Building communities- through diversity and inclusion

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- Why do we need to look into diversity when talking about building communities?

- How it is possible to create and sustain inclusive and diverse communities and societies?

- Which concepts do we need to think with to be able to attain the goal of constructing diverse and inclusive communities?

Diversity

- A contested term
- More relevant today than ever before- transnational relations, migration, technological collaps of distances and borders
- Reimagination of home, belonging and otherness
- Diversity in the form of gender, ethnicity, race and class
- Diversity in regard to minority and majority representation
- Diversity in folk high schools?
  - In Denmark we see a very low representation of ethnic minority students in folk high schools
  - On the other hand we see a problematization of schools with a high representation of ethnic minoritized students

- Diversity is complex and sometimes problematized

- How much diversity do we actually want?

- How much can be tolerated ?

- And what is the right amount of diversity?

Diversity and equality

- Diversity is seen as focus in education- but not so well developed as in the US or the UK. Focus is more on "integration", "inclusion" and "tolerance"

- At the same time discourse on equality is very pervasive in the educational field at large

- The idea is that through the institutional and educational enculturation in school, social, cultural and class based differences will be equalized.

- In regard to cultural or ethnic differences the idea is that participation in a Danish school in itself is a main vehicle for the child's integration into society, as the child will learn the language, the culture and its traditions, and thus become more like the others.

Pork or no pork in daycare?

"No discrimination. One of the places, where pork has been banned is in the institution ….in Ishøj. The leader, Helle Jensen, thinks that this is necessary to avoid discrimination. "Gathering around the meal is an important element in the everyday life, where the kids experience the larger inclusive community. To attain this it is important that we from our side do not treat the individual child differently from the others, says Helle Jensen **(Politiken, 2013** https://politiken.dk/forbrugogliv/forbrug/tjekmad/art5465108/B%C3%B8rnehaver-dropper-svinek%C3%B8d-Det-skal-v%C3%A6re-ens-for-alle**)**

▶ Diversity is managed through the discourse on equality

▶ Diversity and equality are entwined

Culture sensitive or culture blind approach?

- A difficult dilemma in educational practice

- When do we take differences into consideration and make it a focal point of educational intervention?

- When do we take the commoness and equality as a point of departure in educational practice ?

- How to create the perfect balance between recognition and non-recognition of diversity ? Of over – or underrating diversity and otherness?

The Other

- In **anthropology** one sees it historically being used in regard to indigenous populations. Today it is applied more broadly (researcher positioning, ethnic minority groups).

- In **feminist** research the Other is used in understanding processes of exclusion-constructing the male as the First and the female as the Other.

- In **racial studies** it is applied in studies on how categories such as race, religion and ethnicity are used to make some subjects Other

- In **post colonial theory**, it is best represented in Edward Said's work, Orientalism. Where the Other is constructed in discourses on the culturally different and alien in a more general divide between the East and the West.

- In **poststructuralist** work we see it being used broadly as an indicator of how the self is always constituted in power relations and in contrast to something which it is not.

Othering

- When we speak of processes of othering or minoritization we adopt a **power relational and constructionist fo**cus on norms and discourses in society.

- To be an Other is to be power relationally **positioned as different**- and this difference can be defined and marked according to different parameters

- The position as Other is not something you just are, it something which **is done and acted- it is a process**- hence we speak of *othering.*

Integration and minorities in DK

A historical perspective on minorities and integration in DK

1. 1960s-1970s	First phase of major work related immigration **"Guest workers"**	
2. 1980s	In flux of refugees and increased settled immigrants; **"Settlers and refugees"**	
3. 1990s	Political and social problems, focus on integration; **"Second/third generation immigrants", "New Danes", "Hyphenated identities"?**	
4. 2000s	Terror, globalization, internet communities and diaspora; What do we call the Others now? **"Muslims"?**	

Being First or Other

- It is important to see otherness as a constructed category formed historically and socially

- Which means that when we work with diversity we also have to bear in mind what kind of diversity we are dealing with?

- And be aware of from which positions we are dealing with diversity? From a more or less privileged position in regard to being first or othered?

- Being first or other influence our access to meaningful and recognized positions in the communities we are part of

Intersectionality and otherness

- Conceptualized by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989/1991), who used it to describe Afro-American women's invisibility in the judicial and political context in the US.

- Stems from the black feminism movement in the 50s and 60s, which seeked to highlight the doubled marginalization experienced by Black women, where their voices were neither heard in the male dominated black liberation movement or in the white feminist movement.

- The concept moreover, has its roots back to the historical context of slavery in the US and Sojourner Truths speech in 1851, "Aint I a woman", where she looks into the intersection of gender, race and class (Brah & Phoenix 2004).

Intersectionality as a concept

*"We regard the concept of 'intersectionality' as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when **multiple axis of differentiation** – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – **intersect in historically specific contexts**.*

The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands"

(Avtar Brah & Ann Phoenix 2004)

Intersectionality as an approach

The anthropologist Floya Anthias (2009) describes intersectionality as a **"heuristic device"** (p. 11) and hereby highlights that intersectionality cannot just be seen as a theory, but more as an approach- as a way of thinking which can open our eyes to complexity and diversity in practice.

Points of criticism

- Are all differences and categories equally important?

- How to include all points of difference?

- Social difference and diversity works in a multitude of ways, and we need to look into the contextual and historical meaning of a category.

- Many studies on intersectionality tend to overlook the meaning of race- race being a category which historically occupies a significant meaning in regard to access to power and privilege (Lewis 2013).

- How we understand difference is often related to how we understand culture and ethnicity as concepts

- Most often diversity and difference is seen in the lens of cultural difference

- This is also evident in regard to the discourse on integration and inclusion

Traditional understanding of culture

Diversity and complexity

▶ Cultures are rarely homogenous; Danish culture cannot easily be defined as a single homogenous and absolute unit

▶ Ethnic minority groups are rarely homogenous, well defined units that are secluded.

▶ Reality is much more diverse and complex.

Saqib, 16 years old

"…I mean, I would like to call myself a Muslim first and foremost, and then a Pakistani. I mean, Dane, I can be, a little, because we do live in the Danish society. But firstly religion and then Pakistani"

Azam, 36 years old

"I am not home anywhere but I am home wherever there is Muslim and that is what fascinates me about it. I can go here to a Muslim community and get along...And I am gonna be accepted because I am a Muslim"

Roots or Routes?

▶ Liisa Malki highlights the importance of being aware of the fact that self construction and belonging is not only about **roots** but also about the **routes** one takes in the world

▶ Our focus should thus not always and solely be on the ethnic or cultural background of the minoritized individual- we have to focus on which routes and ways of negotiation one chooses as a situated subject in diverse and complex contexts of participation.

▶ A person can have multiple cultural roots and routes in the world.

Malkki, L. 1992: "National geographic: The Rootings og People and the Territorialization of National Identity among scholars and refugees" in: *Cultural Anthropology*, vol 7, no 1.)

Negotiating subjects

➢ One cannot define the individual subject by his cultural or ethnic Otherness- one has to see **the individual as a situated, negotiating subject who is differently positioned in different contexts and in regard to different categories.**

➢ Maybe instead of talking about **adaptation** we should talk about how individuals **negotiate** their participation and membership in a given culture and **community**

➢ This points towards a more **diversifying perspective** on culture as practice and lived life and otherness as dynamic positions that can change and shift according to context, community and setting.

Multiple belongings
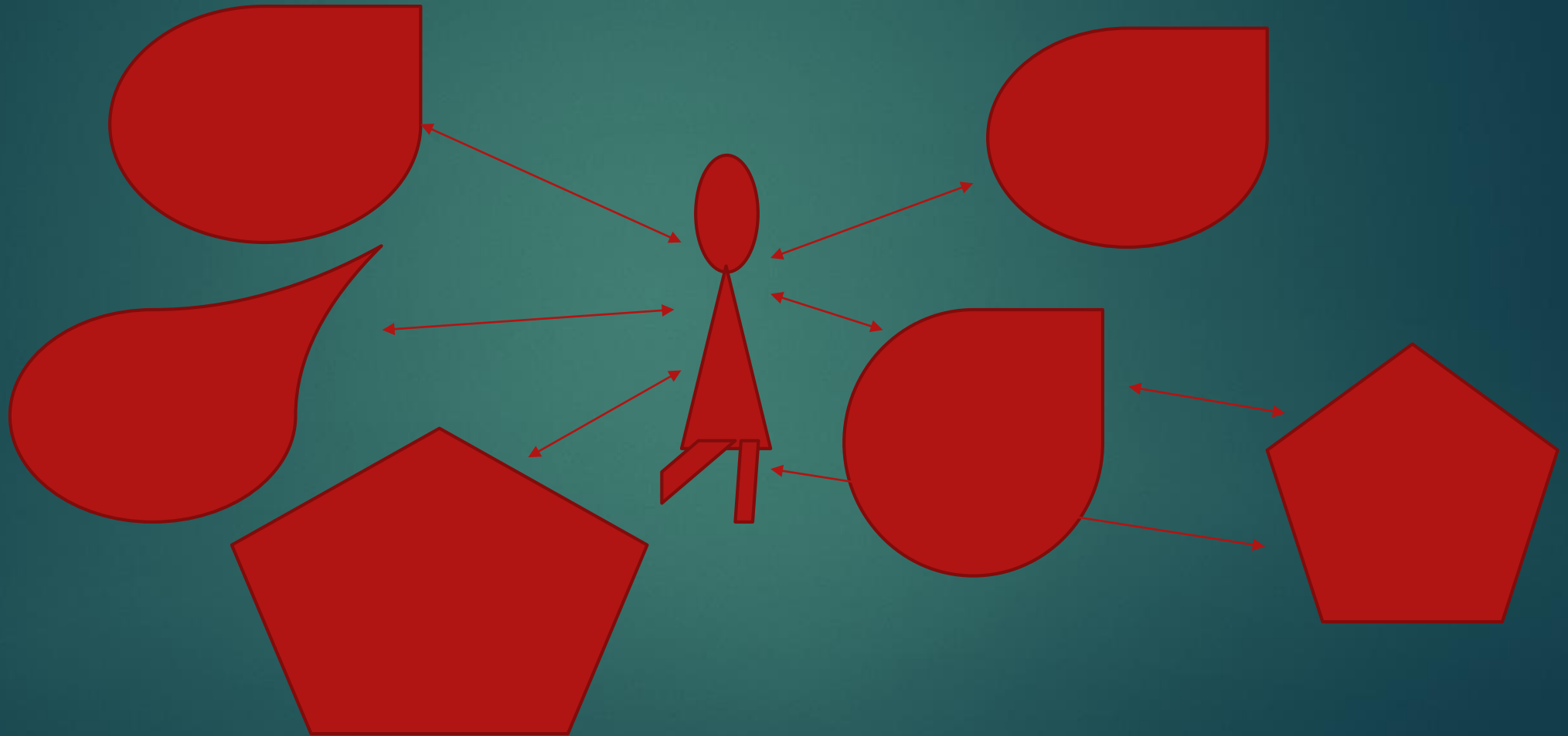
Integration and inclusion

▶ Integration: Focus on making the individual part of an already existing group or unit through adaptation

  ▶ How is it possible for the foreigner or stranger to become part of the Danish society?

▶ Inclusion: Focus on how the group can be formed in such a way that the individuals feel they belong there.

  ▶ The goal is to create inclusive communities and settings, and thus the theoretical point of departure is not so much the individual who needs to conform and adapt, but rather the framing of the settings and contexts in which the individual is participating.

Community

- Community as always in becoming and connected to identity and belonging (Khawaja 2010)

- In educational studies the link between community, learning and the position you occupy in the learning community is especially highlighted.

- Showing how being in a peripheral position and moving towards a more centralized and accepted position as a legitimate member of the learning community makes a difference

- The interdependent relation between community, identity and belonging

- Communities of practice (Lave & Wenger 1990), communities as transcending marginalization (Mørck 2011)

Belonging

- Implies a focus on how subjects construct points of **emotional and spatial attachments in the world.**

- Is related to a **longing** for something which is not always within reach. It is a desire that can move in many directions and take on many forms.

- Is often a **naturalised** feeling

- Can be connected to politicised claims of **legitimacy and citizenship**

- Related to processes of **inclusion and exclusion.**

Belonging as a process

- Belonging is a process- it is not something you just achieve- it is done- and most often in a manner where you have to fight for and negotiate being accepted as someone who belongs.

- It is a movement across different places, identities and conceptualizations of home.

Belonging and community

- Most often individuals seek a sense of belonging in the communities they are part of or want to become part of, and the question then **remains how can we as educators foster communities that create a sense of belonging for all** ?

- How can we practice communities in a manner where belongingness and inclusion is encouraged- and not only encouraged but actually felt?

- **How do we create communities in ways where otherness is seen, accepted but also transgressed**? So that the otherness is not defining, and holding you back- where it is possible to move from a marginalized position to a more centralized and recognized position in the community and in society at large?

Sources of inspiration

- Cultural sustainable pedagogy
  - Sustaining and respecting cultural and linguistic competence of students, and providing a socially just educational community and context for immigrant youth.
  - To attain this one of the first steps is to move beyond static notions of culture, and push back against narrow definitions, which limit the understanding of the everyday life of children and youth.
- Decolonizing the university and curriculum
  - Look into curriculum and other practices to see how minoritized groups are represented.
  - The aim is to decolonize and destabilize the existing power relational structures to attain recognition of students with a minoritized or racially othered background

We are not defined by our otherness, but our drive to belong and be part of communities that recognize us as subjects that can contribute meaningfully to the community.

Thank you for your attention!

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