of traditional, capitalist wage labor, but nevertheless use clock time in their practices.

Commodification of time

The commodification of time necessitates abstract and standardized clock time, with the addition that it is *commodified* (Adam 1989), turned into a commodity with exchange value, exemplified by the quote ”time is money”. This is a temporal dimension which is both being resisted and reproduced in our empirical examples, below analyzed first regarding the timebanks and secondly regarding the worker co-ops.

Timebanks and commodification of time

The timebanks entail the very obvious exchange dimension that is a core in the capitalist notion of ”time is money”, merely that it is not money but only time (and its use for different services) that is being transacted. There are several different types of timebanks, some much more institutionalized and ”professional” than others. Those who manage to remain active over time usually have an administrator/time broker who works specifically at coordinating the contacts and administrating the exchanges between the members. This key person can be compensated for the work either (or both) through economic compensation or receiving ”time units” in the timebank, something which is an explicit commodification of time. Papaoikonomou and Valor (2017) point out some of the problems facing the Spanish and Greek timebanks in their study. A major hindrance for many is that they have too few exchanges, something which is related to the problem quoted in the previous section, that it takes time to organize a transaction. People might hesitate to spend time as long as they still have to relate to a society where the discourse of time as a scarce resource prevails.

Another problem reported by Papaoikonomou and Valor (2017) is hoarding of time credits, that people will do things for others, but not ask for any services themselves. Although common perceptions might imagine a free rider problem where people use other people’s time without giving anything in return, a bigger problem according to the literature on timebanks actually seems to be that people want to give their time to others but without using any services themselves. Many members appear to be supportive members who like the idea of timebanks for political reasons, while only a few members are very active. The dominant social norms discourage people from asking for

services, fearing they are abusing the system. However, the timebank logic is based on reciprocity and not charity, and giving without receiving undermines the functioning of the timebanks. The timebanks try to counter this by encouraging users to have a balance close to zero, and some have a limit to how much surplus and debt one can have, such as 20 or 30 hours. The authors comment that four of the 38 timebanks in their study had to close due to lack of activity before their study was published and identify this "internal" threat as a "fundamental problem" (Papaoikonomou & Valor 2017).

In relation to the dimension of commodification of time, one can say that these obstacles occur when the timebanks are not commodified *enough.* The timebanks constantly have to negotiate between the temporal logic of their idea of reciprocity and community and the commodification of time in the surrounding society which values acceleration and effectiveness. This clash with the norms in the surrounding society is not only related to temporality, but also to issues such as how to evaluate a service. Should members write comments online about how (dis)satisfied they were, or is this a potentially harmful practice spilling over from mainstream consumer society? (Papaoikonomou & Valor 2017).

In Lee et al.'s (2004) comparison of different British local currency systems, including both LETS and a timebank, they mention how LETS is "drenched in mainstream conventions" (Lee et al. 2004:609) in spite of its attempt to provide an alternative exchange system. They quote one of their interviewees to illustrate how the mainstream norms about values are difficult to abandon:

> I know [that] in Mendip LETS the view there was ... [that] an hour of one person's time is worth an hour of another person's time, it doesn't matter what you are doing. And I was doing acupuncture then, and I had a babysitter, and in some way it didn't feel quite balanced for me, because somebody could come and do four hours of babysitting – and that's quite nice – two hours you're sitting reading a book, and I mean, that's fine, but for me to do four acupuncture treatments – four people – you can't [do it]. You know, it's not quite the same. So, to me that's one of the difficulties, which is just the nature of life. You have to address these issues (Lee et al. 2004:609).

It is exactly this aspect of conventional exchange that is a major difference between the timebanks and the capitalist "time is money" equation. The timebanks' ambition is to make every individual's time equally valuable (Papaoikonomou & Valor 2017), but as the quote illustrates, conventional thinking can be hard to overcome. In capitalism, the price of a service depends on the market, and usually a lawyer will be able to demand a much higher salary than a dogwalker. One of the political Greek timebanks has used a different approach and exchanges one service for another no matter how long each one takes (Papaoikonomou & Valor 2016).

Worker cooperatives and commodification of time

The worker cooperatives oppose the commodification of time in some aspects, where one example is the equal ownership of the organization. This involves that the members make use of their time for their own gains through collective self-government, rather than 'selling' their labor power to an employer. However, the co-operators do get financial compensation for their working hours within the co-ops. Wages are distributed amongst the members who have partaken in income-gaining projects based on their reported working time. This involves a commodification of time, exemplified by the following quote from a member in the Transportation Co-op:

> If I put in 15 more minutes, I know that I will get something for it, compared with if one would not get paid over-time somewhere else. And then, it always turns out that one does some things without writing it down or time report is or something like that. (Member 2, Transportation Co-op)

The quote illustrates how members may be motivated to put in extra work in the co-op since they know that they will get economic compensation for it, which clearly reflects how their time is being commodified. But the member also says that the time is not always reported, an aspect that connects to what was mentioned above that the members may not report their time in the same way. This means that time is an unstandardized commodity, but a commodity nevertheless.

However, the co-ops practice resistance to the commodification of time to some extent by using work time for projects that do not generate money. The Heritage Co-op has a system for reporting working hours that includes time spent on work that does not generate money, neither for the co-op nor the member. The co-op also spends potential profit on projects that are seen as valuable but will not be profitable.

> [W]e make sure then to do some other things at times, that may involve a loss – that we actually use our profit to projects involving a loss but that can raise bigger issues and make some other impressions in the society. (Member 2, Heritage Co-op)

Further, in the Drama Co-op, they talk about how to resist the enhanced pulse and stress in the surrounding society – the social acceleration (Rosa 2013b) – and include time for reflection in their salaried working hours. They emphasize having "non-productive" time that assures physical and mental sustainability as resistance to a perceived capitalist, exploitative working life. However, the co-operators also talk about their non-productive reflection time as something that will improve the output, advancement and quality of their produced work.

Thus, even if the co-ops value time that is not productive, and work for themselves rather than selling their labor power, their "oppositional" time to some extent reflects a capitalist logic where time is valuable according to its conversion into money.

Constructive resistance or reproduction of the dominant temporality?

In the introduction we asked how the alternatives differ from the dominant capitalist temporality and to what extent they depend on the same logic that they attempt to confront. The analysis above has shown that timebanks and worker co-ops both resist and reproduce the abstract and standardized clock time and commodification of time of capitalist temporality. In organizing their activities, timebanks depend on clock time as a way of measuring a service, reproducing this aspect of capitalist temporality. However, a basic principle in timebanking is that everyone's time is worth the same, something which challenges the usual market system of unequal returns for labor. Worker co-ops oppose the strict 40-hour work week and resist the "time is money" equation by valuing time that is not productive according to traditional, capitalist wage labor, but in some aspects reproduce the dominance of clock time and commodification of time, for instance by being paid according to clock time hours.

We also asked how these alternatives construct resistance that may have the potential to mitigate the dominant capitalist temporality in the short and the long run. This final question is addressed in this section by discussing the issues of mainstreaming vs. radicality and the spread of social innovations.

The two analyzed examples of collective organizing have an explicit intention to create social practices and ways of relating to other people which differs from the mainstream, which in the present day means a society where capitalism and the market economy dominate the organizing of work and service exchange. Globally, those who work on organizing community exchange systems, such as timebanks, have a rather sophisticated theoretical critique of the exploitation of global capitalism and present-day money systems. Many Swedish cooperatives have also chosen their organizational form in order to enhance other values than the dominance of capitalist logics.

Both timebanks and co-ops face a dilemma when communicating with others. Should they emphasize their radicalism and stick to the principles, even if it means remaining small and mainly organizing those who have a political motivation? Or should they "mainstream" themselves as a viable alternative which works in practice, as one more option to choose from in system which celebrates "individual freedom to choose"? The last option might have a greater potential for fast growth, but at the expense of compromising basic principles and creating internal contradictions.

The question regarding how much to mainstream in order to make a difference is central in both our cases. It takes time to create new norms, not least when the attempts are made within the same system that is being opposed. Many of the interviewed co-operators, for instance, articulate that they may have to tone down their reference to organizational form in order to receive customers. This indicates, in line with the work by Jaumier et al. (2017), that cooperatives may be either pragmatist, reformist, or political in relation to capitalism. Worker co-ops can thus be framed as compliant with capitalism, for example through articulations that cooperative enterprises can be a way for the worker to earn more money (Wiksell 2017). This points to an understanding that the co-ops' constructive resistance against capitalist temporality is not a

feature built into the organizational form itself, but practiced due to a political effort of individual worker co-ops.

Similarly, in the context of LETS, a close cousin to the timebanks, North (1999) has pointed out the tension between radical resistance and mainstreaming. Whereas some participants emphasized LETS as neutral and apolitical, those with explicitly anarchist views saw it as completely different. To them, LETS was a tool for resistance based on alternative economic values. Although LETS was not a timebank, these members emphasized how work should be valued equally for the time it took rather than the skills it required, an important principle in the timebanks' efforts against the commodification of time.

Although mainstreaming might in the short perspective bring in more customers or participants to the timebanks and worker cooperatives, recent research on the spread of social innovations indicate that for long term radical change to take place, there might be good reasons to nurture the radical elements even though this means remaining relatively small and isolated for the time being (Törnberg 2018). In the area of *transition studies* on how socio-technical innovations spread, it is well established that innovations are easily incorporated into existing systems as long as they are faster, cheaper and better. However, completely new approaches that clash with existing systems and norms may break through only if first nurtured in a protected niche environment, where they can "learn to fly" without competing with the dominant systems. In a theoretical article, Anton Törnberg (2018) combines these insights with the literature on social movements, in particular the part focusing on free social spaces and prefigurative politics. Törnberg concludes that for bottom up social innovations driven by social movements to succeed, it is essential that the alternatives are pre-existing and ready to exploit a window of opportunity when it arises. Such alternatives might "be a social haven where critical social movements are free to develop new stories and counter-discourses that go beyond the constraining narratives of the hegemonic regimes of today – stories focused on building the new, able to conjure new specters, to haunt the dream of the old" (Törnberg 2018:404). In applying Törnberg's conclusion to timebanks and worker co-ops, it means that if they want to become the new norm in the long run, their emphasis should be on developing *functioning alternatives* which will be ready to show the way once the opportunity reveals itself. In the context of temporality, this means that functioning alternatives beyond clock time and commodification of time should be the focus, not the size in itself.

To find a protected niche environment is a challenge for both worker co-ops and timebanks since they act within the capitalist system. As we have shown, both alternatives to some degree reproduce capitalist temporality, which diminishes their radicality in this aspect. This conclusion is hardly surprising, because even when people are making a serious effort to think and live differently, it seems unrealistic to expect a small alternative operating in a world dominated by global capitalism to be completely anti-capitalist throughout. It remains to be seen how these and other initiatives of constructive resistance against capitalist temporality can practically handle the balancing act of organizing radical alternatives without too much mainstreaming. When timebanks and cooperatives are the new norm, people who join do not need to consider these practices as alternatives

to capitalism, but at the moment, intentional and collective efforts seem to be a condition for being able to explicitly challenge dominant values.

The aim of this article was to theorize the complexities of resistance and investigate the nuances of practicing constructive resistance, and our two examples have illustrated that resistance is not a question of either/or. One aspect of capitalist temporality can be reproduced by alternatives while another aspect is simultaneously undermined. The examples illustrate some potential alternatives, but also the elusiveness of practicing constructive resistance to dominant temporalities. Future studies will show whether such a reproduction and undermining of dominant values is also taking place when it comes to other forms of constructive resistance and other aspects of dominant norms.

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Author presentations
Majken Jul Sørensen is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Karlstad University, Sweden. Her research focuses on everyday and constructive resistance, nonviolent social movements, humour and political activism, as well as people's agency and ability to create change from below.

Kristin Wiksell is a PhD Student of Sociology and member of The Centre of Regional Studies at Karlstad University. Her research interests concern social change and relations of power and resistance in the fields of co-operation, organizing, work life, and economics.

Corresponding authors
Majken Jul Sørensen,
Karlstad University, Department of Social and Psychological Studies
651 88 Karlstad
majken.jul.sorensen@kau.se

Kristin Wiksell
Karlstad University, Department of Social and Psychological Studies, 651 88 Karlstad
kristin.wiksell@kau.se

FANNY AMBJÖRNSSON

Time to clean

On resistance and the temporality of cleaning

Abstract
Cleaning is a practice with low status. Most people single out cleaning as the least attractive of household chores and the people who clean as a profession are usually badly payed. This article is an attempt to discuss why these practices have such a bad reputation – in everyday life, in work, in popular culture and, not the least, in the feminist movement. Through ethnographic data primarily based on interviews, I investigate the historically imbedded meanings tied to practices of tidying up. Drawing on theories of queer temporality, I highlight what I want to call the temporality of cleaning – the repetitiveness and direction backwards and sideways instead of forward – as a possible answer. The circular practice of taking care of our physical remains remind us of our approaching death, rather than of progress, and thus generates feelings of anger and despair. But instead of ignoring or avoiding this reminder of another time, I argue for a feminist appraisal of the temporality of cleaning. In line with scholars within resistance studies who urge for a sensibility for the temporal aspects of everyday resistance, I propose that a feminist politics that puts cleaning at the center rather than in the margins would acknowledge our mutual dependency and co-living with the material world around us.

Keywords: cleaning, household work, queer temporality, gender, resistance, ethics of care

> ***Iris:*** Most of my time is occupied by thinking about cleaning and all that has to be cleaned. I am only happy for a short while, and that's when it's completed. All time is, in some sense, time before cleaning. No clarity exists around it: the idea that I will simply take care of it now, it's more that I go around and try to keep the chaos at bay, some way or another. I feel constant discomfort, chills, anxiety because it is not tidy in the way that I want it to be. I feel like I do little bits and pieces of cleaning all the time, and then during the weekends I engage in bursts of cleaning, when I spend perhaps two hours cleaning intensively, and then afterwards I can experience satisfaction. But rarely as I remember from before, from the time before the family. There was a completely different satisfaction, you could really get it right. You knew that everything was clean, you were done.
>
> ***Fanny:*** Do you have a longing for it to be complete, to have arrived?

> ***Iris:*** Yes, and to be able to do anything besides thinking about it. To be allowed to rest. Just to get to sit down and take in how nice I made it. That it's done. The hope that one can devote energy to something else.

Iris is a woman in her forties, living with her partner and two children in a middle-sized town in the north of Sweden. She is one of the participants in my study on the practice and politics of everyday cleaning[1] – and even if her statement is rather pointed, it may serve as an illustration of a rather general opinion on cleaning. Most people I interviewed found dusting, mopping and sweeping the floor a boring task, something they preferred to avoid if they had the chance. Rather than removing dust, they favoured household chores like home decorating, cooking or taking care of children.

These findings are not too surprising. Even if there, for sure, exists both people who enjoy cleaning and rewarding aspects of the chore, cleaning in general has a remarkably low status in society. It is something that is badly salaried (if salaried at all) and unconcernedly unloaded unto those who have the least power and influence in society. Moreover, it is neither in science, popular culture, or feminist activism paid any particular attention or investigated.

The question is: how come? In this article, I will discuss cleaning through the lens of time, developing an argument where the temporality of cleaning, its specific rhythm and direction, is presented as a possible key both to its pertinacious gender connection, and its low status. Using theories on queer temporality I want to dig deeper into what is actually perceived as problematic with actions that are sideways or backwards facing, rather than forward. Departing from this discussion, and in relation to theories on resistance, I will discuss how the specific temporality of cleaning can be understood in terms of a feminist or queer resistance: a kind of politics of cleaning.

Research on cleaning

There is strikingly little research on cleaning as a daily practice, internationally as well as nationally. In a Swedish context, one of the few dissertations that is directly concerned with cleaning was written by architect Gudrun Linn in 1985. In *Badrum och städning. Hur ska badrum byggas för att underlätta städningen?* [Bathroom Design. The Cleaning Perspective], Linn investigates *Svensk Byggnorm*'s [Swedish bulding standard's] detailed minimum spatial dimensions for bathrooms from the perspective of cleaning — that is, how the standards correspond to experiences of getting the spaces clean. This was something no-one had previously done, and the reactions were swift. The day before the thesis was defended, the leading newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* published an article by an associate professor at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology, expressing the view that research on this kind of topic was ridiculous (Johansson

1 The article is based on thoughts developed in the book *Tid att städa. Om städningens praktik och politik* (Ordfront 2018).

1985). To investigate the best way of cleaning one's bathroom, was, according to the researcher, a waste of time.

Despite the fact that Linn's dissertation was published more than thirty years ago, cleaning still generates remarkably little research interest. In particular, there is a lack of research within cultural theory (see Pink 2004, Martens 2007). On the other hand, there exist nearby research fields that concern issues of cleanliness, dirt and sanitation. Among other things, there is research on unpaid housework, where gender equality and work division are frequently the focus (see, for example, Elvin-Nowak 1999, Hageman and Roll-Hansen 2005, Magnusson 2006, Platzer 2009, Aarseth 2011). In these studies, cleaning is discussed as an integrated part of all care and household work that someone in the home has to attend to, and that is usually not held in particularly high regard.

Another field in which housekeeping figures in the periphery is research on the conditions of the housewife, historically (see, for example, Palmer 1989, Shove 2003, Johnson & Lloyd 2004) and in retrospect (Åström 1986, Danielsen 2002, Marander-Eklund 2014). In these studies, an alternative story is told about all the chores that were mainly women's responsibility, but that rarely qualified as real work. A pioneer in this area is Ann Oakley, who in *The Sociology of Housework* (1974) interviewed British housewives in the 1970s. Oakley's starting point was to consider housework as work in its own right. Her conclusion is that this type of work is characterised by being unpaid, lonely, mostly tedious and very monotonous. If independence was the quality that the women in Oakley's study appreciated most about their housework, then, symptomatically, household chores were the least appreciated. Worst of all was washing the dishes, ironing — and cleaning (Oakley 1974:42).

If the unpaid housework is given a specific meaning when performed by a housewife, it is partially differentiated when it is leased out as paid work to others. Research on household work in other people's homes, as well as the (growing global) home services market is relatively extensive. In the Swedish context, the introduction of tax deductions for household services, which includes cleaning, has been the focus of studies on both employers and employees (see, for example, Björklund-Larsen 2010, Calleman & Gavanas 2013, Kvist 2013, Petersson 2013). An important perspective in this research is the gradual globalisation of housework (Anderson 2000, Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2004). Access to cheap household services have increased during the 21st century, partly as a result of greater income disparities, partly as a result of a global post-industrial service economy with increased labour supply (Calleman & Gavanas 2013). Today, there are more and more poor (preferably) women in the global south and east travelling to clean the homes in the north, sometimes with different types of entry permits, worse conditions and lower wages than other migrants, indicating that housework is not to be considered as real work (Sassen 2006, Cox 2011, Lutz 2011).

To sum up, there are a number of research fields that touch upon issues relating to cleaning in the home. However, it is remarkably rare that cleaning itself plays the main role, something that made me particularly interested in the chore and how it is experienced by people (see Ambjörnsson 2018). My material consists of approx-

imately thirty in-depth interviews, a strategic sample with people of different ages, sexes, sexualities, ethnicities, places of residence, housing and occupations.[2] To get in touch with the informants I have mainly used ”snowballing”, which means that informants recommend other people who might be of interest for the study (Widerberg 2002). I have also, via the *Institute for Language and Folklore* (*Dialekt- och Folkminnesarkivet)*, collected twenty questionnaires about everyday cleaning. An additional category that I, to a certain extent, use in my analysis, is fictional texts, where cleaning constitutes a theme. In this article, however, empirical data will have to stand aside in favour of a more theoretical discussion on the temporality of cleaning and the potential resistance this particular temporality might offer.

Housework and temporality

Researchers agree that the ambivalent position of household work in modern society must, in part, be considered in light of the societal changes that occurred in the shift from peasant society to industrial society (Giles 2004). In peasant society, the production of food and other necessities was carried out within the framework of the home and the family, where women and children actively participated. With the growth of industrialisation, in the case of Sweden sometime in the late 19th century, large sections of production moved from the private to the public sphere, which labelled production as the domain of men. The ”task-oriented” time was gradually substituted by a mechanical ”clock-time”, another way of organizing and conceptualizing time, society and power (Adams 1990). The home, and that which took place within the confines of the home, gradually became synonymous with consumption and reproduction, rather than production — and also came to be associated with the woman (Felski 2000, Gillis & Hollows 2009). The home also became tied to leisure, an activity that according to Henri Lefebvre (1984), among others, first arose with industrialisation. The public sphere, however, was linked to work.

Important to note is the classed aspect of this construction. The woman who was set to be the ”home maker”, managing the ”mall world”, consuming for the domestic, originated from the upper classes or the growing bourgeoisie. The working-class women, on the other hand, had to simultaneously work inside and outside the home, often doing household work in rich households. Thus, the proliferating ideal of the housewife, peaking in the 1950s, was based on a naturalised class difference, dividing not only male workers but also women (Berner 1996, Marander-Eklund 2014). Regardless of who actually did the chores in the house, be it a low payed working-class woman or the housewife herself, it is possible to conclude that it is the norm of salaried work,

2 The interviews, which lasted between forty minutes and two and a half hours, have also been somewhat different in terms of form. In six cases, I have chosen to interview persons among cohabiting couples (both homosexual and heterosexual couples). These interviews have contributed interesting information about positioning related to household work. In one of the cases, the conversation took the form of a couple interview, which gave a unique insight into the ongoing negotiation of cleaning as a chore (see Martinsson 1997, Norberg 2009).

and the masculinisation of work, that makes housework appear as a less important, merely something for women to preoccupy themselves with. The underlying logic is that household work does not generate income, nor does it produce new goods, but instead essentially strives to maintain the *status quo.*

Besides being a low status chore in the private, with little regard and recognition, the impermanence and constant repetition seems to be the reason why most people I interviewed dislike cleaning. Like Iris stated earlier on, Lollo, a woman in her mid-fifties, explains that the ongoing decay, no matter how often you clean, causes feelings of anger and and even despair.

> ***Lollo:*** It gets dirty sooo fast, it's not fair! Yes, I would say that's why I dislike cleaning, I feel offended! You tidy up, have some friends over for a coffee or dinner or sleep-over and you have breakfast together and leave home. And when you get back: what?? Cause, maybe you didn't bother to clear away or do the dishes, since you focussed on having a nice time with your friends. And it feels somewhat unjust! Because I really just cleaned the whole flat. And maybe someone comes to visit and says: Oh wow, what a mess! And you go: It wasn't like this the day before yesterday, I promise!

What, then, is the problem with repetition? Why is repetitive work so often portrayed as comfortless and meaningless? Henri Lefebvre (1984) advances the notion that it has to do with lines and direction, that is, temporality. The repetitiveness of everyday life is perceived as a problem simply because it appears to be opposed to modern society's focus on advancement and accumulation, that is to say, "progress" (cf. Freeman 2010). Routinely performing a chore means that it becomes a habit rather than a surprise. This implies an instrumentalisation of existence, where problematisation, intellectualisation and critical thinking — virtues in modern society — get pushed to the side. We often perform our routine tasks on auto-pilot: sinks are wiped while we listen the radio and the dirty clothes under the bed are sorted without much intellectual effort. By being static and predictable rather than changeable and dynamic, everyday life thus functions, in Rita Felski's words, as a "retardation device, slowing down the dynamic of historical change". (2000:81)

Feminism and the home

Household work would then, according to this perspective, be characterised by a different rhythm — or another temporality — than the historical forward-looking time. It is routinary, monotonous, repetitive and non-productive, and is therefore perceived as less developmental and meaningful. The person performing the chore will thus also be regarded as less future-oriented, independent and free. Perhaps it is not so odd that feminists throughout history have had a strained relationship with both household work and the home. Felski (2000:86) goes so far as to formulate it as feminism's anti-home

narrative.[3] For a woman to leave the home and find paid work is simply a relatively unproblematic feminist exhortation (Giles 2004). From Ibsen's Nora, who leaves the "doll's house", over Betty Friedan's depressed housewives and Germaine Greer's female eunuch, to Maria Sveland's "Bitterfitta", the path to women's self-actualisation and freedom has been diverted away from the home, and instead redirected out into the wider world (Lloyd 1984, Johnson and Lloyd 2004, Gillis and Hollows 2009). In the feminist classic *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (1949/2010) equates homework with what she calls "immanence", that is, the opposite of creativity and transcendence. To wash, iron, and chase dust bunnies under the cupboards is, she writes, "holding away death but also refusing life" (2010:476). Thus, it is possible to assert that the person involved in household work is only able to grasp the negative aspects of life:

> "Legions of women have in common only endlessly recurrent in a battle that never leads to victory (...) Few tasks are more similar to the torment of Sisyphus than those of the housewife, day after day, one must wash dishes, dust furniture, mend clothes that will be dirty, dusty, and torn again. The housewife wears herself out running on the spot; she does nothing; she just perpetuates the present… " (2010:474).

Housework, the work imposed upon women, has thus often been formulated as opposed to self-realisation — as something dull, monotonous and meaningless. At the same time, feminists, not least feminist researchers, have wanted to bring attention to — and in some contexts appreciate — the invisible and unpaid care work that is the prerequisite of paid labour (and life in general). Introducing an ethics of care, based on the mother-child encounter as a model for a particular kind of ethical work that is not purely governed by autonomy, qualities like empathy, interdependence, nurturance, flexibility, responsiveness and receptivity were valorised and investigated (Gilligan 1982, Noddings 1984, Ruddick 1989, Holm 1993, Tronto 2013). Within a slightly different tradition, philosopher Iris Marion Young (2005) approaches the issue of the value of housework through a discussion of conservation. To preserve the existent, Young asserts, is central for creation of the home as a place. Young refers to Martin Heidegger's understanding of *dwelling* as the ultimate product of man; his meaning is that this in turn constitutes a combination of preservation and building. According to Young, however, preservation is seldom given the same attention as building. While creating, a male coded activity, has been regarded as productive, female coded conservation and preservation is usually perceived as less creative,

3 This anti-home narrative of feminism has been criticised among other black feminists, such as bell hooks. In "Homeplace (a site of resistance)" (1990), she discusses how the home, as a place, was the central starting point for black women's struggle against both a patriarchal and racist society. To even have a place to call home, to fight for the home of one's family and the chance to spend time and energy on one's own home, rather than the home of other (white) people, in hook's reasoning, becomes a feminist issue permeated by experiences of racialisation and racism.

and therefore not as interesting. Young counters previous feminists' descriptions of the home and housework as unending, meaningless work that binds women to a subordinate position in society. Instead, she wants to emphasise the human value of the acts that aim at guarding "the things of the past and keep them in store" (2005:141). To organise, arrange and take care of our belongings and our corporeal imprints must, according to Young, be considered as at least as creative an activity as the production of something new.

Young's focus on the creativity of preservation includes, in principle, a task such as cleaning. To organise the things around us, to tend to and take care of, is to be considered a sort of preservation. At the same time, Young agrees with Simone de Beauvoir when she describes certain parts of household work, especially cleaning, as instrumental, mechanical and not particularly creative. This trend also applies to the feminist philosophers, which I referred to earlier, who want to reinterpret and raise the status of the female coded activities of care and household work, departing from relationality and mutual dependency instead of a sovereign liberal subject (Ruddick 1989, Tronto 2013). Even within these conversations, the act of cleaning is strikingly absent. Cleaning simply seems especially difficult to promote as constructive, self-developing and creative.

The temporality of cleaning and the meaning of dust

One reason for this, as I have previously suggested, could be the relationship between cleaning and the temporal. For example, when we compare cleaning with interior decoration, child rearing and cooking, we see how the latter activities do in fact produce things both new and permanent, in the form of children who grow up or curtains that remain in place. Cleaning, on the other hand, differs from most of the reproductive activities, because it does not create anything new. Rather, it is perceived as best performed when it is neither seen nor noticed — and is therefore mainly about striving to maintain the status quo. If the unpaid domestic chores have been determined as reproductive rather than productive, cleaning seems to be the least productive of these chores. And if domestic chores can be characterised as impermanence — and therefore need to be repeated over and over again — cleaning appears to serve as the quintessential example of endless repetition. Earlier on Lollo described feelings of despair, hopelessness and even anger when confronted with the fact that the home was messy only a few hours after cleaning. And Iris, who admits that she is constantly thinking about what has to be cleaned, formulates the frustration in terms of an endless temporal loop: "All time is, in some sense, time before cleaning". When I ask her to tell me what goes through her mind during the interview, she answers:

> ***Iris:*** I'm thinking about the dishes. There's a faint smell of garlic, and I have a guest staying, and I'm wondering whether she can smell it. I'm thinking that she probably did the dishes. It's that feeling of seeing what I could remove, but it's meaningless anyway, because it's just such a vanishingly small part of everything

> that needs to be done. I see the newspapers and the dust on the windowsill, on the radiators. I see the dust coating the lamp, and the frames under the sink have a sticky coating, which I'll never get around to dealing with. It's hard.

Both Iris' and Lollo's descriptions of cleaning in the home concerns its repetitive character, i.e. that it is a chore that has to be carried out over and over again, and therefore appears to be hopelessly unfinished. But sweeping dust, wiping frames and scrubbing the toilet is not only to be regarded as an unproductive activity, it also deals with dirt and debris — that is, the deposits of life that remind us of the perishability of existence. The gaze is, so to speak, facing backwards and downwards, rather than forwards and upwards. Unlike care work such as childcare, cooking and home furnishing, cleaning is thus a task that necessarily moves in the "wrong" direction, with another temporality. It is also this motion that Iris reveals in her resignation over the dust that accumulates like a sticky residue in the cupboard under the sink, and her inability to "keep the chaos at bay". For Iris as well as for Lollo, cleaning is considered an understated and hopeless battle against the unavoidable decay. By definition, cleaning is simply to recognise oneself as dependent on the passage of time — stuck in the dirt and grime and the endless water treading.

Cleaning as resistance?

The special rhythm and direction of cleaning, its specific temporality, is thus a possible explanation for its low status. It is also this point I suspect will be the most politically urgent. Is it possible to embrace the temporality of cleaning, rather than to shun it — to discern a potential political point in lingering on the repetitive and apparently unproductive motion backwards and downwards? Is the temporality of cleaning even to be considered a potential resistance?

Over the past years research on resistance, what it is and how it can be conceptualised, has grown within different and related fields such as poststructuralist, feminist, queer, post-colonial and subaltern studies. The plurality of definitions of the key concept, including for instance "civil resistance", "everyday resistance" and "critical resistance", illustrate the vivid and productive ongoing debates (Baaz et al 2016). In "Conceptualizing resistance" Joselyn Hollander and Rachel Einwohner (2004) made an ambitious overview of the literature, mapping some key disagreements among scholars, but also singling out the only two features that are agreed upon: 1) that resistance is an act 2) which is always in opposition to power. The questions remaining to be solved are: who needs to recognize an act in order to be defined as resistance? Does the act necessarily need to be intended? And does it have to result in change?

Departing from these discussions, researchers within the emerging field of resistance studies are suggesting a perspective that recognises the plural, malleable, productive and fluid character of the phenomenon, viewed as a complex and ongoing process integrated into daily social life (see f.i. Baaz et al 2016, Johansson & Vinthagen 2016). Following James Scott (1985), Baaz et al (2016) argue that everyday resistance might

be seen as a kind of ”infrapolitics”, i.e. informal, non-organized, non-confrontational and hidden. However, and apart from Scott, they want to highlight unintended or ”other-intended” acts as possible resistance – i.e. acts that has the possibility to undermine power relations through its consequences rather than through its intentions. One example of this is the current worldwide movement of digital file sharing, in which millions of people undermine some of the biggest multinational corporations in the world through illegally sharing films, music and software. The intent is not necessarily formulated as a critique of the capitalist system or intellectual property rights, but is rather to be seen as a desire for the products at stake. To not recognize these kinds of un- or ”other-intended” acts as resistance would, however, be misleading. Rather, intentions must be considered ”plural, complex, contradictory, or evolving as well as occasionally something that the actor is not sure about, views differently in retrospect, or even is not able to explain” (Baaz et al 2016:140).

So, what about cleaning? Might there be a point of analysing the temporality of cleaning in the light of these ongoing discussions within resistance studies? In a recent article, Anna Johansson and Stellan Vinthagen (2016:427) highlight the temporal dimensions of resistance, urging for an analysis that recognises ”everyday resistance as temporally organized and practiced in and through time as a central social dimension” (cfr Lilja et al 2015, Baaz et al 2016). Their call taps into a recent trend within the social sciences and humanities, where scholars ”revisit” the concept of temporality, pointing at its naturalised connection to power, discipline and control (Foucault 1979, Weston 2002, Grosz 2005). For instance, Elizabeth Freeman (2010:3) discusses the use of time ”to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity”, including the production of goods as well as the reproduction of new citizens. Through introducing the concept chrononormativity, Freeman explores how the temporal ordering of time reflects a logic of heteronormativity that delimits difference. Understanding temporality itself as a tool of power, she calls for a ”deviant chronopolitics”, closely related to the concept of queer time, used by Judith Jack Halberstam. According to Halberstam (2007:182), queer time is ”the perverse turn away from the narrative coherence of adolescence – early adulthood – marriage – reproduction – child rearing – retirement – death, the embrace of late childhood in place of early adulthood or immaturity in place of responsibility”. Turning against what might be defined as ”family”, ”reproductive” or ”heteronormative” time, praising the ”here and now” instead of the future, queer temporality is then understood as a form of resistance.

In his polemic book, *No Future*, philosopher Lee Edelman (2004) pleads what he calls the anti-social turn in queer theory, drawing on theories of queer temporality. His point is that the only possibility of politically countering the capitalist idea of endless growth and progress, an ideology intertwined with and organised through the absolute primacy of heteronormativity and the figure of the child, is to embrace negativity and abandon investments in the future. To simply make oneself impossible to exploit in favour of the future. Edelman’s concern is a theoretical one: what happens not so much to actual queer lives but to a queer principle of refusal of all forms of normative identity. Still, it is relevant here, since it reveals the potential

opposition that other temporal rhythms constitute in our society. In an era saturated by exhortations to go beyond, break up and glance forward, the dingy temporality of cleaning appears almost an insult. Like Lollo and Iris cited earlier, we simply get annoyed by the idea of having to bring out the vacuum cleaner once again — despite having just vacuumed. The repetitive rhythm of cleaning, the seemingly hopeless cycle, therefore offers resistance to dominant beliefs about what is considered to be proper and important in society.

What is more, the direction of cleaning, facing backwards and downwards — the direction of decay and transience rather than the seemingly constructive — constitutes a potential wrench in the system. That, at least, is how I interpret the lack of commercial exploitation of cleaning, in a culture that otherwise makes money on everything else possible. The plethora of products, newspapers, television shows and books about home and household chores rarely focus on cleaning. Lifestyle programmes, interior design magazines and podcasts about the small things in life are largely devoid of cleaning. Cleaning can, indeed, be subcontracted and avoided, in the form of low paid work. On the other hand, it seems harder to make it a hobby or a lifestyle. That way, the dust could be compared to the queer position in Edelman's figure of thought — something that only with difficulty lets itself be "domesticated".

Unlike Edelman's dark utopia, which is based on the antisocial and introspective, cleaning, on the other hand, is relational. Ultimately, it is about care-taking — perhaps not primarily of the future, but rather the current, and the constant decay: the remnants of living. In an attempt to rethink the often-despised forms of time required by practices of care, Lisa Baraitser (2017) introduces the concept "time of mattering". Combining insights from feminist writings on care ethics with theories on queer temporality, Baraitser (2017:92) wants to uncouple "maternal time from chrono-heteronormativity, and align it, instead, with queer time in the sense of being radically outside of the time of normal development". Doing this, she draws attention to the political potential in an ethics that illuminates our world as one of time-consuming practices of staying, remaining, repeating, enduring and taking care of one another and our mutual remains. One of the few people that I interviewed who claims to enjoy cleaning, puts it like this:

> ***Johanna:*** When I look at that armchair, for example, it's like having a relation to it, because I know that I've wiped it. A bit like that. It's like a relationship simply. Yeah, whaddya call it?
>
> ***Fanny:*** Tactile?
>
> ***Johanna:*** Yes, something tactile, exactly. But not only tactile, also something that has to do with taste and smell and touch. Sensuous. Yes, sensuous! It's a very sensuous experience to clean. It is both sensuous and spatial. And, spiritual, actually, I think. There is something in just knowing that *this one here, is here*, although *this one* I clean in that way. Like as if you were able to know someone

> else's body, how it feels and what it wants. It's like a relationship, but a relationship to the room and the objects. In a way, cleaning reminds me of an act of love. You show that you take care of the place where you live and that there is something nice about that. It's like a healing process, something reparational, or how to put it. There is something about the act of caring. I think you can say that I like fiddling around with my things. That it's nice to fiddle with one's stuff, simply put. That's what I do, I think.

To "fiddle with one's stuff", as Johanna puts it, involves signing oneself into a motion of bodies, cleaning, over time — thus transcending oneself and one's individuality. The act of surrendering to the basic facts of life: deterioration, decay and the passage of time — reveals how dependence and care must be regarded as the prerequisite of life, rather than a hampering burden. Following this line of thought, Simone de Beauvoir's description of the housewife's hopeless water treading, formulated as such: "She does nothing; she only perpetuates the present" (2010:474), serves less, I imagine, as a description of Edelman's embrace of the asocial negativity, than of a kind of care for the present. It is a solicitude in drab colours, which, through its stubborn repetition and focus on decay, does not shy away from the dead or dying. Such solicitousness, I suppose, can also point to a possible different source of meaning than prospective individual self-realisation.

From this perspective, cleaning might be perceived as a form of resistance, transcending the whole idea of being against something, but rather making space for other ways of organising life and society (Baaz et al 2016:143). Following Lisa Baraitser's call for a recognition of life as conditioned by repetition and endurance, I thus propose cleaning, with its backward and downward motion, as a reasonable starting point for a feminist politics. This is a direction in which the smallest common denominator is the recognition of the repetitive character of everyday life, our coexistence with deterioration and the affirmation of common vulnerability. The way a society cleans, how we deal with the remains, rubbish and left-overs, could simply be formulated as the starting point for how well we deal with our common needs.

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Author presentation

Fanny Ambjörnsson is Associate Professor in Gender Studies at the Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies, Stockholm University. Apart from research on cleaning and care work, her research interests generally concerns young femininities, queer resistance, queer temporalities.

Corresponding author
Fanny Ambjörnsson
Stockholm University
Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies
106 91 Stockholm
Mail: fanny.ambjornsson@gender.su.se

ERIKA WALL, JOHN SELANDER & JONNY BERGMAN

Makt och motstånd i rehabiliteringsprocessen

Sanningen om tidig återgång i arbete utmanad

Power and resistance in the rehabilitation process – The truth about early return to work challenged
The aim of this study is to reach a deeper understanding of the ambition of early return-to-work, defined in the rehabilitation process, and what it means for some of those affected, women on sick-leave. Based on a governmental inquiry and responses to an open question from a survey, a discourse analyze is made with focus on how power and resistance appear in the material. The analysis show that the governmental inquiry can be understood as shaping discursive practices where early return-to-work is central. From that, the individual is positioned as a ”passive” receiver of rehabilitation, and/or as ”slow” in regard to norms created in the rehabilitation process. In relation to this, the women on sick-leave show resistance. That is, they oppose the normative speed of rehabilitation. From this, we mean that there is a need for variation when it comes to time in the process of return to work.

Keywords: rehabilitation, early return-to-work, time; resistance, discourse analysis

REHABILITERING OCH ÅTERGÅNG i arbete i Sverige styrs av lagar och riktlinjer ursprungligen formulerade i samband med rehabiliteringsreformen 1992. Det var då som begreppet arbetslivsinriktad rehabilitering för första gången infördes i socialförsäkringen och Försäkringskassan fick ett både omfattande och övergripande ansvar för rehabilitering. Samtidigt gav man arbetsgivaren ett förstahandsansvar för rehabilitering av individen vilket innebar att arbetsgivaren skulle svara för att de åtgärders vidtas som behövs för en effektiv rehabilitering. Titeln på det betänkande som låg till grund för reformen 1992 var *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) och det var en talande titel. Den övergripande tanken i betänkandet var nämligen att processen för återgång till arbete skulle vara just *tidig* och samordnad, något som framgår med tydlighet i utredningens inledande text:

> Det är genom tidiga insatser, som man förebygger långtidssjukskrivningar och förtidspensioneringar. Det är välkända fakta att ju längre tid en försäkrad är sjukskriven desto större är risken att han inte skall komma tillbaka i arbete. (---)

> Ju tidigare åtgärder för individen som kan sättas in desto mindre omfattande blir sannolikt behovet av insatser senare (SOU 1988:41, s. 13).

Ansvaret för samordning lades i huvudsak på Försäkringskassan och ansvaret för tidiga åtgärder ålades i första hand arbetsgivaren. Bland övriga aktörer vars ansvar lyftes fram fanns Arbetsförmedlingen, Försäkringskassan, kommunerna sjuk- och hälsovården med flera. Reformen motiverades utifrån den forskning som stod till buds då, och som därefter bekräftats, där man visat att processen för återgång i arbetet generellt främjas av tidigt initierade rehabiliterande åtgärder. Dessa resultat har visat sig vara gällande i såväl svenska förhållanden (Marnetoft et al. 2001; Selander et al. 2002; Selander et al. 2015) som internationellt (Arnetz 2003; Lydell et al. 2005; Rinaldo & Selander 2016). En viktig aspekt som lyfts fram till stöd för tidig återgång i arbete är att sjukfrånvaro ska innebära så litet avbrott som möjligt för individen (Fadyl, McPherson & Nicholls 2015).

Under senare år har man i forskning börjat ifrågasätta den strikta fokuseringen på tidiga åtgärder. Man menar exempelvis att vissa individer vars funktionsnedsättning är kraftig och/eller kvarstående; vilka inte sedan tidigare befinner sig på arbetsmarknaden, eller vars arbetssituation var ohållbar redan innan sjukskrivning inte vinner på tidiga åtgärder (Fadyl & McPherson 2010; Levack, McPherson & McNaughton 2004; Ottomanelli & Lind 2009; van Vlezen et al. 2009). Vad gäller tidigare studier, vilka stöder hypotesen om tidiga insatser effektivitet, har det visat sig att dessa nästan uteslutande bygger på kvantitativa och aggregerade data och att kvalitativa studier av hur tidiga insatser påverkar individen nästan saknas helt (Tjulin, MacEachen & Ekberg 2011). Det finns studier vilka går emot hypotesen om tidiga insatsers effektivitet som visar att tidig återgång i arbete vid sjukdom kan vara direkt skadligt (Eakin, MacEachen & Clarke 2003). Seing med kollegor (2015) menar att det helt saknas evidens för tidiga insatsers effektivitet och att antagandet om att tidig återgång generellt sett är att föredra ofta bygger på metodologiskt svaga studier. De analyser som presenterats pekar på att den sjukskrivne individen måste ses som unik och att processen från sjukskriven åter i arbete därför inte kan standardiseras (Tjulin, MacEachen & Ekberg 2011, Seing et al. 2015). För många individer kan tidiga insatser vara bra, men inte för alla. Det finns mycket som talar för att själva fokuseringen på tidiga insatser och högt tempo i rehabiliteringsprocessen för vissa kan bli det största hindret för återgång i arbete.

Mot denna bakgrund väljer vi här att fokusera på hur rehabiliteringsprocessen beskrivits i *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) med särskilt fokus på ambitionen om *tidig återgång* i arbete vid sjukskrivning. Vi kommer undersöka hur långtidssjukrivna kvinnor i dag förhåller sig till förutsättningar för återgång i arbete, särskilt ifråga om tid och tempo. Dessa analytiska utgångspunkter skiljer sig från tidigare studier av rehabiliteringsreformen 1992, vilka istället har fokuserat på de strukturer som låg bakom idén om arbetslivsinriktad rehabilitering (Lindqvist 2000); principer för bistånd och disciplinering som styrande för rehabiliteringsprocessen (Grape 2001) och rehabiliteringsreformens i relation till de principer som är styrande för arbetsmarknaden i stort (Brulin & Bäckström 2006).

Avsikten med föreliggande studie är att bidra till fördjupad förståelse för rehabiliteringsprocessens ambition om tidig återgång i arbete och vad detta innebär för dem det berör, de sjukskrivna. Hur makt och motstånd tar sig uttryck i rehabiliteringsprocessen kommer att undersökas i relation till *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) och utsagor från långtidssjukskrivna kvinnor, särskilt med avseende på tid och tempo.

Syftet är att, med fokus på tid och temporalitet, diskutera hur makt och motstånd kan förstås i relation till de sanningsanspråk som görs i rehabiliteringsprocessen.

Teoretisk referensram

Återgång i arbete, som kunskapsproduktion genom myndighetstext och utifrån individers upplevelser, analyseras i föreliggande artikel utifrån teoretiska perspektiv på makt och motstånd, särskilt i relation till tid och tempo.

Vad gäller kunskapsproduktion av detta slag blir individen ett objekt som kunskap skapas kring (Foucault 1970/1981) och hur kunskap definieras och legitimeras blir ett uttryck för makt över individen. Hur makt gestaltas genom denna kunskapsproduktion, och hur detta skapar ramar som beskriver individens handlingsutrymme, beskrivs av Foucault genom att maktutövande kopplas till diskursiva praktiker (Foucault 1970/1981). Genom olika former av maktrelationer kategoriseras individen. Dessa kategoriseringar tvingar sig på individen som sanning som individen måste ta till sig. Genom detta sätter sig sådana kategoriserar i individens egen identitet och som något andra ser i denne (Foucault 1982). Detta innebär att diskursiva praktiker positionerar individen som subjekt. Dessa diskursiva praktiker formar därmed förutsättningarna för individen att tolka situationen, liksom att tolka sig själv, i den specifika situationen. Hur kunskap gestaltas genom diskursiva praktiker skapar därmed förgivettagna ”sanningar” om vad som förväntas av individen och den roll i vilken hon befinner sig. Detta sker genom åtskiljande praktiker, gränsdragningar och uteslutningar vilket gör det omöjligt att tänka utanför den legitimerade kunskap som skapats inom området. De diskursiva praktikerna syftar således till att skapa en sanning som samtidigt gömmer alternativa sanningar. De diskursiva praktikerna osynliggör hur maktutövandet har direkta effekter på individen. Att analysera diskurser ger därmed möjlighet att synliggöra hur produktionen av diskurser, genom olika praktiker, skapar ordning och reda genom att bestämma vilken förståelse av ett fenomen som ska ses som sann. Genom analys av hur diskurser upprätthålls genom diskursiva praktiker är det således möjligt att belysa vilka förgivettagna tolkningar som ges makt som ”sanningar”. En sådan analys synliggör hur vissa perspektiv ges makt som det styrande kunskapsanspråket, dess (vilja till) sanning (jämför med ”will to truth”, Foucault 1970/1981). Den diskursiva praktiken kan således beskrivas som en teknik som används för att framställa och gestalta kunskap. Foucault beskriver dessa processer på följande sätt:

> [T]he production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality (Foucault 1970/1981:52).

Effekter av hur maktrelationer i diskursen skapas genom diskursiva praktiker kan synliggöras i hur kroppar görs fogliga genom disciplinering (jämför med Foucault 2003) och den kunskap som produceras och ses som sann överförs till individen genom disciplinerande tekniker. För kropparnas disciplinering måste kroppen övervakas och kontrolleras i relation till plats och tid. De disciplinerande teknikerna sätter således kroppars förmåga i relation till tidsenheter inom vilka den mänskliga kraften ska användas för produktion. Disciplineringen syftar till att öka kroppens krafter ur ekonomisk synpunkt och samtidigt minska dem ur politisk synpunkt (Foucault 2003). Foucault (2003) menar att varje rörelse behöver en riktning, en varaktighet och en ordningsföljd (Wehrle 2016) och att ett användande av kroppen som uppfattas ”korrekt” ska förstås i relation till att tiden samtidigt används ”korrekt” där inget får lämnas overksamt eller onödigt (ibid.). Att registrera och kontrollera var människor befinner sig och vad de gör genom olika förutbestämda processer skapar ordning. På liknande sätt skapas en kontroll av tiden genom ett förutbestämt system som beskriver vad som ska göras när, hur fort och i vilken följd (Foucault 2003). Dessa tekniker skapar således en tydlig maktrelation där individen blir underkastad samhällssystemet och tvingas lyda under en disciplin som nyttiggör henne i relation till samhället.

Makt vad gäller tid och tempo är inte på något sätt en ny fråga, varken som fenomen eller specifikt i relation till arbete i det moderna västerländska samhället (se till exempel Marx 1867/1971, Weber 1930/1978)[1]. Teoretiska perspektiv på tid, tempo och acceleration har använts för att tolka och förstå det moderna västerländska samhället och dess processer (se till exempel Eriksen 2001; Gleick 1999; Rifkin 1987; Rosa 2003, 2005/2013; Rosa, Dörre & Lessenich 2017; Tomlinson 2007; Virilio 1999, Wajcman 2008). Begreppen inom området ses ofta som delvis överlappande (Ulferst, Korunka & Kubicek 2013) där exempelvis acceleration har använts såväl för att beskriva övergripande förändringar i samhället (Gleick 1999) som förändringar i tidsanvändning (Garhammer 2002) eller individens upplevelser av tidspress (Levine 1997; Szollos 2009).

Här utgår vi ifrån synen på accelererad tid som en föreställning om hur tid kan användas för att nå en punkt av maximal effektivitet (Lilja 2018, se Foucault 2003). Detta perspektiv kan relateras till Rosa (2005/2013) som menar att den stora betydelse temporalitet fått i dagens samhälle ska förstås i ljuset av att tidsbesparing värderas högt på såväl makro- som mikronivå (Rosa 2005/2013, jämför med Andersen et al. 2018). Detta innebär att det ökade tempot *i sig* har gett upphov till en värderingsförskjutning där det som uppfattas som ”snabbt” föredras framför mer

1 För en fördjupad diskussion kring hur relationen mellan tid och makt kan förstås över tid, se Epstein & Kalleberg (eds.). (2004).

”långsamma” alternativ (Adam 2003, jämför med Rosa 2003, 2005/2013; Rosa, Dörre & Lessenich 2017).

Dessa perspektiv på makt och tid visar alltså att individer har, som subjekt, att förhålla sig till disciplinerande tekniker som inte bara kontrollerar vad som ska göras inom en viss tid, utan också definierar snabbhet som en dygd i sig:

> The accelerated tempo, entwined subjectivities and contemporary forms of human experiences have emerged in interactions with discursive processes, which define effective time-usage as a virtue. (Lilja 2018:424)

Samtidigt som en analys av diskurser kan användas för analys av makt och temporalitet, och för att synliggöra hur individen blir ett till synes passivt objekt begränsad till den rådande diskursen, visar exempelvis Wehrle (2016) på en öppning för individen att uttrycka motstånd mot hur kroppen disciplinerats genom förgivettagna normer. Hon menar att:

> Foucault's detailed description of the docile body thus seems to suggest the possibility of a non-docile body. It seems implicit that before all of these mechanisms are exercised upon it, there is a wild and rebellious body, a body that bears the possibility of resistance against a restrictive power and forced embodiment of norms. (Wehrle 2016:60)

Även om Wherle (2016) medger att det vore att gå emot Foucaults grundläggande argumentation att påstå att det under den normaliserade och disciplinerade kroppen skulle finnas en underliggande mänsklighet, är det en intressant ingång för analys av individens motstånd. Wehrle uppmärksammar nämligen hur motstånd mot de disciplinerande teknikerna synliggörs genom hur individen börjar skapa mening kring det som inte fungerar i enlighet med normaliserade och rutinartade handlingar (Wehrle 2016). Motstånd utgörs således av praktiker på mikronivå, snarare än stora sociala revolutioner (Death 2010). Detta kan förstås som uttryck för *individens motstånd mot disciplinerande tekniker*, vilket av Foucault (1997) benämns som ”counter-conduct” (Death 2010) och ställs i relation till ”the power that conducts”, alltså makten att styra individen (Odysseos, Death & Malmvig 2016). Individens motstånd mot disciplinerande tekniker, ”counter-conduct”, definieras av Foucault som: ”[a] struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others” (2007:201). Detta motstånd beskriver det täta sambandet mellan motståndet och den styrning mot vilken motståndet utförs (Death 2010, Lilja 2018) och tar sig uttryck i ifrågasättanden av den rådande ordningen:

> how not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principals, with such and such objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them (Foucault 1997:28, författarens kursivering).

Motstånd mot disciplinerande praktiker har också synliggjorts av Lilja (2018) särskilt ifråga om tid och tempo. Hon diskuterar motståndets tid och temporalitet utifrån läsningar av Foucaults teorier om motstånd i den meningen att ”Foucault's theorising on resitance displays how time, power, and resistance are all intertwined” (Lilja 2018:430). Lilja relaterar olika tidsaspekter till olika former av motstånd, där hon bland annat lyfter fram *inbromsning* som ett motstånd mot accelererad tid: ”resistance in accelerating spaces might occur as point of deceleration” (Lilja 2018:424). I tidigare studier med fokus på temporalitet har aspekter av stabilitet, orörlighet och tröghet förbisetts (Wajcman 2015; Vostal 2017) och de perspektiv Lilja (2018) för fram kring tid och temporalitet kan ses som svar på detta.

I föreliggande studie väljer vi att utgå ifrån normers inverkan för att kunna analysera inte bara hur disciplinering av individen reproducerar maktförhållanden mellan samhällets institutioner och individen (Wehrle 2016), utan också hur individen kan tillskrivas aktivitet (Wehrle 2016, Lilja 2018). Detta ger möjlighet att analysera hur individers utsagor inte bara ska förstås i relation till den sanning som (re)produceras genom dessa berättelser utan också i relation till den position hon placeras i genom olika diskursiva praktiker (Wehrle, 2016). Vi knyter också an till Thomas och Davies (2005) som visar på en diskursiv produktion av motstånd där individens kritiska reflektion också ses som uttryck för kraft och motstånd (jämför med Wehrle 2016). Dessa perspektiv på makt och motstånd innebär att inte bara individens aktiva handlingar inkluderas, utan också individuella upplevelser av motsägelser, spänningar och missnöjen som tillskrivs betydelse. Motstånd kan därmed synliggöras genom att artikulera spänningar som uppstår i olika relationer eller mellan olika tolkningsramar/diskurser (Thomas & Davies 2005:687). Vad vi har här är således ett utrymme att analysera individens motstånd, vad gäller tid och temporalitet, där subjektivitet och makt lyfts fram som särskilt relevanta perspektiv (jämför med Lilja 2018; Wehrle 2016; Thomas & Davies 2005).

Metod

Den teoretiska referensramen om hur makt görs genom diskursiva praktiker och tas emot av individen som förgivettagna sanningar (jämför med Foucault 1970/1981) och som individen också möter med motstånd (Wehrle 2016) ligger här till grund för diskursanalys av dokument och enskilda individers utsagor om förutsättningar för återgång i arbete. Att lyfta såväl makt som motstånd i analysen går också att återkoppla till Foucault själv, som menar att de motsättningar som gör motstånd möjligt, går att återfinna i diskurserna själva:

> …discourse transmits and produce power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (Foucault 1990:101).

Datamaterial

Analysen i föreliggande studie baseras på två material. Inledningsvis analyseras de utgångspunkter som är styrande för ambitionerna om tidig återgång i arbete vid sjukskrivning och som präglar hur den svenska rehabiliteringsprocessen ser ut idag. Här har vi valt att studera detta genom analys av utredningen *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) som låg till grund för rehabiliteringsreformen 1992.

Därefter, och i relation till den första delen av analysen, följer analys av ett material baserat på utsagor inhämtade från kvinnor i offentlig sektor som vid tiden för datainsamlingen var, eller under året innan hade varit, långtidssjukskrivna. Detta empiriska material består av utsagor i vilka *tid* och/eller *tempo* gavs mening i relation till upplevelser av förutsättningar för återgång i arbete. Materialet omfattar skriftliga svar på en öppen enkätfråga. Utsagorna är inhämtade från 26 kvinnor anställda i en kommun vilka under 2015 hade varit sjukskrivna till följd av psykisk ohälsa i 60 dagar eller mer. Vid tiden för insamling av data var vissa personer ännu sjukskrivna på hel- eller deltid och andra hade återgått i arbete på den arbetsplats där de arbetade innan sjukskrivning eller på annat håll.

Procedur

De individuella utsagorna om återgång i arbete samlades in genom en enkätundersökning som efter granskning av den lokala etikkommittén vid Mittuniversitetet, vilken inte hade några invändningar med avseende på etiska frågor, genomfördes under våren 2016 i en kommun i Sverige med drygt 5000 anställda.

Enkäten distribuerades till de som under 2015 hade varit sjukskrivna 60 dagar eller mer, totalt 280 personer, och av dessa svarade 204 personer (svarsfrekvens 73%). Analysen i föreliggande artikel fokuserar på berättelser om *tid* i deltagarnas svar om förutsättningar för återgång i arbete vid långvarig sjukskrivning på grund av psykisk ohälsa. Detta innebär att endast en mindre del av materialet inkluderas här: det som kommer från kvinnor som uppgivit sjukskrivning på grund av psykiska besvär och vilka svarat på den sista frågan i enkäten: ”Vilka åtgärder skulle bäst underlätta återgång i arbete för dig?” (56 personer). Av dessa var det drygt hälften (26 personer) som explicit talade om *tid* i relation till åtgärder för att underlätta återgång i arbete. Analyserna i föreliggande studie baseras på dessa utsagor.

Den öppna enkätfråga om stöd för återgång i arbete, som ligger till grund för de utsagor som analyseras här, var formulerad på så vis att det hade varit möjligt för deltagarna att svara kortfattat genom att återge specifika exempel på stödjande åtgärder. Ungefär en fjärdedel av deltagarna gjorde också det, och ett sådant svar kunde då se ut så här: ”omplacering” (deltagare 56). Ytterligare en fjärdedel av deltagarna svarade med en kort mening, som i detta exempel: ”Att jobba dagtid då det är bättre bemannat” (deltagare 47). Vad som dock överraskade oss var att resten av deltagarna (ungefär hälften av de kvinnor med psykosomatiska besvär som besvarat frågan) svarade frågan på ett berättande sätt där svaren inte begränsades till den specifika frågan utan också berättade om upplevelser av situationen på arbetsplatsen, under sjukskrivningen och/eller av förutsättningar för återgång i arbete. Den fråga som ställdes avgränsades till

stödjande åtgärder för återgång i arbete men dessa berättelser begränsades inte till sådana, utan gav också gripande berättelser om svårigheter som karaktäriserat situationen på arbetet innan sjukskrivning, problem relaterade till sjukskrivningsprocessen och funderingar kring hinder för återgång i arbete.

Utifrån den teoretiska referensram som ligger till grund för de analyser som görs här, där Foucaults perspektiv på makt och motstånd fokuseras (Wehrle 2016; Thomas & Davies 2005; Foucault 1997), förstås deltagarnas själva besvarande av frågan i enkäten som ett aktivt handlande. Deras utsagor är alltså inte att betrakta som objekt, utan som uttryck för en händelse (jämför med Fairclough 2001). Att enkäten i sin helhet handlade om upplevelser av återgång i arbete innebär därtill att deltagarnas utsagor ska förstås specifikt i relation till förgivettagna idéer om rehabiliteringsprocessen. De kan således sägas ha producerats vid ett kommunikativt tillfälle (de Beaugrande & Dressler 1981) vilket utgör grunden till varför detta urval av utsagor lämpar sig för diskursanalys. Datamaterialets karaktäristika ger också att analysen är avgränsad till tolkningar av deltagarnas görande inom ramen för det handlingsutrymme som gavs i denna specifika situation av att besvara enkäten. Analysen gör således inga anspråk att besvara frågor om hur långtidssjukskrivna kvinnor förhåller sig till förutsättningar för återgång i arbete utanför denna specifika situation, utan knyts helt och hållet till hur deltagarna agerar i relation till rehabiliteringsprocessens ramar *genom* sina svar på den fråga i enkäten som här studeras.

Enkätmaterialet har analyserats tidigare utifrån andra teorier och analysmetoder, med fokus dels på individens upplevelse av stöd och kontakt med ansvarig chef, vilket analyserades statistiskt (Buys, Selander & Sun 2017), och dels med fokus på upplevelser av vilka som är de viktigaste stödjande faktorerna för återgång i arbete för kvinnor som varit sjukskrivna på grund av psykiska besvär (Wall & Selander 2018). Resultat av den senare, kvalitativa, analysen gav fem tematiska områden inom vilka deltagarna upplevde möjligheter till stöd för återgång i arbete: arbetstid, arbetsbelastning, förståelse, lugn och ro samt möjlighet att börja om (ibid.).

Analysmetod

För att undersöka rehabiliteringsprocessens ambition om tidig återgång i arbete, och vad detta innebär för de sjukskrivna, gör vi en diskursanalys med fokus dels på hur diskursiva praktiker gestaltas (Foucault 1970/1981) och dels på hur individen förhåller sig till detta, bland annat genom att i viss mån ge uttryck för motstånd mot den rådande diskursen (Wehrle 2016). Utgångspunkten för vår analys är att de ambitioner om tidig återgång som präglar svensk arbetslivsinriktad rehabilitering har betydelse för de människor som förväntas återgå i arbete enligt ambitionen om *tidig återgång* (SOU 1988:41). I analysen undersöker vi hur myndighetstext bidrar till att skapa positioner som människor har att förhålla sig till. Vidare analyserar vi hur utsagor om betydelsen av tid och tempo för förutsättningar för återgång i arbete kan ge uttryck för motstånd mot dessa förgivettagna positioner.

Analyserna görs genom en stegvis analysprocess där textgranskning utgör det inledande *beskrivande* steget i analysprocessen av de båda datamaterialen. Analysen

av myndighetstexten (SOU 1988:41) fokuserar därefter på *tolkning* av hur individen objektifieras och tilldelas olika positioner genom de kategoriseringar som görs och som är del av rehabiliteringsprocessen (jämför med Boréus 2011). Utifrån vårt syfte lägger vi särskild vikt i analysen vid att titta närmare på vilka sätt de diskursiva praktiker som formar rehabiliteringsprocessen bidrar till inkludering och exkludering (Foucault 1970/1981). Genom detta är avsikten att synliggöra hur de diskursiva praktiker och sanningsanspråk som produceras inom en diskurs ger konsekvenser för individen (Rose 1996). I relation till strävan efter *tidig* återgång i arbete vid sjukskrivning (SOU 1988:41) lägger vi särskilt märke till hur de som avviker från normen om ett visst tempo i rehabiliteringsprocessen beskrivs, kategoriseras och disciplineras, vilket utgör det sista steget i denna del av analysen.

Också i analysen av deltagarnas utsagor (enkätsvaren) utgör textanalys det första steget som inkluderar en bedömning av vilka svar som är att definiera som utsagor om tid och *beskrivning* av dessa. I den andra delen (*tolkning*, Boréus 2011.) av denna analys går vi vidare och tolkar hur de individer, som är del av rehabiliteringsprocessen som helt eller delvis sjukskrivna, förhåller sig till de diskursiva praktikerna kring tidig återgång i arbete. Slutligen fokuserar vi på betydelsen av motstånd. Med utgångspunkt i de perspektiv på motstånd som presenteras av Wehrle (2016) fokuserar vi här det motstånd som uppstår när de sjukskrivna ger uttryck för frågor som berör tid och tempo i rehabiliteringsprocessen. Detta innebär att vi tittar närmare på hur deltagarnas utsagor bidrar till *förståelse* för hur kroppar och upplevelser skaver mot de diskursiva praktiker och den förgivettagna sanning om tidig återgång som präglar rehabiliteringsprocessen för att synliggöra hur denna process ifrågasätts av kvinnorna.

Analys

Betoningen på *tidig* återgång till arbete efter sjukdom kan förstås utifrån de ambitioner som presenterades för första gången som ett grundläggande ramverk för reformeringen av rehabiliteringsprocessen i *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) och har därefter, i nu trettio år, genomsyrat strävan för rehabiliteringsverksamheten i Sverige med fokus på å ena sidan tidiga rehabiliteringsåtgärder, vilket fokuseras här, och å andra sidan samordning av rehabiliteringsprocessen och dess aktörer. På så vis kan denna utredning än idag ge en god överblick över de idéer som ligger till grund för processen för återgång i arbete i Sverige. I denna första del av analysen kommer vi att titta närmare på hur *tidig återgång* presenteras som en av de mest centrala aspekterna för rehabiliteringsprocessen i Sverige.

Hur myndighetstext skapar ramar för hur rehabiliteringsprocessen kan förstås

Vår textanalys visar att betänkandet *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) ger uttryck för vad vi menar är en överordnad samhällsdiskurs som framhåller självförsörjning genom lönearbete. Denna diskurs byggs upp i beredningen av en idé om kroppens förmåga att bidra till samhället. Utgångspunkten förutsätter en viss kropp: den funktionsduglige och arbetande kroppen. Nedsatt funktion ses därmed som be-

roende och underordnad (jämför med Bergman & Wall 2017, Lövgren 2014). Vår tolkning är således att diskursen om självförsörjning genom lönearbete byggs upp av diskursiva praktiker (jämför med Foucault 1970/1981). I det andra, tolkande, steget av analysen av beredningen (SOU 1988:41) blir det tydligt hur ambitionen är att kroppar och deras sinnen ska disciplinerats att bli fogliga för att upprätthålla idén om självförsörjning genom lönearbete. Det sista steget av analysen bidrar till förståelse för hur delar av denna disciplinering handlar om positionering av individen och att sätta kroppars förmåga i relation till idéer om tid och tempo. I beredningen (SOU 1988:41) blir detta särskilt tydligt genom hur texten genomsyras av argument för tidiga insatser och snabba processer genom rehabiliteringsverksamheten. Tidiga rehabiliteringsåtgärder blir således en del av samhällets disciplinering för att styra mänskliga kroppar till att, inom en viss tidsenhet, uppnå en viss förmåga, nämligen förmågan till (heltids)arbete.

Beredningen *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) präglas av idéer där tid och tempo ges stort värde. Att högt tempo i rehabiliteringsprocessens inledande skede är att föredra framställs som en sanning. Beredningen slår fast:

> Vikten av tidigt insatta rehabiliteringsinsatser är allmänt känd (SOU 1988:41, s. 165).

Denna utgångspunkt står i det närmaste oemotsagd genom betänkandet. Tidiga åtgärder ges därmed mening som rationella sanningar och synliggör hur detta perspektiv ges makt som det styrande kunskapsanspråket (jämför med Foucault 1970/1981). I materialet återfinns återkommande poängteringar av betydelsen av *tidig* återgång, som i följande exempel:

> *Tidigt* insatta rehabiliteringsåtgärder är grunden för en lyckad rehabilitering (SOU 1988:41, s. 189, vår kursivering).

> En huvudprincip för rehabilitering är, som tidigare poängterats, att den igångsätts *så tidigt som möjligt* i sjukfallet (SOU 1988:41, s. 212—213, vår kursivering).

Att högt tempo privilegieras känner vi också igen i de teoretiska perspektiv på tid, tempo och acceleration som använts för att beskriva dagens samhälle (se till exempel Adam 2003; Andersen et al. 2018; Rosa 2005/2013). Vår analys visar således att de perspektiv på tid och tempo som lyfts fram i *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) synliggör en övergripande idé där *tidigt* och *snabbt* värderas högt (jämför med Adam 2003; Andersen et al. 2018; Rosa 2005/2013). Argumentationen för tidig återgång till arbete framstår därmed som en diskursiv praktik som riktar den sjukskrivne individen åter mot normen: lönearbetet. Denna diskursiva praktik bygger på en vilja att kontrollera tiden för återgång i arbete och hur snabbt detta ska ske. Vi skulle alltså kunna säga att den övergripande diskursen bygger på en idé om accelererad tid (Lilja 2018) vilket konkretiseras genom den diskursiva praktiken för tidig rehabilitering. Här

benämner vi denna diskursiva praktik för tidig rehabilitering[2]. I betänkandet presenteras dessa perspektiv på rehabiliteringsprocessen som sanningar redan i inledningen där man säger:

> Ju tidigare adekvata åtgärder sätts in, desto större blir chanserna för att rehabiliteringsarbetet blir framgångsrikt (SOU 1988:41, s. 337).

Vad vi har här är en diskursiv ram där *tidiga* insatser står oemotsagda och ges mening som *framgångsrika* satsningar. Detta förstärks ytterligare ifråga om dess koppling till framgång, genom att tidig återgång kopplas till ekonomisk effektivitet, som i detta exempel:

> För att effektivisera rehabiliteringsverksamheten är det ytterst viktigt att resurserna sätts in så tidigt som möjligt i sjukfallet (SOU 1988:41, s. 165).

Beredningen beskriver detta förhållande på flera sätt genom betänkandet:

> Om man med hjälp av effektivare, tidigare insatta och utökade rehabiliteringsåtgärder kunde reducera den genomsnittliga sjukskrivningstiden med bara några fåtal procent, skulle besparingseffekten enbart ifråga om sjukpenningskostnader kunna räknas i 100-tals miljoner kronor årligen (SOU 1988:41, s. 35).

Genom ekonomiska argument som dessa blir det tydligt hur dessa perspektiv på tidiga insatser återkopplar till vad vi förstår som den övergripande diskursen inom vilken heltidsarbete framhålls. Denna görs tydlig genom dess koppling inte bara till rehabiliteringsprocessens kvalitet ifråga om kortare sjukskrivningar, utan också vad gäller förutsättningar för minskade samhällskostnader. Det första steget i analysen har således visat att vad vi har här är ett tydligt uttryck för normen om den arbetsdugliga kroppen, där det andra steget i analysen tydliggjort hur budskapet, att *tidig* rehabilitering privilegieras, konkretiseras som en diskursiv praktik. Denna praktik har under de senaste trettio åren präglat politik och verksamhet vad gäller arbetslivsinriktad rehabilitering. Det sista steget i vår analys av beredningen visar hur individen fogas genom disciplinerande tekniker. Genom dessa har *tidig* rehabilitering, som diskursiv praktik, stor betydelse för dem som är del av rehabiliteringsprocessen, de sjuka. Denna del av analysen fördjupas i följande avsnitt.

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2 Föreliggande artikel fokuserar på betydelsen av tid och tempo i rehabiliteringsprocessen och avgränsas därmed naturligt till frågor om tidig rehabilitering i beredningens betänkande. Som titeln på beredningen antyder präglas materialet dock av grundläggande idéer om att rehabilitering ska inte bara tidigt utan också samordnat. En alternativ förståelse för materialet skulle kunna bygga på samordning som diskursiv praktik. Vår analys visar dock att den idé som är bärande i materialet är frågan om tidig rehabilitering. Samordning ses som ett nödvändigt verktyg för att skapa förutsättningar för att sätta igång rehabiliteringsprocessen tidigt.

Hur sjukskrivna tillskrivs roller genom rehabiliteringsprocessen

Som vi visat är *tidig rehabilitering* att förstå som en diskursiv praktik som bygger på ett tydligt maktperspektiv där den enskilde individen objektifieras och genom det tilldelas roller i relation till den övergripande diskursen som framhåller självförsörjning genom lönearbete. Individen värderas således utifrån sina förutsättningar att genomgå ”framgångsrik rehabilitering” (SOU 1988:41, s. 337). Beredningen präglas av en värderingstyngd syn på tidig återgång i arbete vid sjukskrivning och snabba processer som också görs synlig ifråga om individen, den sjuke.

Genom fokus på tidig rehabilitering framstår det att ambitionen med rehabiliteringsprocessen är att foga avvikande individer (det vill säga kroppar vilka helt eller delvis avviker från förmåga till lönearbete) för att närma sig normen, att arbeta. Vår analys visar att dessa processer genom diskursiva praktiker objektifierar individer vilka avviker från den norm som präglar diskursen. I materialet blir två roller särskilt tydliga: *den passiva mottagaren* och *den långsamma*.

Den första roll som framstår som särskilt central i materialet är den som tilldelas den individ som avviker från normen om den arbetsdugliga kroppen genom att vara sjukskriven. I materialet osynliggörs den enskilde individen genom formuleringar i beredningen (SOU 1988:41) där man istället för att lyfta fram individen talar om ”rehabiliteringsarbetet”, ”rehabiliteringsåtgärder” och på liknande sätt fokuserar på rehabilitering som en samhällelig process. Genom detta förstås individen som en kropp som ska disciplineras (jämför med Foucault 2003) och som ska hanteras från ett samhällsperspektiv. Därmed blir individen också definierad som en passiv mottagare av rehabilitering. Av detta skäl etiketterar vi här den rollen som *den passiva mottagaren*. Ett exempel på detta ges i följande citat, där individen inte alls nämns, utan blir underförstådd som passiv mottagare av ”åtgärder” för ”rehabiliteringsarbetet”:

> Ju tidigare adekvata åtgärder sätts in, desto större blir chanserna för att rehabiliteringsarbetet blir framgångsrikt (SOU 1988:41, s. 337).

Den underliggande förståelsen av den passiva mottagaren bidrar till att bygga upp den diskursiva förståelsen av den tidiga – och därmed framgångsrika – rehabiliteringsprocessen som relaterar till den rådande diskursen om självförsörjning genom lönearbete.

Den andra roll som framstår som särskilt betydelsebärande i materialet tilldelas de som inte bara avviker från normen om arbetsförmåga, utan också avviker ifråga om att kunna genomgå rehabilitering i sådant tempo som förväntas av den sjuka. Denna dubbelt avvikande roll etiketterar vi här som *den långsamma*. Långtidssjukskrivna individer värderas som avvikande i beredningen (SOU 1988:41) i relation till den dominerande diskursen om att kunna försörja sig själv genom lönearbete och förstås också som avvikande i förhållande till den diskursiva praktiken, gestaltad genom ambitionen om tidig rehabilitering så som den uttrycks i beredningen. Genom detta är vår analys att personer med lång tids sjukskrivning förstås som dubbelt avvikande i förhållande till såväl normen om arbetsduglighet som i förhållande till normen om rehabiliteringens tänkta process.

Analysen tydliggör att rehabiliteringsprocesser som inkluderar individer vilka snabbt kan återgå i arbete privilegieras. Detta görs genom att dessa kontrasteras mot de processer som kräver särskilda åtgärder – exempelvis inkluderande personer med lång tids sjukskrivning och/eller de som har en historia av många efter varandra följande sjukskrivningsperioder. Detta synliggör hur idén om tidig rehabilitering bidrar till att de långsamma positioneras som en roll som kräver särskild hantering för att uppnå självförsörjning genom lönearbete. Ett exempel ur materialet där sådan positionering går att förstå följer i detta citat:

> En effektivisering av samhällets rehabiliteringsåtgärder har till syfte att dels förbättra utsikterna till att en långtidssjukskriven över huvud taget rehabiliteras, dels förkorta den tid rehabiliteringsprocessen tar (SOU 1988:41: 337, om ekonomiska effekter av utredningens förslag).

Vår analys av materialet visar också att de enda gånger individen lyfts fram och görs synlig i beredningen är i de fall då ansvar för svårigheter i rehabiliteringsprocessen skjuts över till individen, som i följande exempel:

> Ofta sätts rehabiliteringsinsatserna in för sent och individen har vuxit in i en sjukroll och motivation och möjligheter till rehabilitering har försvårats ytterligare (SOU 1988:41, s.165).

I citatet ovan ser vi hur beskrivningen av den långsamma kopplas till idéer om problem hos individen. Nu talar man inte längre om den passiva mottagaren, utan lyfter fram hur individen ”har vuxit in i en sjukroll” och att rehabiliteringsprocessen därmed försvårats. Vad vi har här är tydliga uttryck för hur dessa, i förhållande till den dominerande diskursen om arbetsduglighet, blir dubbelt avvikande och förstås som i en roll vilken behöver disciplineras. I dessa formuleringar, kring den långsamma, ligger också en glidning i ansvarsförhållandet inom ramen för rehabiliteringsprocessen, där de långsamma förstås som mindre motiverade (än andra). Analysen visar också att just denna grupp positioneras i relation till andra grupper i samhället: arbetskamrater, chefer med flera. Genom detta skapar och återskapar beredningen en position där de långsamma ges ansvar för sin situation. Detta innebär att situationer som gör att individen uppfattas som *stillastående* värderas på så sätt att personen ifråga bedöms som *efter* andra individer (jämför med Rosa 2005/2013; Andersen et al. 2018:2067).

Sammanfattningsvis visar diskursanalysen av *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) att kunskapsanspråket om *tidig rehabilitering* står som oemotsagd sanning genom beredningen och genom detta utgör en diskursiv praktik utifrån vilken individen positioneras och de avvikande kropparna förväntas förändras och disciplineras. Tidig rehabilitering ges också värde genom att i materialet kontrasteras mot ”för sena” insatser (se t.ex. SOU 1988:41, s. 165). Detta kan förstås i relation till hur acceleration inte bara ger fokus på högre tempo, utan också ger grund för värderingsmässiga bedömningar där tidigare insatser och snabbare tempo värderas högre än långsamma

processer (jämför med Rosa 2005/2013; Andersen et al. 2018; Adam 2003). Vad vi ser här är hur en övergripande diskurs byggs upp av normer om full funktionsförmåga för lönearbete vilket synliggör underliggande perspektiv där individen som avviker från normen positioneras som *den passiva mottagaren* och där *de långsamma* lyfts fram som dubbelt avvikande och med det görs underprivilegierade i förhållande till alla övriga roller som synliggörs i materialet. Analysen synliggör därmed hur fokus på tidig återgång i arbete vid sjukskrivning, som diskursiv praktik, inte bara begränsas till att ge kunskap om rehabiliteringsprocessen som sådan, utan också ger förståelse för maktstrukturer i samhället. Individer med sjukdom positioneras som passiva mottagare för rehabilitering och där de, för vilka tidig återgång och snabba processer fungerar väl, privilegieras. Samtidigt positioneras de, vars situation ser annorlunda ut och därmed har behov av en längre och/eller långsammare rehabiliteringsprocess, som problem vilka måste hanteras genom disciplinering.

Hur långtidssjukrivna kvinnor gör motstånd mot tidig återgång i arbete

I denna andra del av analysen kommer vi titta närmare på utsagor hämtade från kvinnor som vid datainsamlingen hade varit, eller fortfarande var, sjukskrivna under minst 60 dagar året innan. Detta är alltså en sådan grupp, som utifrån analysen av *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) som ett uttryck för en diskursiv praktik om tidig återgång i arbete vid sjukskrivning, inte bara objektifieras som passiva mottagare av rehabilitering, utan också förstås som dubbelt avvikande från normen genom lång tids sjukskrivning (de långsamma). Här analyseras utsagor om förutsättningar för återgång i arbete, särskilt vad gäller olika perspektiv på tid och tempo, och hur dessa berättelser kan förstås i relation till den förgivettagna sanning som är del av den dominerande diskursen om självförsörjning genom lönearbete.

Denna del av analysen baseras på svar på den öppna enkätfrågan ”Vilka åtgärder skulle bäst underlätta återgång i arbete för dig?”. I analysen har vi tolkat deltagarnas utsagor i relation till enkätfrågans utformning. Man kan se frågans utformning i sig som ett uttryck för den dominerande diskursen om förmåga till lönearbete. När vi analyserar frågan närmare är vår förståelse att frågan representerar den förgivettagna sanningen om att återgång i arbete är vägen framåt vid sjukskrivning. Frågans utformning blir därmed en del av den diskursiva praktik vi här undersöker. I relation till frågans utformning och koppling till den övergripande diskursen är det särskilt intressant att titta närmare på svarens karaktär, vilket utgör den första delen av analysen av detta material.

Textanalysen visar tydligt hur deltagarna förhåller sig aktivt i relation till frågans utformning. Många av deltagarna väljer att inte begränsa sina svar till att gälla underlättande åtgärder med avsikt att (snabbt) återgå i arbete, utan ger också information om svårigheter som karaktäriserat situationen på arbetet innan sjukskrivning, problem relaterade till sjukskrivningsprocessen och funderingar kring hinder för återgång i arbete. Hur deltagarna aktivt förhåller sig till den positionering av den sjukskrivne genom rehabiliteringsprocessen som diskursiv praktik utgör det andra steget i analysen (tolkning). Vi menar att detta sätt att svara på frågan visar att deltagarna gör *motstånd*

mot de praktiker som gestaltas genom tidig rehabilitering som en förgivettagen sanning (jämför med Thomas & Davies 2005; Wehrle 2016), vilket utgör det sista steget i vår diskursanalys och den del som fokuseras här.

Vår analys av materialet från de sjukskrivna kvinnorna görs i relation till hur rehabiliteringsprocessen under lång tid fungerat som en diskursiv praktik som bidragit till att positionera individer – bland annat i rollerna som passiv och/eller som den långsamma som måste hanteras då den inte passar in i den tänkta (ideal)processen. Mot den bakgrunden kan man fråga sig vilka uttryck för motstånd som alls är möjliga? Vår analys av materialet visar hur den diskursiva förståelsen för vad som uppfattas som en ”normal” rehabiliteringsprocess skapar reflektioner hos individen som synliggör att de bryter normen, vilket vi förstår som ett uttryck för individens motstånd mot disciplinerande tekniker (”counter-conduct”, Foucault 1997). Ett exempel på det är hur en av deltagarna uttrycker sig om att bli frisk efter att ha diagnostiserats med utmattningssyndrom:

> Tyvärr tar det tid (deltagare 162).

Vår tolkning är att det inledande ordet ”tyvärr” ska förstås som ett uttryck för att personen i fråga förstår att annat är önskat (av samhället) och att hennes behov av längre tid för återhämtning därmed bryter mot normen för rehabiliteringsprocessen. Denna formulering kan därmed förstås som ett synliggörande av den diskursiva praktiken tidig återgång i arbete efter sjukskrivning – och som ett motstånd (”conter-conduct”) mot detta.

Utifrån de teoretiska perspektiv på motstånd mot disciplinerande tekniker (Foucault 1997, Death 2010, Odysseos, Death & Malmvig 2016) som ligger till grund för analysen är vår tolkning således att deltagarnas utsagor är möjliga att förstå på ett fördjupat sätt, där uttalande som ”Att få bli frisk *i lugn och ro*.” (deltagare 193, vår kursivering) kan förstås som ett uttryck av motstånd mot den roll som individen blivit tilldelad, som passiv och långsam. Här menar vi att individens val att fokusera på en önskan om ”lugn och ro” ska ses som ett uttryck för motstånd mot den underförstådda innebörden av frågan i enkäten, om (tidig) återgång, och istället ett uttryck för en önskan om motsatsen: en lugn process av rehabilitering. Denna kontrastering där ”lugn och ro” ställs mot att ”underlätta återgång i arbete” kan därmed förstås som ett motstånd mot den diskursiva praktiken som gestaltas som tidig rehabilitering. Materialet är rikt på sådana exempel där önskningar om (mer) tid för återhämtning genom rehabiliteringsprocessen lyfts fram, som i dessa exempel:

> Jag behövde tid först och främst (deltagare 63).

> Förståelse och tid (deltagare 5).

> Tid för återhämtning (deltagare 113).

Deltagarnas uttryck för önskemål om mer tid för återhämtning går alltså att förstå utifrån hur *tidig rehabilitering* verkar som en diskursiv praktik där den sjuke, utifrån myndighetsperspektivet, positioneras som *den långsamma*.

Det är intressant att också se hur önskemål om mer tid för återhämtning synliggör relationer, exempelvis mellan individen och dennes chef eller gentemot någon av de andra aktörer vilka ingår i rehabiliteringsprocessen. I följande citat görs det inte tydligt vem som är motparten i den relation som beskrivs, det som synliggörs är att individen positioneras som maktlös i relation till någon som har makt att bestämma över rehabiliteringsprocessen:

> Att jag får 'trappa' upp min tid i arbetet i lagom 'tempo' och inte 'slängas' in i fullt arbete från att inte just ha jobbat något alls (deltagare 128).

I citatet ovan ser vi hur deltagaren i sitt svar om stödjande åtgärder beskriver hur hon "får" trappa upp sin arbetstid. Detta är ett exempel på ett genomgående mönster i empirin där deltagarna synliggör maktpositioner genom att ge uttryck för egen upplevd maktlöshet. Vi menar att detta synliggör hur sjuka individer objektifieras som passiva mottagare av rehabilitering genom rehabiliteringsprocessen som diskursiv praktik. Följande citat ger ytterligare exempel på hur den egna positionen förstås:

> Att jag *får* möjlighet att arbeta i mindre omfattning (deltagare 156, vår kursivering).

> *Tillåtelse* att återgå i egen takt (deltagare 54, vår kursivering).

Vad vi har här är således uttryck också i det empiriska materialet för den sjuka som *passiv* mottagare av rehabiliterande åtgärder. Utifrån ett maktperspektiv ser vi dessa utsagor inte bara som uttryck för denna förväntade passivitet, utan också som ett försök till motstånd mot den övergripande diskurs som dominerar området där förmåga till arbete privilegieras. Genom att synliggöra maktrelationerna ("jag får…") gör deltagarna motstånd mot den förgivettagna positioneringen av den sjuke som *passiv* mottagare såväl som mot idén om de *långsamma* som problem som måste hanteras i särskild ordning.

Vad gäller hur deltagarna intar diskursivt bestämda positioner som synliggör makt och maktlöshet i rehabiliteringsprocessen visar analysen att deltagarnas motstånd främst riktas mot en obestämd part som representerar rehabiliteringsprocessen som sådan. De gör motstånd mot "makten" ("the power that conducts", Odysseos, Death & Malmvig 2016), snarare än en specifik aktör. Detta känns igen i hur motstånd mot diciplinerande tekniker ofta ses som praktiker på mikronivå (Death 2010). När en specifik motpart lyfts fram är det Försäkringskassan som ges mening av deltagarna som den aktör som har makt (över tiden). Ett exempel på detta ser vi i följande citat som inkluderar inte bara *tid* (sjukskrivningen/arbetstidens omfattning) utan också rehabiliteringsprocessens *tempo*:

> Tycker det är jättejobbigt att Försäkringskassan pushar på så. Nu jobbar jag 25% och det funkar ok. Ska snart upp i 50% och fem veckor senare 75%. Det känns jobbigt och jättetufft (deltagare 162).

I citatet ovan ser vi hur deltagaren beskriver hur det känns ”jättejobbigt” och ”jättetufft” vilket ger uttryck för individens upplevelser av motsägelser mellan å ena sidan sin egen förståelse för de egna behoven för (långsam) återgång i arbete och å andra sidan den rehabiliteringsprocess som hon uppfattar att Försäkringskassan förväntar sig att hon ska ingå i. Dessa motsättningar förstår vi här som uttryck för motstånd (jämför med Davis 2015:687) mot såväl den diskursiva praktiken, som gestaltas genom *tidig rehabilitering*, som mot hur hon förstås som den besvärlige *långsamma* och samtidigt förväntas inta positionen som *passiv mottagare* av den process för rehabilitering som erbjuds.

Diskussion

I föreliggande studie har vi gjort en diskursanalys med avsikt att nå fördjupad förståelse för rehabiliteringsprocessens ambition om tidig återgång i arbete vid sjukskrivning och vad detta innebär för dem det berör, de sjukskrivna. Sammanfattningsvis visar vår analys att den beredning (SOU 1988:41), från vilken ambitionen om tidig återgång kommer, skapar ramar för hur rehabiliteringsprocessen ska förstås där tid och tempo lyfts fram som särskilt betydelsebärande. Vi har också visat hur sjuka, i relation till diskursen om självförsörjning genom lönearbete, förstås som passiva mottagare av rehabiliteringsåtgärder. När behov finns för längre sjukskrivningstid och/eller långsammare återgång i arbete än vad som uppfattas vara normen, ges de sjuka rollen som långsamma vilka måste hanteras. Analysen har synliggjort hur den diskursiva ramen för hur rehabiliteringsprocessen förstås skapar spänningar och missnöje hos de sjuka. Uttrycken för detta förstår vi här som motstånd (jämför med Foucault 1997, Wehrle 2016, Odysseos, Death & Malmvig 2016, Death 2010) mot rehabiliteringsprocessens utformning. Detta motstånd uttrycks främst i relation till en outtalad motpart (”the power that conducts”, Odysseos, Death, Malmvig 2016) men ibland särskilt mot Försäkringskassan som representant för tidig rehabilitering. Motståndet hos deltagarna ger en bild av en önskan om någonting annat än vad som uppfattas vara den förgivettagna sanningen om hur arbetslivsinriktad rehabilitering ska fungera, nämligen en önskan om mer tid för rehabilitering (jämför med Wall & Selander 2018).

Trots att ambitionen om tidig rehabilitering står till synes oemotsagd i *Tidig och samordnad rehabilitering* (SOU 1988:41) och att de sjukskrivna själva förhåller sig till tidig återgång i arbete vid sjukskrivning som det normala, blir det tydligt i de utsagor från sjukskrivna som vi analyserat, att motstånd görs mot detta. Också inom forskningen har man under senare år ifrågasatt den ensidiga fokuseringen på tidig rehabilitering (se till exempel Seing et al. 2015; Eakin, MacEachen & Clarke 2003; Tjulin, MacEachen & Ekberg 2011). Vi instämmer i denna kritik och menar att det är av stor vikt att man i Sverige öppnar upp för en bredare variation inom ramen

för rehabiliteringsprocessen och ger större möjligheter för långsammare processer för dem vilka har behov av mer tid för att tillfriskna, eller som en av deltagarna uttrycker det:

> Tillåtelse att återgå i egen takt (deltagare 54).

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Författarpresentation

Erika Wall är docent i sociologi och universitetslektor i rehabiliteringsvetenskap vid institutionen för hälsovetenskap, Mittuniversitetet. Erika forskar framför allt om upplevelser av risk och trygghet i arbets- och vardagsliv oftast med utgångspunkt i betydelsen av olika sociala och rumsliga perspektiv. Under senare tid har hennes forskning allt mer inriktats mot arbetsliv och hälsa och hon bland annat studerat återgång i arbete bland långtidssjukrivna kvinnor. För närvarande leder Erika ett fyraårigt forskningsprojekt, finansierat av AFA-försäkringar, om unga vuxnas upplevelser av introduktionen till arbetsmarknaden.

John Selander är professor i rehabiliteringsvetenskap vid institutionen för hälsovetenskap, Mittuniversitetet. Hans forskning är i huvudsak inriktad mot socialförsäkringsområdet. John fokuserar särskilt på arbetslivsinriktad rehabilitering där han till exempel undersöker arbetstagarens upplevelser av stöd från närmsta chef vid långtidssjukskrivning.

Jonny Bergman är filosofie doktor i sociologi och universitetslektor vid institutionen för humaniora och samhällsvetenskap, Mittuniversitetet. Hans forskningsintressen rör framför allt hur privilegierade och normaliserade positioner och ageranden kan förstås och utmanas. I sin tidigare forskning har han bland annat fokuserat hur vissa

positioner och ageranden privilegieras och normaliseras i relation till asylsökandes situation. I forskning kring trygghet för äldre har han studerat hur funktionalitet och ansvarstagande relaterar till olika privilegierade positioner och ageranden i relation till ålder.

Kontaktuppgifter
Erika Wall, Institutionen för hälsovetenskap, Mittuniversitetet, Östersund.
Epost: erika.wall@miun.se

DEBATT

Samhällsvetenskaperna och den akademiska friheten i Turkiet

Massavskedanden, resignation och motstånd

KLAS BORELL & MARCO NILSSON

Abstract
Allvarliga kränkningar av den akademiska friheten förekommer idag i flera av Europarådets medlemsstater och det är ofta samhällsvetenskaperna som utgör måltavlan. Situationen är särskilt allvarlig i Turkiet där tusentals universitetslärare avskedats. Intervjuer med avskedade turkiska samhällsvetare och samhällsvetare som lever under hot om avsked ger en sammansatt bild: här finns både resignation och motstånd.

Keywords: akademisk frihet, Turkiet

AKADEMISK FRIHET BRUKAR ofta förstås som en kombination av sammankopplade individuella och institutionella friheter: det handlar om lärares och forskares individuella frihet att bedriva undervisning och forskning och om universitetens frihet att autonomt utforma och upprätthålla kriterier för utbildnings- och forskningsaktiviteter (Altbach, 2001; Berdahl, 1990; UNESCO, 1997).

Akademisk frihet är central för att universiteten ska kunna fylla sin roll som kunskapsproducenter – nyskapande idéer förutsätter frihet från extern inblandning och ett fritt meningsutbyte. Men akademisk frihet spelar därutöver också en bredare demokratisk roll, bland annat eftersom nya forskningsresultat stimulerar offentlig debatt. Sociologer och andra samhällsvetare intar här en särställning eftersom de i sin forskning ofta berör politiskt kontroversiella frågor.

Det är mot denna bakgrund ingen tillfällighet att auktoritära och högerpopulistiska krafters angrepp mot akademisk frihet idag särskilt drabbar samhällsvetenskaperna. I april i år signalerade Brasiliens utbildningsminister, med stöd av presidenten Jair Bolsonaro, att landets högerpopulistiska regering planerar att dra in allt federalt ekonomiskt stöd för akademiska program i filosofi och sociologi. ”This effort to defund academic departments”, skriver de Internationella och Amerikanska sociologförbunden i en med andra vetenskapliga sammanslutningar gemensam protest (ASA, 2019), ”interferes with the academic independence and freedom of inquiry that are so crucial to the

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productivity of a nation's higher education system and will tarnish Brazil's standing for research and scholarship."

Också bland Europarådets medlemsstater förekommer idag allvarliga kränkningar av den akademiska friheten och ånyo utgör samhällsvetenskaperna högerpopulismens primära måltavla. Efter en utdragen konflikt har Victor Orbáns regering i Ungern tvingat Central European University – ett från staten oberoende internationellt universitet med inriktning mot samhällsvetenskap och humaniora – att lämna landet och omlokalisera verksamheterna till Wien (för en bakgrund, se Burgaric, 2019). Utan att konsultera de berörda universiteten har också den ungerska regeringen dragit tillbaka ackrediteringen av masterskurser i genusstudier och hot om liknande ingrepp i universitetens frihet att utforma utbildningsprogram har framförts av den polska högerpopulistiska regeringen (se t.ex. Vida, 2019). I Italien har företrädare för Matteo Salvinis parti Lega krävt att en bok om partiet och högerpopulismen, författad av statsvetaren Gianluca Passarelli och sociologen Dario Tourto (2018), ska tas bort från kurslitteraturen vid universitetet i Bologna (Mammone, 2019).

Bland Europarådets medlemsstater är emellertid hotet mot den akademiska friheten särskilt allvarligt i Turkiet.

Fredspetition och undantagslagar

De senaste årens systematiska attacker mot den akademiska friheten i Turkiet är kopplade till två händelser:

Den 11 januari år 2016 undertecknade 1 128 turkiska akademiker uppropet *Vi kommer inte att medverka till detta brott* (*Bu Suca Ortak Olmayacagiz*). I uppropet krävdes att den turkiska staten upphör med våldshandlingar mot den kurdiska minoriteten i landets sydöstra delar och att regeringen i stället vidtar åtgärder för att återuppta fredsförhandlingar. Reaktionen från president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan var omedelbar och kraftfull. Undertecknarna av den så kallade Fredspetitionen anklagades för att genom "terroristisk propaganda" undergräva säkerheten, och landets offentliga institutioner uppmanades att bestraffa dem. Turkiets allmänna åklagare och landets universitetskanslersämbete vidtog snabbt åtgärder mot undertecknarna med avskedande, arresteringar och fängslanden som följd (Abbas & Zalta, 2017).

Den misslyckade militärkuppen den 15 juli samma år blev en katalysator för en ännu bredare attack mot akademisk frihet. Enligt regeringen genomfördes kuppförsöket av generaler som stod nära Fethullah Gülen, en muslimsk predikant i självvald exil i USA. Med hjälp av efter hand successivt förnyade undantagslagar greps och utrensades akademiker och andra offentliganställda. Avskedandena genomfördes utan rättslig prövning och utan möjligheter för de drabbade att överklaga. Formellt riktades dessa och andra repressiva åtgärder mot Gülens "terrornätverk" men drabbade i praktiken all opposition mot det styrande Rättvise- och Utvecklingspartiet, AKP (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Angreppen mot den akademiska friheten i Turkiet har inte bara riktats mot enskilda akademiker utan också mot universitetens autonomi. Nya rektorer nomineras inte som

tidigare av universitetens fakultetsmedlemmar utan av Turkiets universitetskanslersämbete (Yukseköğretim Kurulu) och det är landets president som fattar de slutgiltiga besluten. Föga förvånande har nytillsatta universitetsrektorer spelat en aktiv repressiv roll genom att initiera egna undersökningar av universitetslärares ”lojalitet” och vidta disciplinära åtgärder av olika slag (Baser, Akgönul & Özturk 2017; SAR, 2016).

Att leva med avsked och hot om avsked

Enligt en sammanställning utförd av det internationella nätverket för akademisk frihet, Scholars at Risk (SAR, 2019), avskedades under detta sammantagna förlopp 7 508 universitetslärare och andra universitetsanställda och bland de avskedade återfinns ungefär hälften av Fredspetitionens undertecknare (Academics for Peace, 2019). En oproportionerligt stor del av de avskedade akademikerna – men också av de som dömts till fängelsestraff – var samhällsvetare (Abbot, 2017).

I en intervjustudie med sociologer, ekonomer, statsvetare och andra samhällsforskare från sex turkiska universitet har vi försökt fånga den sociala verkligheten bakom sådana siffror (Aktas, Nilsson & Borell, 2018). Hur, frågade vi oss, ter sig livet för de avskedade forskarna, hur ser de på sin framtid och på möjligheterna att bedriva fortsatt forskning? Angreppen mot den akademiska friheten drabbar emellertid inte bara dem som förlorat sina positioner vid universiteten. En lika viktig fråga handlar om hur ett repressivt klimat påverkar dem som fortfarande har en akademisk tjänst. Vad innebär det att leva i fruktan för ett tänkbart avskedande?

De avskedade akademikerna, visar intervjuerna, befinner sig i en mycket utsatt position. De avskedade är inte bara utestängda från forskning och högre utbildning utan också från alla typer av offentliga tjänster. Informanterna berättade dessutom om vad som förefaller utgöra ett system av mera informella statliga påtryckningar mot privata arbetsgivare, vilket reducerar möjligheterna att få arbete även inom den privata sektorn. Beslut om avsked är dessutom ofta sammankopplade med reserestriktioner under obestämd tid, vilket berövar de drabbade möjligheten att söka tjänster vid utländska universitet. Avskedandena, visar intervjuerna, får ofta drastiska konsekvenser för forskningen. De avskedade samhällsvetarna förvägras inte bara att, som tidigare, bedriva forskning inom ramen för en tjänst; de utesluts också från de forskningsprojekt de deltagit i. Därutöver påverkas deras möjligheter att bli publicerade på turkiska: av rädsla för regimen tvekar turkiska bokförlag och tidskrifter att publicera arbeten av avskedade forskare.

I intervjuerna med akademiker som fortfarande har kvar sin anställning, men lever under hot att avskedas, understryks också svårigheterna att bedriva forskning. Möjligheterna till internationellt utbyte, till exempel genom vetenskapliga konferenser, har inskränkts. Det gäller även utsikterna att få ekonomiskt stöd till forskning som på något sätt kan uppfattas som politiskt känslig. Flera intervjupersoner redogör för vad de ser som ett alltmera finmaskigt angiverinät bland såväl regimvänliga kollegor som bland studenter, vilket kräver försiktighet. En av forskarna förklarade till exempel:

> Du kan få en viss fråga av en student under en föreläsning och du besvarar den. Men den frågan kan visa sig vara en fälla som lagts ut till dig som lärare. Som en följd av detta har lärarna nu blivit mer försiktiga med vad de säger.

En sådan självcensur får enligt intervjupersonerna ett allt starkare genomslag också i forskningssammanhang. Texter som antas kunna uppfattas som politiskt känsliga skrivs om, och forskarutbildningshandledare handleder doktorander i konsten att undvika potentiellt politiskt känsliga ämnen och formuleringar.

Den kontinuerliga självcensuren, menade flera intervjupersoner, undergräver forskningsmotivation och skapar ett slags självförakt. En forskare sammanfattade detta på följande sätt:

> Vi har bokstavligt talat levt i sorg, och jag har förlorat min motivation. Saker som jag gjort tidigare spelade inte längre någon roll, och jag började ifrågasätta mina skäl att stanna kvar i universitetsvärlden. Jag deltar fortfarande i vetenskapliga aktiviteter, men jag har förlorat motivationen.

Ett intressant och paradoxalt resultat från intervjuerna med avskedade akademiker är att regimen, trots alla bemödanden, inte lyckats få dem att tiga. Redan mot slutet av år 2016 etablerade avskedade undertecknare av Fredspetitionen till universiteten alternativa verksamheter. I Solidaritetsakademier fortsatte avskedade lärare att undervisa studenter (Erdem & Kamuran, 2019) och genom Gatuakademier gjordes försök att koppla samman kampen för akademisk frihet med hela civilsamhällets motstånd mot regeringens auktoritära politik. En kommande studie (Aktas, Nilsson, Borell & Persson, kommande) av Gatuakademin i Ankara illustrerar dock svårigheterna med sådana projekt. Trots att tid och plats för akademins offentliga föreläsningar meddelades så diskret och så sent som möjligt var säkerhetsutmaningarna stora. Dessutom, framgår av studien, visade det sig svårt att få kontinuitet i en verksamhet som var beroende av avskedade universitetslärare som brottades med den dagliga utmaningen av att hitta ekonomisk försörjning.

Sprickor i fasaden

Efter år av undertryckt akademisk frihet i Turkiet finns dock nu vissa tecken på förändring. Med ordförandens utslagsröst fastslog nyligen Turkiets konstitutionsdomstol att undertecknarna av Fredspetitionen inte begick de ”terrorbrott” de anklagades för. Det hela handlade, menade domstolen, istället om en fullt legitim opinionsyttring (Ugur, 2019).

Den överraskande domen kan ha flera orsaker. Det styrande partiet AKP kunde tidigare motivera sin maktställning med en ständigt växande ekonomi. Idag stagnerar Turkiet ekonomiskt och arbetslösheten ökar. Sprickorna i AKP:s maktställning blir samtidigt allt tydligare. AKP segrade visserligen i lokalvalen den 31 mars i år men förlorade i Turkiets tre största städer, Istanbul, Ankara och Izmir. Nederlaget i Istanbul

– där Erdoğan var borgmästare under 1990-talet – var särskilt förödmjukande eftersom det omval AKP genomdrev gav oppositionen en övertygande seger.

Ett ytterligare skäl bakom den överraskande domen kan handla om att effekterna av angreppen på den akademiska friheten på landets högre utbildning och forskning blivit större än regimen kunnat föreställa sig. Endast två turkiska universitet återfinns i år bland världens 500 högst rankade lärosäten; en nedgång från tidigare fem universitet (QS World University Ranking, 2019). Turkiska forskares publiceringar i internationella vetenskapliga facktidskrifter har samtidigt minskat, särskilt drastiskt inom samhällsvetenskaperna (Freedom for Academia, 2017).

Den turkiska konstitutionsdomstolens överraskande beslut att avlägsna terroriststämpeln från de avskedade universitetslärare som undertecknat Fredspetitionen kan så småningom öppna möjligheterna för återanställning. Men det finns samtidigt skäl att varna för överdriven optimism. Ett återupprättande av akademisk frihet i Turkiet är ännu avlägset. Sprickorna i den turkiska regimens fasad ökar dock utrymmet för internationell opinionsbildning. Det har aldrig varit mera angeläget än nu att kräva att oskyldigt fängslade och avskedade turkiska universitetslärare återfår sin frihet och sina tjänster.

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Författarpresentation

Klas Borell är professor i sociologi och socialt arbete. Hans forskning har ofta berört frågor som ligger i skärningspunkten mellan dessa ämnen, till exempel socialt utanförskap och sociala konflikter, religionens sociala betydelse och förändringar av familjelivet. Borell är idag verksam som seniorprofessor vid Högskolan i Jönköping och han har tidigare bland annat varit gästforskare och gästprofessor vid universitet och forskningsinstitut i Libanon, Italien, Turkiet och USA.

Marco Nilsson är docent i statsvetenskap. Hans forskar om våldsamma konflikter i internationell politik med ett särskilt intresse för Mellanöstern. Hans forskning har berört frågor om mellanstatliga krig, jihadism, terrorism och hur människor påverkas av våldsamma konflikter, till exempel i form av migration. Nilsson är idag verksam vid Högskolan i Jönköping.

Kontaktuppgifter

Klas Borell, Högskolan i Jönköping.
Epost: Klas.Borell@ju.se

Recensioner

Carl-Göran Heidegren, Henrik Lundberg och Klas Gustavsson, *Sverige och filosoferna: Svensk 1900-talsfilosofi i sociologisk belysning.* Studentlitteratur, 2018

En möjlig tentamensfråga: Hur många bindestreck skall det egentligen vara i svensk sociologi? Svaren kunde tänkas handla om rättstavning eller om akademisk anglifiering (på svenska behövs ju i allmänhet inga bindestreck vid sammansatta ord), men troligen framförallt om sociologins relation till sina underavdelningar eller grenar, eller – om sociologin med stort S inte (längre) finns eller syns, om det allmänna enbart uppträder i det enskilda – om dessa grenars förhållande till varandra. Med *Sverige och filosoferna: Svensk 1900-talsfrilosofi i sociologisk belysning* har vi nu fått en introduktion till och ett exempel på en relativt ny sociologisk underavdelning som kanske aspirerar på ett sociologibindestreck. Bör den i så fall tillerkännas detta?

Filosofin kan som sådan förstås inte jämföras med tex. medicinen när det gäller denna kunskaps betydelse för och inverkan på människors liv. Och inte utgör de filosofiska seminarierna en specifik eller samhälleligt viktig miljö för eller domän av det sociala livet såsom t.ex. familj och arbete. Men filosofin är i detta sammanhang, alltså i relation till sociologin, intressant av andra anledningar. Jag för min del tänker då främst på det långa och komplicerade förhållande som filosofin och sociologin har till varandra. Båda disciplinerna har i perioder setts och sett sig själva både som grundvetenskaper och som systematiserande eller syntetiserande ”övervetenskaper”, båda lånar så att säga gärna ut sig till andra ämnen, och båda tar sig gärna an andra kunskapsområden för att på sitt sätt förklara eller förstå dem. Detta innebär att det på denna punkt råder ett slags funktionellt släktskap mellan filosofi och sociologi. Men också, och just därför, en viss konkurrens.

Sverige och filosoferna består av fem olika kapitel eller delar. Det första, skrivet av Carl-Göran Heidegren och Henrik Lundberg, behandlar filosofisociologi över huvud taget och vill genom en historisk översikt och en genomgång av ett antal grundbegrepp besvara frågan om vad filosofisociologi är. Kapitlet är mycket klargörande och för den som vill skapa sig en överblick över ämnet och få tillgång till ett antal kunskapssociologiska begrepp och perspektiv kan det varmt rekommenderas. Av bokens övriga kapitel är två skrivna av Carl-Göran Heidegren, ett av Henrik Lundberg, och ytterligare ett av Klas Gustavsson. Kapitel två och tre behandlar en viktig del av svensk 1900-talsfilosofi, nämligen skapandet av en svensk analytisk filosofi, med rötter i den s.k. Uppsalaskolan samt hur distinktionen mellan analytisk och kontinental filosofi etablerades och vilken

Sociologisk Forskning, årgång 56, nr 3–4, sid 319–325.

betydelse den hade för den svenska akademiska filosofins utveckling. Kapitel fyra är på sätt och vis kontrafaktiskt orienterat, då det handlar om ”hur man blir en bortglömd svensk filosof” och det femte kapitlet behandlar ”ekologi och filosofi i 1970-talets Sverige”.

Boken, och kanske då särskilt det långa kapitlet om ”de två filosofierna” analytisk och kontinental filosofi, och kapitlet om hur och varför uppsalaskolan transformerades till analytisk filosofi utgör enligt min uppfattning centrala bidrag till svensk filosofi- och idéhistoria under mitten av 1900-talet. Alla fyra kapitlen utgör också goda exempel på tillämpningar av filosofi- och/eller kunskapssociologiska begrepp och perspektiv. Trots detta lägger jag ifrån mig *Sverige och filosoferna* med känslan av att vissa frågor lämnats oavgjorda, enkannerligen den om just relationen mellan sociologi och filosofi, och jag vill här peka på vad jag uppfattar som ämnets svårigheter.

Författarna definierar filosofisociologi som ”studiet av filosofisk verksamhet som en socialt organiserad aktivitet förankrad i olika historiska och sociala kontexter, en aktivitet som inbegriper produktionen av filosofisk kunskap, det vill säga påståenden och argument som reser anspråk på giltighet” (s. 10). Detta tycks mig emellertid för vagt och kanske heller inte helt träffande. För om man inte närmare specificerar vad filosofisk kunskap är, annat än att den reser giltighetsanspråk, blir det en smula oklart vad man studerar. Och kanske vore det faktiskt riktigare att säga att författarnas filosofisociologi studerar den filosofiska aktivitet som just *inte* reser – eller i alla fall inte kan infria – filosofiska giltighetsanspråk? Men med vilken rätt kallas aktiviteten då filosofisk? Och hur kan man egentligen studera detta (det ena likväl som det andra) utan att pröva de utsagor som förekommer i den filosofiska verksamheten? Och, vidare, hur skiljer man i så fall i slutändan filosofisociologi från filosofi?

I grunden är det, anser jag, samma problem som uppstår när författarna talar om ”positioneringar” och ”interventioner” som de olika aktörerna på det filosofiska fältet intar och gör i sin strävan att etablera och legitimera en viss typ av filosofi. För även om dessa begrepp är nog så intressanta är det oklart hur man egentligen kan avgöra vilka positioneringar och vilka interventioner som skall räknas. Om man skall kunna tala om ett ”gränsarbete” måste man ju kunna skilja på gräns och det begränsade/skyddade. Och hur gör man det utan att på allvar sätta sig in i de verksamheter som bedrivs i skydd av gränserna? Med andra ord: hur sätter man sig in i filosofisk verksamhet utan att själv filosofera? Vid ett tillfälle i det första kapitlet talar författarna om hur filosofisociologin kan studera vilka positioner som är möjliga att inta i ett givet tankerum (s. 42 f.). Det är en intressant och, som författarna anger, mycket ambitiös uppgift. Men också här är det oklart utifrån vilken position man kan bestämma dessa olika möjliga positioner.

Dessa och liknande svårigheter gör att boken ibland lämnar de mer strikt sociologiska förklaringarna och glider in i en mer idéhistorisk framställning. Eller kanske riktigare: klyvs i å ena sidan en teoretisk del som presenterar en helt säkert mycket användbar uppsättning begreppsliga redskap vilka emellertid inte fullt ut förankras i en vetenskapligt grundad argumentation om deras giltighet, å andra sidan en idéhis-

toriskt orienterad del. Att själva huvudundersökningarna är idéhistoriskt inriktade är enligt min bedömning emellertid inte något egentligt problem, eftersom den sortens framställning också är mycket viktig, men förklaringarna får då, förståeligt nog, drag av *post festum*; de blir mer av beskrivningar, än rena förklaringar av vad som skedde. De djärva anspråk som filosofisociologin med sina för filosofin själv externa metoder och angreppssätt tycks vilja resa förvandlas, just på grund av, det är vad jag tror, den i detta arbete något otillräckligt genomarbetade kunskapssociologiska grundproblematiken (kanske kunde det liknas vid ett slags metodologiskt *Hit-men-inte-längre*-reflektion), till något mer modest.

Och kanske är det också skälet till att filosofisociologin i så stor utsträckning tycks historiskt orienterad? Jag vill ge ett exempel på detta. I kapitel ett refererar författarna historikern Johan Östling som arbetat med Mannheims teori om generationer. De skriver: ”Medlemmarna av 1945 års generation hade, trots flera inbördes olikheter, unisont tagit ställning mot nazism och fascism. De var alla upplysningssinnade rationalister. En följd av att 1945 års generation kom att dominera den intellektuella offentligheten var att det nu blev synnerligen svårt att vinna gehör för idéer som tog sin utgångspunkt i upplysningskritiska, idealistiska, romantiska eller religiösa tankesystem” (s. 27). Jag tvivlar inte på att detta är riktigt. Men 1945 års generation blev väl dominerande delvis just p.g.a. av de ställningstaganden den gjorde?

Hur intressant filosofisociologin än är, har den, menar jag, såsom den framträder i *Sverige och filosoferna* alltså sina inre svårigheter. Jag tror att den uppenbarar en delvis olöst konflikt som återfinns i filosofin likaväl som i sociologin, mellan förnuft och förnuftsargument å ena sidan och fakta och empiriska argument å den andra, mellan (inre) menings- och begreppssammanhang som måste förstås reflexivt och (yttre) tillfälliga sammanhang som måste kartläggas medelst mer handfasta empiriska metoder. Filosofer vill nu inte gärna se sociologer klampa in på vad de uppfattar som sitt område för att argumentera *ad hominem* (vilket är ett skällsord i filosofin, medan det motsvarande *faktum* ofta är ett honnörsord i kunskapssociologin). Men också förnuftet är beroende av något slags fakta. Sociologer, däremot, förefaller ibland nästan njuta av att skandalisera det ”rena” filosofiska förnuftet genom att tillbakaföra det till en specifik social kontext, men tycks själva många gånger utgå från en icke problematiserad och i grunden, så tycks det mig, motsägelsefull common sense-uppfattning om kunskapens sociala karaktär.

Som vi alla vet ordnar sig tillvaron själv inte fullt ut efter våra ämnesdiscipliners indelningar (den vetenskapliga differentieringen är inte alltid oproblematisk). Men till det som konstituerar sociologin hör inte bara studieobjektet, socialiteten, alltså de sociala banden mellan människor och grupper, utan också vårt ämnes metoder. Dessa leder kanske inte alltid precis eller hela vägen dit vi önskar oss, men de utgör trots allt tydliga, relativt trygga och framförallt gemensamma kunskapsvägar. Och ändå: landskapet bortom allfartsvägarna är ju så lockande! För den sociala världen, den sociala rymden, uttöms ju inte ens av all världens metodologiskt korrekt säkerställda fakta; den är t.ex. också i sig själv en värld av möjligheter, rättfärdigande och kritik. Den sociala världen är till sitt väsen en delvis, men också blott delvis, förnuftig värld, en

värld där så att säga fakta möter förnuft. Frågan är bara hur detta möte skall hanteras. Det är min uppfattning att sociologin och filosofin hanterar detta möte på litet olika sätt, eller att de på motsatt sätt låter ena polen av detta spänningsfyllda begreppspar framträda, medan den andra, som vid ett gestaltpsykologiskt aspektseende, får träda tillbaka i den nödvändiga men av nödvändighet otematiserade bakgrunden.

I anslutning härtill kan man nog säga att *Sverige och filosoferna* befinner sig på tryggt sociologiskt område och att boken därmed huvudsakligen rör sig bland sociala fakta. Den klargör många sammanhang och ökar avgjort vår förståelse av svensk filosofi och av svenskt 1900-tal, liksom den ger oss redskap att själva kasta oss över liknande studieobjekt. Och det är gott så, även om den, vilket jag försökt antyda, inte själv undkommer alla problem från ”förnuftssidan” av sitt studieobjekt. Därmed är det också klart, menar jag, att *Sverige och filosoferna* utgör ett bidrag till förståelsen av, men att den inte – för hur kunde den? uttömmande behandlar, relationen mellan sociologi och filosofi. Filosofisociologin utgör antagligen en egen gren på det stora sociologiska trädet, eller är ett eget träd i den sociologiska skogen (som vi inte alltid ser). Men förtjänar den, i den form den här framträder, ett bindestreck? Härtill är jag tveksam. Bindestrecket är ju egentligen ett slags *double bind*; det binder samman och håller isär på en och samma gång. Om jag skulle få frågan om bindestrecken i svensk sociologi skulle jag säga att det kanske bara behövs ett: filosofi-sociologi. Men det är en delvis annan historia.

Sverre Wide
Örebro universitet

Mikael Holmqvist, *Handels – maktelitens skola*. Atlantis, 2018

Mikael Holmqvist har en särdeles talang för att välja studieobjekt. Liksom den förra tegelsten om Djursholm är hans senaste bok tillägnad en institution förknippad med makt. Makteliter är viktiga och Holmqvists ansats är både modig och god: Hur väljs de ut som fattar beslut för oss alla, vad kan de och vad tycker de? är centrala frågor för både samhälle och samhällsvetenskap.

Som plattformar för att studera makteliters tillblivande är handelshögskolor dessutom oumbärliga. En tidigare bok i ämnet bär titeln ”Merkurius möter Minerva” (Engwall, 1992) – en träffande metafor för dessa institutioners motsägelsefulla uppdrag; de ska tjäna både köpmännens gud och vishetens gudinna. Jag har själv spenderat halva mitt liv i dessa miljöer. Som student, forskningsassistent, doktorand och sedermera forskare har jag verkat i den dynamik och spänning som uppstår när handel och vetenskap ska rymmas under samma tak. Och liksom Holmqvist bedriver jag forskning i gränslandet mellan företagsekonomi och organisationssociologi, med fokus på hur eliter skapas vid just handelshögskolor. Därför öppnar jag med särskilt

intresse denna bok som utlovar en sociologisk analys av mitt eget *alma mater*: Handelshögskolan i Stockholm.

Jag läser 473 sidor utan att bli uttråkad. Jag lär mig en hel del: om hur Handelshögskolan blev till, om antagnings- och anställningsordningar och hur skolan organisatoriskt skiljer sig från andra ekonomihögskolor. Jag nickar stundom igenkännande när Holmqvist belyser företagens och kårens unika roll vid skolan. I stora drag fångar Holmqvist också den alldeles speciella krutdurken av energi och framgång som Handelshögskolan utgör. Men jag blir också ganska snabbt undrande. Vad är detta för text?

Det ska sägas: Mikael Holmqvists projekt är ambitiöst. Det verkar knappt finnas ett arkiv som inte besökts, en avhandling som inte lästs, ett dokument som inte begärts ut. Holmqvist uppger att han besökt undervisningstillfällen och intervjuat anställda och studenter. Frågan är vad han gjort med allt detta material.

På ett sätt verkar materialet oumbärligt för hans syften. Varje kapitel kretsar kring ett enda huvudargument: Handelshögskolan är en elitmiljö (kapitel 1); krämarna grundade skolan (kapitel 2); nationalekonomins roll är att legitimera skolans existens (kapitel 3), och så vidare – huvudteser som sedan backas upp med rikliga citat från olika källor. Detta retoriska grepp har en uppenbar pedagogisk fördel: ingen läsare missar vad Holmqvist vill säga. Men det har också stora nackdelar.

Det är till exempel oklart om teserna har uppstått ur empirin eller tvärtom. Kvalitativa studier kan bedrivas på många sätt. Arbetar forskaren induktivt kännetecknas analysarbetet av att det kontinuerligt uppstår analysidéer, kategorier, som sedan testas mot forskarens övriga observationer, vilka i sin tur samlas in på basis av de preliminära kategorierna. Om forskaren istället startar med en tes att undersöka är fallet egentligen inte mycket annorlunda; bevis för och emot samlas in och vägs mot den stipulerade hypotesen (även om en tesdrivande studie tenderar att undersöka en smalare frågeställning och vara mer ”framtung” i planeringsfasen).

Men gemensamt för alla rigorösa kvalitativa studier är systematik: i urval, bearbetning och presentation av empiriskt material. Forskningsdesign handlar i bred bemärkelse om ”att identifiera element av ordning, systematik och konsekvens”, som Howard Becker och hans medförfattare formulerade det i den legendariska studien ”Boys in White” från 1963 (sid 17). Forskarens tankebana från observation till slutsats ska redogöras för, så att läsaren ska få en chans att förstå forskarens val, inte minst som en försäkring mot den kritik av brist på reproducerbarhet och testbarhet som kvalitativ forskning ofta får utstå.

Etnografin, det arbetssätt som Holmqvist hänvisar till som sitt – och som också varit mitt eget – har dessutom ovanligt höga krav på självreflektion. Eftersom forskarens sinne är det instrument genom vilket alla observationer flödar och färgas blir en viktig del av etnografens jobb är att ständigt rannsaka sig själv i fältarbetet; vilka slutsatser drar jag från det jag observerar? Har de med kulturen jag studerar att göra, eller är det mina egna förutfattade meningar och antaganden som spökar? Förändras mitt förhållningssätt i takt med att jag lär känna den kultur jag studerar, och i så fall hur?

Men i ”Handels – maktelitens skola” får vi ingenting veta om dessa mödosamma

processer. Empiriskt grundade analytiska kategorier lyser med sin frånvaro och i bilagan som ska tjäna som metodkapitel för specialintresserade finns enbart en uppradning av källor, men ingenting om varför just dessa valts ut, hur Holmqvist läst dem eller deras relation till de starka teser han framför. Vi får bara veta att material har ”gåtts igenom” (s. 419), att vissa delar av studien gjorts ”spontant” och andra ”mer planerat” (s. 421) och att han ”observerat miljön systematiskt” (s. 425). Holmqvists presenterar sitt *habitus* i form av titlar och utbildning (s.427), men berättar väldigt lite om vad han själv lärt sig under de två år som arbetet pågått utöver att det varit ”förhållandevis enkelt” att genomföra studien (s. 428). För den genomsnittliga populärvetenskapliga läsaren kanske dessa svar är tillfredställande, men ur forskningssynpunkt är de bristfälliga.

Holmqvists otydliga relation till sin empiri reflekteras också i dess redovisning. Om jag räknat rätt har han gjort ett 50-tal intervjuer - men han använder sig förbluffande lite av dem. När han väl gör det överstiger citaten ytterst sällan de 40 tecken som vanligen krävs för att de ska redovisas i enskilt stycke, vilket betyder att hans primärrespondenter inte får chansen att beskriva längre resonemang eller skeenden från sin egen organisation. Andrahandskällor däremot (bland annat krönikor av undertecknad), refereras ofta i långa stycken, ibland sidvis.

Holmqvist blandar vidare friskt referat från skolans hemsida, studentbloggar, intervjuer, medieartiklar, forskning och skönlitteratur för att belägga en och samma tes. Greppet är underhållande, men det döljer också viktiga brister i texten, såsom bristen på källkritisk diskussion. Slår man till exempel upp sida 358, hänvisar han till en SvD-artikel från 1968, en DN-artikel från 1984, en skönlitterär roman från 2001, och en forskarantologi från 2016 i syfte att måla upp ett slags tidlös personlig profil av prydlighet, smärthet, borgerlighet och råglondhet som normen för hur en Handelsstudent ”är”. Därpå åkallas raskt en DN-intervju från 2001, en SvD-artikel från 1947 och en forskarmemoar från 1983 för att belägga det faktum att Handelsstudenter ”är” mestadels politiskt ointresserade.

Huruvida denna stereotyp är giltig i våra dagar är inte poängen. Poängen är att dessa källor är skapade vid olika tidpunkter, av olika personer som verkat i olika kontexter och haft olika syften. Denna avsaknad av basal källkritik är anmärkningsvärd. I en lång monografi får den dessutom en märklig ontologisk bieffekt: Handelshögskolan framstår i Holmqvists framställning som en karikatyr, en statisk koloss med en förändringsresistent kulturell ”essens” – något varje iakttagare av sociala institutioner vet är en omöjlighet. Strukturer och kulturer förändras alltid. I en organisation som lyckats bygga, överleva och anpassa sig till sin omvärld i över 100 år torde förändring rimligtvis vara minst lika kännetecknande som stabilitet.

Det dunkelt sagda är det dunkelt tänkta, brukar det heta. Avsaknaden av grundläggande resonemang om metod och ontologi väcker misstankar att Holmqvist faktiskt inte haft nog tid att göra ett gediget forskararbete. Intrycket, och jag betonar *intrycket* (för om verkligheten vet jag ju lite) blir snarare att teserna formats i förväg och att enstaka bevis på detta sökts i data som sedan staplats på varandra, för att med kvantitet snarare än kvalitet vinna läsaren på ett närmast journalistiskt vis.

Vad som orsakat denna styvmoderliga behandling av respondenter och källor vet

jag inte, men de behäftar texten med avsevärda trovärdighetsproblem. Dessa drabbar tyvärr även potentiellt intressanta hypoteser. För när Holmqvist exempelvis spekulerar kring att finansminister och alumnen Magdalena Andersson skulle ligga bakom en anslagshöjning till skolan (s.85) eller att det ”troligen” är så att nya professorer valts ut för de är kvinnor (s.222) eller att det ”finns gott fog att påstå” att studentkåren är den viktigaste utbildningsverksamheten på skolan (s.314) – ja, då är jag inte övertygad.

Detta leder till min sista stora fråga: vad vill Holmqvist? Han håller det kritiska tänkandets fana högt, och ägnar ett helt kapitel åt hur Handelshögskolan skulle kunna omorganiseras för att åstadkomma en mer fritt tänkande elit. Men som Holmqvist själv nämner så är fokus på lönsamhet och företagsnära undervisning ingalunda unikt för Handels, utan återfinns i nära nog alla elitutbildningar i ekonomi, även på ”reguljära universitet”. Här byter han ständigt måltavla genom texten; oftast är det Handelshögskolan som kritiseras, men ibland alla elitutbildningar i ekonomi, men stundom också Holmqvists eget ämne företagsekonomi. Dessa spår kan tyckas lika men leder till ganska olika platser: är Handelshögskolan ett unikum av strålglans och maktkonstruktion, eller egentligen bara ett extremfall av något större? Argumentationen slirar, och återigen saknas svar.

Och det är synd, för ämnet är både hedervärt och viktigt. *Handels – maktelitens skola* har ovedersägliga kvaliteter. Men det som med lite mer tid och analytiskt fotarbete kunde ha blivit ett avsevärt bidrag till svensk elitforskning bär dessvärre drag av metodologiskt hastverk. Det vore beklagligt om boken – med tanke på dess genomslagskraft i debatten – skulle bli det omgivande samhällets riktmärke för vad kvalitativ samhällsvetenskaplig forskning är.

Anna Tyllström
Institutet för framtidsstudier

Sociologförbundet i Manchester och på nätet

DET VAR ETT lite mulet och småregnigt Manchester som stod värd för den fjortonde europeiska sociologkonferensen. Liksom de två senaste konferenserna i Prag och Aten låg deltagarantalet i Manchester på över 3000, vilket kan jämföras med de tre första ESA-konferenser som blott tilldrog sig runt 600 deltagare. För den som vill kunna sin sociologförbundshistoria kan meddelas att första ESA-konferensen ägde rum i Wien, 1992. Några av sociologerna som besökte Manchester var inte ens födda då. Tiden går.

Det var en välorganiserad konferens med otaliga diskussioner om Brexit och mängder av seminarier och plenarföreläsningar. Nästan alltför stor valmöjlighet kan tyckas för den som har svårt att bestämma sig. Jag hade stor behållning av ett av de mer välbesökta semiplenarerna som hölls av lingvisten Ruth Wodak om högerextrem retorik och etnografen Elijah Anderson om ”What black folk know”. På samma gång aktuellt och historiskt, personligt och analytiskt. Där fanns också en rad förläggare närvarande med bokbord förstås och jag kunde (lite stolt) konstatera att flera svenska sociologer fanns representerade i urvalet. Efter jämna röster blev ordföranden för Rådet för de nationella förbunden italienskan Maria Carmela Agodi istället för den tidigare Sokratis Koniordos från Grekland. Ett populärt turistmål som undertecknad missade var det berömda Chetham’s Library – Storbritanniens äldsta öppna bibliotek som grundades i mitten på 1600-talet. Åtskilliga kollegor tog tillfället att slå sig ner i den fönsteralkov där Karl Marx och Friedrich Engels lär ha skissat på Kommunistiska manifestet.

Närmast nu väntar vår egen nationella konferens som hålls i Stockholm 18–20 mars 2020. Den lokala organisationskommittéen med vår vice ordförande Kenneth Nelson i spetsen jobbar hårt för att få allt på plats. Se konferensens nylanserade hemsida! www.sociologidagarna.se Ta även en titt på förbundets nya fina hemsida: http://www.sverigessociologforbund.se/

Avslutningsvis en påminnelse! Som vi tidigare har annonserat om är det läge

att fundera över nomineringar till förbundets pris ”Bästa avhandling 2018–2019”. Institutionsmedlemskap ger rätten att nominera max 2 avhandlingar från perioden 2018–2019. Motiverade nomineringar ska vara inne senast 1 december till vår sekreterare Oskar Engdahl (oskar.engdahl@socav.gu.se). Styrelsen önskar en ordning där prefekt nominerar efter beredning av handledarkollegium (eller motsvarande).

Katarina Jacobsson
Ordförande SSF

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9. Tabeller, figurer och bilder ska laddas upp i separata filer i sitt ursprungliga filformat.
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12. DOI-länkar till referenser anges där sådana finns.

Referenser utformas på följande sätt

Bok: Pilgrim, D. & A. Rogers (1993) *A sociology of mental health and illness*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Artikel: Haavio-Mannila, E., J.P. Roos & O. Kontula (1996) ”Repression, revolution and ambivalence: The sexual life of three generations”, *Acta sociologica* 39 (4):409–430.

Kapitel i bok: Dryler, H. (1994) ”Etablering av nya högskolor: Ett medel för minskad snedrekrytering?”, 285–308 i R. Erikson, & J.O. Jonsson (red.) *Sorteringen i skolan*. Stockholm: Carlsson.

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