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– A case of social logistics

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One prison is in motion in Sweden every day. There are more persons employed to handle these transportations than in an ordinary prison. If we regard the costs for transportation of prisoners we can see that it is similar to the cost of one prison. In that sense you can say that the transport service is comparable to a prison, but there are interesting differences between prison and prison transportation. A prison is a place where you stay during a certain time, while the transport is a question of motion, both in time and space.

The transported prisoner is transferred from one prison to another, but the transport also involves transformation, not only from one context to another, but also from one identity to an other. Simultaneously they are in motion both externally, when the transport moves in the landscape, and internally, when the prisoner is transformed from a subject to an object and back again during the transport. In this article, we will discuss the transformation process during transportation, where the metamorphosis of the transported reveals the governmentality in the situation, and thereby, in society.

Loïc Wacquant (2002) has stated that the neo-liberal way of describing insecurity in society has taken a turn to describe social problems in terms of criminality. He considers how exclusion is discussed in terms of criminal justice in the United States, in France and in other countries around the world, and he argues that the Welfare State is becoming a Penal State.

Mobility is an essential part of the neo-liberal everyday life, and has also a central place in identity dynamics in governing a population. Prison is a metaphor for modern society and imprisonment is supposed to prevent mobility. However, prisoner transportation is an important part of the dynamics of the prison system. This is an obvious example of the distinctive nature of the role played by culture in neo-liberal forms of governance. Transferring prisoners is being used to maintain differentiation and security and to break the cultural rules and rituals that are establishing among the prisoner population.

Since the issue of culture has been central ever since the cultural turn, it has however also called upon "culturalist" explanations, which means that social issues have been neglected. Within our project there is an inter-disciplinary exchange between the cultural and the social that can

throw light on the different disciplinary frameworks and how different conceptions of culture are implicated in theories of social change. Within ethnology the main focus is on cultural identity; while social work research is occupied with social change. We will discuss the question: What bearing does this have in contemporary deployments of culture in both formal policy domains and everyday forms of social regulation? Our preliminary investigation concerning the prison transportation system has shown three interesting interlocking themes on mobility that could shed light on this: continuity and change, identity dynamics and regulative processes.

Continuity and change

Our approach begins within a changing prison transportation system in the middle of the 19th century, when debates in Sweden on the multitude of complaints concerning prisoner transportation, led to different trials on how to simplify the foot march where the prisoners were linked together with wooden bars, leather belts, and iron chains (Wieselgren 1895). By then, part of the meaning of this system was a normative show in public of the prisoner as a symbol of his crime. The chained prisoners marching through the village was a spectacle where people came to see how dangerous they were and what exclusion from society that could be expected for those who did not follow the rules. If the prisoners even had handcuffs it revealed that they were extremely dangerous. Gradually the discussions led to solutions like horse drawn wagons and later on railway wagons like the one that Michel Foucault (1977) has described as a "correction wagon" which is a prison in motion , anonymous and secretive outside, but with the ability inside to transform the prisoners. This is simply an elaborated and articulated machinery, a correctional system, that has replaced the chain. Starting in these circumstances where Foucault describes the prisoner transportation as a transformation apparatus it is possible to understand how this systematically organized handling of humans went through a transformation from ritual openness to administrative discretion and how it can be understood as a metaphor for a more general development of society. In focus for our investigation is both the development of change when the technique altered from an open ritual to a closed administrative discretion and the continuity in this discretion, today expressed for instance in internet discussions where you find expressions like "I met a grey van escorted by four police cars … Does anyone know what kind of equipage this is?".

Identity dynamics

Mobility is an essential part of the neo-liberal everyday life and has also a central place in identity dynamics in governing a population. People today live in the intersection of a number of different cultural traditions and there is a high demand for cultural competence to be able to move between different belongings. It is a question of being flexible and mobile. Mobility can include tourists, refugees, vagabonds, business executives, etcetera and this is where and why the prison transportation system interests us, since we with the Latourian notion believe that societies are not what hold us together, but what should be held together (Latour 1993a). The prison transportation system is a kind of technical system that knows how to minimize risk and instability and it shows how power is exercised in a way that can be compared to the meaning of governing a population. Mobility and transformation are the working parts of the system, where a carrier is carrying out decisions made centrally by a governance that is not in motion but supervising the process. This could be called 'social logisticts', which means that it is something needed to rule the social system.

With the understanding of Bruno Latour (1993b), technique is not something surrounded by a society, but a society made sustainable. We consider the prison transportation system as a technical system, connecting networks of actions and social relations. Different cultural and social techniques are being used to minimize risk and create security. A prisoner is usually moved because he has been unruly or there is another reason for changing his behaviour. He is going to be transformed from one subjectivity to another by the motion. The meaning of the transport is transformation. At the same time however there is a need for affirmative identities in the transportation process. They have to be made moveable as objects or items; wrapped up, sealed and categorized in terms of logistics. Fixing of boundaries create differentiated objects at the same time as a relation is created between them.

In transporting 'dangerous goods' like prisoners, it is important to be aware of the social interplay between the superiors and subordinates. The objected prisoner is changed during the transformation in the transportation process, which means that there is a constant need for establishing the power relations. What makes the powerful powerful, is the system as such or the equipment and means by which he is constituted as powerful. Bruno Latour has described systems as containing so called black boxes. These black boxes are filled with things that do not need to be negotiated or reconsidered. The more that can be

placed in these boxes, habits, forces, things … the wider construction can be constructed. The black boxes are never totally closed but the actors in power act as if they were closed and dark. How can an actor maintain the asymmetry needed and lay down an order for the other to be followed?

To understand the power that is being exercised, we have to look into the systems black boxes and unwind the relations that keep them closed. Escapes and escape attempts can be understood as counter strategies by the prisoner as subject to resist that the system tries to transform them into obedient objects. By following the rules you make a contribution to their maintenance. But when you try to open the box, you get open relations under negotiation which threatens the maintenance of the system. The ability to black box relations is an ability to control the actors in the network.

The transportation of prisoners demands a network of pre packed boxes and relations that are negotiated and ready for use. Something that is not negotiated can not be moved unless it is changed. A black boxed movement demand a black boxed transport infrastructure. This is where the prison transportation system comes into work. To keep the network sustainable, the prison transportation system aims at black boxed transportation and transformation. Prisoners are being moved at the same time as they are placed in a new situation. The objected prisoner should be changed by being moved but still there is nothing else happening than his being moved in time and space. However this differentiation is what occupies the whole transportation system.

Studying the relation between transforming and transporting the prisoners within the transportation activity makes it possible to combine cultural identity formation with social relations. Instead of excluding identity questions from our understanding, we should critically examine from which situations they emerge. Not until we have done that, can we reformulate them. Identities are always shaped in the gap between what we ourselves choose to belong to and the categories that are forced upon us (cf. Hall & du Gay 1996). Cultural identities depend both on societal circumstances, interpersonal relations and everyday practices. Power is not a question of social control, simple repression, and patriarchal systems. Identity questions are related to questions of citizenship and cultural belonging. In the ongoing discussion about the meaning of cultural identities and differences, as the philosopher Nancy Fraser (2003) so skilfully has formulated it, the struggle for cultural recognition is fast becoming paradigmatic and demands for recognition of cultural difference fuels struggles of groups. Group identities supplant class

interests and cultural domination supplants exploitation as the fundamental injustice. The remedy for injustice then becomes cultural recognition. And a new notion of the world is centred on identity difference, cultural domination and recognition while questions concerning exploitation and redistribution tend to be obscured or even disappear. Identity politics goes hand in hand with neo-liberalism and the new economy. Opinions like identities being evil in locking people up in determined and affirmative identities and negative subordination is not being heard. However, we cannot avoid realising that identity is the basis from which people build meaning and make experiences. As Craig Calhoun has expressed it, *we know no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other, we and they are not made* (Calhoun 1995, p. 193).

Both our self-understanding and our relation to other people depends on that we know who we are. But at the same time we are different depending on the situation we are in. Cultural identities reside in interpersonal relations and understandings and commitments embedded in crucial social and cultural ties in daily practices. We should examine identity mechanisms and processes as the interplay between storytelling, social categories, boundary formation, and identity claims solidarity, contention and political change.

In the processes of identity dynamics, we can see the distinctive nature of the role played by culture in neo-liberal forms of governance. Transferring prisoners is being used to maintain differentiation and security and to break the cultural rules and rituals that are establishing among the prisoner population.

One of the main tasks for the prison is to prevent and regulate mobility, as a prisoner, you are supposed to be *in* prison. But one of the main strategies for handling the prison is differentiation and differentiation presupposes categorisation. Differentiation and categorisation are essential for the prison system. By categorising prisoners and differentiate prisoners between different prisons and different departments in the prison, it is possible to maintain order in the prisons as well as it is possible to separate prisoners that have what is called "bad influence" on each other. This is also an important part of the matter of social logistics.

The logics of differentiation and categorisation becomes more evident when a prisoner is to be transported since he then is to be transformed from the category that he was ascribed in the first prison to a new category in a new prison. In this categorisation both internal and external categories are used. Internal categories are for example the crime

committed, the length of the prison sentence and the reason for transportation. Categorisation from these variables is related to the prison system. External categories are categories that are related to other systems, it could be gender, age, ethnicity, drug use or any other category that not specifically derives from the prison system. Charles Tilly (1999) has argued that when we add external categories to the internal ones, then we strengthen the category and makes it more fixed.

During transportation the transported is under transformation. In this transformation he has some categorical characteristics from the system he leaves, some from the one he is going to, and some external. The comprehensive and diverse description the transported person could have is handled through objectification. It is not the person that is in motion; it is the prison system that moves him, he is an object for transportation. He is still in prison, but the prison, during transportation, is not a building, it is often a car, but it could also be an aeroplane, a boat or any other means of transportation. The prisoners subjectivity is ignored, as a transported prisoner described in a newspaper article about the methods for transportation: "I have never felt so depersonalised in my whole life, it is impossible to describe" and he adds "I felt like an animal, it was humiliating, one does though have some value as a human being" (*Dagens Nyheter* 20050301).

While the transportation is performed you could say that there are persons sitting in a car, but although they are persons they often maintain their roles as transporter and transported. These roles are governed through the regulations and through the interaction within the transport service (cf. Collins 2004). Charles Tilly (2002) has argued that we can understand a system through stories. Every context produces standard stories, and since they are produced by the system, they reflect the system. Therefore we can understand how the relationship between the transporter and transported are maintained and negotiated by listening to stories from prison transporters. In interviews and conversations with prison transporters and transported prisoners we have noticed some standard stories.

One story told among prison transporters concerns how long time they can sit in a car without talking to the transported. Stories are told by proud transporters that they have been driving from the south to the north of Sweden, over 1000 kilometres, without talking. These stories are told with a laugh that indicates their pride of not crossing the boundary between their roles, and not regarding the transported as a subject.

On the other side of the boundary there are stories told about transporters that talk and interact with the transported as a person.

These stories are often told either with indignation, from those who dislike the interaction that blurs the roles, or as counterstrategies. Transporters that tell these stories about their own action regard the interaction as some kind of counterstrategy. They often add some sentence about 'you have to regard them individually' to their story. They also often express some kind of critique against the prison system. It can be comments about the prison personnel, or about the reason for this specific transport. For example, they can explain making contact by saying "I think it is important to make a conversation while we are in the car. In the prison they always are among other prisoners. In the car, I have a possibility to influence them when we are alone together". This is an example of cross-boundary interaction where the transporter tries to change the individual that is being transported. Although the border between the transported object and individual subject is crossed, the asymmetric relation of the superior and the subordinated are maintained. The superior transporter tries to influence the subordinated prisoner.

One case of boundary crossing by interaction could be if the transporter and transported talked about personal issues. Then they should have exchanged stories about weather and football in the beginning of the trip and end up exchanging stories about family and personal events. Here the boundary could be crossed, not only in the situation, but also in the relationship between the roles. The roles of the transporter and the transported are blurred and therefore also their status as normal or deviant, superior or subordinated. Maybe these stories are not told, since they do not match the idea of the prison transportation. Therefore the silence that surrounds these symmetric interactions could reveal the governmentality in the situation (Collins 2004). This kind of interaction is not possible, it is a non-event, and therefore, you can not discuss it, especially not among prison transporters. There is one non-event that is discussed since it is an event that should be prepared for, though it should not take place, which is when the prisoner escapes, when he turns him self into a subject and starts to move from the transport.

All these stories give us the picture of the expectations of the normal transportation, the transportation where the black boxes are neatly ordered and where the distinction between the categories of transporter and transported are maintained.

Regulative processes

In the above outlined presentation of themes of the organizational continuity and change and the identity dynamics within the prison

transportation system we have elucidated a regulative process that shows how different conceptions of culture can be implicated in theories of social change. Prisons are the symbolic gateway through which a variety of individuals are processed in order to be incorporated into the social contract. However the prison system cannot function without the dynamics of the transport system since the prison system is not only a security system, but also a system of social logistics. It is mobility and transformation that show the regulative process in action.

The overall aim in this project from a social science perspective is to see how regulations and interpersonal relations have developed as a part of the prison system. From a cultural theoretical point of view we can see how it has contributed to identity formation and the categorization process through which the state controls its citizens. Identity is the result both of casual actions by individuals and of historically and socially constituted context. They are shaped in the relational interaction between the transformation processes by which humans become both subjects and objects.

There are today two kinds of spatial movements, one is rapid and the other is slow but also more powerful, more fateful, but also more threatening (Liedman 1999). The first movement concerns the global life mode of people like famous sportsmen and music artists, business executives and researchers where international encounters play an important part in their everyday life. The other more threatening movement concerns the poor, refugees, migrants and others for whom there is no space in any society. Since mobility is an essential part of everyday life, it also has a central position in governing a population. It can not be regulated through ordinary rules instead it is controlled in a more diffuse process termed governmentality.

The prison transportation system can, through its means of control, serve as an example of how the neo–liberal welfare state creates individuals in permanent motion. However we also have to consider whether this is a metaphor for a new penal thinking in welfare states. Loïc Waquant (2002) has put it as an equivalent to a penalization of poverty. If so, what does it mean to democratic participation and citizenship? The state has always aimed at restricting poor people's movement patterns (Melossi 2002). In former days it was a question of preventing mobility. Today it is a question of regulating mobility and this is why the prison transportation system plays an important role.

If we regard the micro processes in those situations where the regulated practice is performed, then we can see how the state acts and thereby understand aspects of the contemporary society (Collins 2004).

A long historical perspective is necessary to reflect both continuity and change, whether in society or in the cultural formation of identities.

While the social research tendency today seems to aim towards more quantitative studies, we want to stress the importance of a combination of the cultural and the social. Societal processes after the cultural turn made us aware of the importance of social constructions. However there was a lack of both critical analysis and realistic support in just regarding life as a construction (cf. Bonnell & Hunt 1999). There are social facts. We have to avoid both the relativistic and the reductionistic trap.

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