

Sammendrag av doktorgradsavhandlinger

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Childhood as a social and symbolic space: Discourses on children as social participants in Society

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Temaet for avhandlingen er en teoretisk og empirisk analyse av hvordan barns liv formes av kulturelle og politiske oppfatninger om barndom. Bakgrunnen for prosjektet var et ønske om å få dypere innsikt i samfunnsmessige og kulturelle forhold som forklarer den økende interessen for barn som aktive deltakere i samfunnet, og hvilken betydning dette har for barns liv. Dette ønsket hadde sitt utspring i doktorandens erfaring med evaluering av flere prosjekter om 'barn og medvirkning' i Norge på 1990-tallet. Siden den gang har barns rettigheter som aktive deltakere og samfunnsborgere hatt økende innflytelse innenfor barnepolitikk og barneforskning, både nasjonalt og internasjonalt. Internasjonalt kan dette knyttes til FN's konvensjon om barnets rettigheter (1989) som er blitt tolket som revolusjonerende i forhold til tidligere barnerettserklæringer når det gjelder å anerkjenne barn som kompetente, selvstendige borgere med rett til innflytelse i samfunnet. Avhandlingen, som bygger på en analyse av prosjekter om barn og medvirkning i Norge og Danmark, viser at de nye diskursene på noen måter gir barn og unge nye muligheter for aktiv deltakelse. På den annen side er det også sterke symbolverdier knyttet til forståelse av barn som samfunnsborgere. Å gi barn rettigheter til medvirkning bidrar blant annet til å gjenskape forståelsen av Norge som et moderne demokrati. Andre underliggende mål gjør seg også gjeldende, som f.eks. å hindre fraflytting fra bygda. De nye diskursene er preget av tvetydigheter og paradokser. De avspeiler at forståelser av hva det betyr å være barn og hva det betyr å være voksen er i endring, og at grensene mellom det å være barn og voksen utviskes.

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Kindergarten makes a difference

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“Kindergarten Makes a Difference” is a study of everyday life in kindergartens. Reconstructions of how staff and children, in their meetings with each other, handle everyday life, are made through theoretical analysis of ethnographic data. The reconstructions include how the adults and children produce and reproduce the socio-cultural conditions of the everyday life, which means hierarchical ordered social relations and cultural meanings. The research is de-

limited to the interactions between staff and kindergarten children and is oriented by the following question: How are socio-cultural differences and inequalities between kindergarten children made, remade and changed when the children meet the staff?

The purpose of the everyday study is to construct knowledge about relations between processes of differentiation in kindergarten and the children's different and unequal relations to social and cultural structures of dominance. These relations I have chosen to call socio-cultural learning processes and socio-cultural re-production. The research object – everyday life – and the interest in sociocultural learning processes and re-production calls for specific method and theory. The ethnographic fieldwork is chosen as methodological approach and Bourdieu's theory of practice is central in the theoretical approach. Both method and theory put practice and bodies in the centre of research, and this study is therefore characterized by its close analysis of kindergarten children's and pedagogues' bodily practises.

Through observations, conversations, interviews and sound recordings in a kindergarten in Copenhagen I have taken advantage of the ethnographic fieldwork's potential and have produced data about traces, rhythm, tones and ways of placing. I will stress the sound recording as a crucial element in relation to obtain knowledge about subtle levels of everyday life and to understand the complexity of children's and the staff's practices and the processes of differentiation. The sound recording was motivated by my participation in the field, where I experienced sound as an important dimension in everyday life. Analysis of sound data has called for methodological development, in order to reconstruct sound profiles and sound positioning in the kindergarten. This reconstruction I used as an approach to analyse patterns of relations between ways of practicing, distinctness and status. In order to reconstruct processes of differentiation, analysis of sound data is combined with analysis of field notes and interviews.

Data processing has produced a need for concepts that maximize the analytical possibility of conceptualising the micro-complexity of practises and processes and still maintains the theory of practice's glance for power and dominance. As an answer to this need I have included Tim Ingold's concept of landscape, Nancy Fraser's concept of recognition and Beverley Skegg's concept of respectability in the theoretical analysis and analytical argumentation about how kindergarten makes a difference.

The theory of practice shaped the analytical work. It's constructions of social life as habitually oriented and hierarchically ordered relations between positions form a theoretical standpoint, from where I can understand and explain the observed practices and processes as investments of capital in forms of habitual inclinations and re-production of unequal positions. I find the concept of habitus and the concept of capital analytically productive but nevertheless inadequate when the endeavour was to understand how differentiations and socio-cultural re-production is made and kept alive by bodily interactions. I chose to replace the concept of field with the concept of landscape because it in a relevant way leads the attention away from the structural context and towards everyday material, sensible and interactional context. The concept of landscape has not served as analytical concept in the same way as the concept of recognition and the concept of respectability. Those two concepts are very central to the reconstructing of differentiation processes, which include reconstructions of the children's and the staff's constructions of proper practices, recognition logics and status systems in the everyday life of the kindergarten. The reconstructions of differentiation processes start from children's and staff's sensuous manifestations and routinized practices and interactions and lead to knowledge about relatively hidden and relatively unwanted parts of everyday life in kindergarten: the conform play about social and cultural dominance.

This everyday study, with its interest in children's socio-cultural learning processes and its ethnographic approach, is related to existing Nordic and North American micro sociological childhood studies and anthropological child studies. But it is also different from the exist-

ing studies because the primary focus in this study is the interactions between staff and children and the knowledge about how children are active subjects and how different childhoods are made in situations and conditions where children are directly objected to educational work. This focus has made it possible to reconstruct how children's bodily practices are active cards in the game about differentiations.

It is shown how children contribute to the re-production of socio-cultural differences and inequalities while they are doing their practical and strategic work aimed at retaining or improving their position. This knowledge is important when we try to understand why differentiation processes are inert and hard to change.