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INTRODUCTION

The Scholarly Landscape

This book is primarily addressed to the community of researchers and practitioners dealing with adult learning. Its starting point is that research into adult education and adult learning cannot (today, and even less in the foreseeable future) be seen as an isolated sub-discipline within pedagogy, with a well-defined object and a connection to specific institutions or a particular professional practice. Learning processes do not only, and probably not even primarily, take place in the more or less professional and intentionally structured activities that have learning as their purpose. On the contrary, learning is a human process necessity that logically precedes these, and a potential dimension of all life activities. The concept of lifelong learning, which sometimes appears to be a commandment in a “politics of necessity”, can also be perceived more sympathetically as a reminder of a socio-psychological reality: we learn as we live. In addition to the recognition of a wider social context which is more realistic than most educational intentions and ideas comes the realization that learning processes are embedded in an experience process that has both conscious and unconscious aspects. The concern of this book is to justify and further develop approaches of critical research to adult learning processes – and constraints on learning – in this broader context.

By thus transcending the idealistic thinking that has characterized pedagogy and much of the tradition of liberal enlightenment and education, this approach aligns itself with material and practice-theoretical learning research. The particular feature of the psychosocial approach presented here is that within a holistic societal theoretical framework, it recognizes a psychodynamic reality which is unconscious. As such it is unavailable for observation and can only be recognized indirectly through its influence on consciousness and agency, but it is nevertheless a life process and not a speculative assumption or construction. The inspiration for this thinking comes from the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious. We can understand the psychodynamics of learning in the light of life-historical interaction and relational experiences that are continually incorporated and changed intrapsychically and interspsychically, interfering with our social practice. The recognition and access to this psychodynamics is based on interpretations of its manifestations, from dream interpretation and psychoanalytic therapy to cultural analysis: in this way, it is part of a hermeneutic tradition. A critical hermeneutic interpretation not only aims to understand subjective meanings, motives and aims, but equally to understand

the societal background of subjectivity and to see and appreciate the subjective contributions to societal relations, i.e. the dialectical relationship with a historical dimension.

In the understanding of the dialectic between the societal totality and the constitution of the individual psyche as a subject, the concept of the unconscious plays a central role: what it consists of, its importance for adult learning and consciousness, and how we can explore it at different levels. In the concept of the unconscious, there is no reference to a particular “substance” or to specific “places”. The concept refers to a multilevel dynamics that play a role in individual and communal mental life as well as in the forms of consciousness, culture and knowledge that are part of our social everyday life. “The *societal* unconscious” in the title of the book emphasizes the connection between what is usually seen as an individual phenomenon with a domain of meanings and insights that are excluded from *societal* articulation and attention, following the Frankfurt School’s social theory. The individual becomes a subject through relationships to the world and the ways in which it is encountered and encouraged in relations to others and the world at large, and how these experiences are internalized and create grounds for ways of living with oneself and others. When the originally entirely dependent encounters societal conditions which are in conflict with its wishes and needs it develops unconscious psychic defences against certain motives or realizations. The individual psychic unconscious is seen as a trace of such psychosocial forms of exchange and societal contradictions. Although they are exiled from or appear distorted on the social surface they have not disappeared and therefore remain a source of permanent tension in the development of the individual and society. In this book a psychosocial approach is proposed as a framework in which one can explore these psychosocially dynamic processes on different levels.

The individual chapters in this book are therefore largely concerned with how we can interpret the relationship between the visible/conscious and invisible dimensions in specific everyday life contexts. They examine a number of the areas where this relationship appears. Although a common feature is that these dynamics are social, and are transformed and materialized at all levels of social interaction, the contributions reflect both subject-related differences in their focus of interest and the discussion of theoretical issues and disagreements. The editorial thinking has not been to present contributions within one unified theory and methodology, but to illustrate how a broadening of the scope of learning research and attending to the psychodynamics of the social could enable a new understanding of learning, while at the same time showing how a learning perspective may help to discover emerging subjective dynamics in the research of social realms not concerned with learning in the first place.

Learning in school must be understood in a context of everyday life. This is true in spite of the fact that school-based, institutional forms of adult and continuing education in addition to child and youth education supplement or replace learning processes in the community and workplace contexts of everyday life. Firstly, because

there is much truth in the old saying “If you want to understand what is going on in a classroom then look at life outside, too”. Secondly, because learning is one of the most important subjective dimensions of social life. In fact, the question of what and when people learn from their everyday life as a whole, and especially why they often cannot integrate certain experiences in their conscious ways of dealing with life, might in fact be the most important challenge for researchers and practitioners: understanding how learning takes place through social (interaction) experiences, and in particular why these experiences are often not turned into insights. If research into adult learning is to avoid the dead end of uncritical professionalization, its field must be adult life in the broad sense and, in particular, its subjective dimensions: “subjectivity in society”.

This broadening of the horizon can be traced both in practice and research in adult education. Political systems still perceive education (non-formal education and instruction, training) as the way to promote lifelong learning, and therefore also seek to professionalize and industrialize adult and continuing education as a sector (Jütte & Lattke, 2014; Jütte, Nicoll, & Salling Olesen, 2011). But adult education research has in recent decades moved from the ambition to define itself as a discipline, “andragogy”, partly based on knowledge of the particular features of adult learning processes (Knowles, 1980, 1984), and with a focus on improving the efficiency of teaching adults, towards a broader horizon involving important social conditions for adults in general (gender relations, labour market, ageing).

Accordingly, adult education research has in recent years been inspired and informed by interdisciplinary developments in social and cultural empirical research and theorizing which form important, though hardly dominant, streams in critical social sciences. Most importantly, with a turn to qualitative methodologies, this enables a focus on subjectivity and the cultural dimensions of the social. With regard to adult education research, these social science paradigms and traditions have inspired methodological developments which shift the perspective away from just teaching and instruction in more or less organized education over to empirical research into learners’ everyday lives and life experiences and the wider cultural and social environments (Salling Olesen, 2006). These developments can be clearly traced in the development of work in the ESREA research networks, in RELA, and in books published in the ESREA book series (e.g. Merrill, Galimberti, Nizinska, & González-Monteagudo, 2018; Ostrouch-Kaminska & Vieira, 2015; West, Alheit, Andersen, & Merrill, 2007). The books cover a variety of topics, e.g. ethnographic awareness of cultural difference and relativity, gender studies emphasizing critiques of generalized (and gendered) concepts of the individual, historical contextualization of learners and educational activities, learning in social and cultural collectives, the study of workplace organizations and the influence of technological developments, among many others. Concepts and ideas of cultural and social circumstances have been deconstructed and the more or less hidden power relations have been exposed, which has given way to a reinterpretation and new discussion of the values and political engagements which are always involved in knowing and learning.

These developments of new empirical interests are productive alternatives to a more speculative and/or normative concern with the mission of teaching and education. The centrality of the life world perspective and the experience of the learner seems to be a useful starting point for understanding the complexity of learning processes. It has enabled a differentiated understanding of learning processes as interaction between individual life histories and specific environments. Not least, it has provided a basis for understanding learning in working life as more than a one-sided embellishment of and adaptation to technologies and work organizations. It has provided raw material for an ideological-critical perspective, pointing out that educational ideas have often been blind to gender, class and ethnicity, but more specifically, also to the unconscious aspects of living and learning. But in this way, it has also necessitated and begun a theoretical exploration of who “the many learners” can be: women, and even working class women in a particular labour market situation, or young men of different ethnic background (than white Caucasian), or young women in a society characterized by sexualized gender stereotypes, and many more – all learners are different.

Qualitative research is most often in its core an effort to understand and visualize living people’s own motives and experiences as independent and legitimate dynamics. What people learn and want to take with them can often be far from what is expected by society around them. From a political perspective the qualitative approach to understanding people’s learning processes (and educational participation) is a logical and political opposition to the demands of capitalist modernization that people just learn to be employable and economically profitable. In this frame of thought, the subject of social life and learning remains with the many, as we know it from the roots of adult education in social movements and subcultural collectives. And what might be important: it usually involves the hope that “they will find something good for themselves” rather than a particular formulated notion of a goal and expected learning outcomes.

Recognizing and studying empirically the life experiences and life situations that shape the individual, one also moves into a more complex and differentiated understanding of individual subjects than merely seeing them as sovereign, rational, and independent free-willed practitioners. Theoretically, one is thus also on the way to challenge or transcend the universal notion of the individual subject which is the basic concept of *Bildung* and emancipation in a humanistic tradition, yet often paradoxically linked with the idea that the educator, the teacher and the school assume final responsibility for the subject’s general education and learning. Despite these tendencies, research into adult education and adult learning processes has so far remarkably sidestepped from questioning the notion of the free individual subject. In relation to children, there has been a discussion of the contradictions of socialization and of connections between societal conditions and the shaping of subjectivity; however, this is only to a limited extent true of research on adult learning processes. One might see the emphasis on the idea of a free, rational and

autonomous subject, both in relation to individual learners and learning processes, and in relation to professional agency, as a respectful identification with the adult student – in critical opposition to instrumental learning psychology, social engineering and particular adult teaching and instruction strategies. However, societal conditions are preferably understood as external obstacles or favourable conditions for the unfolding of individual and communal subjective aspirations, which is the basic form of emancipation and autonomy. This tendentious dichotomization of the psychological and the societal, subjects versus society, theoretically imposes some limitations on the understanding of the dialectical relationship between individual learning and historical development processes. This book addresses this challenge with its introduction to psychosocial theory and methodological inspirations, and especially the theory of unconscious dimensions of subjectivity and the attempts to understand these as socially and relationally produced and socially active mechanisms.

Admittedly, it is not the only bid for a discussion of the relationship between society and subjectivity that has been offered to us from general social science, nor the one which has won the most followers. Other critical approaches have addressed these issues (Fejes & Salling Olesen, 2010). Some of them are relatively uncritical in the sense that they account for experiences and figures of thought in immediate everyday practice. Others raise the issue of the human subject, transforming it into a more complex, socially and historically produced and fluent reality which must be studied in context. In particular, it may be pertinent to mention various versions of discourse analytic approaches from the Anglophone world, Francophone practice theories, and cultural-history activity theory originating from Russian cultural psychology. I will not become involved in a purely theoretical discussion of differences and similarities, strengths and weaknesses, but prefer to see a psychosocial approach as an innovative contribution in relation to a historical situation which challenges all our figures of thought and requires new thinking.

The perspective of the long historical development lines in adult education and education policy has often had the nature of one-sided stories of progress or decay that have set the framework for policy and implementation, to the detriment of the understanding of the complexity of the societal struggles and nuances of individual learning processes. Both adult education and associated research have been and are linked to an enlightenment and education effort that has been normatively and practically opposed to authoritarian powers and traditional cultural and social repression. In the developed capitalist world, which must be considered to include the whole of Europe, despite great differences, free and conducive social spaces and the *Bildung* of enlightened people (through education!) are closely connected and mutually reinforcing. This has made the normative ideas of the free individual and autonomous practices self-legitimizing. The abstract nature of this normative identification has provided ample room for other perceptions of the subject in social life, which in different ways also accompany modernization.

First of all, an individualized “economic man”, which reduces people’s subjective drive to the pursuit of self-interest, or “greed”. In the first two decades of the new millennium, the discourse about adult learning and education has been replaced by “lifelong learning” and a consensual policy of necessity, driven by international elites of bureaucrats, business managers and policy makers with an outlook on global competition. This societal shift on the political level only became recognized while it was being implemented in more or less neoliberal policy and discourse. “Learning” has been seen as an instrumental, ultimately economically motivated process of assimilative transfer of knowledge and skills necessary for employability and economic efficiency, and discussions of education have also been re-focused on “educational outcomes” and “competences”. The implicit subject-construction has been the one of global capitalism, the individual without home and values. As true as this concept of a human subject is a reduction, there is even greater demand for opposing ideas based in identity-political essentialisms such as nationalism and ethnocentrism. This is where we stand – with ecological disaster, increasing inequality, Brexit, xenophobia and illiberal regimes. In such an environment where traditional ideas of emancipation seem to fail politically the challenge for critical research is to explore dynamics and material resources within and beyond education which envision endogenous social change (Nicoll & Olesen, 2013). And there seems to be good reasons to adopt a critical and deconstructive view of the traditional concepts of subjectivity and liberation.

However, we must not limit the view to the centres of the capitalist world. In other parts of the world, the establishment of basic material and political prerequisites for individual freedom and democratic participation is far from being realized, and literacy and education still have a key role (UNESCO, 2016). But this does not mean that they will be following the same path as the western capitalist world. For learning research, first of all, it can be assumed that forms of subjectivity are different in other societal and cultural environments. In a globalizing world, we must seek to discover the particular forms of modernization processes which result from the inevitable interference between capitalist globalization and local culture and experience, and we must include empirical methods suited to capture not only the already formulated subjective goals but also those which are emergent. It also raises theoretical questions as to which notions of autonomy and subjectivity are relevant in the modernization processes underway in postcolonial environments in Africa and Asia, in China and in Latin America, reflected in the whole discussion of the “Southern theory” and alternative epistemologies (Connell, 2007; de Sousa Santos, 2014).

This book continues a development of qualitative research from the 1990s and 2000s focusing on how material societal relationships and historical change are developing at the level of everyday life, in the form of human efforts and actions that are at the same time expressing conscious experiences and goals and being influenced by unconscious drivers (not drives!) originating in the social experiences of life histories.

PART 2: LEARNING, EXPERIENCE AND THE UNCONSCIOUS: THE PSYCHOANALYTIC INSPIRATION

Psychosocial approaches seek to uncover the inner connection between psyche and society by integrating a critical view of society's totality, founded in Marxist theory, with an interactive and cultural understanding of psychodynamics based on psychoanalysis. Both are controversial and the connection between them in particular. Especially psychodynamic thinking has had limited influence on research into education and learning. An obvious way of understanding the immunity against this theorem is the tendency to identify, in a humanistic or social way, with the autonomous adult learner. Psychoanalytic theory may seem to challenge something that for adult educators is a central value: respect for the learner subject's integrity. Psychodynamic understandings are also partly based on very complicated and extensive theory traditions – there is considerable confusion between psychoanalytic (individual) therapy and psychodynamic cultural analysis – and theories cannot immediately be implemented in practical agency strategies.

The first part of the book will seek to bring these theoretical assumptions down to earth through three complementary contributions. Kirsten Weber's doctoral thesis was one of the first attempts to integrate critical social sciences and psychoanalysis through application in empirical adult education research. Her study demonstrates a fundamental redefinition of the adult educational field based on a concept of experience from a German tradition, directly from Oskar Negt and indirectly from Theodor Adorno and a broader Hegelian tradition of thinking. It is an empirical study of a specific adult educational field, namely the learning processes of adult working women in practice-oriented trade union training programmes (Weber, 1995). Women's life context has of course changed a lot since then, trade unions alike, but the study presents a new model for understanding adult learning. The chapter that is included in translation here deals with the setting of a framework for the analysis, the female life context and experience, through non-pedagogical concepts derived from Marxism, psychoanalysis and gender theory.

Why was this groundbreaking? The concept of experience actually has a long presence in progressive pedagogy (Dewey, 1971; Negt, 1964; Negt & Kluge, 2016), and since the 1980s, various forms of experience-based teaching have played a certain role in adult education practice. This is usually an expression of the sympathetic endeavour to take the participants and their experience seriously and it stresses the dependence on social and cultural processes of learning. Often, the concept has been linked to an educational practice where teaching is part of activity in social environments or movements. However, there is also a contradiction here: the concept of experience was used as a critique of institutions, arguing that students' experience and subjective processing of it should define the resources and goals of the pedagogy. On the other hand, when conceived as another recipe in the steady turnover of "faiths" in pedagogy, it will in practice usually imply a tendency to operationalize the experiences of the participants as an opportunity, a

starting point or a motivational amplifier in an institutional teaching whose goals and content are, however, determined by other considerations (curriculum, teacher intentions, employability). The experience must therefore be operationalized and made manageable and usable. In this operationalization, the learner becomes objectified, either as the bearer of singular individualized experiences, or perceived as a member of a stereotyped group with allegedly shared experience. This is a critical point of general pedagogical relevance, but it may be particularly important in relation to adult learning. Even when adults participate in institutional education and training, it is usually a subordinate part of their overall life, and they meet teachers and content with a weighty and immediate experience base. If particular elements are colonized and detached from the subjective life history as a means of didactic operationalization, the learning is bound to fail or have a limited result. “The challenge is not to include adult students’ experiences in teaching but to find out how adult education can succeed to become a moment in students’ experience building” (Salling Olesen, 1989).

The tension between a practical orientation in adult education and the respect for the subjective and holistic nature of individual and collective learning processes is a permanent challenge. The concept of *Bildung* has in a certain historical context been an attempt to reconcile the interest in knowledge transfer with an emancipatory idea by establishing a canon of *Bildung* in the form of a curriculum assumed to be the key to personal development and social liberation. In adult education this has not worked very well – not only because the emancipatory idea was historically overtaken, but also because it is based on an idealistic and normative conception of the subject instead of a critical-analytical interest in the learning processes that actually (may) take place in subjects of different generations, class, gender and life experience. The requirement for adult education research must be the establishment of knowledge and concepts that can at one and the same time produce practically relevant insights into the life context of adult people and a criticism of the ideological routines of thinking that relate to (professional) pedagogical practice.

Kirsten Weber’s work is an early attempt to solve this dilemma in progressive adult education that is just as relevant today. By analysing the participants’ subjective experiences based on gender and class, drawing on the Frankfurt School and psychoanalytic social psychology, and on women’s research and trade union analysis, she established an external framework for understanding the educational work of Danish trade unions. The concept of experience establishes an axis of reflection from the individual’s perceptible everyday lifeworld, through collective learning processes to the overall cultural production on a societal level (knowledge, class culture, political ideas) (Negt, 1999; Negt & Kluge, 1972, 2016; Salling Olesen, 1985, 2007). It emphasizes the foundation of experience in the real (material) life situation, and thus the individual and collective importance of learning processes is subject to objective societal dynamics. It enables the examination of temporally inconsistent structures: on the one hand, through individual fields of conflict and psychodynamics, and on the other hand, the structuration through contradictions in

the different levels of the societal environment, which is both the content of learning processes and its conditions.

Kirsten Weber's study is a continuation of a critique of institutional education that draws on the European reform pedagogy tradition and the student movement of the previous century. In the specific research case, she examines a borderland of institutional education: on the one hand, it is a highly intentional organization with goals, frameworks and social control. On the other hand, it is a political education that relates to the proud traditions of community education, and ideally identifies the union organization with the working women as the potential collective subjects. Here, there is also an inherent contradiction: it sets a framework for political learning processes based on the participant workers' own experience, but these were often blocked in the organizational politics. These contradictions are revealed in the study, not through ideological criticism of the labour movement or the instrumental self-understanding of the education, but through analysis of observations and interviews with the participants, i.e. female union representatives.

The analysis of the representatives of the working women aimed to understand how their lives looked to themselves. The intention was not to classify or stereotype, nor to explain why they thought this or that, but to try to understand a subjective experience process in which the education had meant more or less, and all the time with an awareness of what might not yet be conscious but emergent in their experience. Weber used inspirations from a depth-hermeneutic methodology that was developed in cultural research and adapted to everyday life research (Leithäuser, Salje, Volmerg, Volmerg, & Wutka, 1977; Volmerg, Senghaas-Knobloch, & Leithäuser, 1986), and later developed by the Roskilde research group into psychosocial interpretation practice (Salling Olesen, 2012). The analysis draws on theoretical concepts derived from Marxist social theory and psychodynamic gender theory, here applied to adult education and learning. However, it is a hermeneutic study based on the Frankfurt School's epistemology, which is most clearly formulated by Theodor Adorno: the principle of non-identity, i.e. that social reality is always historical and that theoretical concepts are not identical to but are always in a dialectical relationship with the specific subject of cognition (Adorno, 2001).

This analysis thus draws on a number of theoretical and methodological foundations developed outside the field, and the two other contributions in this part are written without the pedagogical perspective, but by the researchers who were the direct inspirations for Kirsten Weber's approach. They deal in a different way with the constitution of subjectivity in a broader societal context.

Regina Becker-Schmidt, who has written one of these chapters, stands as an exponent of a Marxist feminism in the Frankfurt School tradition. She has not only produced ground breaking research into female industrial workers' life experience and subjective involvement in their work, but has also theoretically formulated the gender-theoretical concept of dual socialization – “die doppelte Vergesellschaftung” (Becker-Schmidt & Knapp, 1987), which places the gender relationship as an integral part of the capitalist social structure – a capitalism-critical conceptualization of what

has been referred to in sociological gender research as intersectionality – which points critically to the tendency to neglect the gender relationship in the Frankfurt School's class analysis and thus also to the political thinking that was associated with class experience. Her chapter in this book was originally written in connection with the women's university that she organized in connection with EXPO in Hanover in 2000, and which brought together women from all over the world in a discussion of gender theory and women's situation (Becker-Schmidt, 2002). The chapter, based on this concept of dual socialization, points out that women are stretched daily between different life contexts and are forced to bridge the gap between working life and family life. In the emotional contradictions that follow are both the need and the resources for emancipation and empowerment. Biographical studies of women's lives are key, because women's emancipation must be their own work and must grow out of concrete and personal everyday experience.

This is the analysis and gender political programme that Kirsten Weber unfolds in the analysis of the union women's ambivalent experience in formulating their own needs in a male-dominated trade union movement. The method for her critical hermeneutical analysis of the women's experiences drew partly on the development by Thomas Leithäuser and his colleagues of a depth-hermeneutic approach to everyday experiences. It was inspired by phenomenological societal analysis, i.e. studying society at the level of the lifeworld, and in particular by Alfred Lorenzer's ambitious integration of psychoanalysis and Marxism into his materialistic socialization theory and later into the development of a depth-hermeneutical cultural analysis. Leithäuser and his colleagues in Bremen transferred these approaches to a number of major empirical analyses of working life and other aspects of everyday life and of the dynamics of consciousness processes, without any thought for learning processes or adult education. Kirsten Weber's analysis draws on all these factors. Today there is a clearer picture of how the psychoanalytically inspired cultural analysis that Lorenzer developed was transposed to another subject field and another community level through the analyses of Leithäuser and colleagues, and how this forms a stepping stone for further transposition into the learning process analysis, where, via the synergy with Becker-Schmidt's concepts of ambivalence, it becomes sensitive to the complexity of the female worker representatives' learning processes.

As mentioned before, psychoanalytic concepts have often been misunderstood or simply rejected because of limited insights into what these theories have to offer. With this in mind, I asked Thomas Leithäuser to contribute to this book with a clarification of the status of psychoanalytic inspiration, and account for the important anchoring in Lorenzer's interactive socialization theory, which provides some crucial preconditions for the productiveness of the analysis in learning theory. Hence the third chapter in Part 1 is written by Leithäuser about psychoanalysis as a social science. This chapter very briefly plays out the fundamental difference between psychoanalysis as a therapeutic practice and as a cultural analysis applying psychodynamic concepts and also interpretative methodology inspired

by psychoanalysis. Leithäuser has himself integrated his own original speciality, developmental psychology, with the social study of everyday working life and consciousness building. He explains some of the basic notions which may make it easier to read the following texts for the reader with little or no knowledge of psychodynamic thinking, and prevent some possible misunderstandings of the role of psychodynamic concepts and methodology.

When we understand learning processes in the context of experience, it presumes an understanding of a dialectical relationship between a subject and the outside world. The psychosocial understanding of this subject intuitively connects it to the individual in the first place: the individual becomes a subject by building experience through relationships to the world. The experiences from this interaction have conscious as well as unconscious dimensions which can be traced in individual psychodynamics. However, it is a point that we talk about “subjectivity” rather than “the subject”. Since the individual is being constituted as a subject in a dialectical relationship with the outside world, subjectivity cannot be confined to the individual organism alone. We can, therefore, trace the importance of psychodynamics, and of unconscious processes, at all levels of the societal structure. Learning cannot be understood without its embedding in social relations and a cultural context even including the societal organizing forces that we can preliminarily call global capitalism. Therefore, we must understand learning processes in mutual dialectic relationships with social and cultural processes that immediately manifest themselves at other levels of societal structure.

Most of the following chapters are demonstrations of psychosocial analysis in different realms. Each chapter presents a holistic approach to specific social phenomena, going far beyond the scope of adult education and learning, and demonstrate in particular the potentials of a psychodynamic approach to the social. The idea is thus to coin the epistemological principle of the non-identical specificity of concrete phenomena in different realms. I have subdivided the empirical material into three tiers of exploration, Parts 2–4. Part 2 relates to the understanding of individual learning and learning careers in the context of life histories. Part 3 deals with the subjective dimensions of groups and institutions. Part 4 includes two chapters which deal with the psychodynamic dimensions of historical and political processes. Finally, Part 5 contains a chapter summarizing the methodological basis of a psychosocial approach.

This composition does not represent an attempt to split the contributions in a simple division of labour, each responding to a partition of an epistemic object. On the contrary, it is intended to emphasize that psychodynamics and the relevance of the concept of the unconscious are not related solely to individual psychic phenomena. Further, societal and historical relations, without being any kind of deterministic structures, penetrate every level of the social, including emotions and consciousness within individuals, social relations between individuals and institutional practices.

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUAL LEARNING AND LEARNING CAREERS IN LIFE HISTORY

The chapters in this part of the book deal with development of empirical research into the micro processes of learning and the dynamics of individual learner careers. Learning is seen as rooted in the experience of everyday life, from early life in connection with material survival in childhood as a matter of adaptation and innovative changes, cultivated in social and cultural development, sometimes in the arts, sometimes in social organization and politically articulated. We should therefore understand individual adult learning by focusing on the lifeworld of learner subjects. We should attend to all those areas of life where we individually and collectively meet challenges and may learn (or resist the implications of what we learn). One example is the learning related to working life. Working life challenges are also opportunities for learning. What is learned depends on the life affordances (Billett, 2001) but also on the potential learner subjects, the employees. This means that although we realize that learning is situated and depends on participation in social practices in the workplace (Lave & Wenger, 1991), we need to analyse it as an experience process of the workers. This does not mean to re-introduce an individual learner subject. With the concept of experience gained from Negt and Adorno, it means interpreting societal as well as psychosocial aspects of workers' experience. The response to problematizing the concept of the free, rational individual learner subject is to explore the diversity and the complexity of learning on the basis of the specific learners.

I will elaborate a little on the conceptual "genealogy" because it may help to understand how strategic responses to challenges of adult education developed into psychosocial research into learning and subjectivity in a much broader sense. Until the millennium, research was still mainly committed to promotion of adult and continuing education. Adult education was basically seen as a general good. The challenge seemed to be to develop an interdisciplinary approach to understanding adults' participation (and non-participation) in adult education (Kondrup, 2013). Integrating a subjective dimension in the sociological study of structural patterns would enable the understanding of participation or the lack of it, and the life history analysis was a response to this challenge (Rubenson & Salling Olesen, 2007; Salling Olesen, 1989; Becker-Schmidt, this volume). A biography or life history approach offered simple and tested data production with immediate plausibility. Furthermore, it would not only provide insight into aspects of motivation and participation in education and training, but also into the subjective significance of content in learning processes. In this way, it opened a more differentiated and critical perspective on the relevance of education and alternative directions of learning from the perspective of the learner. A biographical approach was therefore adopted, in the first place using well established practical methodological experiences in empirical biographical research, drawing on inspiration from educational biographical research in Europe (Alheit, 1994a, 1994b; Alheit & Dausien, 2002) as well as sociological

biographical methodology (Rosenthal, 1995). Moving from an explanatory type of social research, this enabled a theoretical investigation into the driving forces in *educational* activity and the effects of education in the context of learners' life histories. Methodologically, the tool was a hermeneutic procedure applied to interview transcripts, but soon the awareness of the relation between the narrator, the character being told (the persona), and the living person whose life was being told required a historical/empirical differentiation in the complex relationship between individuals and their past and present environment. This again posed new questions about the theorizing of the learner subjectivity. The narrators were interpreting their own lives through their life experiences, their present situation and their more or less reflective ideas about their possible future, and the researchers interpreted their interpretation. This led to more systematically engaging with the psychodynamic problematizing of the individual subject as well as the researcher subject, and to take inspiration from psychodynamic interpretation methodology, including the concept of the societally unconscious. A combination of a lifeworld perspective on the social and a psychodynamic theory of subjectivity is seen as a key to overcome the obvious weakness in the assumption of the free, rational and enlightened individual subject without letting go of the focus on the subjective aspects of experience and learning. Later followed many and varied empirical studies of people who on their own initiative or encouraged by their institution related to learning and education in the light of crises and upheavals, especially in their work and career (Dybbroe, 2002, 2012; Larsen, Salling Olesen, & Tsanaka, 1998; Salling Olesen, 1994, 1996; Salling Olesen & Weber, 2002; Weber, 1995, 2007, 2010).

However, at this time around the millennium the shift in the political environment took place with the arrival of the new lifelong learning policy and discourse. The political perspective on adult education became more ambiguous. The critical research focus on the learner assumed a new direction – in the first place the critique of the neoliberal policies and the potentially individualizing economic drivers – and more fundamentally the societal nature of subjectivity and conditions of autonomy under the societal pressure for individual submission to economic rationales. This was no theoretical news for a psychosocietal concept of subjectivity, on the contrary. But the awareness of the contestable and ambiguous nature of learning and education accentuated a more radical perspective for learning research: escaping the submissive individualization in neoliberalist learning policy goes through experience based learning (Negt, 1964) and developing “sociological imagination” (Mills, 1959). It became essential to emphasize that the life history framework, although interpreting individuals and micro dynamics, is actually studying subjectivity as a societal dynamic. For example, studying working class women in the context of class and general societal gender relations, with the concept of “double socialization” (Becker-Schmidt) explores the ambivalences of individual life experience in the light of *societal* contradictions and historical conflicts of wage labour and gender relations. Especially in light of the work of Thomas Leithäuser, Regina Becker-Schmidt and other German researchers linked to a psychodynamic theory and

analysis of subjectivity, new concepts were introduced, problematizing the idea of an individual subject and its self-interpretation central to (auto)biographical narratives (Salling Olesen, 2011). This genealogy, moving from biography to a psychosocial life history framework in the perspective of a historical shift in the political environment where the concern for adult education and training was superimposed by the agenda of lifelong learning, is also visible in the three chapters in this part which all discuss psychosocial interpretations, but in thematically layered variation.

The first chapter “Aggression, Recognition and Qualification” is from the early phase of the life history approach in education, working with data from just before the millennium. It presents psychosocial interpretations of strong emotions in two educational processes. The subtitle “On the social psychology of adult education and learning in everyday life” draws the connection between the emotional engagement in the educational setting and learning related to work and to the participants’ wider identifications. The first case is based on interviews with participants in a retraining programme in which long-term unemployed men in a region in industrial decline were trained to work as skilled social educators in a psychiatric ward. There are glimpses of unusually aggressive reactions from participants who used to be male breadwinners but have to shift to a female work domain in order to find any job. This also involves dealing with professionals who are women and a female organization culture. They are learning new skills but they also have to go through a challenging identity process. The other case is based on interviews with participants in a professional continuing education programme for social educators with little professional education background, working in youth leisure clubs as pedagogical social workers. Emotions are evoked by some students with social problems in their own life, who are regarded by other students as unsuitable for the programme. At first sight, these reactions seem rational in terms of the risk to their (shared) professional status, but they are also remarkably strong, coming from students in a professional social work programme who should be prepared to accept social problems. This emotional charge may be interpreted as an unconscious articulation of a more general feeling of lack of recognition of their work. The empirical material in both cases consists of relatively deep interpretations of interviews which directly refer to the educational setting, but also involving reference to the work domains for which the learning was preparing the participants. The analyses are selective in the sense that they highlight the emotional involvement of the students in apparently trivial situations and provide psychodynamic interpretations which link these emotions to the participants’ work identity process, thus illustrating the methodological points from the book that was translated in excerpt in this volume, Part 1 (Weber, 1995).

The next two contributions are products of PhD projects that were designed with significant inspiration from later developments, where the life-historical approaches are more elaborated. They are based on biographical data that are analysed psychodynamically in the context of profession theory. Karsten Mellon’s chapter refers to a project on students in professional education with untraditional (non-academic) backgrounds. On the basis of life-historical interviews, the study analyses

the students' perception of their past life, the decision to seek a new education and career, and their experience of how past life experiences have been rejected, used or transformed in the programmes they are attending, with a study environment primarily aimed at other types of students. The chapter presents a single case of a woman who, on her way to becoming a teacher, reflects on her childhood, her past work experience and, not least, her mother's employment as a milk lady in a school. In the analysis, both elements of the told life story, i.e. the narrator's representation of the relationships in her family and her strong identification with the mother's literally nurturing role in a school, are interpreted in the light of the narrator's current identity process, which is naturally oriented towards her coming profession and the immediate educational experience.

The second PhD project that forms the background for Sissel Finholt-Pedersen's chapter was about the relation of theology students to their coming profession as ministers. The material included three interviews with each of 12 theology students at various stages of their study programme. The interviewees all talked in detail about their life historical background to their choice of education, their present relation to Christianity and a possible priestly ministry, and their education and short experiences of practice. The students consistently express doubts and ambivalences as to the priestly ministry, and in particular its preaching dimension. These subjective expressions were partly interpreted in the light of individual life-historical differences, especially gender relationships. The immediate impression is of a discussion of and personal positioning as to the priesthood, to which several have strong familial ties, but their words may also be interpreted as a partly unconscious projective handling of personal ambivalences. The personal beliefs and attitudes towards preaching play a major role, but also a discussion of the future content of the profession and professional roles other than being a minister. The Norwegian religious struggle between an academic theology historically rooted in a Danish-influenced bureaucracy elite and a more confessional folk religion, also involving the two educational institutions represented in the sample, is traced in the students' different professional imaginations. In the chapter, interpretations from two cases are presented in more detail, a man and a woman, also pointing to gender aspects.

The two chapters show how a psychosocial life-historical analysis can shed new light on a type of learning that has primarily been explored sociologically, or more narrowly (and affirmatively) within the perspective of the individual profession. It is a common point that professions on the one hand are societally structured and historically changing frameworks, and on the other hand the subject of the students' identification and imaginations. Together, the two analyses illustrate how personal life stories form part of the identity formation and subjective experience formation and learning that take place through the education and the first practical experience with the profession, and together provide an individually specific and professionally differentiated identity.

The common feature of the three chapters in this part is to focus on the importance of emotional dynamics in education and learning processes, but also to understand

that these emotional dynamics are the result of social experiences (socialization) and are effective as subjective impulses in a social context which in these cases is mediated by work and professions. The nature of hermeneutic interpretations of interview texts and interaction protocols underlines the complexity of these contexts, and demonstrates the theoretical point that these can only be recognized as individual exemplary subjective expressions.

PART 3: UNDERSTANDING INTERACTION AND LEARNING IN ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

In a psychosocial approach, the relationship between the historical structure of society as a whole and the constitution of the individual psyche as a subject is understood as a dialectical interaction in which unconscious exchange and tension relationships play an important role. The understanding of this dialectical interaction between society and psyche is not the same as an insight into how this interaction occurs and how it develops. Sometimes it has meant that theoretical, political and more existential thinking have been captured in a relatively simplistic idea of a correspondence between psychic defence mechanisms and forms of societal repression, either optimistically as a direct correspondence between “awareness raising” and societal liberation or dystopic beliefs that what is societally displaced returns destructively. Such thinking is not very productive for strategic agency, nor does it provide a good understanding of everyday practice. As initially emphasized, it is in the concrete social phenomena and relationships of everyday life that the psychodynamic and the social are intertwined, not as complementary perspectives or theories but as interwoven materiality. In this context, the intermediate level of society constituted by groups, institutions and organizations plays an interesting role precisely because it is an intermediate level in social formation, which allows for particular insight into the complexity and the many forms and levels of communication that connect the entire societal and psychodynamic levels, with dynamics that go both ways: How does the societal imprint of the psychodynamics actually take place, materially? And how does the impact of psychodynamics on social consciousness and agency affect society as a whole, the historical changes?

One might expect this intermediate level to be theorized and investigated as just such a link between subjective agency in the microsocial environment, the lifeworld, and fundamental historical changes and ruptures at the macro-social level; one might also expect the fact that everyday life in institutions and organizations presumes and consists of tacit social practices to be reflected theoretically. This is not really the case. Although the relationship between social and psychological factors and between individual agency and social structures is present everywhere, most research focuses on explicit and conscious dimensions, maybe because they are oriented towards practice in situations that are taken for granted.

Subjective dimensions of historical changes in social formation are most often conceptualized as by collective or institutional actors or factors. In critical research,

institutions have been widely regarded as “imprints” of capitalist power relations. Group processes were only marginally dealt with in Marxist social theory. In institutional theory, organizations and institutions are ontologically independent entities that contribute independently to societal dynamics. However, their inner interaction and basis in individual subjects is theoretically unclear and seems to rest on a rather questionable premise of independent individual subjects. In management and organization theory, one can also see a historical trend from technical-functional concepts over informal social to cultural understandings of the organization. This development probably reflects a real historical change that attaches increasing importance to social interaction and the organizational members’ consciousness, and includes something that can be seen as subjective agency, cf the concept of sense making (Weick, 2009). In a more traditional industrial setting, the concept of the “workers’ collective” (Lysgård, 1961) referred to the collective subjective agency.

Although both cultural and industrial sociological analyses see organizations as a result of the members’ actions and consciousness, a theorization of the subjective dynamics and their background in the actors’ experiences is lacking. This is, however, found in psychoanalytic social psychology, which in particular concentrates on understanding how the social psychology of groups shapes organizations. Here, it is a question of involving psychodynamic subjectivity theory for analysis of (and intervention in) group processes at the micro level in local organizations. On the other hand, the societal aspect of the organization is primarily understood as a functional framework, with e.g. the concept of the organization’s “main task” which in the Tavistock tradition denotes the organization’s societal legitimacy and ultimate condition of existence. Most dialectically, however, Menzies Lyth’s analysis of how institutions’ organizational structure can be seen as psychic defences against subjectively unbearable aspects of work in a hospital (Lyth, 1988). Such unconscious defences do not really work, because they do not integrate the problem. By extrapolation, it can on the other hand be assumed that real relief from those unbearable aspects might, conversely, induce or enable institutional changes.

Within this landscape, I believe that a psychosocial empirical approach could provide critique and constructive advance. The combination of socialization theory, the Frankfurt-based theory of non-identity and depth-hermeneutic interpretation offers some tools for contextualizing everyday life phenomena in interpretations that include a psychodynamic as well as a historical dimension. In the Dubrovnik group, we have systematically worked with empirical materials from our own research in various fields, especially education and learning processes, based on the assumption that material dialectics can be studied through empirical analysis at the everyday life level. Part 3 of the book contains three contributions on schools and museums as organizational processes. Two of the contributions in Part 4, both Danish, but primarily rooted in the British social psychological research tradition, try to move further down the Tavistock path by analysing the relationship between societal changes and social psychological dynamics in the rather special workplace of the school.

Åse Lading has studied the collegial relationships in a group of teachers at a general high school (grammar school) in connection with an organizational reform that requires increased collegial cooperation in the form of teacher teams. The reform is welcomed by some members of the teaching staff while others see their professional identity and associated collegial relationships threatened. The subsequent conflict puts the teachers' traditional mutual tolerance under severe pressure. Based on a Bion-inspired organizational psychological approach, an interpretation of the "opponents" of the reform is presented as forming a "fight/flight" basic assumption group. They defensively take flight from the conflict by staying silent in the public space and thereby withdrawing from influencing organizational development. A few years later, when Åse Lading returns to the same school, the dynamics in the group of teachers have changed considerably. Old contradictions seem superimposed by a new common work identity which is centred on positive values such as collegial stability and reliability. The changes are seen in the context of a marked intensification of the teachers' work demands and possibly also the impact of the financial crisis on society as a whole, which make the teachers feel more dependent on each other. However, it is also noted that teachers show little interest in taking part and speaking up for themselves in the democratic fora of the organization. The analysis raises the question of whether this silence on controversial themes is inherited within the organization, i.e. as unconscious traces of a previous defensive way of handling conflicts which do not have unambiguous solutions.

Peter Henrik Raae writes in the next chapter about school management in primary schools during a period when a new management structure that strengthened the role of the school leaders in relation to the teaching staff and also tightened the requirements for accountability in relation to the authorities and the outside world, which were in the process of being developed. His analytical framework also draws on the British social psychology tradition. But instead of seeking to understand the significance of the personality of the leader for the organization, the focus is on the interdependence between leader and organization in which the leader's subjective situation is equally determined by the social circumstances, both by the political mandate and by all the employees. In an interview with a school leader who immediately seems to have this demanding situation under full control, the analysis uncovers an underlying defensive dimension of the leader's heroic position which actually turns out to be counterproductive to the development of the organization. The manager's defensive behaviour can be identified as "manic defence" (Klein, 1975). But instead of just being analysed as an individual defence, the heroic leadership position is seen as part of the social situation; the unconscious defence mechanism seems to coincide with a coping strategy that is politically required as part of a societal change of the school framework.

In terms of methodology, another interesting aspect appears: a collusion between interviewee and researcher that arises in the interview, where the researcher shows emotional solidarity with the school leader's need for help in a difficult situation. This observation was elaborated on in the collective interpretation of the Dubrovnik

group, moving from considerable confusion about the organizational context to a substantial understanding of the collusion as a response to the school leader's need for help. This point is developed in the chapter as a more general transfer/counter-transfer relation which can be seen as a general methodological dimension of the interaction between the societal environment and the interpretation of the psychodynamic relations in the field (Salling Olesen & Leithäuser, 2018).

The third contribution deals with the institutional level in a way that points to the dialectical relationship between learning within the institution and its societal function. Lynn Froggett argues in the chapter "The Museum as a Third Space – a Special Kind of Object Relating" that the institution of the museum and its traditional *raison d'être*, preserving artefacts and conveying their cultural significance, can be encouraged to translate conscious and unconscious experiences into learning processes for new user groups. First, the chapter demonstrates, through an example of media-based museum activity, how an artefact, a tea set, at the same time materializes a historical context (British imperialism) and personal everyday life experience (the author's own memory of family tea). Next, the chapter presents a typical local museum and the institutional reform context that forces the institution to reinvent itself as a framework for local community development and social work, but without discussing the actual development of the institution. Instead a case is presented showing cultural experience processing through museum visits: a group of unemployed people conducts a workshop in creative writing on the basis of a photo installation in the museum. Froggett analyses their poetic texts, demonstrating that a new mental space for experience processing is being created through the experience of the exhibition. The analysis refers in particular to Winnicott's concepts of object relations and "intermediate space", but also Lorenzer's concept of the scenic nature of experience. The process can thus be seen as an example of the museum institution taking on a new role. By activating the visitors' emotional experiences, it can create a new space for learning and ultimately for social practice in the local community.

Juxtaposing Winnicott and Lorenzer is interesting in itself. The intermediate level of society, i.e. organizations and institutions, has been handled in different ways in those research traditions which have contributed in particular to the development of the psychosocial approach presented in this book. Somewhat simplified, it can be said that the continental tradition has been particularly interested in the relation between societal conditions (including family structure) and psychodynamic dimensions in the significance of cultural and aesthetic phenomena, as well as particular mentalities. However, group and organizational psychology and the psychodynamic dimensions of institutions have played a significant role in British psychosocial research. There are, of course, many overlapping issues and interests, e.g. about the psychodynamic aspects of workplaces and work relations, but a significant amount of theoretical work has been necessary in clarifying which of these theoretical differences could be attributed to specific research areas and/or fields of practice to which the theorization and empirical results were committed.

PART 4: UNDERSTANDING SUBJECTIVE DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL
PROCESSES: IDENTITY AND POLITICS

Towards the end of the last century, references to identities and values in policy formation and justification seemed to gain a new significance in political processes. Identity politics was not exactly new, it had played a central role in ethnic and gender equality struggles for decades, but the dissolution of the cold war blocs gave way to new questioning of national identities and nation-based states. There was a tendency to deal with identity politics in a moral key, discussing the justification of (national) identities, or in terms of political science, analysing technically the influence and effects of identity processes in political processes. Both are of course relevant, but hardly sufficient to understand the diverse and intense development of identity based politics. We came upon this issue as a side effect of developing an interdisciplinary psychosocietal approach, and realized that this approach might help to understand the genesis of identity politics and its roots in everyday life experiences.

In the year 2000, a small group (Kirsten Weber, Thomas Leithäuser, Jessé de Sousa of the University of Brasilia, and myself) held a conference on “Interculturality, identity and social prejudice” in the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik. This conference worked out as an interesting sharpening of the questions of theorizing and studying the psychodynamic dimensions of collective social processes and cultural clashes. As a result, it was decided to organize a similar conference in 2001 with an emphasis on an interdisciplinary exercise in the interpretation of the psychodynamics of identity processes and social prejudice. The 2001 conference established the *International Research Group for Psychosocietal Analysis* which has since then been developing with an annual conference in Dubrovnik and a number of networking activities (guest lectures, joint research projects among some of the members, etc.). Generally the research group was founded on the basis of the idea that the mediation between societal (historical) processes and psychodynamics might bring decisive insights into some of the “mundane” social processes that each of us was working with elsewhere, being scholars of learning research, social work, health professions, organizational development and cultural analysis. The main topics for the work of the research group therefore came from everyday life in each of the three initially contributing countries, Germany, the UK and Denmark.

In a paper for a research seminar on social prejudice in Fortaleza, Brazil, I wrote the following: “Lately political and social processes seem to depend much more strongly on culture and identity than in the classic modernization process of industrial capitalism and the national state. Maybe it is more true to say that this relation has become obvious: the modernization itself dissolved traditional bonds and modes of shaping identities, including the nation state as a “natural” horizon, and political interaction increasingly involves asynchronous cultural and psychological encounters. It has become obvious, and at the same time very challenging to the rationality of modernized societies, that the social psychology of identification and

of social prejudices are powerful building blocks in political processes – and hence also objects of manipulation.

In Europe we have several recent examples of violent political processes that seem mainly based on (cultural) identity (beside the historical one of anti-semitism and anti-romanism). One is the politicization of the anxieties and experiences with work migrants and refugees into *xenophobia*. The other one is the process of dissolution of the former *Yugoslavia* which has taken the shape of a religious and ethnic/national feud.

The political exploitations of ‘identity’ call for theoretical and political reflection. They might be seen as the most ‘prominent’ examples of, and also results of, the fact that cultural encounters and interferences have become an all-embracing aspect of everyday life. Broader examples are inter-cultural conflicts within a society, the fuelling of national or state conflicts with cultural meaning, or in the inclination to articulate identity as grounds for resistance to ‘development’, new technologies and changing social structures.

This political development is but one reason to focus on subjective aspects of culture and identity, in order to search for the mechanisms that can lead to either cultural enrichment and learning processes (inter-culturality), or to defensive consciousness and aggressive delimitation (social prejudice). It calls for examination of the links and mediations between everyday life social practice, identity building, and the subjective construction of socially active orientations, and not least a real historical approach in order to overcome reductionist explanations of present behaviour and orientation by projected historical legacies and/or essentialist concepts of identities”.

These observations dating back around the millennium actualized a challenge for understanding the social psychology of relatively abstract national and religious identities and differences. The new type of politics, instead of struggles over resources or power and domination in the competition between systems, seemed to engage people much more directly and also to raise new questions of legitimacy. In this context the ubiquitous presence of the remnants of the Yugoslav war was of course a tragic and alarming reminder that identity formation was connected with strong feelings and might have powerful political consequences. Being in post-Yugoslavian Croatia, we could not avoid seeing the interpretation of the local history of civil war as a challenge for understanding those dynamics of everyday life which had led to the disastrous conflicts “out of the blue”. It seemed obvious to work on that particular theme just within the Inter-University Centre of Postgraduate Studies. IUC had been a meeting point for “concerned scholars” who worked for an international dialogue during the period of the cold war, some in the form of peace and conflict research and some by organizing conferences and collaboration of critical scientists across the east-west-divide, and we were a group of critical social scientists who wanted to reactivate this practice after the Yugoslav civil war. Some of us had had continuous connections with colleagues and friends in Yugoslavia, and were, retrospectively seen, also identified with the Yugoslavian development

of an independent socialism which, in spite of an authoritarian political regime, was culturally modern and free for its citizens. It had been painful to follow the rapid destabilization after Tito's death in 1980. Accumulated debts led to economic decline and inflation; gradually an ambience of crisis for the very legitimacy and sustainability of the federative state emerged – and nationalism began to surface in Croatia and Serbia. Paradoxes stood lined up: Yugoslavia was a highly profiled state, had broken out of the communist bloc, co-founded the movement of non-allied states, and had been able to secure its own socio-economic development. As a state it was a careful construction of ethnic, national, religious and regional balances; it was a modern society, open to international cultural influences, and people integrated and even married across those divisions. Yet the dissolution process seemed to be driven by, or at least taking the form of national and religious segregation and hostility. It seemed like a 'pathological' cultural development where the hitherto existing culture lost its effectiveness as a moral source in everyday life. The usual interpretation of the history was that previously repressed cultural orientations re-surfaced. Hence the question, here and elsewhere: What are the forces of cultural identity that seem to prevail over social and economic interests and contemporary realities and experiences?

The Yugoslav catastrophe still appeared around the turn of the millennium as an unlikely exception in the midst of Europe. There were lots of challenges to empathy and analysis. One of the chapters in Part 4, "Identity, Learning, and Social Prejudice", is an updated version of the paper whose preamble was quoted above. I wrote it as an immediate reflection on the surprising experience I myself had been through in frequent visits and contacts with networks of colleagues and friends in Yugoslavia from before the civil war.

In relation to the development of methodology and our usual focus on everyday life, it was also a kind of alternative case, a theoretical exercise based on an endless and complex source material, in opposition to the usual procedure focussing on well-defined set of empirical data.

The psychosocial analysis of this case pointed to a dynamism that later proved to be less of an exception. Questions of culture and national identity had been blocked during the cold war. In the western societies, the modernization process in the post-war period produced a dynamics of emancipation that was articulated in subcultures of e.g. youth and women and in consumerism. But politically the definition of freedom (which was largely adopted by the opposition in the Eastern Bloc) was mostly reduced to the anti-communist struggle. After the dissolution of the Soviet state, the Baltic countries were liberated from Russian dominance, but simple conflicts about Russian minorities flared up, while others just remained unresolved, as in Ukraine until today. Others have become more complicated and ambiguous when national identities re-emerge inside existing states, e.g. the Catalans in Spain, or in state conglomerates, such as the Scots within the UK, not to mention a number of other potential national minority issues. Identities that for decades appeared to be

obsolete suddenly popped up as themes of mobilization in political conflicts – even sometimes leading to extreme hatred and violence.

But beside the nation-state issue we have seen surprisingly strong political identifications in several versions, which have broadly defined the political scene in Europe. For this reason, I also returned to the analysis of the Yugoslav case and recently discussed it again at the research group seminar in 2018. The dynamism that seemed to manifest itself in the Yugoslav conflict and which has since proved to be of decisive political significance is an issue of identity that not only appears in the relationship between nations and states. It has been particularly important in the relationship between peoples and population groups, partly independent of states. The politically most comprehensive impact of this issue is probably the relationship between population groups in multicultural societies and the relationship of the “existing population” to (war) refugees and immigrants.

Even before the migrations after the millennium, Britain was a multiethnic and multicultural society. Linden West has contributed to the book with an exemplary analysis of his birthplace, the formerly flourishing industrial city of Stoke-on-Trent. Here, radicalization and polarization have taken hold with the industrial decline and the establishment of a relatively numerous immigrant group organized around the Islamic religious community and the mosque. In this environment, fundamentalist Islamists face xenophobic British natives. Islamism has on the surface a religious foundation but Linden West seeks to understand more generally the dynamics which generate the firm belief in possessing an ultimate truth. He works with narrative interviews with local Islamists and shows how the individual story itself carries the interviewee’s wider experience. With reference to Axel Honneth, he analyses how the experience of non-recognition at the personal level is connected with the awareness of wider misrecognition, epitomized in the genocide against Muslims in Bosnia which is interpreted as religiously motivated, committed by Christians. West applies psychoanalytical thinking to the interpretation of how this cultural experience, as a result of dependency and anxiety as to the complexity of the world, becomes a totalitarian assertion of possessing an indisputable truth which he refers to as “omniscience”. The rest of the chapter revolves around the conditions for resisting totalitarian self-confirming identification. In opposition to this dynamic, he posits, through historical reference to the British workers’ movement, the struggle against absolutism through democratic dialogue involving the cultural and psychological acceptance of the experience of others and the preliminary and relative nature of all knowledge.

Another theme of identity politics has evolved in relation to immigration, where war refugees are typically confused with migrant workers and others. The greatly increasing numbers of refugees from wars in Syria and Somalia, repression in the Middle East and Africa and work migrants from inside and outside the European Union have given rise to a wave of xenophobia. Although there is, of course, a rational core of social interests and concern for the sustainability of European

welfare systems, it is quite obvious that the fear of strangers has an emotional intensity that does not correspond to real rational concerns. Understanding the material economic and social preconditions for this potential is, on the one hand, a way of understanding what troubled waters right-wing populists are fishing in. But it is also a source of a deeper understanding of the subjective aspects of how “ordinary people” feel threatened, not just physically, economically, or in relation to employment, but threatened in their identity and dignity.

THE DEFENCE MECHANISM AND ITS POLITICIZATION

The two cases included in this part of the book both deal with situations where strong group identifications are built on apparently unrealistic or disproportionate perceptions of social relations. The analysis of the Yugoslav conflict primarily points to a political exploitation of a social psychological defence reaction. The core of the understanding of the incomprehensible explosiveness is a psychodynamic interpretation of the feelings of ancient violations and new threats that in a moment made neighbours enemies and led to a radical dehumanization of their mutual perceptions. Something similar is true in the context of refugees and migration, as a political mobilizer for far-right nationalist parties and movements and sometimes also violent extremists. Linden West’s chapter shows that the basis of Islamist fundamentalism is also feelings of lack of recognition and a similar sense of threatened collective identity.

A fairly common and well-known defence mechanism like “splitting”, where relations are seen in exclusively black-and-white patterns, is activated on a collective level, and leads to the establishment of a strong group identity defined by hostility to other groups. The psychodynamic mechanism seems to be a quite simple one that already Freud was observing: individuals unconsciously seek to avoid anxiety by collectively identifying with some object, projecting any evil on other groups, and also feeling freed from individual responsibility. Acknowledging “the other” being different is no longer an opportunity or enrichment, but a threat. Even when more or less misinforming interventions are taken into account it seems to presume a radical detachment of the feelings from experiential content. Alfred Lorenzer coined the concept of cliché for such emotional reactions that have been detached from their original experiential content, but also have nothing to do with the actual situation. The psychosocial analysis seeks to understand the specific social and historical circumstances that make this dynamic comprehensible.

The analyses presented here show that unconscious subjective reactions may have severe or even disastrous societal and political consequences, when defensive psychodynamics for some reasons prevail, but also that psychodynamics are historical and specific to societal circumstances.

Linden West writes beautifully about the efforts of the historical education of workers to expand the tolerance to ambivalence and uncertainty. It is hardly coincidental that he chooses the historical reference to a context in which openness

and confidence in the future was strong; the reality in contemporary societal situation is quite different, anxiety and uncertainty prevail, political forces wishing to exploit these emotions are very strong, and therefore also the unconscious defenses accompanying them. The two presented examples of a psychosocial interpretation of political processes are both about identity processes in which unconscious emotional forces are activated creating regressive, reactionary dynamics. But identity is not generally a cliché in Lorenzer's sense, it may of course be based in experience of belonging to a region, a language, a culture or a tradition and is a normal basis of orientation in a global and changing world. Identification is a coordinate from which one can experience the world and meet others as a subject. It is also a human right and codified in international law as the self-determination of peoples. One can easily argue that a well-integrated identity is the best prerequisite for openness, tolerance and learning ability. So why does it in specific cases work out as a cliché? It depends on the interactive relation of subjective experience. What matters is which conscious and unconscious impulses are activated through the encounter with others and with the world. Under certain social and political circumstances identities are destabilized undermining confidence in oneself and others. This is where these realities are vital also for learning possibilities.

So beside the critical analysis of the regressive dynamics psychosocial research can also show ways in which an inclusive and containing social environment may support people's ability to realize and deal constructively with threats, learn about them and change them without resorting to defense mechanisms that distort observations of reality. This requires research that empirically analyse how specific individual and collective learning processes take place in different contexts and with people from different backgrounds. For example one can mention the ambiguity attached to protest movements which, based on authentic experiences, protest against elites while at the same time they are attempted to be orchestrated by populists. But even when they offer national conservative, xenophobic or fundamentalist politics, one should empirically seek to interpret what is grounded in experience and what is manipulation.

Although conservative and xenophobic identity policy prevails at present, there is at least one example of a political mobilization that seems to be based on authentic life experiences which should be mentioned, even though we do not have a research-based presentation of it in this book.

It is the #Metoo eruption and movement. It seems to be a belligerent example of socially repressed experiences that have been "stored" in women's bodies and psyche, usually individualized and presumably partly as an unconscious dynamics that has profoundly influenced women's perception of the world and of themselves. When these experiences become politically articulated, this enables both cognitive and emotional recollection of events that have marked them strongly. There is no doubt that individual women have retroactively changed their feelings and understanding of their own lives, and this will also decisively change the societal framework of gender and individual interactions in the future. At the same time, the actual communicative

and political process of #metoo is a muddy stream which, in addition to righteous resentment and a new assertion of the right to integrity, also contains elements of splitting and xenophobia (feminist essentialism and demonization of men, individual injustices) and is thus exemplary of the complexity of the relationship between the unconscious and the conscious formation of experience.

A psychosocial research strategy that is theoretically aware of, and methodically seeks to interpret the meaning of, unconscious dynamics in everyday interactions and relationships may provide a more nuanced approach to the understanding of political processes. But I also see it as a confirmation that one can thereby understand the processes of learning embedded in subjective life worlds and experience. This means exactly not didactizing them or predicting the direction of the process, but to understand societal nature of adult education and lifelong learning. Individuals are continuously exposed to a condition of learning. Technological advances and globalization cause a developmental pressure that is a very direct driver for adult learning processes, which take place in practices, imperceptibly and necessarily even long before they are recognized and may or may not become organized education. We acquire new knowledge and new skills, change our attitudes and values, develop new identities, and sometimes also become better at understanding and tolerating that others are different. However, the emotional and cognitive effort may sometimes become too burdensome, and it is therefore crucial how this general developmental pressure is interpreted, by both individual learners and groups of learners, often unconsciously and before it is recognized. Learning can be stimulating and developing, or overwhelming and threatening, and individual and collective life histories may account for the way it is experienced, projected in their futures and influencing the content of learning processes. The problem that was about individual developments of professional identity in Karsten Mellon's and Sissel Finholt-Pedersen's projects is therefore also about, for example, the development of a professional field and its social function. In short, the social situation and the political thematization are in play together with the conscious and unconscious psychosocial dynamics and identity process of individuals and social groups and influence the motivation for and direction of learning processes.

PART 5: A PSYCHOSOCIETAL APPROACH TO LEARNING – A PROCEDURE FOR A MATERIALIST THEORY

The last part of the book, Part 5, consists of a single chapter presenting a theoretical and methodological framework for a psychosocial research approach. It has also been published in the online magazine *Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung/Social Research*. It is primarily a methodological article. But by referring to Lorenzer's socialization theory it also provides a missing link in the reflection of subjectivity, conceptualizing both the object of the in-depth interpretation, namely the subjectivity of everyday social practice, consciousness and cultural artefacts, and the interpreting subject, the researcher, him/herself. With this material theory of the

subject the methodology is a preliminary – procedural – opposition to an exclusively or primarily cultural understanding of the societal nature of subjectivity as we know it from the linguistic turn in the social sciences, in positioning theory, and in discourse analytical criticisms; each of these approaches problematizes the modern understanding of the subject without taking the step out of Cartesian idealism. It is a core aspect of this opposition that the materiality in terms of bodily life, dependence, historical temporality and social practice precedes the culture of the idea and language both in individual life and social development (Negt & Kluge, 2014). But it is not an “undialectical materialism” (unfortunately the corresponding positive concept is so politically compromised that it can hardly be used to express the opposite). The optimistic experience is that the socially unconscious in a given society contains resources for a dynamics that is not easily predictable, cf. #metoo. On the societal level, one does not understand revolutions until they have happened, but they could not have happened without unfolding unconscious psychodynamics and social agency that were not transparent at the time. On the individual level, learning processes and identity development take place in unpredictable directions and leaps. Therefore, understanding the socially unconscious must have the nature of a negative theory and a methodology fit for carving out the future of mundane present everyday life.

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