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Hegemony and the Intellectual Function

Medialised Public Discourse on Privatisation in Sweden 1988-1993

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Hegemony and the Intellectual Function

Medialised Public Discourse on Privatisation in Sweden 1988-1993

LIV SUNNERCRANTZ

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY | LUND UNIVERSITY, 2017



Hegemony and the Intellectual Function

Hegemony and the Intellectual Function

Medialised Public Discourse on Privatisation in
Sweden 1988-1993

Liv Sunnercrantz



LUND
UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This dissertation offers a theorisation of the ways in which the intellectual function is performed through various subject positions. In the thesis, a post-Marxist approach to discourse theory is used to address questions of discursive shifts, hegemony and the intellectual function. It is supplemented by a rhetorical political analysis in order to examine how practices and strategies involved in hegemonic struggles take place on a more fine-grained level of analysis. The theoretical argument is complemented through empirical work that analyses the medialised debate on privatisation in Sweden from 1988 to 1993. As a step in the theorisation process this empirical analysis applies elements of both post-Marxist discourse theory and rhetorical political analysis to shed new light on the intricacies of the intellectual function and the hegemonic processes in which it plays a key part. Using a post-Marxist terminology, the intellectual function is conceived broadly as the articulation and mediation of ideology, and analysed with the aid of conceptual devices derived from the rhetorical political analysis approach. Empirical analysis thus plays an active, constitutive role in the production of theory. This also implies that empirical analysis is not undertaken primarily as an end in itself, but rather because it is needed to support the theorisation process. Nevertheless, the analysis of the privatisation debate in Sweden elucidates important discursive changes that took place in this decisive period of recent Swedish history.</p> <p>The focus of the study is directed towards the shifts in ways of defining and speaking about the concept under contention (in this case, privatisation) in a relational setting of concepts and political positionings; the formation and performance of an intellectual function and the types of subject positions made available in the debate, and the rhetorical practices used to inhabit such positions; and the rhetorical and political strategies employed to achieve (relative) fixation of a particular definition of privatisation by making it (appear to be) commonsensical. The analysis shows how a common sense centred on the right to private ownership, is established in the privatisation discourse.</p> <p>By disentangling moral and efficiency-based arguments, the empirical analysis provides novel insights that contradict existing economic assumptions about neoliberal politics and ideologies. By fleshing out the post-Marxist notion of an intellectual function, the study offers a way of conceptualising a post-foundationalist theory of intellectuals. Moreover, performances of the intellectual function are typologised into three ideal types: "experts", "spokespersons", and "public intellectuals". The dissertation also points to processual changes in the representation of these ideal types in mainstream and alternative media.</p> <p>By analysing discursive practices of coalitions building and the articulation of political frontiers in the privatisation discourse, the empirical analysis elucidates constructions of unity and division among political subjects. What emerges from these processes is a new hegemonic order which supplants the previous hegemonic formation – which became the common enemy across political lines – the social democratic welfare state.</p>		
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Hegemony and the Intellectual Function

Medialised Public Discourse on Privatisation in Sweden
1988-1993

Liv Sunnercrantz



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‘Tutti gli uomini sono intellettuali, si potrebbe dire perciò; ma non tutti gli uomini hanno nella società la funzione di intellettuali (così, perché può capitare che ognuno in qualche momento si frigga due uova o si cucisca uno strappo della giacca, non si dirà che tutti sono cuochi e sarti). Si formano così storicamente delle categorie specializzate per l’esercizio della funzione intellettuale [...]’

Antonio Gramsci

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¹ Umberto Eco, *How to Write a Thesis*, trans. by Caterina Mongiat Farina and Geoff Farina (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2015), 182.

² Eco, *How to Write a Thesis*, 182.

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sure that every academic workplace is supplied with the worst kind of “coffee” imaginable; sourced from the hands of starving children; acidic enough to cause ulcers; and cheap enough to oust all competition. To Zoégas and their mother company Nestlé – and to Lund University for buying products that clearly goes against all ethical consideration – I have nothing polite to say.

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Liv Sunnercrantz

The cupboard on top of the stairs,
Department of Sociology,
Lund.

On the 7th of November 2017,
or a not-so-red centennial

Abbreviations and Swedish Words

Aftonbladet	“The Evening Paper”. Nationwide Swedish evening tabloid newspaper, based in Stockholm.
Arbetet	“The Labour”. Regional (southern) Swedish daily newspaper, based in Malmö.
Centerpartiet (C)	“The Centre Party”. Swedish agrarian party.
DN	<i>Dagens Nyheter</i> , “Today’s News”. Nationwide Swedish daily newspaper based in Stockholm.
Expressen	“The Express”. Nationwide Swedish evening tabloid newspaper, based in Stockholm.
FMSF	<i>Fria Moderata Studentförbundet</i> , “the Free Moderate Student League”, or “The Confederation of Swedish Conservative and Liberal Students”. Swedish student non-partisan organisation. Politically close to the Moderate Party.
Folkpartiet; Folkpartiet Liberalerna (Fp)	“The People’s Party”, later “the Liberal Peoples Party” (liberal addition in 1990). Swedish social-liberal party.
Frihetsfronten	“The Freedom Front”: Swedish network organisation with a neoliberal and libertarian orientation. Responsible for the publication of the periodical <i>Nyliberalen</i> .
GP	<i>Göteborgs-Posten</i> , “The Gothenburg Post”. Regional Swedish daily newspaper, based in Gothenburg.
LO	<i>Landsorganisationen i Sverige</i> , “The Swedish Trade Union Confederation”.
Moderaterna (M)	<i>Moderata Samlingspartiet</i> , “Moderate Unity Party”, “Moderate Coalition Party” or simply “the Moderate Party”. Swedish conservative party.
Ny Demokrati (NyD)	“New Democracy”. Shortlived right-wing populist party (1991-1994).
Nyliberalen	“The Neoliberal”. Nationwide periodical, political journal, based in Stockholm.
OBS! Kulturkvarten	“N.B! The cultural quarter of an hour”. The national public service radio programme for public idea debate on cultural, societal, and philosophical matters.

Riksdag or Riksdagen	Corresponds to “parliament”. The national legislature and supreme decision-making body in Sweden.
SAF	<i>Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen</i> “The Swedish Employers’ Association” (later <i>Svenskt Näringsliv</i> , “Swedish Business”).
Sifo	<i>Svenska institutet för opinionsundersökningar</i> literally "the Swedish Institute for Opinion Surveys"
Socialdemokraterna (S; SAP)	<i>Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti</i> . “The Social Democrats”. Also known as “Sossarna”. Swedish Social Democratic party.
SR	<i>Sveriges Radio</i> , "Swedish Radio". Sweden's national public service radio broadcaster.
SSU	<i>Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Ungdomsförbund</i> , “The Swedish Social Democratic Youth League” is the Swedish Social Democratic Party’s youth association.
SvD	<i>Svenska Dagbladet</i> , “The Swedish Daily Paper”. Nationwide Swedish daily newspaper based in Stockholm.
SVT	<i>Sveriges Television</i> , “Sweden's Television”. Sweden’s national public television broadcaster (public service).
Timbro	Right-wing, market-radical Swedish think tank and book publisher.
TLM	<i>Thélème</i> , later <i>TLM</i> . Nationwide periodical, cultural journal, based in Stockholm. Published by the association <i>Thélème</i> .

PART I

Introduction

In which the content and contribution of the dissertation is revealed and the discourse theoretical approach, along with the empirical material that has been analysed accordingly, are outlined. In short, this is a dissertation in which the question of “the intellectual” in relation to the construction of hegemony is revived by approaching said problem from a post-foundationalist perspective. By confronting old and new theory with an empirical material consisting of utterances and arguments in the political, medialised discourse on privatisation in Sweden (during 1988-1993), I am able to make theoretical contributions to this field of research – as well as provide useful insights into the ideologies and arguments that surround privatisation politics.

Chapter 1

Making Sense of “Intellectuals” and Hegemony in the Public Discourse on Privatisation

Neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world.³

For [Antonio Gramsci], the construction of a hegemonic collective will depends on political initiatives that are not the necessary effect of any infrastructural laws of movement. In that sense, the scope of the contingent political construction was greatly widened. This on the one hand increased, as a result, the role of the intellectual function in the construction of hegemony; on the other, it led to the impossibility of restricting that function to the group or caste with which the intellectuals had traditionally been identified.⁴

What does it mean to suggest that neoliberalism has “become hegemonic as a mode of discourse” and how did this come to pass? What precisely is “the intellectual function” and what role does it have “in the construction of hegemony”? In this dissertation I turn to the post-Marxist discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe for a first cut into these questions. This equips me with a theoretical understanding in which hegemony is seen as on-going relational processes and practices rather than the end state of a completed, historical process. Hence, I treat hegemony partly as a processual phenomenon and partly as an active practice or strategy. To understand such practices and processes in a certain debate, we need to examine how arguments and positions structure such discourses and, as I will argue, the intellectual function in this context. It is for this purpose that I mobilise the medialised debate on privatisation in Sweden from 1988 to 1993. The study, then, is not interested in the outcomes or effects of this

³ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, 2005), 3.

⁴ Ernesto Laclau, ‘Constructing Universality’, in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, ed. by Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek (London, 2000), 287.

debate per se, but enrolls it as an exemplary case for studying hegemonic processes, practices, and strategies. Theoretical development, in other words, is the primary target, whereas empirical insight concerning this particular debate is a secondary priority; an incidental bonus so to speak, but nevertheless a valuable one.

Proceeding from a critique of conventional notions of intellectuals and their roles, I demonstrate the importance of understanding debates as discourses with relational positions from where arguments are articulated. While I find that post-Marxist discourse theory has taken us an important part of the way in the direction of an adequate theory of hegemony and discourse, it also holds unanswered questions and missing links that need to be addressed. In my work I address two of these in particular: firstly, the continued black-boxing of the intellectual function, and secondly, the lack of adequate empirical discourse theory studies in a Scandinavian context, especially with regards to hegemonic practices associated with neoliberalism⁵. In this chapter I begin with a short introduction of the post-Marxist take on discourse, hegemony, and intellectuals in which I also identify key areas for further theoretical development. In the following sub-section I then sketch my own approach to addressing these shortcomings. This includes, most importantly, my turn towards the rhetorical political approach to enable a more detailed way of studying the role of the intellectual function in hegemonic processes. In the third subsection I introduce my empirical study of the privatisation debate in Sweden from 1988 to 1993 before concluding the chapter.

⁵ Notable post-Marxist contributions within a Scandinavian context include: Dennis Westlind, *The Politics of Popular Identity: Understanding Recent Populist Movements in Sweden and the United States*, Dissertation, Lund Political Studies (Lund, 1996); Jannick Schou and Morten Hjelholt, 'Digitalizing the Welfare State: Citizenship Discourses in Danish Digitalization Strategies from 2002 to 2015', *Critical Policy Studies*, 2017, 1–20; Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen, 'Political Administration', in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy, and Governance*, ed. by David R. Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, 2005); Torben Bech Dyrberg, Allan Dreyer Hansen and Jacob Torfing, eds., *Diskursteorien på arbejde* (Frederiksberg, 2001); Allan Dreyer Hansen and Eva Sørensen, 'Polity as Politics: Studying the Shaping and Effects of Discursive Politics', in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy, and Governance*, ed. by David R. Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, 2005); Allan Dreyer Hansen, 'Dangerous Dogs, Constructivism and Normativity: The Implications of Radical Constructivism', *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 11/1 (2010), 93–107; Jacob Torfing and Magtudredningen (projekt), *Det stille sporskifte i velferdsstaten: en diskursteoretisk beslutningsprocesanalyse* (2004); Per-Anders Svärd, *Problem Animals: A Critical Genealogy of Animal Cruelty and Animal Welfare in Swedish Politics 1844–1944*, Dissertation, Department of Political Science (Stockholm, 2015); Charlotte Fridolfsson, *Deconstructing Political Protest*, Dissertation, Department of Social and Political Sciences (2006); Jenny Gunnarsson Payne, *Systemskapets logiker: en etnologisk studie av feministiska fanzines*, Dissertation, Etnologiska skrifter, 38 (Umeå, 2006).

A post-Marxist take on discourse and hegemony

Discourse, in my perspective, is more than talk or text. In short, discourse can be described as ‘a shared way of apprehending the world’⁶, which is more or less sedimented, and institutionalised – yet constantly modified and transformed by our actions, thoughts, and statements. Or, in a more abstract sense, “discourse” signifies a relational ensemble of meaningful practices: a configuration that consists of both semantic aspects of language and meaningful aspects of non-verbal practices. Discourses are constituted through meaningful articulations (linguistic and non-linguistic) when subjects attempt to interpret and make sense of the world around them. For an object, word, or practice to be rendered meaningful, it needs to be understood in relation to other elements represented in this system. Subscribers to a certain discourse can in this way create coherent accounts and understandings. ‘Discourses construct meanings and relationships, helping define common sense and legitimate knowledge’⁷. They rest on certain ‘assumptions, judgments, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debate, agreement and disagreement’⁸ about an object or occurrence. Non-linguistic elements, like objects of a natural, material, or physical character acquire meaning through discourses. More technically, they need to be discursively constructed to be distinguished in relation to other elements and thus rendered meaningful. That is, the meaning and significance of objects that clearly exist independently of any particular discourse, still depend on these discursive articulations.

At a more concrete level, discourse can be analysed as an ensemble of cognitive schemes, conceptual articulations, rhetorical strategies, pictures and images, symbolic actions (rituals), and structures (architectures), enunciative modalities, and narrative flows and rhythms. All these things should be analysed both in terms of their ability to shape and reshape meaning.⁹

In addition, discourses exhibit properties of contingency, historicity, contextuality, relationality, an ontological character and structural *undecidability*¹⁰. Ideology

⁶ John S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, Second Edition (Oxford, 1997), 9.

⁷ Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, 9.

⁸ Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, 9–10; Jason Glynos and others, ‘Discourse Analysis: Varieties and Methods’, 2009, 8.

⁹ Jacob Torfing, ‘Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges’, in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy, and Governance*, ed. by David R. Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, 2005), 14.

¹⁰ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd edn (London; New York, 1985); Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL, 1988); Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, paperback (London, 2005); David R. Howarth and Jacob Torfing, eds., *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy, and Governance* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, 2005); Jason Glynos and David Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social*

functions to distort and cover up the undecidability of all social identity, and constructs a reality that covers up the contingent, precarious, and paradoxical character of social identity. Because all elements of discourse are radically contingent constructs, and not by necessity bound to any essential property of the “signified”, they can be re-defined, re-named, re-valued, interpreted and understood in various ways. A stable hegemonic discourse can be dislocated when it is confronted by events that it cannot explain, represent, or control – a crisis. The dislocation may be amended by reconstituting order and fixing the elements of discourse.

The field of discourse analysis has expanded fast, and in many directions, over the past decades. The divergent types of approaches to discourse analysis are often reflections of different theoretical starting-points, such as critical realism, phenomenology, or post-structuralism. This project is situated within the paradigm of post-Marxist discourse theory which consist of a system of ontological assumptions, theoretical concepts, and methodological principles. The specific type of discourse analysis that I employ thus draw upon conceptual ontological and theoretical resources from post-structuralism, or post-foundationalism. Such theories question essentialism and foundationalism – the idea that a society, human subject, or object has a fixed essence that determine the identities and meaning of said elements. Instead, by building on the works of Michel Foucault, John Langshaw Austin, Jacques Derrida, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Slavoj Žižek and others, the discourse theoretical project developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, promotes a relational perspective. This is not to be confused with a relativist “anything goes” type of postmodernism. Post-foundationalist perspectives centre on the idea that social meanings are contextual, relational, and contingent.¹¹

A discourse is constructed by means of articulation in and through hegemonic struggles – a practice that links up and modifies the identities of discursive elements. This construction takes place in and through hegemonic struggles that aim to establish a political and moral-intellectual leadership. Through articulations of meaning and identity, hegemonic struggles attempt to unify a discursive space around a particular set of elements against a threatening “other”, through a construction of political frontiers. Hegemony is thus understood as a practice of linking together contingent demands and identities into a unified project. A particular social force, political demand or identity thus assumes the representation of a universality or totality. By providing credible principles for interpreting past, present, and future events, gripping the hearts and

and Political Theory, Routledge Innovations in Political Theory; 26 (London, 2007); Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*, Taking on the Political, Transferred to digital print (Edinburgh, 2008); David R. Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power* (London, 2013).

¹¹ Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*; Glynos and others, ‘Discourse Analysis’; Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*.

minds of the participants in a discourse, and appealing to their common sense, certain articulations can become hegemonic.¹²

Social actors occupy differential positions within the discourses that constitute the social fabric. In that sense they are all, strictly speaking, particularities. On the other hand, there are social antagonisms creating internal frontiers within society. Vis-à-vis oppressive forces, for instance, a set of particularities establish relations of equivalence between themselves. It becomes necessary, however, to represent the totality of the chain, beyond the mere differential particularisms of the equivalential links.¹³

Based on Antonio Gramsci's 'new arsenal of concepts', Laclau and Mouffe claim to extend the Gramscian theory of hegemony. Gramsci's conceptualisations of 'war of position, historical bloc, collective will, hegemony, intellectual and moral leadership - which are the starting point of our reflections in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*'¹⁴, corresponds, in the post-Marxist theory of discourse and hegemony, to notions of political frontiers; articulation of demands and antagonisms; discursive and hegemonic formations; hegemonic practices, relations, articulations, and forms of politics. The question of intellectual and moral leadership, and the role of the intellectual function that is central to Gramsci's theory, has been largely overlooked in post-Marxist discourse theory. Poststructuralist thinkers have, since the publication of *Hegemony* (1985) responded to problems regarding agency, identity, and subjectivity in the initial model. The issue I address here is, however, not one regarding human actors, but the problem of how to conceptualise "the intellectual" within this post-Marxist (post-structuralist, post-foundationalist) framework.

Because the founders of this approach to discourse theory engaged, for the most part, in abstract theoreticism, the task of problem-driven studies of specific discourses and empirical studies befall a new generation of discourse theorists. Equally, although discourse theory has been proven adept at tackling "soft" topics of identity politics regarding gender, ethnicity, and social movements, too few have chosen to address traditional sociological and political issues – the "hard" topics like welfare state changes and public administration, have mostly been left to realist approaches.¹⁵ This includes the changes taking place in the Scandinavian welfare state – a topic well researched by political scientists and sociologists that prescribe to more structuralist, rationalist, or empiricist approaches. The contribution of this project takes up the challenge of anchoring discourse theory in empirical perspectives to produce new insights into the role of the intellectual function in relation to hegemony; and discursive change and

¹² Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*; Howarth and Torfing, *Discourse Theory in European Politics*; Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*.

¹³ xiii Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

¹⁴ ix Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

¹⁵ These points of critique and encouragement for further research are outlined by Jacob Torfing, in Torfing, 'Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges'.

continuities with regard to the privatisation discourse in Sweden, in a time of welfare state-crisis. With that said, this dissertation answers questions about the practices involved in these processes - rather than the mere presence of a hegemonic relation or formation.

Theoretical analyses of discourse and intellectuals, as well as arguments on the existence, or non-existence, of hegemony, often lack in terms of empirical research. But this dissertation is an attempt to flesh out empirically what is often mere theoretical assumptions surrounding these concepts, i.e. to trace the intellectual function in a political discourse. The originality of this study consists in the aggregated analysis of discursive shifts and hegemonic processes in a specific case of medialised debate - and the rhetorical practices involved in the performance of intellectual functions and positions articulated in negotiations around change and continuity in the debate. To empirically analyse the articulatory and argumentative practice and in shaping the form, demands and commonplaces of a debate; I have approached the empirical material from the point of problematisation, without taking existing definitions of intellectuals or privatisation for granted.¹⁶

The struggle to fixate the meaning of privatisation in public discourse is a hegemonic struggle. In such struggles, shifts in politics of course play a part, but so do dislocatory events; different perspectives and beliefs; political demands, claims and standpoints. As David Harvey clarifies, the possibility 'for any way of thought to become dominant'¹⁷ rests on a set of conditions including a conceptual apparatus that appeals to us as an audience. 'If successful, this conceptual apparatus becomes so embedded in common sense as to be taken for granted and not open to question'¹⁸. Like Stuart Hall or Mouffe, I am interested in the practices and processes whereby a particular conceptual apparatus or system of belief may appear as the natural, given, and uncontested common sense.¹⁹ While both Mouffe, Laclau and those who have tried to implement their theory on discourse and hegemony, have studied hegemonising processes and practices in various discourses, many questions, theoretical and methodological, still remain and need to be filled with local, empirical content. An investigation into the arguments, practices and strategies played out in hegemonic struggles will provide some answers, but this prompts an inquiry into the sources of those articulations – a subject less explored in this post-Marxist school of discourse theory.

¹⁶ For further reference on this type of approach see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (2008).

¹⁷ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 5.

¹⁸ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 5.

¹⁹ See Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London, 1988); Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political, Thinking in Action* (London, 2005).

Opening the black box of the intellectual function

All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say; but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals (thus, because it can happen that everyone at some time fries a couple of eggs or sews up a tear in a jacket, we do not necessarily say that everyone is a cook or a tailor). Thus there are historically formed specialized categories for the exercise of the intellectual function.²⁰

A widened notion of the intellectual role in the construction of hegemony, follows from the post-Marxist notion of contingent discourses and universalities which require political mediation and representation. Through rhetorical and discursive devices, articulated social relations can be contended or naturalised into a common sense that legitimise (or question) certain relations of power.²¹ Even if Laclau points to the significance of the intellectual function in the construction of hegemony, he is less clear on how this relationship can be researched in empirical studies.²² The emphasis on the rhetorical aspects in the construction of social structures, identities and new discourses (that can win over subjects to a particular coalition, or disorganise and marginalise the opposition) is a distinctive feature of discourse theory. This methodological turn to practices of rhetorical redescription, tropes and argumentation in struggles for hegemony and the constitution of discourses²³, opens up for new research strategies into the intellectual function as well.

Rather than taking pre-given notions of “the intellectual” as the privileged starting points of analysis, the performance of an intellectual function and the formation of intellectual subject positions, in contingent political processes, take up the central part of my analysis. But a developed theory of “the intellectual” was not all that was missing from post-Marxist discourse theory – so was the means to analyse it. While questions

²⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (New York, 2000), 304. For reference see Antonio Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura* (Torino, 1977), 7.: ‘Tutti gli uomini sono intellettuali, si potrebbe dire perciò; ma non tutti gli uomini hanno nella società la funzione di intellettuali (così, perché può capitare che ognuno in qualche momento si frigga due uova o si cucisca uno strappo della giacca, non si dirà che tutti sono cuochi e sarti). Si formano così storicamente delle categorie specializzate per l'esercizio della funzione intellettuale [...]’

²¹ Laclau, ‘Constructing Universality’.

²² Laclau has left us with no more than a few paragraphs with his thoughts on this function, in: Laclau, ‘Constructing Universality’, 286–88; Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London, 1990), 195–96.

²³ Ernesto Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society* (London; Brooklyn, NY, 2014); Torfing, ‘Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges’; Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*; Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Volume 1* (Cambridge; New York, 2002); Alan Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis’, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 9/4 (2007), 545–63.

regarding change, continuity and hegemony in the discourse could very well be analysed with the tools from this school of discourse analysis, the intellectual was difficult to analyse as something more or distinct from other subject positions in discourse. In order to empirically answer questions regarding the notion of the intellectual function, I turned to an approach that draws on both interpretive and post-structuralist theories to analyse political discourses.

In search for an approach to provide conceptual tools to analyse arguments and performativity in political discourse, I turned to rhetorical political analysis. Rhetorical analyses of discourse do all this and more, but is firmly situated within the post-structuralist paradigm and shares some fundamental tenets with the post-Marxist approach.²⁴ rhetorical political analysis, as developed by Alan Finlayson (2007), pays attention to the situations in which argument takes place, the content and types of arguments, arrangements of broad and subtle narratives, styles of argumentation and appeal. By turning to this approach, it became possible to analyse performances of an intellectual function through the constitution of the speaker, as well as of the addressee, of an argument. Drawing on insights from speech act theory, attention is given to the constitution of various speaking positions, or positions of enunciation, in the speech situation²⁵. Whereas a post-structuralist discourse theory allows for analysis of change and stabilisation of discursive processes, seeing subjectivities through psychoanalytic constructs and discourse positions; a turn to rhetorical political analysis allowed me to focus on the arguments that structure the debate and analyse performances of an intellectual function, by various subject positions, and from various positions of enunciation – rather than agents.

Post-structuralist rhetorical political analysis and Post-Marxist Discourse Theory both emphasise the constitutive character of rhetoric and discourse, in contrary to essentialist or realist analyses of meaning or the nature and character of political identities. In this thesis, attention is given ‘not only to the content and styles of argumentation, but also the ways in which different subject positions are constituted in the very process of political argumentation’²⁶. This is what enables an analysis of the constitution of political positions; the identity of the addressee as well as the speaker; and the

²⁴ Cf. Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 545–63; Herbert Gottweis, ‘Rhetoric in Policy Making: Between Logos, Ethos, and Pathos’, in *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*, ed. by Frank Fischer, Gerald Miller, and Mara S. Sidney, Public Administration and Public Policy, 125 (Boca Raton, 2007), 237–50; Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis, *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice* (Durham, [N.C.] USA, 2012); Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*; Aletta J. Norval, *Aversive Democracy: Inheritance and Originality in the Democratic Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007).

²⁵ John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. by Marina Sbisa and James Opie Urmson, Harvard Paperbacks; 88, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass., 1975); Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge Classics (Abingdon and New York, 1972); Derrida, *Limited Inc.*

²⁶ Glynos and others, ‘Discourse Analysis’, 17.

performances of intellectual functions, in a specific rhetorical situation. The intellectual function, which, according to Laclau ‘consists in the invention of languages’²⁷, is performed through statements and arguments. A language for speaking about “privatisation” is invented, negotiated, and provided in the public medialised debate. Ideologies are produced and mediated through articulations of privatisation in relation to various values, political positions, demands and arguments. That is to say, all speakers who partake in the debate temporarily take up specific, yet relational, positions in the debate. In the more theoretical terminology that structures this dissertation, such positions will be treated and referred to as various types of subject positions.

While most earlier and contemporary research treat “the intellectual” as an actor *a priori* recognised by society as belonging to the intellectual caste or playing the role of the intellectual in a certain time or society – identified by research as an intellectual based on a set of characteristics and qualities – in my approach I have been able to move beyond the individual actors to find out what it is, at this particular time and place, that makes an intellectual. In short, if we were to assume that no conception of “the intellectual” existed, what could then be said about the practices attributed to it - what makes the intellectual an intellectual? Because the traditional sociological conceptualisation of “intellectuals” and approaches for how to research “them” clashed violently with my own post-foundationalist approach, a theoretical re-conceptualisation of intellectuals has been a necessary part of this project.

Therefore, this is a dissertation focused more on what you do when you speak, than on the truth-value of your statement. Assuming that all utterances in the debate have a performative aspect means that I treat the act of saying something as an act of “doing” something (positing, enunciating, demanding, engaging et cetera) in the debate²⁸. I analyse such enunciations and trace relational positionings in the arguments of the debate, without presupposing the political or intellectual identity of any actor in the debate. Instead, by letting discursive negotiations be the focal point of the analysis – and not the actors, I will show which practices constitutes an intellectual function in this particular discourse.

²⁷ With reference to Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*.

²⁸ An assumption made with inspiration from Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*; Derrida, *Limited Inc.*

The Swedish privatisation debate, 1988-1993

Existing empirical work on neoliberal hegemony in Sweden and Scandinavia is largely focused on either separate areas of welfare policies, economic policies, tax reforms, labour market policies, pension systems or specific sectors of society such as education, housing, or health care²⁹. A notable amount of research has analysed the neoliberalisation of Swedish Social Democracy³⁰. The political turn to the right initiated in part by the Social Democrats during the 1980s, clearly had neoliberal tendencies – as did the “system shift” implemented by the centre-right government that took office in 1991. This has been highlighted by previous research into the developments and crisis of the welfare state³¹. Deregulation initiatives were seen in all Nordic countries, to a higher degree than many other social democratic countries in Europe, such as Germany or France.³² Overloaded budgets, rather than merely market liberal ideas, is often deemed to be the reason behind the Swedish Social Democrats’ extensive tax- and welfare state reforms and cuts, along with deregulations of capital markets (to an extent that has been compared to Thatcher’s “Big Bang”). Because these austerity measures were largely cut back once the economy was re-balanced, it has been argued that budget-pressure, rather than ideological beliefs, motivated reform.³³ But to treat cuts in public welfare and state expenditure as the only available option in a crisis, might very well be regarded as a sign of a more market-oriented liberal hegemony.

²⁹Bengt Larsson, Martin Letell and Håkan Thörn, eds., *Transformations of the Swedish Welfare State* (London, 2012); Stefan Sjöberg, *Löntagarfundsfrågan - en hegemonisk vändpunkt: En marxistisk analys* (Uppsala, 2003); Mats Benner, *The Politics of Growth. Economic Regulation in Sweden 1930-1994*, 1997; Ragnar Stolt, Paula Blomqvist and Ulrika Winblad, ‘Privatization of Social Services: Quality Differences in Swedish Elderly Care’, *Social Science & Medicine*, 72/4 (2011), 560–67.

³⁰ See for instance J. Magnus Ryner, *Capitalist Restructuring, Globalization and the Third Way: Lessons from the Swedish Model* (2003); Magnus Ryner, ‘Tredje vägen inför verkligheten’, *Fronesis*, 32–33, 2010, 108–24; Sven E. O. Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015* (Lund, 2014); Jenny Andersson, ‘En nyliberalism med ett mänskligt ansikte - eller socialdemokratins omänskliga hjärta?’, *Fronesis*, 32–33, 2010, 125–38; Jonas Pontusson, ‘Socialdemokratins, marknadsekonomin och solidariteten’, *Fronesis*, 32–33, 2010, 139–56; Jonas Pontusson, ‘Radicalization and Retreat in Swedish Social Democracy’, *New Left Review*, 1, 165, 1987, 5–33; Magnus Wennerhag, ‘Den sociala demokratin efter nyliberalismen’, *Fronesis*, 32–33, 2010; Gerhard Schnyder, ‘Like a Phoenix from the Ashes? Reassessing the Transformation of the Swedish Political Economy since the 1970s’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 19/8 (2012), 1126–45.

³¹ Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*; Evelyn Huber and John D. Stephens, *Development and Crisis of the Welfare State*, 2001; Larsson, Letell and Thörn, *Transformations of the Swedish Welfare State*.

³² Peer Hull Kristensen and Kari Lilja, *Nordic Capitalisms and Globalization: New Forms of Economic Organization and Welfare Institutions* (2011); Wolfgang Streeck, *Re-Forming Capitalism: Institutional Change in the German Political Economy* (2010).

³³ Jonas Pontusson, ‘Once Again a Model’, in *What’s Left of the Left: Democrats and Social Democrats in Challenging Times*, ed. by James E. Cronin, George W. Ross, and James Shoch (2011); Pontusson, ‘Socialdemokratins, marknadsekonomin och solidariteten’, 139–56.

Quantitative, media centred studies have focused on portrayals of the welfare state in mass media, measured the occurrence of certain, often pre-determined, concepts – with an empirical material that consists of short periodic selections of features in daily press, repeated at intervals up to several years, over the two decades preceding the 1990s³⁴. Such analyses reveal which dimensions play a part in the characterisation of political issues, the shifting number of protagonists and antagonists of particular issues, balance between articles contributed by actors organised in pre-defined political spheres, or even the language and contents of arguments in the debate (cf. Svallfors, 1995; Boréus, 1994). These studies are not post-Marxist discourse analyses, however. Designed to measure shifts in the perspectives offered by features on the welfare state in mass media (Svallfors) or in the representation of political actors and words (Boréus), they do not attempt to analyse the contingent processes and practices involved in the formation of political frontiers, discourse coalitions, subject positions, or rhetorical strategies in a discourse, continuously, in both mass medialised and emerging alternative fora for debate. That is where this dissertation can function as a complement to existing knowledge on neoliberal hegemony in Sweden and Scandinavia.

At the centre of previous analyses and explanations of increased privatisation stands the market. Because the market is strictly thought to be self-regulated, based on principles of trade agreements that privilege distributive justice, sanctions of fraud and fair treatments, it becomes a symbol of justice and unbiased values. Market relations, based on rationally oriented individuals, are assumed to be more efficient and superior to all forms of collectivist ownership – whether mediated by a democratic state, social institutions, or political organisations.³⁵ Accordingly, since a good and true system functions as the market, the state must mimic market mechanism. If the market says that economic values, efficiency and profit maximisation are good qualities, then these are good qualities for the state as well.³⁶

Privatisation may be seen as a specific area of neoliberal policy in general and has been studied as a phenomena of economic organisation, welfare state organisation and administration alike.³⁷ Often studied as a local, sector effect of wide-sweeping

³⁴ See Stefan Svallfors, *Välfärdsstaten i pressen: En analys av svensk tidningsrapportering om välfärdspolitik 1969-1993* (Umeå, 1995); Kristina Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*, Diss. Stockholm Univ. (Stockholm, 1994).

³⁵ Hans-Jürgen Bieling, 'Neoliberalism and Communitarianism. Social Conditions, Discourses and Politics', in *Neoliberal Hegemony: A Global Critique*, ed. by Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen, and Gisela Neuhöffer, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (London; New York, 2006), 208–21.

³⁶ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 34.

³⁷ John Vickers and George Yarrow, *Privatization: An Economic Analysis*, MIT Press Series on the Regulation of Economic Activity, 18 (Cambridge, Mass, 1988); Henrik Jordahl, *Privatiseringar av statligt ägda företag* (2008); Lennart J. Lundqvist, 'Privatisering - varför och varför inte?', in *Politik som Organisation: Förvaltningspolitikens Grundproblem*, ed. by Bo Rothstein and Shirin Ahlbäck Öberg (Stockholm, 2010); Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, 2011); Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

neoliberalisation or marketisation of society, privatisation is at risk of becoming an isolated question of administrative or organisational matter tied up in a discourse of competition, efficiency and consumer choice.³⁸ Sweden tends to stand out in these analyses, as an example of how far-reaching privatisations were implemented, despite the populations' strong support for the traditional welfare state model³⁹. Paula Blomqvist (2004) argues convincingly for the social and structural consequences of privatisation politics as a salient trend in the transformational processes of the Swedish welfare state. Pointing to a shift in values in policy-making, Blomqvist shows how consumerism, individual rights and private initiatives succeeded an earlier emphasis on shielding the public sector against market forces. In the 1990s, the Swedish public sector (and state) is increasingly seen as an inefficient service producer, whose task is to satisfy citizen demands – rather than being treated as a means of social transformation, or a refuge from capitalist structures and forces in society.⁴⁰ Despite the Swedish welfare state's prominent position on social research, many of these analyses of privatisation and neoliberalisation are coloured by an Anglo-Saxon bias. As this dissertation reveals, the arguments presented in the Swedish public discourse at the time of decision making and early implementations of privatisation policies, are more complex than a simple show of market radicalism.

Today, 25-30 years later, “privatisation” is commonly understood as transferring state ownership and control of services, enterprises, agencies, properties, and assets to the private sector – into private property⁴¹. Ownership may be transferred to firms, non-profit organisations, or individual members of the public. This includes transactions where all outstanding shares in a public company are purchased by private investors. Some definitions extend to the idea of deregulation, and others will exclude processes taking place in the lower, local levels of the state apparatus. Privatisation may or may

³⁸ Paula Blomqvist, 'The Choice Revolution: Privatization of Swedish Welfare Services in the 1990s', *Social Policy & Administration*, 38/2 (2004), 139–155; Stolt, Blomqvist and Winblad, 'Privatization of Social Services', 560–67.

³⁹ Stefan Svallfors, 'A Bedrock of Support? Trends in Welfare State Attitudes in Sweden, 1981-2010: A Bedrock of Support? Trends in Welfare State Attitudes in Sweden, 1981-2010', *Social Policy & Administration*, 45/7 (2011), 806–25; Stefan Svallfors, 'The End of Class Politics? Structural Cleavages and Attitudes to Swedish Welfare Policies', *Acta Sociologica*, 38/1 (1995), 53–74; Jonas Edlund and Ingemar Johansson Sevä, 'Is Sweden Being Torn Apart? Privatization and Old and New Patterns of Welfare State Support', *Social Policy & Administration*, 47/5 (2013), 542–64.

⁴⁰ Blomqvist, 'The Choice Revolution', 139–155. Schnyder, 'Like a Phoenix from the Ashes?' Blomqvist argues that changes in the welfare system and social services have primarily been of a qualitative, rather than quantitative character, with emphasis on consumer choice. Likewise, rather than a question of financing, privatisation has in practice often been a question of provision.

⁴¹ 'Privatisering', *Nationalencyklopedin*

<<http://www.ne.se.ludwig.lub.lu.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/l%C3%A5ng/privatisering>> [accessed 3 May 2017]. See also Blomqvist, 'The Choice Revolution'; Edlund and Johansson Sevä, 'Is Sweden Being Torn Apart?'; Lundqvist, 'Privatisering - Varför och varför inte?'; Schnyder, 'Like a Phoenix from the Ashes?'; Stolt, Blomqvist, and Winblad, 'Privatization of Social Services'; Stone, 'Non-Governmental Policy Transfer'; Svensson, *Marknadsanpassningens politik*.

not involve organisational changes, in order to adapt to market behaviour; commercialisation to please shareholders; or user and producer-governance to reinvest profits into the company.⁴² Private investment and provision may be used for various services, products and projects in replacing or compensating the public sector. Privatisation policies have been used as a means for politicians to distinguish the current rule from previous governments associated with inflation, etatism, bureaucracy or authoritarianism.⁴³ It has been used as a strategy to ensure political support among powerful business actors; influence the constraints of a succeeding government; and to increase financial revenue and finance other sectors⁴⁴. In short, the motives for privatisation can be ideological, strategic, pragmatic, and economic. Privatisation has often gone hand-in-hand with broader free market initiatives, deregulations, and market liberalisation.⁴⁵ The contemporary common sense understanding of privatisation rests on specific and related assumptions, perspectives and beliefs shaped through meaning-making processes over a longer period of time. The current definition might appear to be naturally given or undisputed today, but in this thesis, I analyse how such taken-for-granted understandings of privatisation can come about. Furthermore, definitions of privatisation articulated within the scope of this specific debate intermingle with broader debates on freedom, morality, and the prospects of the welfare state.

A number of fundamental reforms mark Swedish parliamentary politics in the 1980s. A range of solutions to perceived fiscal problems, including deregulation of the credit market, reformation of the tax-system and new forms of management in the public sector, ignite a process of transformation. These shifts in economic policies and public-sector management play a significant role in the emerging financial, social, economic, and ideological crisis of the early 1990s. Adjustment issues, in the form of mass unemployment, austerity politics and increased poverty, characterise the search for budgetary balance. With long lasting effects on Swedish welfare, this crisis has been

⁴² See Vickers and Yarrow, *Privatization*; Sven E. O. Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 1, History, Policies, and Institutions 1884-1988* (Lund, 2014); Germà Bel, 'Retrospectives: The Coining of "Privatization" and Germany's National Socialist Party', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 20/3 (2006), 187-194; Mike Raco, 'The New Contractualism, the Privatization of the Welfare State, and the Barriers to Open Source Planning', *Planning Practice and Research*, 28/1 (2013), 45-64; Luigi Manzetti, *Privatization South American Style* (1999); Svensson, *Marknadsanpassningens politik*; Lundqvist, 'Privatisering - varför och varför inte?'

⁴³ Carlos Medeiros, 'Asset-Stripping the State', *New Left Review*, II, 55, 2009, 109-32.

⁴⁴ Germà Bel, 'Against the Mainstream: Nazi Privatization in 1930s Germany1', *The Economic History Review*, 63/1 (2010), 34-55; Torsten Persson and Lars E. O. Svensson, 'Why a Stubborn Conservative Would Run a Deficit: Policy with Time- Inconsistent Preferences', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol 104/2 (1989), 325; Enrico C. Perotti, 'Credible Privatization', *American Economic Association*, 85/4 (1995), 847-59; Bruno Biais and Enrico Perotti, 'Machiavellian Privatization', *The American Economic Review*, 92/1 (2002), 240-58.

⁴⁵ Bob Jessop, Kevin Bonnett and Simon Bromley, 'Farewell to Thatcherism? Neo-Liberalism and "New Times"', *New Left Review*, 179/1 (1990), 81-102; Medeiros, 'Asset-Stripping the State', 109-32.

described as the worst in Swedish history since the 1930s.⁴⁶ Conflicting positions among parties, social movements, trade unions, trade associations, experts, and public intellectuals form in related debates. This is a crisis not just in and of the welfare state, but one which involves social and political change. The prevalent social democratic hegemonic formation and its dominance over discourse is questioned, disputed, and disrupted. The crisis of the 1990s has since served as a point of reference in discussions on unemployment, public finance, and the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath.⁴⁷

This ensemble of entangled events, where established orders are dislocated, is crucial to the historical context of this study. Crises tend to entail a formation and crystallisation of oppositions and antagonistic relationships, which in this case, provide a backdrop where established relations and taken-for-granted values and beliefs are destabilised, contested, and re-defined. In the political discourse, representatives from both the political right and left question the organisation of the welfare state in general – and the debate on privatisation becomes an ideological struggle. It constitutes a moment in which meanings, identities and positions are contested in struggles among antagonistic positions and forces in public, medialised debates. My empirical study is situated in this specific geographic and historical context. It includes both the months running up to the approximate dawn, as well as the high noon and bourgeoning dusk of the crisis. By focusing on the years 1988 through 1993, I capture both the uncertain years of escalation leading up to its obvious outbreak in 1990, and the severe years of economic decline all through 1993⁴⁸. Moreover, this is a time of change in the media landscape, where the existing public service media monopoly is challenged. The choice of one Sweden's two national daily newspapers (*Dagens Nyheter*) to close down one of the few outlets for cultural debate, lead to an exclusion of certain types of arguments from the national printed debate. New initiatives to create places for political and cultural debate take shape in response to this limited milieu. This time frame includes a period of formations of new and alternative fora for debate: the establishment of the cultural journal *Thélème*, and the revitalisation of the political periodical *Nyliberalen*, in 1989. These two are both captured within the scope of the empirical material, along with the aforementioned mainstream *Dagens Nyheter*; the largest regional daily newspaper: *Arbetet*; the nationally broadcasted public service radio programme for debate on

⁴⁶ Kommittén Valfärdsbokslut, 'Valfärdsbokslut för 1990-Talet: Slutbetänkande, Fritzes offentliga publikationer, stockholm, 2001' (2001); Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*; Svallfors, *Valfärdsstaten i pressen: en analys av svensk tidningsrapportering om välfärdspolitik 1969-1993*.

⁴⁷ Johannes Lindvall, 'Politics and Policies in Two Economic Crises: The Nordic Countries', in *Coping with Crisis: Government Reactions to the Great Recession*, ed. by Nancy Gina Bermeo and Jonas Pontusson (New York, 2012), 233–60.

⁴⁸ All the while avoiding the increasing domination of debates related to the general election and referendum on Sweden's potential EU membership, both in 1994.

general, cultural, societal, and philosophical matters: *OBS!*; as well as various articles, books and reports referenced in these primary sources.

The debate on privatisation in Sweden during these turbulent times of crisis presents an appropriate conjuncture for analysis of hegemonic processes and formations of intellectual subject positions under specific local and historical conditions. During this period, there is both increased activity in the debate as well as short-lived but remarkable shifts in the public opinion on privatisation. The opposition of the public sector's girth changes dramatically as it peaks in 1990 but falls significantly in the following years, to settle in a reverse situation by 1993 when the proponents supersede the opponents of the public sector.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the debate on privatisation is by no means an isolated discourse. It stands in reciprocal relation to other discourses on marketisation, individualisation and post-modernity; welfare state changes, organisation and administration; local, national as well as transnational discourses, and so on. Struggles over interpretative privilege in the debate provide the public discourse with definitions of events, phenomena, and concepts. Regardless of actual policy changes, consequences of privatisation, exact effects of individual actors on the outcomes of the debate, or the level of truth in their statements – the articulation and naturalisation of certain claims and arguments, at this given moment, established a definition which continues to make it possible to still define or recognise a certain phenomenon as “privatisation”. The object scrutinised here, is what it is in the public discourse at the time that makes a fixation of “privatisation” possible. Hence, this thesis makes an important addition to our understanding of social change in general and this socio-historical context and case in particular.

The main fora for debate in the selected period are the opinion pages in leading daily national newspapers⁵⁰. Previous research shows that these sections are relatively exclusive and populated by a homogenous selection of authors⁵¹. To counteract this imbalance, I study not only the opinion pages, but a broader spectrum of contributions to the debate and cultural forms of critique. The empirical data for the project thus

⁴⁹ Lennart Nilsson, 'Offentlig Sektor Och Privatisering 1986-1996', in *Ett missnöjt folk?: SOM-Undersökningen 1996*, ed. by Sören Holmberg and Lennart Weibull (Göteborg, 1997); Svallfors, *Välfärdsstaten i pressen: en analys av svensk tidningsrapportering om välfärdspolitik 1969-1993*. Cf. Svallfors, 'A Bedrock of Support?', 806–25; Edlund and Johansson Sevå, 'Is Sweden Being Torn Apart?', 542–64.

⁵⁰ As argued by previous research on mass media in Sweden; see Svallfors, *Välfärdsstaten i pressen: En analys av svensk tidningsrapportering om välfärdspolitik 1969-1993*; Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*; Stig Hadenius and Lennart Weibull, *Massmedier: En bok om press, radio och tv* (Stockholm, 1994).

⁵¹ Especially in terms of gender and professional status. See Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*; Olof Petersson and Ingrid Carlberg, *Makten över tanken: En Bok om det svenska massmediesamhället*, maktutredningens publikationer, 99-0641947-4 (Stockholm, 1990); *Demokrati och makt i sverige [Elektronisk resurs]: Maktutredningens Huvudrapport*, Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 0375-250X; 1990:44 (Stockholm, 1990) <<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:kb:sou-8351030>> [accessed 1 November 2017].

consists of utterances in the medialised public debate on privatisation, as represented in historical print and broadcast mass-media material. This selection includes opinion pieces and similar forms of contribution, as well as the culture sections in two leading daily newspapers *Dagens Nyheter* (national) and *Arbetet* (regional), the programme for public idea debate on cultural, societal, and philosophical matters (OBS!) on the national public service radio, and two politicised periodical journals: *Nyliberalen* and *Thélème* (later strategically retitled TLM). Additionally, referenced sources – other articles, reports, books, films, and so on – in debate contributions are traced and included as well.

I start out from these selected sources to identify, among many dispersed utterances, a regularity that could be said to constitute a debate on privatisation. From there, I trace arguments in order to map the discourse on privatisation. Hence, not all fora or sources are equally represented in the analysis, since only those contributions that concern privatisation are included. A discourse is of course not just formed in mass media, academia or parliamentary politics, but also in everyday conversations between people. Nevertheless, an everyday discourse on recent, coming, and topical policy implementations inform, and is informed, by the medialised debate. This debate takes place in many arenas, and a few of these are included in this study. The material selected for study constitutes only a limited selection of the entire societal discourse, which in any case constitutes a body of information too large to cover comprehensively in a qualitative analysis. But then again, I study the discourse as it is represented in these fora. I have cut out only a thin slice, of the massive and multi-layered cake that is discourse, in order to study the elements (if you will) that constitute it. Still, the empirical material that I have selected is representative to the extent that I am confident that my cake slice includes both cream, curd, jam, and sponge, if not in perfect proportion.

Purpose and research questions

This is a study of the performances of the intellectual function through utterances and arguments in the hegemonic struggle of the public medialised debate on privatisation in Sweden, 1988-1993. Focus is directed towards a) the shifts in ways of defining and speaking about the concept under contention (in this case privatisation) in a relational setting of concepts and political positionings; b) the formation and performance of an intellectual function and the types of subject positions made available in the debate, and the rhetorical practices used to inhabit such positions; and c) the rhetorical and political strategies employed to achieve (relative) fixation of a particular definition of privatisation by making it (appear to be) commonsensical. The starting point for tracing such utterances consists of contributions to selected media outlets aimed at a

broader audience. I empirically analyse and theoretically reconceptualise the articulatory and argumentative practices involved in the performances of an intellectual function in hegemonic struggles. I show which discursive practices perform the intellectual function and how they are constituted as (and constitutive of) subject positions in the contended processes that shape the form, content and commonplaces of a debate.

A set of underlying questions guide the dissertation. These are phrased through the terminologies, perspectives, and frameworks that comprise the theoretical approach of the project as outlined in part 2. The research questions are as follows:

- How and which subject positions are constituted in the struggle over interpretive privilege, dominance and meaning making in the debate?
- By whom (i.e. from what subject position) and how is the intellectual function performed in this particular socio-historical context?
- How are these intellectual subject positions articulated in relation to other elements of discourse, such as social or political forces, positions, identities, or interests? And how do these contribute to the emergence of discursive formations, discourse coalitions, and political frontiers, in the debate?
- How are continuity and change negotiated in the medialised debate on privatisation in Sweden from 1988 to 1993?

Thesis outline

The dissertation is divided into five overarching parts: the introduction which you have just read; a presentation of the theoretical approach, empirical materials and methodology; the context and content of the privatisation debate; the formations of intellectual positions, functions, coalitions and political frontiers in the debate; as well as an extended discussion on the empirical and theoretical findings and conclusions of this project and their implication for further research into the fields of hegemony, intellectuals and neoliberalism.

In Part 2 (chapter 2-4), I outline the primary theoretical concepts and sources of inspiration for this dissertation, in terms of discourse, hegemony and intellectuals. The theoretical approach that I have designed with the specific purposes of this project in mind, is based on readings of post-structuralist and post-Marxist discourse theory, which in combination has moved into a post-foundationalist terrain; sociological perspectives on “intellectuals”; and rhetorical political analysis. These theoretical considerations serve as an analytical frame of reference for both the topic of the dissertation as well as the methodological framework that I have developed for this

project. By combining what might seem as incongruent theories, I formulate a theoretical and methodological approach that can accommodate both an inquiry into the content and shifts of discourse; the practices and strategies involved in hegemonic struggles; how the intellectual function may be performed in such processes; as well as the more abstract formations, coalitions, and unification through the articulation of political frontiers in the debate. The empirical material as well as methods used in gathering, processing, and analysing the material is described in chapter 4; a more detailed account of the methods in coding and analysing the material is provided in Appendix I.

Part 3 (chapter 5-6) is intended to introduce both the context and content of the discourse on privatisation in Sweden, 1988-1993. Existing and original research provides a contextualisation (chapter 5) of the privatisation debate in terms of both the broad and global picture; the historical, immediate, and local situation of Swedish welfare-state project; implementations of privatisation; as well as specific conditions for public, medialised debate at the time. The empirical analysis that follows (chapter 6) centres on the content of the debate on privatisation – in terms of definitions, descriptions, commonplaces, fixation of meaning, and the central concepts that organise the negotiations for continuity and change in the hegemonic struggles in the debate on privatisation.

An interlude, following part 3, further reveals tendencies found in the empirical material. Changing platforms, editorial gatekeeping, inclusion, and exclusion of certain elements among existing media fora and formats condition the medialised debate at the time. It is these historical and local conditions that set the scene for the formation of alternative media outlets. These social and institutional aspects condition the potential performances of intellectual functions and the formation of subject positions at the time.

Part 4 (chapter 7-8) continues along an aggregated scale, as the analysis advances to the more complex relations of intellectual subject positions and formations, organised in two chapters. Or, in other words, the “how” of the hegemonic struggles in the debate on privatisation. In the first of the two chapters (chapter 7), I analyse the rhetorical practices and strategies involved in the formation of intellectual subject positions and the performance of intellectual functions in the debate. This involves an analytical move towards a theoretical distinction among the ideal types of intellectual subject positions articulated in the medialised debate on privatisation at the time. The latter chapter (chapter 8) is centred on the strategies of coalition building, formations and the political frontiers articulated through the debate on privatisation. This includes a discussion on the antagonistic relations that divide the political space; the alternative media fora created as outlets for marginalised positions; as well the successful and failed attempts to unite disparate political positions and demands, in the debate. A thematic

division structure these chapter internally, while chronological narratives illustrate how meaning making struggles and strategies are played out in the debate.

Part 5 (chapter 9-10) is the final part of the dissertation, where I discuss the main conclusions of this project and reflect on how we might understand the concept of intellectuals and the development of a common sense in the debate on privatisation. Moreover, the concluding part elucidates in which ways contributions from this project might be relevant to the studies of intellectuals and theories on hegemony. This includes a reappearance of some of the theories introduced in part 2, as well as a reflection on possible avenues for further research. Since unexpected implications arising from the research of this dissertation invites a discussion on previous theories on neoliberal hegemony, the final discussion also includes a dialogue with literature that is not presented in part 2.

PART II

Theoretical Framework, Empirical Material, and Methodology

In which many things are explained: what the concepts related to post-Marxist notions of discourse, hegemony and the intellectual function refer to in this text; why much of previous theories on “intellectuals” must be reconsidered; and how I have proceeded to analyse arguments and positions in the debate by turning to rhetorical political analysis. I have brought together a range of previous theories and methodologies, borrowed from different schools, and constructed a performative approach to understand and analyse discourse and the intellectual as a function performed by various subject positions, from a post-foundationalist perspective⁵². The empirical material and research methods are introduced at the end of this part, and described in full in Appendix I.

⁵² Cf. Emilia Palonen, ‘Practicing “Europe”: Georg Lukács, Ágnes Heller, and the Budapest School’, in *The Workings of Political Discourses* (presented at the The XVIII Nordic Political Science Congress, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark, 2017).

Chapter 2

A Post-Foundationalist Approach to the Study of Discourse and Hegemony

Sociological analysis shows that this public interpretation of reality is not simply “there”; nor, on the other hand, is it the result of a “systematic thinking out”; it is the stake for which men fight.⁵³

Since the “linguistic turn” in the field of humanities over half a century ago, the social and political sciences have experienced both a “discursive” and an “argumentative” turn, as an increasing number of inquiries into public and political debates have emphasised the role of language, meaning, values, discourse, and rhetoric in political processes⁵⁴. In the past few decades, concepts and notions from poststructuralist theories have become close companions to such analyses. This trend encourages the researcher to concentrate on understanding, interpreting and critically evaluating phenomena, processes, and practices, instead of searching for causal explanations or effects. Discourse analysts and interpretivists of various schools have often foregrounded the processual construction of meanings and identities. Such researchers frequently question the sharp distinctions between fact and value; objectivity and subjectivity; material and non-material; social practices and verbal utterances, that are found in other perspectives. In pursuing such projects, various researchers have developed theoretical tools and concepts like narratives, nodal points, empty signifiers, framing, discourse coalitions, interpretation, rhetoric, and argumentation, to critically explain the creation, dissemination and reproduction of beliefs, concepts, arguments, discourses, ideology and hegemony in various contexts and settings.

It should be obvious, then, that the perspectives and techniques used to study debates, arguments and meaning making are highly diverse. Many have sought to break radically

⁵³ Karl Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. by Paul Kecskemeti (London, UK, 1929), 198.

⁵⁴ Richard M. Rorty, ed., *The Linguistic Turn* (Chicago, 1967) <<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/L/bo3625825.html>> [accessed 18 June 2017]; Frank Fischer and John Forester, eds., *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (Durham, 1993); Fischer and Gottweis, *The Argumentative Turn Revisited*.

from essentialist and positivist perspectives⁵⁵; others seek mainly to supplement positivist viewpoints with a narrower conceptualisation of discourse as a particular system of belief or conceptual framework; “a shared way of apprehending the world”⁵⁶. Critical discourse analysis and the discourse-historical approach are arguably examples of the latter.⁵⁷ It tends towards a hermeneutics of suspicion, looking for hidden meanings and dubious interests behind utterances and trying to expose these instead of examining the contents of arguments⁵⁸. More squarely positioned in the hermeneutical tradition, interpretive policy analysis has been used to analyse the language of policies and formations of discourse coalitions. It stresses the importance of values (and not just beliefs or interests) in the justification and implementation of policy decisions.⁵⁹ Ethnomethodologists, on the other hand, have a more complicated relation to essentialism. They have focused on the linguistic strategies on micro level interaction, concentrating on strategies rather than form or content of arguments.⁶⁰ All other differences aside, these traditions tend to conceive of discourse as communication, text, words, or an abstract cognitive system. This narrow conception is radically opposed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), David Howarth (2010; 2013) and others of the Essex school approach to discourse analysis.⁶¹

In this chapter, I sketch the outlines of my approach to discourse analysis. With inspiration from poststructuralist studies in discourse theory⁶², historian Margaret R.

⁵⁵ Frank Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices* (2003); Frank Fischer, ‘Beyond Empiricism: Policy Analysis as Deliberative Practice’, in *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society*, ed. by Maarten A. Hajer and Hendrik Wagenaar (Cambridge, UK; New York, USA, 2003).

⁵⁶ Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth*, 9.

⁵⁷ Although I recognise the significance of contributions by discourse analytical researchers like Ruth Wodak, and can see clear parallels between Wodak’s work and my own project – most of the in-depth analysis of those common themes (populism and anti-establishment rhetoric) was something that I chose to leave out from the final version of the written thesis, in order to focus more exclusively on the relationship between hegemony and the intellectual function. That is to say, I take my analysis in a slightly different direction, which is why Wodak and other CDA/DHA types of theory and analysis is not discussed further in this dissertation. Cf. Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*, 1 edition (London, 2015); Ruth Wodak, ‘The “Establishment”, the “Élites”, and the “People”’, *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16/4 (2017), 551–65.

⁵⁸ See Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh, 1999).

⁵⁹ See Maarten A. Hajer, *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society* (2003); Maarten Hajer and Justus Uitermark, ‘Performing Authority: Discursive Politics After the Assassination of Theo Van Gogh’, *Public Administration*, 86/1 (2008), 5–19.

⁶⁰ See Roy Turner, ‘Words, Utterances and Activities’, in *Ethnomethodology*, ed. by Roy Turner (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1974).

⁶¹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*; David Howarth, ‘Power, Discourse, and Policy: Articulating a Hegemony Approach to Critical Policy Studies’, *Critical Policy Studies*, 3/3–4 (2010), 309–35; Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*; Glynos and others, ‘Discourse Analysis’; Gottweis, ‘Rhetoric in Policy Making: Between Logos, Ethos, and Pathos’, 237–50.

⁶² Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*; Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*; Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; Howarth and Torfing, *Discourse Theory in European Politics*; David

Somers (2008) relational historical sociology approach and political theorist Finlayson's (2007) rhetorical political analysis, primarily; this approach borrows theoretical and analytical concepts from several theorists, but makes no claim to follow any model rigidly. My study has been developed through a continuous retroductive confrontation between these literatures and my own empirical material. In clarifying my approach, I begin, like Steven Griggs and Howarth, by setting out the various dimensions of discourse and the ontological assumptions of poststructuralist discourse theory, through a conception of discourse as a constitutive dimension of social relations that does not merely describe an *a priori* underlying reality, but serves to make that reality comprehensible⁶³. The theoretical approach allows me to analyse the medialised public debate on privatisation as a hegemonic struggle, while also prioritising the rhetorical dimensions that contributes to constitute "intellectuals". Thus, the thesis moves between what is often distinguished as a constitutive *ontological* dimension (the form or mode of how social relations and society is instituted) versus the *ontic* content (of these processes, practices, arguments, identities, and structures that characterise social relations)⁶⁴, as I examine the constitutive aspects of rhetorical practices and arguments.

Howarth, *Discourse, Concepts in the Social Sciences*, 99-0594137-1 (Buckingham, 2000); Howarth, 'Power, Discourse, and Policy', 309-35; Steven Griggs and David R. Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom: Hegemony, Policy and the Rhetoric of 'Sustainable Aviation'*, 2013; Stuart Hall, 'The West and the Rest', in *Formations of Modernity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben, Understanding Modern Societies, 99-1349036-7; 1 (Cambridge, 1992); Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation', in *Representation: Cultural Representations And Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall (London, 1997).

⁶³ Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*. Or as Howarth explains; 'A spherical object such as a bundle of newspapers held together by a string, or a piece of foam rubber, is a thing that exists. But it is a "football" in the context of a particular rule governed practice, such as playing football; in other words, its meaning and significance is relative to a particular set of meaningful practices. Indeed, it is worth reiterating that poststructuralists are in fact realists both in the sense that they affirm the existence of a reality that is independent of thought – that the world is not a product of our ideas and language (i.e., if human beings were subtracted from the world tomorrow, we would still have good reason to believe that other things such as footballs would continue to exist) [...] our conceptions of things and entities do not exhaust their meaning or being. [...] Things can acquire different meanings and functions in different historical contexts and situations, though this does not mean that they do not exist, nor does it mean that we cannot say anything about these things within certain relatively sedimented social contexts.' Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 93.

⁶⁴ While both Laclau, Mouffe and Howarth argue for the importance in studying the ontological dimensions of society, Laclau focuses his attention on the ontological category of populism as a mode of articulating (regardless of ideological, ontic *content*); Mouffe argues for an understanding of 'the political' as an ontological dimension of antagonism – separate from the ontic *practices* of politics, through which human coexistence is ordered; and Howarth, whose analyses tend to cover both dimensions still differentiates between the ontic terrain of 'practices of characterization and explanation [...] various strategic and tactical options, which function on the ontical plane' (Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 234.) and the ontological dimension of establishing such identities. While my own stance is critical towards Mouffe's treatment of practices as something merely ontical, I agree with Laclau in that the ontic is an issue on content of and argument, for instance, and the ontological is the mode of articulation. Like Howarth, I argue that language and rhetoric have an

A specific understanding of the range, structure, and capabilities of discourse and the discursive, equips the analysis with a set of tools to conceptualise the functions, positions, practices, and process, specific to the local and historical material of this project.

I delve into a conception of hegemony based on the theories of Antonio Gramsci and those theorists that precede and succeed him. These theorists, as well as Michael Freeden (1996, 2003) and Aletta Norval (2000, 2014) are the primary sources of inspiration for my understanding of the concept and study of ideology. Lastly, I introduce the idea of the intellectual as it has been theorised in traditional sociology and political theory. The concepts presented here are intimately related, as I try to explain, and play important parts in my theoretical contribution which unfolds in the thesis and expands in Part 5. First in this chapter, I clarify what concepts like discourse, articulation and hegemony refer to in this research. A short review of the sociological research on intellectuals makes out the second half of this chapter, before I move on to describe how I have tried to merge these contrasting traditions in my own analytical framework. Lastly, I present the empirical material in detail, as well as my methods in collecting, processing, and analysing that material.

Discourse and the discursive: ontological implications

Discourse can be described as particular historically specific and socially constructed configurations of meaningful practices and articulations. I understand **articulation** as constructing, or severing, links between both linguistic and non-linguistic elements - of modifying and partially fixing the meanings of concepts in discourse.⁶⁵ The components of discourse, i.e. those elements (concepts, things, ideas, institutions, actors, spaces) and their identities, are linked to each other like nodes in a contingent network consisting of partially fixed relations. These relations are in turn constituted through articulations of differential and relational positions. In the process, certain elements are constructed as relatively central **nodal points** around which a certain discourse (or discursive field) is organised. Those nodal points are partially fixed, in relation to the otherwise fluid and infinite character of the discursive.⁶⁶ The instituting of a nodal point like “man” in a democratic discourse, will allow a partial fixation of meaning of the social in that discourse; to enable one to demand “human rights” or

ontological, constitutive character. For reference, see Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; Mouffe, *On the Political*; Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*; Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*.

⁶⁵ ‘[...] we will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*.’ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 105.

⁶⁶ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

speak of “women’s oppression”. Since concepts and practices are embedded in historically specific and socially constituted structures configuring and coordinating meaning, ideas, rules, and logics, that historically contingent interventions constantly displace. The relational character of those elements and the series of contingent articulations that establish the links between them, means that an articulation of one element may change the character of several.⁶⁷ Thatcherism or New Public Management may both in a sense be conceptualised as discourses.

To be able to communicate in a shared and meaning full way, we need a language to speak about the things we see, think, and experience. This means that all objects require representation in discourse. While discursive practices are not necessarily verbal, the naming of things is usually regarded as a rhetorical practice. Furthermore, in contingent discourses like the ideological debate analysed here, **rhetorical practices** of both naming, reframing, redescription, argumentation and persuasion becomes part of the contestation that colour conceptual change.⁶⁸ Turning to a post-Marxist discourse theory brings ontological implications to the study of discourse and hegemony. Like Howarth and Griggs, I believe that ‘rhetorical categories are embedded in the ontological presuppositions of poststructuralist discourse theory’⁶⁹. Although, Laclau (2014) emphasises the ontological dimensions of rhetoric, his focus is on the effects of strategies and rhetorical tropes⁷⁰. I try to distance myself from this tendency towards intentionality and, with inspiration from both Skinner (2002) and Laclau (2014), recognise rhetoric as a performance including both persuasive speech and tropology. This enables an analysis that ‘can focus both on the constitutive character of rhetoric’ and on the use of rhetorical figures and devices in negotiations around the meaning of privatisation; the role of arguments in practices of persuasion; and the construction of coalitions and hegemonic processes. Thus, ‘we can seek both to understand and to critique arguments in relation to broader discourses and ideologies.’⁷¹

The discursive is treated here as an ontological category, implying that the meaning of all objects depend on a field of significant differences⁷². By asserting its ontological character, I argue that concepts (as well as signs, signifiers, social actions, practices, and

⁶⁷ Howarth, ‘Power, Discourse, and Policy’, 309–35; Howarth, *Discourse*, 7–11; Aletta J. Norval, ‘The Things We Do with Words-Contemporary Approaches to the Analysis of Ideology’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 2000, 313–346; Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

⁶⁸ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*.

⁶⁹ Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*, 33.

⁷⁰ That is to say, I recognise rhetoric as something more than the mere articulation of a tropological operations within the metaphoric-metonymic continuum and I am sceptical of simply equating catachresis with rhetoric and synonymous with hegemony, as I believe Laclau does in: Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*. For a critique of Laclau’s narrow conceptualisation of rhetoric see for instance Michael Kaplan, ‘The Rhetoric of Hegemony: Laclau, Radical Democracy, and the Rule of Tropes’, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 43/3 (2010), 253–283.

⁷¹ Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*, 38.

⁷² Drawing on Howarth, ‘Power, Discourse, and Policy’, 309–35.

relations) cannot be defined on their own or by any inherent essences as isolated entities; they can only be deciphered as discursive elements in relation to other concepts. That is to say, all elements are rendered meaningful as objects of discourse – their meaning depends on a socially constructed system coordinating the ensemble of differential positions, rules and conventions that structure the production of meaning in a particular social context. As argued by Laclau and Mouffe, ‘a discursive structure is not a merely “cognitive” or “contemplative” entity; it is an articulatory practice which constitutes and organizes social relations’.⁷³

Systemic integrity of discourse is never fully achieved, partly because discourse is composed of numerous, often competing articulations that establish the **relations** among its components which are mediated by a multiplicity of power relations and characterised by hegemonic practices - and partly because linking together elements of discourse is an articulatory practice by actors modifying the identity of these elements through re-articulation, contestation, and reconfiguration⁷⁴. To Laclau and Mouffe, antagonism has a constitutive function in both language and social orders: my own identity requires the positing of an “other”, because the presence of an “other” discloses the limits of an element, a social order, practice, or regime. Due to antagonistic struggles around the meaning of elements - and negotiations and reiterations in various contexts - some elements will be more stable and fixed than others. It is important to stress, however, that no component is essentially fixed. As a result, a discourse is an incomplete **contingent** system.⁷⁵ This includes the meaning ascribed to such terms as “intellectual” or “privatisation”. I see this as a similar approach to the historically informed relational sociology described by Margaret Somers as a contrast to an essentialist understanding:

What appear to be autonomous categories defined by their attributes are reconceived more accurately as historically shifting sets of relationships that are contingently stabilized. Rather than employing a language of categories and attributes, a historical sociology of concept formation substitutes a language of networks and relationships to support relational thinking.⁷⁶

Or in the words of Laclau and Mouffe: ‘Now, in an articulated discursive totality, where every element occupies a differential position [...] all identity is relational and all relations have a necessary character’⁷⁷. Thus, the concept “intellectual” as well as

⁷³ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 96.

⁷⁴ This aspect is closely related to Derrida’s concept of “iterability”, which in short means repeating a linguistic element, or expression, in different contexts, which in turn always involves a transformation of that expression. See Derrida, *Limited Inc.*

⁷⁵ Howarth, *Discourse*; Laclau, “Identity and Hegemony: The Role of Universality in the Construction of Political Logics”; Laclau, “Constructing Universality”; Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 105–113.

⁷⁶ Margaret R. Somers, *Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights*, Cambridge Cultural Social Studies (Cambridge, 2008), 206–7.

⁷⁷ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 106.

“privatisation” are treated as concept formations whose identities are relational, rather than essential. Moreover, the relationality of the discursive entails processuality, and any positions, demands, fixations of meaning and so on, should be understood as an active making of both differences and equivalences. An *imaginary* example can highlight the relational character of discourse. Here, I have concentrated some of the common phrases and demands of the debate in a shorter paragraph:

The people of Sweden have spoken. Economists, state bureaucrats and politicians need to listen to the demand for privatisation of consuming public-sector services. Regulation and technocracy is threatening democracy! Can it really be the intention of government to abolish the individual freedom of the common man?

In this case, the imaginary speaker is speaking from a differential relation to economist, bureaucrats, politicians, and government – while in an equivalent relation to “the people of Sweden”. Privatisation, being a particular demand⁷⁸, is articulated as a signifier of democracy and individual freedom – again, in a differential relation to state regulation as well as technocratic systems and ideology. Both “state regulation”, “the technocratic system”, “democracy” and “freedom” are notions articulated in relation to one and other, in this extract of discourse. Constituted here are also the subject positions of “economists”, “state bureaucrats” and “politicians”, which are made available but not occupied by the speaker him/herself. In this case, as in most of the empirical material, privatisation is not defined further than to the point that *what it is not*: an economically un-profitable or non-sustainable public sector. While situated in this chain of differences, the concept of privatisation is simultaneously being constructed as an equivalent, or representative, of individual freedom, et cetera. By implication, this also means that “privatisation” *is* profitable and sustainable.

Laclau (1990), Norval (2004), Finlayson (2007), Allan Dreyer Hansen (2014), and other post-structuralist theorists refer to the **undecidability** of meaning-making structures, since concepts may be ascribed or even over-filled with different contents/meanings⁷⁹. The meanings of concepts are established, or at least temporarily

⁷⁸ For this project, I have followed Laclau’s differentiation between *demands* and *requests* in the public domain. A person’s, group’s, or other subject’s response to a dislocatory event like a socio-economic crisis can be to construct that experience as a *grievance*, or rather an issue, affecting a certain group. When that group’s response is articulated as a *request* in the public domain, and if the relevant social authority fails to accommodate for the request (in the eyes of the affected group), it might harden in to a demand. (See Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 73–74.) According to Howarth and Glynos, a demand becomes *political* when challenging the norms of a particular practise or regime (usually manifested as policy), in the name of an ideal. For further reference see Glynos and Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*, 115–16.

⁷⁹ This relates to the concept *overdetermination*. Most definitions of overdetermination have a common ground in that they encompass a dimension of the plurality of meanings of an element. While theories from Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan to Rosa Luxemburg and Louis Althusser (as Laclau and Mouffe (1985) explains) have developed the concept for different needs, most valuable to this type of research is

and partially fixed, through contestation in social and historical contexts, as I have tried to explain. Still, individual readers or listeners will interpret concepts such as “privatisation”, “liberty” or “rights” differently.

Hegemony, domination, ideology, and formations

Hegemony is a concept which carries still a trace from the original Greek, in signifying leadership, rule, authority, sovereignty and so on, especially in terms of geopolitical relations. In its current, politico-philosophical form it can be traced back to the early days of Marxism. Russian social democrats developed the idea of hegemony as something relatively limited: a political tension between the task of leadership; its “natural” class agent; and the class that actually performs it – or simply a relation between the task of political-economic ruling and applied leadership. As this theory was formulated during the struggle against the Tsarist regime, the working class was the subject to take on the task of leadership through an alliance with the peasantry – a task that was not traditionally its own, but that of the bourgeois. This relation whereby a particular class (in this case the proletariat) takes on the leadership of a whole class-alliance, is what signifies hegemony.⁸⁰

Although Vladimir’s theories never reached the transformative effects of his political practices, and the term hegemony rarely feature in his works, Gramsci put much emphasis on Lenin’s re-evaluation of the concept. To Lenin, hegemony signifies a political leadership in terms of class **alliances**, by which a leading class assumes a position of leadership - over the other classes. In return, the leading class would guarantee certain benefits for the other groups/classes to secure dominance over society as a whole. Such alliances are based on common interests among different participants (workers, peasants, bourgeois) in order to secure a legitimate state leadership. In this perspective, it seemed crucial to break the existing alliances, because the ruling

Derrida’s use of overdetermination to describe how one signifier consists of, or encompasses, multiple meanings, of which the speaker is unaware. A word is in a sense leaking meaning. The present word is linked to words which are absent in the text. It is never the product of one single cause but contains a trace of its contexts and the historic processes that creates it. Any word has been overlaid by culture, through synonyms and absent but adjacent meanings and roles. See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (2004); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, 1998); Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*; Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*; Aletta J. Norval, ‘Hegemony after Deconstruction: The Consequences of Undecidability’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 9/2 (2004), 139–57; Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 545–63; Allan Dreyer Hansen, ‘Laclau and Mouffe and the Ontology of Radical Negativity’, *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 15/3 (2014), 283–95.

⁸⁰ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 422–23; Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 49–50; Perry Anderson, ‘The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci’, *New Left Review*, 100, 1976, 14–15.

bourgeoisie would never democratise Tsar Russia. A new political alliance between classes and groups (proletariat and peasantry) against this common enemy was necessary to be able to exercise a hegemony where the proletariat would become the ideological leaders of the democratic forces: the proletarian dictatorship.⁸¹ In Tsarist Russia, the state ruled by force, violence, and coercion to ensure direct domination of the popular masses. Gramsci's writings were largely dedicated to teasing out the different conditions and attributions of the "Eastern" and "Western" societies, emphasising the relationships between state and civil society – and between **coercion** and **consent**.⁸²

Another theorist to reconceptualise hegemony was Rosa Luxemburg, who emphasised aspects of social change. Luxemburg used the analogy of a war of manoeuvre to theorise on the role of economic elements in social change. A crisis is treated as a breach in the enemy's defences, which causes disarray and allows one's own troops to charge in and secures strategic positions. Gramsci, who borrows heavily from Luxemburg, adds that while a war of manoeuvre and swift action might have worked in the Russian revolution – 'wars among the more industrially and socially advanced states' is 'reduced to a more tactical than strategic function'⁸³. The organisational and industrial system calls for another type of warfare, in societies made up of complex structures resistant to the crippling effects of an economic crisis. In a "**war of positions**", we might find that an attack does not diminish the opponent's defences or morale, but merely damages them.⁸⁴ The trench-system in such a modern war is Gramsci's analogy equivalent to the 'superstructures of civil society'⁸⁵.

How come the societies in Gramsci's contemporary Western Europe were still dominated by bourgeois ideology, despite the introduction of democratic elections? If the state does not rule by violent repression, then by what means of submission were the masses persuaded into maintaining capitalism? Gramsci proceeded to answer such questions by searching for more subtle practices of power in arenas other than the state apparatus. He finds it in what is by methodological distinction defined as "civil society". Through capitalist control of the means of communication, as historian Perry Anderson cleverly puts it, capitalist ideology is diffused and voluntarily accepted as dominant.⁸⁶ Control of the press, radio, television, film, publishing, theatre, and much more is still based on the control of the means of production, so there is still a link to the economic "nucleus" in Gramsci's writings. Habits of submission, induced by work, education,

⁸¹ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, 'Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution', in *Collected Works*, trans. by Abraham Fineburg and Julius Katzer, 9 vols (Moscow, 1905), 15–140; James Martin, *Antonio Gramsci: Marxism, Philosophy and Politics*, 2 vols (2002); Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London; Boston, 1979); Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 7, 55; Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', 5.

⁸² Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', 5.

⁸³ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 226–27.

⁸⁴ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 226–30.

⁸⁵ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 227.

⁸⁶ Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', 5.

juridical systems and so on, support the very same structures that creates this ideological conversion. Consent, rather than coercion, thus maintain the system. On the other hand, Gramsci himself later distances himself from such a clear-cut distinction between civil society and state. While at first, the state is described as a site of domination and coercion, and civil society one of hegemony and consent, hegemony is later treated as a combination of coercion and consent distributed over both – or rather the one political-civil society. At times, Gramsci differentiate between political hegemony and cultural hegemony. Here, possibly again referring to political *and* cultural hegemony:

Every state is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a given cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces of development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and educative function, are the most important state activities in this sense: but, in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end – initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes.⁸⁷

Here, hegemony is exercised within, or across both state and civil society. It is important to note, however, that Gramsci's distinction between state and civil society is merely a methodological one, even if it presented as organic by certain political projects⁸⁸. The assertion that economic activity belongs in civil society often includes the idea that the state is not allowed intervene and regulate it. Since civil society and state however are really one and the same, as Gramsci argues, laissez-faire economism is also a form of state "regulation", 'introduced and maintained by legislative and coercive means'⁸⁹. At a later stage, the state is conceptualised in a way as to encompass not just 'the governmental apparatus, but also the "private" apparatus of "hegemony" or civil society'⁹⁰. And so, we end up with a definition of state which includes both political society and civil society. I will return to this discussion of state versus civil society, as it is portrayed in the empirical material (in the first chapter of the empirical analysis), and in the conclusion to explore the connections between such a methodological division and hegemonic practices in the privatisation discourse. So, Gramsci vacillates between these understandings of state and civil society as distinct; as one and the same; or with the state as something that *encompasses* civil society. Consequently, as illustrated in the quote below, hegemony must be enforced by a combination of the two, corresponding, means: force/coercion and consent.

⁸⁷ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 234.

⁸⁸ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 210.

⁸⁹ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 210.

⁹⁰ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 234. Emphasis mine.

The 'normal' exercise of hegemony in what became the classic terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterized by the combination of force and consent variously balancing one another, without force exceeding consent too much. Indeed one tries to make it appear that force is supported by the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion newspapers and associations - which are therefore, in certain situations, artificially increased in number.⁹¹

There are common points between Lenin and Gramsci on hegemony, yet the major difference lies in Gramsci's emphasis on *cultural* and ideological leadership, rather than Lenin's narrow focus on political direction. Furthermore, because hegemony is rooted mainly in civil society rather than political society, as in previous theories, Gramsci can emphasise the role of things more cultural, moral, **common sense** (as a collective noun) or our uncritical, naturalised 'conception of the world'. In his analysis, it is possible to change our ways of seeing things, or acting – even our entire system of beliefs, opinions, superstitions, and common sense, through an ideological struggle of political hegemonies:

Having first shown that everyone is a philosopher, though in his own way and unconsciously, since even in the slightest manifestation of any intellectual activity whatever, in 'language', there is contained a specific conception of the world, one then moves on to the second level, which is that of awareness and criticism.⁹²

Through an active, critical engagement; to consciously work out one's own conception of the world, one can take part in the 'creation of history'⁹³ and break the state of moral and intellectual passivity. To create a new conception of the world, that is 'implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life'⁹⁴, in short, an ideological unity of a social bloc, or formation, it is crucial to cement that unity also between the 'simple' and 'the intellectuals'. One example of where this has succeeded is the Roman Church, in Gramsci's own time, where the Church's own traditional intellectuals, the clergy, and the masses share the same ideology. A philosophical *movement*, cannot be restricted to a specialised culture among intellectual groups. Instead, it must stay in contact with the masses and the source of the problems it once set out to study.⁹⁵ Even if a philosophy like Marxism must be a criticism of the common sense, every philosophy, especially if connected to practical life, has a tendency to become a common sense at least of the limited environment of the intellectuals.⁹⁶ However, by renovating an existing intellectual activity of common

⁹¹ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 261.

⁹² Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 325.

⁹³ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 325.

⁹⁴ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 330.

⁹⁵ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 331.

⁹⁶ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 332.

sense, demonstrating the intellectual qualities of the people, it is possible to create a synthesis of philosophy and the common sense:

The philosophy of praxis does not tend to leave the “simple” in their primitive philosophy of common sense, but rather to lead them to a higher conception of life. It affirms the need for contact between intellectuals and simple [...] in order to construct an intellectual-moral bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass and not only of small intellectual groups. The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity [...] His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers [...]; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. [...] the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity. Critical understanding of self takes place therefore through a struggle of political ‘hegemonies’, from opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics [...]⁹⁷

In these discussions of “conceptions of the world” and the relations between intellectuals and the “simple”, common people, Gramsci independently comes very close to the writings of sociologist Karl Mannheim. Mannheim, who also asserts that all [subject positions] have a corresponding “world-view” based on their social position, equally argues that it is the role of the intellectual to transgress the conception bound to “his” class position, and ally himself with the perspectives of other groups. Furthermore, such world-views can be imposed, by one dominant group on subordinate strata.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Mannheim’s notion of a **consensus of opinion** and spontaneous cooperation between individuals and groups, shares similarities to these theories on hegemony and common sense. Such consensus may occur in homogenous societies or strata, where the contingences of social relationships has been covered over and ‘schemes of experience once laid down and confirmed to be used again and again’⁹⁹, Mannheim argues. As such traditional wisdoms are reiterated ‘always appropriate to the environment [...] any small adjustments in the inherited modes of experience which may be necessary [...] are easily accomplished without ever having to be made conscious and reflective’¹⁰⁰. These are the reflections and expressions of an unambiguous,

⁹⁷ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 333–34.

⁹⁸ Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*, ed. by Bryan S. Turner, Routledge Sociology Classics, 99-1248872-5 (London, UK, 1956); Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. by Paul Kecskemeti, International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction, 99-0114726-3 (London, UK, 1952).

⁹⁹ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 199.

¹⁰⁰ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 199.

undialectical experience of life, signified by the straight proverbial message “*It shall be so*”, ‘contained in the prescriptions of traditionally sanctional usages and customs.’¹⁰¹ This ‘it’-character, as Mannheim calls it, also characterises the ‘common sense, which formulates the principles of our dealings with the simplest things’.¹⁰² Such cultural sedimentations as common senses and proverbs, are according to Mannheim products of a past ruling strata: ‘the “people” as such have only taken over and transformed these cultural creations after a certain time-lag.’¹⁰³ I will return to this comparison between Mannheim and Gramsci in my reconceptualisation of “intellectuals”.

Gramsci’s theory of hegemony can be seen as a development of Lenin’s work on the same concept. The intellectual unity, a critical conception rather than a mere common sense, which Gramsci is aiming for, in order to unite the theory and practice of Marxism (where Lenin and others had promoted practice before thought) is discussed at length in a historical perspective of ‘the political question of the intellectuals’¹⁰⁴. The dialectic between intellectuals and the masses is crucial for the struggle over hegemony. A cultural and moral leadership is needed. Innovation cannot come from the masses until they reach a stage of active critical perception. In the beginning, a mediation by a group who already posits a coherent philosophy is necessary, in order for the process of diffusion of new conceptions to take place. Here, Gramsci emphasizes the organisational element:

Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the creation of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not ‘distinguish’ itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organizing itself; and there is no organization without intellectuals, that is without organizers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people ‘specialized’ in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas. But the process of creating intellectuals is long, difficult, full of contradictions, advances and retreats, dispersals and regroupings, in which the loyalty of the masses is often sorely tried.¹⁰⁵

Here we arrive at Gramsci’s analysis of the intellectual, which I will discuss further in the section where I present my own approach to the study of this “element”. In short, Gramsci defines intellectuals as a stratum, a group, or a position with the capacity to unify a social group and raise their awareness. By a now famous distinction between ‘organic’ and ‘traditional’ intellectuals, the worker who becomes a party representative or a union leader emerge *organically* from the group itself is still treated as an intellectual

¹⁰¹ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 199.

¹⁰² Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 200.

¹⁰³ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 200.

¹⁰⁴ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 334.

¹⁰⁵ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 334.

just as much as the *traditional* priests or teachers who align them self with one class or the other.¹⁰⁶ From the Leninist conception of “hegemony” as class alliances and the party as the vanguard of the people, Gramsci extends the meaning of hegemony to include leadership not just by the proletariat, but other social groups through history – such as the bourgeoisie parliamentary regime. More importantly, in Gramsci’s conceptualisation of hegemony, the agent of change is no longer just the working class, but rather the intellectual. Furthermore, hegemony comes to signify not just political leadership, but cultural, moral, and ideological too. As we have seen, hegemony is sometimes a question of cultural and ideological practices of persuasion and consent in the domain of civil society – but once the strict division of civil society and state is broken up, hegemony becomes ethico-political, based on the leading group’s political and economic power.¹⁰⁷ While the concept of hegemony is mostly associated with explanations of socio-political continuity, it may be equally important to comprehend social and political change.

Hegemonic struggles therefore involve the contest of ideas, beliefs, and meanings. Some researchers have argued for the need to supplement such analyses with studies of the persuasive processes involved. Finlayson (1998, 2007, 2012) does precisely this. In his combination of discourse analysis and the development of a rhetorical political analysis (which I will return to in chapter 3), he analyses how a certain ‘common sense’ is sedimented within a specific discourse, (in his case the discourse of nationalism, in my case the discourse on privatisation). This ‘common sense’ can be re-activated within political ideological discourses, partially transforming the meaning of, in this case, “privatisation”, “ownership”, “freedom” or “public sector” as they are articulated within specific ideological projects.¹⁰⁸ Finlayson uses Stuart Hall to highlight that ‘the hope of every ideology is to naturalise itself out of History and into Nature and thus to become invisible, to operate unconsciously.’¹⁰⁹ A political ideological project can by attachment to an established concept, achieve ‘invisibility’ or a theoretical discursive camouflage, as it appears to stem from the very nature of history (such as the development of the welfare state, or the natural right to private ownership). Political projects that are developed in and dependent on geographic and historical conditions can in this way

¹⁰⁶ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*.

¹⁰⁷ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*.

¹⁰⁸ Alan Finlayson, ‘Ideology, Discourse and Nationalism’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 3/1 (1998), 99–118; Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 545–63; Alan Finlayson, ‘Rhetoric and the Political Theory of Ideologies’, *Political Studies*, 60/4 (2012), 751–67.

¹⁰⁹ Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*, 8. Also quoted in Finlayson, ‘Ideology, Discourse and Nationalism’, 99–118. This quote is also an example of the tensions between structure, agents and intentionality that still reside in poststructuralist theory. Although I do not agree with the implicit intentionality that comes with a statement such as “the hope of every ideology is to”, since I do not believe that ideologies per se have any agency, such tensions seep through in the theoretical texts that I use.

legitimate themselves as a stage in a natural historic order, development, or tradition. Hall, in turn, uses Gramsci to explain how:

[...] common sense, however natural it appears, always has a structure, a set of histories which are traces of the past as well as intimations of a future philosophy [...] common sense is, as Gramsci says, "not without its consequences" since "it holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of will."¹¹⁰

And so we return to Gramsci, through an articulation of a chain of references in an attempt to assert this project within a larger post-Marxist tradition. With this perspective on "common sense", we come as close to the post-Marxist idea of the hegemonic - as a common sense-definition of hegemony.

Hegemony from a post-structuralist's perspective

Once we have rejected all essentialist suppositions on an ontological level, any treatments of hegemony as a topographical concept - as a location within the social structure - become untenable. There can be no single core, essence or centre (such as the economic level) of the social/society, from where hegemony would emanate, since the social is too varied and infinite to be reduced to any underlying unitary principle.¹¹¹ So, the openness of the social - the contingency, fluidity and undecidability of discourse, becomes the precondition of the conceptualisation of a hegemony which does not strive to account for the totality of the social, or constitute its centre.¹¹² Only a fluid system runs the risk of being fixed. From where then, does hegemony emanate? In a sense, it comes from everywhere. Like power, hegemony can be understood as a topological concept. It has a similar omnipresence as power: produced from one moment to the next, repetitious; a complex strategical situation in a particular society - it is not an institution, nor a structure or an inherent strength¹¹³. However, there can be topographical, particular, more or less present, and concentrated moments in the exercise of hegemony¹¹⁴.

It is important to note that all presented perspectives have some commonalities in that hegemony functions through a combination of coercion and consent; it involves the

¹¹⁰ Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*, 8.

¹¹¹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 139.

¹¹² Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 142.

¹¹³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York, 1976), 93.

¹¹⁴ For a similar topological conception of power and critique of Foucault see John Allen, 'Three Spaces of Power: Territory, Networks, plus a Topological Twist in the Tale of Domination and Authority', *Journal of Power*, 2/2 (2009), 197-212; John Allen, *Lost Geographies of Power* (Malden, MA, USA; Oxford, UK, 2003).

construction of an alliance – or the representation of an alliances between different groups, demands and/or interests.¹¹⁵ In the post-structural perspectives of Laclau, Mouffe, Howarth, Norval and others, hegemony is treated as a dual concept. In my understanding of the concept, I am influenced more by Howarth's synthesis (2007, 2008, 2010, 2013), than any other. Here, I treat hegemony as a topological phenomenon that is processual in character, regardless of form, expression, or analytical distinctions.

Hegemony can then be recognised, with all these previous theories in mind, on the one hand as a **form of rule, governance, or order** through which a regime or discursive formation (like the Thatcherite or Social Democratic regime) dominates, holds or 'grips' a set of subjects through practices and policies in a combination of consent, compliance and coercion. This refers to the way in which subjects may accept and consent to a form of rule, order, regime, practice, or policy, that they may have previously resisted or opposed. On the other hand, hegemony is a **process, project, or practice**¹¹⁶ in which a particular demand takes up the representation of a universal one. In this way, the identity of the element is divided between a particular meaning and the more universal signification:

And an empty signifier is a hegemonic one, if hegemony is conceived as a relation in which a particularity, without ceasing to be particular, assumes the representation of a universality which is utterly incommensurable with its ontic differential identity. But if this is the primary ontological terrain, if the totality is not directly derivable from any such ontic identity, but is constructed through this hegemonic 'taking over' of the grounding function, in that case relations of representation are ontologically constitutive (in the transcendental sense of the term).¹¹⁷

I shall return to a critique of Laclau's (2005, 2012, 2014) insistence on this incommensurability the final part of this dissertation, but here I want to emphasise the usefulness of this approach and that is that hegemony, seen as a political practice of coalition building that involves the linking together of disparate demands to contest a form of rule, practice, or policy. For instance, the discourse on privatisation may be represented in a dispersion of linked together demands, such as: less regulation, de-centralisation, cutting state spending, democratic society, liberation from apartheid,

¹¹⁵ Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*, 25.

¹¹⁶ As defined by Howarth (2013): 'Hegemonic practices are in turn those particular kinds of articulations that constitute historical blocs or discursive formations by establishing political frontiers between different demands and identities. The outcome of successful hegemonic projects is the disarticulation of a previously sedimented historical bloc and the institution of a new configuration of state, economy, and society.' Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 213–14.

¹¹⁷ Ernesto Laclau, "REPLY," *Cultural Studies* 26, no. 2–3 (March 2012): 396.

anti-communist struggles et cetera. A hegemonic process is thus when a particular demand assumes the function of universal representation of a range of otherwise disparate demands.¹¹⁸ Or, in the words of David Howarth; ‘Hegemony is thus a type of political relation that creates equivalences between disparate elements via the construction of political frontiers that divide social relations’¹¹⁹. Such practices of constructing relations and discourses; organising and disorganising coalitions and demands often involves rhetorical techniques to reframe and redescribe issues or demands, or persuade and appeal to others support for a certain demand, coalition, or perspective - to take sides. It is this latter form of hegemony as a practice or processes that I have used to analyse the practices of argumentation and articulation in the debate, as well as the constituting of “intellectuals” through enunciations of relatively particular or universal representations. This is explained further in the following section on intellectual subject positions as well as in chapter 7.¹²⁰

Finally, the formation and dissolution of discourse coalitions also *presupposes* the construction of identities and the emergence of political subjects. Subjects and identities in this perspective do not pre-exist their struggles and conflicts. Instead, in many cases, they are actually produced in the very construction of projects and coalitions: they emerge in the complicated practices through which groups and agents seek to *represent* and *articulate* their demands, identities, and constituencies.¹²¹

Similar to Howarth’s (and other poststructuralists) insistence on discourse as a system of meaning that humans are thrown into, and which determine not what exists in the world, but how we are able to interpret it, Mannheim argues that we or ‘They’ – ‘the collective subject’ – ‘does not exist in a world in general, but in a world of meanings, interpreted in a particular way.’¹²² As both Laclau, Howarth and Mannheim build on Heidegger, it is no wonder that their subsequent theorising converge on certain points. Where Howarth and Laclau argue that human beings are always ‘thrown into a pre-existing world of practices and meanings’¹²³ – Mannheim argue that ‘We step at birth

¹¹⁸ Ernesto Laclau, ‘Populism: What’s in a Name?’, in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. by Francisco Panizza, Phronesis (London, 2005), 32–49; Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; Laclau, ‘REPLY’, 391–415; Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*.

¹¹⁹ Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 199.

¹²⁰ In similar vein, political scientist Kristina Boréus uses the notion of hegemony to explain the changes that takes place in Swedish politics during the 1970s and 1980s. As the title implies, Boréus maps the “Right-wing Wave” characterising the public debate at the time, but arrives at the conclusion that no new hegemony has been created as representatives from on the one hand employers’ organisation and on the other social democratic organisations are both still represented in mass media outlets by the end of the 1980s. However, it is a different understanding and analysis of hegemony that I attempt here. See Boréus, *Högerväg: Nyliberalismen Och Kampen Om Språket I Svensk Debatt 1969-1989*.

¹²¹ Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 202.

¹²² Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 197.

¹²³ Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 97.

into a ready-interpreted world, a world which has already been made understandable, every part of which has been given meaning¹²⁴. Perhaps, one could argue that discourse is ‘that profounder Something which always interprets the world somehow, whether in its superficiality or its depths, and which causes us always to meet the world in a preconceived form.’¹²⁵ As Mannheim continues to answer the question how this “They”, ‘this publicly prevailing interpretation of reality actually comes into being’¹²⁶, he focuses on four kinds of social process which should be recognised as ideal types of generating factors, which usually co-exist or merge, even if one will tend to predominate. On the basis of either a consensus of opinion, a monopoly situation, atomistic competition, and/or a concentration around one point of view, the public interpretation of reality may come about.

Domination and interpretation

In speaking of both hegemony and dominance, I am influenced by the theories of Antonio Gramsci and his followers. In such perspectives, there is a clear difference between the concepts of hegemony and domination. Gramsci makes a distinction between the two, where domination is the product of force and an antithesis to the consent-induced hegemony.¹²⁷ If domination is a product of coercion rather than consent, you can say that it is something like a relation where a view or conception of the world is forced upon the discourse; a supremacy in discursive form; a moment of force, of constraint, or intervention. As political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe put it; ‘we shall call relations of domination the set of those relations of subordination which are considered as illegitimate from the perspective, or in the judgement, of a social agent *external* to them, and which, as a consequence, may or may not coincide with the relations of oppression actually existing in a determinant social formation.’¹²⁸ Or, in Howarth’s discussion on power and the role of ideology in the character of fantasy; when a subject is ‘gripped by a picture’ that becomes ‘sedimented and naturalised in practices, institutions, and images, then it ceases to be a relation of power in the strict sense and becomes instead a relation of domination.’¹²⁹ In his view,

¹²⁴ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 197.

¹²⁵ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 197.

¹²⁶ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 197.

¹²⁷ Anderson, ‘The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci’, 5.

¹²⁸ Emphasise mine. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 154. This relates to a definition of a relation of subordination as ‘that in which an agent is subjected to the decisions of another’ (similar to Robert Dahl’s famous concept of power - see Robert A Dahl, ‘The Concept of Power’, *Behavioral Science*, 2 (1957), 201–15.). Relations of oppression are in contrast ‘those relations of subordination which have transformed themselves into sites of antagonisms.’ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 153–54.

¹²⁹ Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 207.

domination ‘thus differs from authority and oppression in that agents are complicit in their acceptance of structures and practices, which *from the critic’s* point of view, can be judged illegitimate or unjust.’¹³⁰

Although these perspectives are related, and Howarth’s is based on Laclau and Mouffe’s, as well as Steven Lukes’ and by extension Robert Dahl’s; Howarth provides a more nuanced conception where a relation of domination can be recognised as illegitimate or oppressive not only from the outside, but from critical groups or subjects *within* the relation. I.e. only an external agent can, in Laclau and Mouffe’s version, expose the relations of oppression to the self-deceived subjects of a dominant regime (a state, dictatorship, colonial power, et cetera) that has successfully concealed its contingent character and naturalised its own superiority – while to Howarth, critical agents internal to such a relation can very well be aware of it. Then again, according to Gramsci, this self-deception among the masses who adopt another groups conception of the world is only an intellectual submission and subordination, that is followed in normal times. However, occasionally, another conception of the world will manifest itself in the action of the dominated subjects:

This contrast between thought and action, i.e. the co-existence of two conceptions of the world, one affirmed in words and the other displayed in effective action, is not simply a product of self-deception [*malafede*]. Self-deception can be an adequate explanation for a few individuals taken separately, or even for groups of a certain size, but it is not adequate when the contrast occurs in the life of great masses. In these cases the contrast between thought and action cannot but be the expression of profounder contrasts of a social historical order. It signifies that the social group in question may indeed have its own conception of the world, even if only embryonic; a conception which manifests itself in action, but occasionally and in flashes when, that is, the group is acting as an organic totality.¹³¹

Dominance, then, is not a precondition to or necessary aspect of hegemony, since hegemony in its perfect form is practised without being recognised as oppressive. Still, relations of dominance might include hegemony, or be a step towards renegotiating hegemony. Likewise, I have spoken of interpretative privilege which does not simply follow after dominance. When Mannheim expounds on the ‘the old battle for universal acceptance of a particular interpretation of reality,’¹³² his version of the implementation of an interpretation of the world as a move from the particular to the universal, is similar to the notion of hegemonic practices later developed by the Essex school of discourse theory. Moreover, these processes of meaning making are not necessarily a product of rational forces or thought, but of contestation and negotiation where affect also has a

¹³⁰ Emphasise mine. Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 207.

¹³¹ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 328.

¹³² Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 197.

part to play. Again, something similar appears in Mannheim, who, in this sense at least, can be seen as an early proponent of relational sociology:

Our social structure is built along class lines, which means that not objective tests but irrational forces of social competition and struggle decide the place and function of the individual in society. Dominance in national and international life is achieved through struggle, in itself irrational, in which chance plays an important part. These irrational forces in society form that sphere of social life which is unorganized and unrationalized, and in which conduct and politics became necessary. The two main sources of irrationalism in the social structure (uncontrolled competition and domination by force) constitute the realm of social life which is still unorganized and where politics becomes necessary. Around these two centres there accumulate those other more profound irrational elements, which we usually call emotions. Viewed from the sociological standpoint there is a connection between the extent of the unorganized realm of society where uncontrolled competition and domination by force prevail, and the social integration of emotional reactions. The problem then must be stated: What knowledge do we have or is possible concerning this realm of social life and of the type of conduct which occurs in it?¹³³

In the essay *Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon* Mannheim discusses competition in the sphere of thought. In this important contribution to the sociology of knowledge, Mannheim makes a distinction between hostile contest and peaceful rivalry – a distinction corresponding roughly to the way Mouffe later utilises the concepts of antagonism and agonistics¹³⁴. In all historical thought, Mannheim argues, there has been a rivalry between different parties seeking an identical goal: the possession of the correct social diagnosis (or at least for the prestige that is associated with the possession of the correct diagnosis). ‘Or, to use a more pregnant term to characterize this identical goal: the competing parties are always struggling to influence what the phenomenologist Heidegger calls the ‘public interpretation of reality.’¹³⁵ Like Laclau, Mouffe, Howarth, Griggs and other post-Marxist thinkers, Mannheim insists that social and political realms are marked by struggles among social groups (and not necessarily classes, parties or actors) that strive to assert their particular *interpretation of*

¹³³ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1936), 102–3. Here, Mannheim is almost post-foundationalist in his note on what constitutes the “political”: ‘It is necessary here to repeat that the concept of the “political” as used in conjunction with the correlative concepts, rationalized structure, and irrational field, represents only one of many possible concepts of the “political”. While particularly suited for the comprehension of certain relationships, it must not be regarded as absolutely the only one.’

¹³⁴ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London, 2013). For similar comparisons of the implications of these similarities between Mouffe and Mannheim see also Henrik Lundberg, ‘Between Ideology and Utopia: Karl Mannheim’s Quest for a Political Synthesis’, Forthcoming.

¹³⁵ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 197.

reality as the universal interpretation. Note here the anti-essentialist tendencies in Mannheim:

[...] every historical, ideological, sociological piece of knowledge (even should it prove to be Absolute Truth itself), is clearly rooted in and carried by the desire for power and recognition of particular social groups who want to make their interpretation of the world the universal one.¹³⁶

‘The nature of the generally accepted interpretation of the world at any given time’, Mannheim argues, ‘is not merely a matter of the so-called “public opinion”¹³⁷. Instead, it is a matter ‘of the inventory of our set of fundamental meanings in terms of which we experience the outside world as well as our own inner responses’¹³⁸. That is to say, the generally accepted interpretation of the world is a matter of discursive practices and structures, in more poststructuralist terms. Such a public interpretation of reality may form as a result of to competition between several groups that all strive to impose their interpretation of the world on others. Laclau and Mouffe would (and do) call this antagonism, but Mannheim calls this (or something similar) “*atomistic competition*”. Total atomization - a fragmentation where completely isolated individuals or thinking groups all compete with each other – is impossible. However, as a reaction to this increasing fragmentation a type of competition for the creation of a public interpretation has developed, which is predominant for the era Mannheim finds himself in. That is the *concentration* around one point of view, by a number of previously separate competing groups and views. This results in a concentration of competition around a few poles of power, which in turn become more dominant intellectual currents and counter-currents (such as rationalism and irrationalism). Polarisation processes are exemplified by Mannheim as the creation of two camps observable in his own time and society, where different types of social and political forces and currents merge and establish a common front against, in this case, rationalism.¹³⁹ This line of reasoning bears clear resemblances to Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe and their insistence on the tendencies towards a division of the social in (necessarily) two camps in the fixation of one point of view as the one and only point of view.

When I speak of interpretative privilege I refer to the privilege of providing interpretations, meaning and definitions of phenomena, concepts, events and so on - the privilege to define, value and (re)conceptualise elements of discourse. A certain position or perspective can be said to gain interpretative privilege within a discourse. In a sense, interpretative privilege can thus be seen as position of accepted authority, whose articulations and conceptualisations will be met with consent from the subjects

¹³⁶ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 196–97.

¹³⁷ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 197.

¹³⁸ Mannheim, ‘Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon’, 197.

¹³⁹ Karl Mannheim, ‘Conservative Thought’, in *Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology* (London, 1953), 74–164.

searching for meaning and reference in a discourse. From this privileged position it is possible to implement particular understandings, definitions, values, norms, and ideologies in the discourse.

I set out to study the construction of a naturalised, common sense understanding of privatisation; a phenomena, figure or frame which on the one hand sets limits to the possibilities of political transformation and on the other is itself under constant re-construction. These notions of hegemony, domination and interpretative privilege informs my investigation. Studying the re-articulation of a common sense, which naturalises ideology, allows me to understand privatisation as a specific political demand as well as its relation to the larger social formation, a formation which the discourse of privatisation helps to produce.

An extended conception of ideology

Related to this conception of hegemony, is the concept of ideology. **Ideology** may of course be conceived of in different ways, as negative a force; a common world-view; or political standpoints, for instance. It is famously theorised by sociologist Karl Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia* (1954), where he tries to untangle the concept of ideology from the Marxist notion of consciousness (to which Gramsci subscribes), to include the opinions, statements, propositions, conceptual apparatus, and systems of ideas that characterise the total structure of the mind of an epoch or group¹⁴⁰. More recently, political theorist Michael Freeden¹⁴¹ has presented a morphological model of ideologies that closely resembles the post-Marxist conception of hegemony: as an active attempt and processes of **decontestation** of elements in conceptual arrangements. In short, a type of naturalisation of previously contested concepts. From Freeden's perspective ideologies are counter-pluralist discourses, modes of political thinking or strategies, deliberate or not, that manage the underlying pluralism of political ideas in society. These strategies may, permit pluralism to a certain extent or strive to suppress pluralism through practices of decontestation. Through decontestation specific meanings, among all the available contested and contestable conceptions that a concept can hold, are debated in a political discourse. Ideologies display stronger and weaker decontestations. A highly specific, decontested, meaning may be fixed or ascribed to fundamental human rights; at other times, a limited plurality of meaning may be permitted, as with liberal views on religion. As an analytical concept, decontestation refers to how meaning is fought over and how contested meanings are fixed and/or fail to be fixated. In

¹⁴⁰ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*.

¹⁴¹ Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford, UK, 1996).

Freeden's perspective, ideology is not a question of the power of oppression, but the connotation and fixations of meaning which are fundamental to political discussions.¹⁴²

Freeden's theory has been criticised by political theorist Aletta Norval, amongst others, for not paying enough attention to actual structuring of social orders and political identities in the process of such decontestations¹⁴³. The perspective of ideology promoted by Laclau does precisely that, but still emphasises the role of the empty signifier within ideological discourses as the object of analysis. For my own project, I have extended the definition of ideology to include the political argument, as proposed by political theorists Finlayson and James Martin, who treat ideology as a political belief system articulated in a style of argumentation formed in a context of expectations, needs, and demands. Such styles of argumentation can be adapted to various audiences. Here, it is not just the internal organisation of what and how a political spokesperson thinks – but how they want the audience to think about it and the ways in which political ideas are presented in public, communicated, and made persuasive, becomes the object of study.¹⁴⁴ This means that rhetoric is transient and that belief systems might also be dynamic, just as hegemonic practices and processes are necessarily dynamic in the context of a contingent discourse.

[...] attempts to win the assent or consent of those not already thinking within the ideology in question. The study of such arguments is a study not only of semiotic conditions but also of political action – the strategies of political actors as they express and embody their political thinking and communicate it to others. Ideologies provide a series of reasons for thinking one sort of thing rather than another and an actor may draw upon these when formulating responses to external events, problems, and rival challenges, and when seeking ways to persuade others to share the same perspective.¹⁴⁵

Hence, ideology must be recognised as something more than content and substance, since its forms of presentation and justification becomes co-constitutive of the ideological formation.¹⁴⁶ This opens up for a study of the organisation of negotiations,

¹⁴² For further reference see Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*; Michael Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions; 95 (Oxford, 2003); Michael Freeden, 'The Morphological Analysis of Ideology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, ed. by Michael Freeden and Marc Stears, Oxford Handbooks Online (Oxford, England, 2013).

¹⁴³ Norval, 'The Things We Do with Words-Contemporary Approaches to the Analysis of Ideology', 313–346; Aletta Norval, 'Poststructuralist Conceptions of Ideology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, ed. by Michael Freeden and Marc Stears, Oxford Handbooks Online (Oxford, England, 2014).

¹⁴⁴ Alan Finlayson and James Martin, "'It Ain't What You Say...': British Political Studies and the Analysis of Speech and Rhetoric", *British Politics*, 3/4 (2008), 451; Finlayson, 'Rhetoric and the Political Theory of Ideologies', 751–67.

¹⁴⁵ Finlayson, 'Rhetoric and the Political Theory of Ideologies', 8.

¹⁴⁶ Alan Finlayson, 'Ideology and Political Rhetoric', ed. by Michael Freeden and Marc Stears, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies*, Oxford Handbooks Online (Oxford, England, 2013).

the institutional and cultural contexts structuring relations between speaker and audience, as well as an inquiry into the history of a debate, which ‘sets the terrain for contemporary contest’¹⁴⁷, which is what I have attempted here. To both Mannheim, Gramsci and Laclau, the mediation and dispersion of ideology is linked to the intellectual function, which I will return to shortly. To take such practices into account, I have followed Finlayson’s and Martin’s advice to study the rhetoric involved, by investigating the general situation where the rhetorical acts take place, the organisation of persuasion, as well as the use of rhetorical appeals to character, emotion, and reason (or ethos, pathos, and logos), as explained in the final section of this chapter.

Formations, regularities, and coalitions

Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a *discursive formation* – thus avoiding words that are already overlaid with conditions and consequences, and in any case inadequate to the task of designating such a dispersion, such as ‘science’, ‘ideology’, ‘theory’, or ‘domain of objectivity’. The conditions to which the elements of this division (objects, mode of statement, concepts, thematic choices) are subjected we shall call the rules of formation. The rules of formation are conditions of existence (but also of coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance) in a given discursive division.¹⁴⁸

The idea of a **discursive formation** is most notably developed by Michel Foucault in an analysis concerned with orders of discourse, or ‘those large groups of statements’¹⁴⁹ known as “medicine”, “economics”, or “grammar”. Foucault asks himself what these unities are based on, and finds a field of objects ‘full of gaps, intertwined with one another, interplays of differences, distances, substitutions, transformations’¹⁵⁰. The statements in these fields cannot be linked together in any single figure. He finds concepts that differ in structure, with different rules governing their use. He does not find a single thematic, but ‘various strategic possibilities that permit the activation of incompatible themes’¹⁵¹ and even the same theme established in different groups of statements. From these realisations came the idea ‘of describing these dispersions themselves; of discovering whether, between these elements [...] one cannot discern a

¹⁴⁷ Finlayson, ‘Ideology and Political Rhetoric’, 9.

¹⁴⁸ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 41–42.

¹⁴⁹ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 40.

¹⁵⁰ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 41.

¹⁵¹ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 41.

regularity: an order in their successive appearance, correlations in their simultaneity, assignable positions in a common space, a reciprocal functioning, linked and hierarchized transformations¹⁵². To study such formations would then be to describe systems of dispersion. I understand Foucault's concept discursive formation as the orders or operation, not within; but amongst, overarching or transcending, several individual discourses. While Foucault exemplifies this with the discursive formation of literary criticism as discourse that constitutes the author, I attempt to analyse the public medialised discourse on privatisation as the discourse that constitutes "the intellectual".¹⁵³ 'But in either case this is an open process which will depend on the multiple hegemonic articulations [...]'¹⁵⁴

Although many later interpretations tend to collapse the notion of a discursive formation onto the concept of discourse - a feat possible only if discourse is narrowly defined (as communication or statements) and if "the discursive" is separated from the "non-discursive" aspects of social: then discursive formations can be treated as the meaningful structure that produces discourses in a unilateral, causal relation. That is to say, if I would use Norman Fairclough's terminology¹⁵⁵, the notion of "discursive formation" would come closer to the conceptualisation of "discourse" in Laclau and Mouffe's terminology. Following my earlier discussion on discourse and the discursive, I choose to treat discursive formations as another separate, if still related, analytical concept with inspiration from Foucault as well as Laclau and Mouffe's somewhat abstract explanation:

A social and political space relatively unified through the instituting of nodal points and the constitution of tendentially relational identities, is what Gramsci called a historical bloc. The type of link joining the different elements of the historical bloc - not unity in any form of historical a priori, but regularity in dispersion - coincides with our concept of discursive formation. Insofar as we consider the historical bloc from the point of view of the antagonistic terrain in which it is constituted, we will call it hegemonic formation.

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¹⁵² Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 41.

¹⁵³ Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse', in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. by Robert Young (Boston, 1981).

¹⁵⁴ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 144. Furthermore, 'Finally, inasmuch as the hegemonic formation implies a phenomenon of frontiers, the concept of war of position reveals its full significance. Through this concept Gramsci brings about two important theoretical effects. The first is to confirm the impossibility of any closure of the social: since the frontier is internal to the social, it is impossible to subsume the social formation as an empirical referent under the intelligible forms of a society. Every "society" constitutes its own forms of rationality', Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 136.

¹⁵⁵ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (2013). See also Michel Pêcheux, *Language, Semantics, and Ideology* (New York, 1982).

¹⁵⁶ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 136.

[...] this dispersion includes a proliferation of very diverse elements: systems of differences which partially define relational identities; chains of equivalences which subvert the latter but which can be transformistically recovered insofar as the place of opposition itself becomes regular and, in that way, constitutes a new difference; forms of overdetermination which concentrate either power, or the different forms of resistance to it; and so forth. The important point is that every form of power is constructed in a pragmatic way and internally to the social, through the opposed logics of equivalence and difference; power is never foundational. The problem of power cannot, therefore, be posed in terms of the search for the class or the dominant sector which constitutes the centre of a hegemonic formation, given that, by definition, such a centre will always elude us.¹⁵⁷

The discursive formation then becomes a **hegemonic formation**, or what Gramsci calls a historical “**bloc**” (with reference to Georges Sorel), does not refer to the specific logic of a single social force. A hegemonic formation then consists of ‘an ensemble of discursive moments’¹⁵⁸. Every formation, be it hegemonic, social, or discursive, is constructed through, what Laclau and Mouffe dubs ‘regularity in dispersion’¹⁵⁹ and are the outcomes of social practices that link together heterogeneous elements in changing historical discourses. These linkages are relational, differential, and contingent – they are open to rearticulation - which means that discursive formations are uneven and incomplete.¹⁶⁰ From this perspective, agents constitute formations through articulatory practices and are re-integrated into them, implying a complex and co-constitutive relation between agents and structure. The notion of a “formation” implies a totality which is distinguishable only by its exterior, its constitutive outside, Laclau and Mouffe argues. In such abstract terms, a relatively stable system of difference, is identified by being possible to cut out as a totality – from that which lies beyond. A formation signifies itself, it constitutes itself as a formation, by creating its own borders. Through a chain of equivalences, the formation constructs what lies beyond its own limits – as that which it is not.¹⁶¹

In the empirical analysis I shall endeavour to describe the process involved in the creation of these discursive formations and outline the regularities of the discourse on privatisation. With reference to my earlier discussion on hegemony as a practice of coalition building, I can show how a coalition or constellation within the discourse on privatisation comes to dominate, hold or “grip” the audience, as well as the sort of practices involved in creating a combination of consent, compliance, and coercion. In doing so, I have also been influenced by notions of “discourse coalitions” and

¹⁵⁷ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 142.

¹⁵⁸ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 142.

¹⁵⁹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 136.

¹⁶⁰ Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*, 55.

¹⁶¹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 143–44.

“hegemonic projects”, to recognise different actors and groups link together and are able to find common identification with certain demands empty signifiers, over a particular period of time (such as Thatcherism or workers’ movements). Like Steven Griggs and David Howarth, I interpret the concepts of discourse coalition and hegemonic project as more or less synonymous, while aware of the different intellectual traditions attached to both concepts.¹⁶² Whereas Maarten Hajer’s notion of a **discourse coalition** was inspired by Foucault and policy perspectives¹⁶³, the post-Marxist conception of a **hegemonic project** stems primarily from Gramsci, but has been further developed by Stuart Hall, Bob Jessop, Laclau and Mouffe, aforementioned Griggs and Howarth, among others¹⁶⁴. Because the term hegemonic “project” implies a conscious, intentional, and perhaps ideologically or politically motivated practice of coalition building with the aim of dominating a discursive formation, I have instead chosen to use the concept of a discourse coalition to describe the totalities of practices and linkages identified in the empirical analysis – since my analysis puts less emphasise on the intentionality that a project implies.

Summary

I have thus outlined my main ontological presuppositions and concepts with which I analyse my research problems, as articulated within a post-Marxist framework. What is more, these elements are linked together in an empirical inquiry which unfolds in the analysis. To provide an overall method of analysis of this hegemonic contestations around meaning making, domination, and interpretative privilege in public medialised debate, an analysis centred on the content, character and structure of the discourse is complemented by an approach attuned to the way such negotiations take place. To do that, I need to account for how and from where statements are made; from where they are spoken; on behalf of whom they speak and to whom they are directed. In short, I need to be able to identify the constitution of the positions and practices involved. That is the concern addressed in the following section.

¹⁶² Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*, 24.

¹⁶³ Maarten Hajer, ‘Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice: The Case of Acid Rain in Britain’, in *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, ed. by Frank Fischer and John Forester (Durham and London, 1993).

¹⁶⁴ See Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*; Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*; Bob Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State* (Cambridge, 2002); Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*; Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*.

Chapter 3

A Performative Reconceptualisation of “Intellectuals”

“The intellectual” has deep theoretical roots. The relationship between hegemony and the roles, functions, or positions of “intellectuals” have furthermore been the subject of many previous studies. “Intellectuals” have been theorised as traditional or organic¹⁶⁵; movement intellectuals¹⁶⁶; as a relatively free-floating intelligentsia or stratum¹⁶⁷; and a scholarly strata¹⁶⁸; identified in terms of creative capabilities¹⁶⁹, producing or distributing ideas, knowledge and culture¹⁷⁰; recognised as critical of power, opposing groups and standpoints - including their own¹⁷¹; capable of influencing public opinion¹⁷²; possessing knowledge beyond the ordinary¹⁷³; as vindicator of truth¹⁷⁴; as a

¹⁶⁵ Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura*; Antonio Gramsci, ‘The Intellectuals: The Formation of the Intellectuals’, in *An Anthology of Western Marxism: From Lukacs and Gramsci to Socialist-Feminism*, ed. by Roger S. Gottlieb (New York, 1989).

¹⁶⁶ Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach* (University Park, Pa, 1991).

¹⁶⁷ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*; Karl Mannheim, *Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology* (London, 1953); Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*; Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*; Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction: Studies in Modern Social Structure : With a Bibliographical Guide to the Study of Modern Society* (London, 1940).

¹⁶⁸ Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (New York, 1969); Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge, 2000); Pierre Bourdieu, ‘For a Scholarship with Commitment’, *Profession*, 2000, 40–45; Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (1988).

¹⁶⁹ Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford; New York, 2006).

¹⁷⁰ Ron Eyerman, *Between Culture and Politics: Intellectuals in Modern Society* (Oxford, 1994); Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (New York, 1960); Patrick Baert, *The Existentialist Moment: The Rise of Sartre as a Public Intellectual* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA, USA, 2015).

¹⁷¹ Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, 2nd edn (London, 1994); Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*.

¹⁷² Régis Debray, *Teachers, Writers, Celebrities: The Intellectuals of Modern France* (London, 1981).

¹⁷³ Frank Furedi, *Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone? Confronting 21st Century Philistinism* (London, 2004).

¹⁷⁴ Charles Wright Mills, *The Politics of Truth: Selected Writings of C. Wright Mills*, ed. by John H. Summers (2008); Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York, 1980).

figure with authority and autonomy¹⁷⁵; as societal outsiders¹⁷⁶; as a representative of a movement or standpoint¹⁷⁷; or as ‘a role or set of relations, a point of intersection between a reputation, a medium, a public, and an occasion’¹⁷⁸. Normative research would point to the supposed role but obvious decline of intellectuals in contemporary society¹⁷⁹. A tension in the possibly ways to perceive “intellectuals” as an actor’s category, as a role, or a position in a social order, has been developing in these previous theories. That tension boils down to the question of defining “who” counts as an intellectual in terms of personal identification, characteristics, capabilities, or recognition. This function of mediating ideology is introduced by Gramsci, who also analyses the position of intellectuals as that of moral and intellectual leadership. Starting from the notion that all are intellectual, Gramsci makes a distinction based on the activity, function, and position of different types of intellectuals, in relation to other actors, groups and forces. For Gramsci the construction of hegemonic forces depends on political initiatives, necessitating the role of the intellectual. The importance ascribed to the intellectual in Gramsci’s work must be seen in the relation to his widening of the concept of hegemony, as pervading all levels of society – of both state and civil society.¹⁸⁰ Thus, the roles intellectuals play in both areas of politics and culture – in the politicisation of civil society and socialisation of politics, may be studied through discourse analysis. While a non-essentialist perspective would refrain from presupposing the identity of those actors fulfilling the intellectual function at the time – too abstract accounts often instead fail to account for the concrete processes and practices involved in the performances of an intellectual function¹⁸¹.

Performing an intellectual function

Let us start with Gramsci. For him, an ‘organic intellectual’ was anything but a logical analyst of concepts. It was somebody engaged in the practice of articulation as the essential component in the construction of the hegemony of a group – union organizers, technicians of different sorts, journalists, and others were, for Gramsci, organic intellectuals, and he counterposed them to the traditional ‘great’ intellectuals. [...]

¹⁷⁵ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*; Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*.

¹⁷⁶ Dick Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger: Studies in Spokespersonship*, Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 99-2336824-6 ; 30 (London, 2000).

¹⁷⁷ Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*.

¹⁷⁸ Collini, *Absent Minds*, 493.

¹⁷⁹ See for instance Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York, 1987).

¹⁸⁰ Laclau, ‘REPLY’, 391–415; Howarth, ‘Power, Discourse, and Policy’, 309–35; Howarth, *Discourse*.

¹⁸¹ Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*.

This widened conception of the intellectual - which, as I have said, now comprised people such as union organizers, technicians, journalists and others, to whom we could easily add today other groups like social workers, film-makers, consciousness-raising groups, etc. – Gramsci called 'organic intellectuals'.

It is this widened notion of the intellectual role in the construction of hegemony that I had in mind when I wrote about a contingent universality which requires political mediation and relations of representation. Of course I never wrote anything so ludicrous as that the role of this intellectual mediation is one of logical analysis.¹⁸²

Laclau's approach to theorising the intellectual – not as a person or caste – but as an extension of the articulatory function, has potential. Laclau's reflection on intellectuals (1990) rest on a poststructuralist framework and thus differ from previously mentioned theories on the level of ontology. Instead of starting out from a group or actors – comprising the category of intellectuals, he builds on Gramsci's conceptualisation and speaks of the *function of intellectual activity*. Accordingly, the intellectual function is in short 'the practice of articulation'¹⁸³, which in turn involves a partial fixation of relational meaning and a structuring of social relations. The intellectual function, rather than the function of the intellectual, consists in the invention of languages as well as the creation and mediation of (organic) ideologies. Such practices and ideologies can unite otherwise fragmented and dispersed elements (demands, actors, cultural activities, and so on) into united, hegemonic formations. This means that the intellectual activity of articulation and mediation becomes central for discursive, hegemonic, and consequently social, change.

Thus, I make the deliberative assumption that all actors are intellectual in terms of personal qualities of cognition, but all actors do not perform an intellectual function in society. However, as I see it, the intellectual function of articulation and mediation of ideology is performed through contributions to public political discourse. To state as Laclau does, that the intellectual function is that of articulation – opens up yet again for a perspective where every articulating subject (performed by any individual or collective actor) performs an intellectual function. That means that all contributions to the public debate are performances of an intellectual function (rather than just the utterances of actors self-identifying as intellectuals). It is thereby detached from the identity of the performing actor and becomes instead a subject position contingently emerging in the moment of articulation. For example, the union representative is not an intellectual per se, but becomes the performer of an intellectual function whenever he/she contributes to the debate.

This is where I argue that the primary distinction should not be between intellectuals and non-intellectuals. Instead of presupposing a determining substance constituting an

¹⁸² Laclau, 'Constructing Universality', 286–88.

¹⁸³ Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, 195.

actor category called “intellectuals” I propose, therefore, a relational differentiation between subject positions performing this function. That is to say, a union representative channelling the demands of workers, negotiating with other actors, and engaging in the cultural activities of the movement, plays a different part in the struggle for interpretative privilege and public opinion than someone who claims to channel the demands of the people and engages in the debate of mass media. Although it might not be possible to speak of any objective, natural or mechanical functions or positions of intellectuals, the various positions of the enunciating subjects can be traced and analysed in statements. As Mannheim points out, ‘in every historical and political contribution it is possible to determine from what vantage point the objects were observed’¹⁸⁴. Similarly, I argue that it is possible to determine in every contribution to public debate through which intellectual subject position the statement was articulated.

The relational post-foundationalist perspective sketched above enables new approaches to chart and analyse public debates. By treating enunciated positions and subject positions within discourse as relationally constituted through articulatory practices, it is possible to make distinctions among the various positions taken up in a particular discourse. In my charting of the empirical material I have therefore been able to determine and categorise such various positions enunciated, articulated, and taken up in the debate. While flawed by its persisting emphasis on the intellectual individual (and by associated essentialist tendencies), the existing literature on intellectuals has been useful in terms of identifying the different types of subject positions that might be in play. With the classical literature on intellectuals, and the relational, post-structuralist theory in mind, I have been able to distinguish ideal types *among* various intellectual subject positions represented in the empirical material. To do this, I have focused on the theoretical concepts that proved to have resonance in the empirical material. It is clear that the notion of the intellectual incorporates a number of tensions. The primary axes that I have been able to identify in my own empirical material differ slightly, due to both context, theoretical framework, and ontological presuppositions. Below, I sketch out the most relevant dimensions of relative attachment versus relative un-attachment; particular or universal enunciations; aspects emotional appeal and public engagement; and lastly if the form of public engagement which manifest in various ways. These are the tensions that have shown relevance in the making of different intellectual ideal types in the empirical material.

Furthermore, my argument is that these performative practices *constitute* and not just characterise the different subject position of intellectuals. I have approached “the intellectual” as something performative, similar to the “doing” of gender. The intellectual, as I see it, is not a fixed set of traits, template or a universal role. One becomes an intellectual, not by earning a specific degree or living up to a set of characteristics, but by actively performing an intellectual function, possibly while

¹⁸⁴ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 111.

invoking certain recognised symbols and signs in certain contexts to engage, grip or persuade the audience. This rhymes well with the post-structuralist approach to discourse I build on, which is in turn marked by Austin's theories on the performative aspects of speech¹⁸⁵. By borrowing a phrase invented by philosophers of language and utilised in poststructuralist gender theory, I can move towards a conception of intellectuals centred on an active and temporary doing. In short, Austin argues that certain utterances include a performative dimension of doing: in saying "I do", at a wedding, for instance. Now Austin excludes the possibility for all utterances to be performative in *contrast* to constative utterances – to him, only the illocutionary act can be a "doing" where the utterance performs a doing ("I bet", "you are under arrest", "I surrender", "I apologise", "I quit!").¹⁸⁶ These speech acts seem to be regarded as acts of communication only.

Considering politics as a language system (and language as a political system), J. G. A. Pocock argues that verbalisation and communication are part of a performance – which in turn may be part of a series of performances. "Performativity" is used here in a slightly broader sense than the way Austin uses it, since Pocock sees even constative utterances as performative. To Pocock, all speech 'is performative in the sense that it does things to people. It redefines them in their own perceptions, in those of others and by restructuring the conceptual universes in which they are perceived.'¹⁸⁷ Verbalisations, he argues, constitute acts of power by informing people and modifying their perceptions, or by defining them in a way that changes how they are perceived by others. No speech-act is purely self-defining, as speech acts are performed in communication in another's universe. Because language is a relational system, redefinition of the one always effects the other. Communication is an act of speaking "to" someone, even if that listener is the speaker him-/herself, or an absent audience. Because language consists of already formed components and institutionalised structures, and because only a certain amount of words is available in that system, 'the words that perform my acts are not my own'¹⁸⁸. Performance require context, Pocock asserts. One statement can invoke a 'whole world of reference structures'¹⁸⁹, 'set of resonances whose subversive tremors may be felt at the heart of the system'¹⁹⁰. Language may communicate both less and more than what the subject intends, as there is no immediate link between thought and speech, but always a moment of mediation just as it is impossible to prevent the listener from hearing (or re-using) those words from another perspective. Words then, are institutionalised, used by various individuals, in divergent ways, and only borrowed by an actor to perform a certain speech-act. Because

¹⁸⁵ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

¹⁸⁶ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

¹⁸⁷ John GA Pocock, 'Verbalizing a Political Act: Toward a Politics of Speech', *Political Theory*, 1/1 (1973), 41.

¹⁸⁸ Pocock, 'Verbalizing a Political Act', 33.

¹⁸⁹ Pocock, 'Verbalizing a Political Act', 30.

¹⁹⁰ Pocock, 'Verbalizing a Political Act', 42.

of this institutionalisation, a speaking subject's language becomes available to the audience to reply or refute. Successful communication or debate builds on a continuity between statements – reply and counter reply – but a speaking subject cannot fully control the language.

Pocock's reasoning also resonates with notion of hegemony, domination and interpretation discussed in chapter 2:

The two-way character of communication will be entirely lost when there are those who have the meaning of their words decided entirely for them, and reply to the speech acts of those in command of the language¹⁹¹

In other words, agenda setting is central to the form and function of debates. The force, actor, or coalition that manages to set the agenda of the debate forces others to engage in the debate and verbalize experiences in terms that are already set, and thus unwittingly perhaps recreate the discourse of the opposition. Language can imprison both the oppressed and the oppressor: by “locking” a subject in a position that they cannot redefine or escape from, or treating the subjects as a thing, denouncing it, or by destroying the means of its speech acts. To totally imprison a subject in a certain category, or subject position, is only possible if no alternatives exists – if I am defined, even in my own perception, in terms set by others. By performing a speech-act that denies the legitimacy of another's contribution, it is possible to reduce others freedom of action and force them to abdicate, confess or conform in order to reply. To find a ‘way out of the role assigned which language assigns me’ I may assign ‘to you a role in the implementation of the language structure’¹⁹² – that of manipulation in the leader or mediator.

With the help of Pocock and Derrida, I would like to stretch Austin's idea of performativity a little further, and argue that all saying is doing. To link together elements in discourse, to reiterate and articulate meaningful statements, is to perform, in this case, an intellectual function. In a political medialised debate, such as the debate on privatisation, all utterances do something, as arguments or posits that are part of an active struggle for or against privatisation. Through the course of an argument, we position ourselves in relation to those subject positions and meaningful elements that are discursively available around us. Even constative, assertive, or descriptive utterances are part of a rhetorical practice, building an ethos, a mode of persuasion or an act to inform the reader of the truth one claims to hold. All contributions to the debate involves a signature, and ‘the signature invents the signer.’¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Pocock, ‘Verbalizing a Political Act’, 36.

¹⁹² Pocock, ‘Verbalizing a Political Act’, 42.

¹⁹³ Jacques Derrida, ‘Declarations of Independence’, *New Political Science*, 7/1 (1986), 10.

In signing, [...] representativity is fully legitimated only by the signature, [...], I have the right to sign, in truth I will already have had it since I was able to give it to myself. I will have given myself a name and an "ability" or a "power," understood in the sense of power- or ability-to-sign by delegation of signature. [...] There was no signer, by right, before the text [...] which itself remains the producer and guarantor of its own signature.¹⁹⁴

The utterance has a source, an explicit signature, or an implicit enunciated position of a subject (which is not necessarily the same as an individual person, as the following section explains). The debate requires the speaker to engage, even if the speaker is merely called upon to explain a situation and enlighten the audience. Utterances thus have a constitutive aspect: in speaking we are doing activities of invention; positioning; negotiations of change and continuities; establishing truths and guidelines for veridiction; contesting or supporting hegemonic practices and regimes; and above all (re)iterating and contributing to existing systems of meaning. Because "the intellectual" is not a set role, but a function that is temporarily performed in an utterance within a fluid discourse, it is an ongoing performance by many different speakers. These speakers are "doing" or performing an intellectual function, by articulation in public debate and in the process taking up enunciated positions and subject positions.

Enunciate positions and subject positions

The subject emerges where there is dislocation; at the point at which things are still at stake, where meanings and identities are loosened from their structural subject positions.¹⁹⁵

The starting point for my reconceptualisation of intellectuals is articulations of subject positions rather than actors and their roles – making the enunciate position the main focus in distinguishing the type of intellectual subject positions constituted in the debate. If the intellectual function is that of articulation and mediation, then who or what performs that function is necessarily intellectual – then again 'distinctions have to be made'¹⁹⁶, which is why this initial definition of the intellectual function or position is to be confronted with an empirical material in an attempt to sort out different ideal types of intellectual subject position and their relation to hegemonic practices.

¹⁹⁴ Derrida, 'Declarations of Independence', 10.

¹⁹⁵ Norval, 'The Things We Do with Words-Contemporary Approaches to the Analysis of Ideology', 329.

¹⁹⁶ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 307.

Now, the difference between subjectivity or agency and **subject positions** within poststructuralist discourse theory, is that the latter refers to the place from which we act or speak, that is, the position of enunciation that subjects can occupy in a discourse, while the former refers to a notion of ‘subjectivity in which subjects act or decide’¹⁹⁷ In moments of dislocation, e.g. a crisis which disrupts the existing order or routinized practices, the subjects are compelled to go through a process of identification anew, enabling a subject to identify differently.¹⁹⁸ Thus, political conduct begins when ‘we are forced to make decisions in situations which have as yet not been subjected to regulation.’¹⁹⁹ Or as Laclau notably asserts; ‘the subject is nothing but this distance between the undecidable structure and the decision’²⁰⁰. Laclau’s early reduction of the subject to subject positions has been criticised most notably by Slavoj Žižek for repeating structuralist mistakes. To understand subjectivities, Žižek makes use of Jacques Lacan’s notion of “the lack”²⁰¹, and his psychoanalytical intervention is what Howarth and Jason Glynos later incorporate into their “logics-approach”²⁰². With that said, neither identification nor subjectivities are of any immediate concern in my own project of reconceptualising the intellectual as a function performed by a range of subject positions, from which I attempt to construct an overarching typology – which is why I focus on subject positions.

The subject positions of social agents are constituted and constructed in, for example, political argumentation, with regard both to the speaker and the addressee. For instance, when the Berlin wall fell in 1989 (symbolically) leftist intellectuals (at least Swedish) had to scramble to reassert their position and relations of identification²⁰³. This means that an actor is not glued to a single subject position, but may articulate different subject positions in different statements. Unlike a purely structuralist or voluntarist notion, this approach acknowledges both actors’ active identification and the regulating aspects of discourse – rendering only certain subject positions available. There is a similarity in the nature of the constitution of subject positions and the rhetorical situations, which I return to in the next section. Subject positions and enunciated positions, are constituted somewhere in the distance between the speaker

¹⁹⁷ Howarth, ‘Power, Discourse, and Policy’, 314.

¹⁹⁸ Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*; Howarth, ‘Power, Discourse, and Policy’, 309–35. Such dislocations may be of various degree, dimensions or extent and affect only a single subject in everyday interpellation – or entire social formations. It is the moment of dislocations that opens up an otherwise relatively closed structure, thereby allowing actors/subjects to actively identify and choose in which ways to act.

¹⁹⁹ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 102.

²⁰⁰ Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, 30.

²⁰¹ Slavoj Žižek, ‘Beyond Discourse-Analysis’, in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, by Ernesto Laclau, Phronesis (London), 99-1834809-7 (London, 1990).

²⁰² Glynos and Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*.

²⁰³ Kjell Östberg, ‘Radikaliseringssvågor i Sverige: Rytm och allianser i den sociala kampen’, *Arbetshistoria*, 1–2, 2005, 14–21.

and the listener. In short, this means that subject positions only exist in-between – as they are relationally constituted.

With reference to Hall and du Gay (1996), the process from subject to subject position resides in a point of suture between the discursive practices and the production of subjectivities. This is a moment of identity: a temporary attachment to subject positions made available by discursive practices, through a successful articulation that links, joins or attaches the subject to positions in the existing structure of meaning (i.e. discourse). That is to say, as an individual subject (actor or agent) I am obliged to take up a meaningful position, a representation (constructed across a lack from the place of the “other”), in relation to other elements of discourse. By being “hailed” (or interpellated) into place as a social subject of a particular discourse, I have the option of either identifying or dis-identifying with available identities (when addressed with “Hey man!”, binary toilet signs, “Ladies and gentlemen”, and so on). By a process of identification, I am constructed as a subject that can be rearticulated and identified as a meaningful element in the surrounding discourse.²⁰⁴ In any instance before the moment of voluntary or involuntary relational positioning of subjects, the subject, or actor, is simply not meaningful in relation to other positions/elements of discourse. In a discourse-analytical sense, then, identity only exists momentarily through active choices between available positions.

In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, for instance, Foucault treats the subject as little more than an enunciative position within a discursive formation from which human agents can speak and pronounce with authority (Foucault, 1972).²⁰⁵

David Howarth more or less equates subject positions with enunciative positions, in distinguishing only between ‘subject positions within a discourse – places of enunciation that subjects can occupy in speaking and acting’²⁰⁶ and the subjectivity in which subjects act or decide. In the analytical process of this project, I found it useful to make even further distinctions and differentiate between subject positions and Foucault’s notion of enunciate positions – in an interpretation that diverts from Howarth’s.

Enunciated positions, as theorised by Michel Foucault, are positions that are occupied by the speaker, through active, rhetorical acts in *to* and *on behalf of whom* arguments are uttered. Instead of looking at the content of what is said, i.e. the intervention in itself, studying the “enunciate” position makes it possible to analyse from where a statement is spoken.²⁰⁷ While the enunciative subject is more than the individual who

²⁰⁴ Stuart Hall, ‘Who Needs “Identity”?’ in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif, 1996), 5–6.

²⁰⁵ Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 227.

²⁰⁶ Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 272.

²⁰⁷ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

wrote or spoke the words, and not necessarily equal to the author, it can be only occupied by the author or authors of the formulation. An enunciated position is on the one hand subjective and denotes on the speaker's own (or others) positioning, in relation to other subject positions. On the other hand, in the sense that the articulation abides to the rules of the game, to be rendered meaningful in relation to other elements in a specific discourse, an enunciated position must resonate with other articulations. The position of the enunciating subject is:

determined by the prior existence of a number of effective operations that need not have been performed by one and the same individual (he who is speaking now), but which rightfully belong to the enunciating subject, which are at his disposal, and of which he may avail himself when necessary. The subject of such a statement will be defined by these requisites and possibilities taken together [...] So the subject of the statement should not be regarded as identical with the author of the formulation — either in substance, or in function. [...] It is a particular, vacant place that may in fact be filled by different individuals; but, instead of being defined once and for all, and maintaining itself as such throughout a text, a book, or an oeuvre, this place varies — or rather it is variable enough to be able either to persevere, unchanging, through several sentences, or to alter with each one [...] If a proposition, a sentence, a group of signs can be called 'state-ment', [...] it is because the position of the subject can be assigned. To describe a formulation qua statement does not consist in analysing the relations between the author and what he says (or wanted to say, or said without wanting to); but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it.²⁰⁸

Hence, the enunciating subjects are constituted through the particular discourse at hand. In this case, I use the notion of enunciation to analyse the performances of “the intellectual”. While enunciated positions are always occupied by and refers back the speaker as a particular or universal representation of an “I”, “me” or “we” of various qualities, character or authority, the subject position is never an “I” but always discursively attainable as relationally defined and can be inhabited and ascribed to *many* actors, just as one actor can inhabit various subject positions simultaneously. Subject positions are always positions of *subjects*, never of a personal characteristic or object, but not necessarily or automatically occupied by the individual speaker from where the argument originates. A speaker or writer can actively attempt to co-constitute, articulate, take up or move between various subject positions and can thus momentarily attach him/herself, or others, to certain subject positions (such as “expert”, “politician”, “journalist”, “union leader”, “human”, et cetera) in the course of an argument. Utilising subject positions becomes a way of understanding the structuring of the social. With a relational categorisation based on differences and resemblances among various subjects and their relational positions, we are able to comprehend the world around us. Since

²⁰⁸ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 106–7.

post-structuralist discourse theory can and has been criticized for disregarding individual agency, the attention to enunciated positions makes for an analytical amendment in an attempt to take those shortcomings into consideration without subscribing to a completely voluntarist account.

Attachment

Relative attachment, or rather, un-attachment represents the perhaps most controversial dimension in the theories of intellectuals. Some of the most influential work on intellectuals is that of Karl Mannheim, who's most famous concept of the "relatively un-attached", "uncommitted" or "free-floating" intellectuals is oft cited and simplified by omitting the adverb "relatively".²⁰⁹ To Mannheim, relatively unattached intellectuals are those uncommitted to the interest of organisations, institutions, nations or socio-economic groups; with a perspective that is characteristically detached, ever changing and independent of their social situation or class interest. He differentiates types of intellectuals based on performance (manual or intellectual), occupation (free professions or paid vocations) and education (the educated, the uneducated – specifically trained or generally cultivated). By virtue of a relative unattachment to the relations of production, the intellectual functions to engage in the polarisation and safeguard the world of thought from the factional interests in capitalist societies; or mediate between political forces and create a political synthesis of demands and perspectives.²¹⁰ In Gramsci's analysis, a description which resembles Mannheim's perspective in the relatively un-attached intellectuals can be found in the description of the "traditional" intellectual, exemplified as the ecclesiastic who see themselves as independent of class interests, but whose function is to reproduce the hegemony of the dominant class. Of course, in contrast to this traditional intellectual of a former historical bloc, Gramsci poses the "organic" intellectual of the modern world. Organic intellectuals are formed through and organically bound to a specific class, attached to its particular interests, experiences and demands which they articulate in political terms.²¹¹

For my own analysis, I have translated this theory of "relative un-attachment" to a post-foundationalist approach. "Attachment" thus becomes a matter of articulated positioning, rather than the social position of the intellectual as uncommitted to the interest of organisations and institutions. That is to say, how the enunciated position is linked up in the context of articulation - i.e. in relation to a party, organisation, institution et cetera, determines the relative attachment of the enunciated position. For instance; a contribution to the debate from an actor speaking on behalf of a corporation;

²⁰⁹ Cf. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*, 105–6.

²¹⁰ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*.

²¹¹ Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura*.

articulating demands on behalf of that organisation; demands in the interest of a client or represented party, may be considered to be an enunciation of a relatively “attached” subject position. Equally, a statement or contribution in the debate where no attachment to other particular positions, interests, or actors, must be considered as relatively un-attached position of enunciation. This dimension includes articulated disciplinal or vocational attachment or, in contrast, extra-disciplinary non-partisan engagement.

The particular versus the universal

A distinction between the broad cultivated intellectual and the specialised, technical expert, resurfaces in many theories. In Gramsci, this distinction is based on qualitative difference of the intellectual activities, where ‘creators of the various sciences, philosophy, art’²¹² constitute the highest level and ‘humble “administrators” and divulgators of pre-existing, traditional, accumulated intellectual wealth’²¹³ can be found at the lowest level. Specialisation is a recurring theme (and threat) in both Gramsci, Foucault, and Bourdieu.²¹⁴ Foucault’s distinction between specific intellectuals and universal intellectuals is based on context and socio-historical circumstances. The role of the universal intellectual is described as typical for the old left and defined as the bearer and spokesperson or individualisation of the universal - of truth, justice, and the collective consciousness, through moral, theoretical, and political engagement. This universal, free subject (exemplified as the writer) is compared to the more contemporary role of the intellectual in specific sectors in service of the state or capital (university, hospital, civil services et cetera). Whereas the universal intellectual takes part of, or even organises, general discourse, the specific “merely competent” intellectual is limited to particular sectors. The function of the universal intellectual is political, whereas the function of the specific intellectual is strategic - speaking the truth in service of state or capital. If the universal intellectual is traced back to the jurist and the writer, the specific intellectual derives from the expert. The universal intellectual can be seen as the bearer of universal values whose struggle against injustice resonates across time and space, it functions as a point of reference and identification for the masses; while the specific intellectual has a strategic position.²¹⁵

²¹² Gramsci, ‘The Intellectuals: The Formation of the Intellectuals’, 119. Cf. Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l’organizzazione della cultura*, 10.

²¹³ Gramsci, ‘The Intellectuals: The Formation of the Intellectuals’, 119. Cf. Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l’organizzazione della cultura*, 10.

²¹⁴ Michel Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York, 1980), 109–33; Bourdieu, ‘For a Scholarship with Commitment’, 40–45; Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l’organizzazione della cultura*.

²¹⁵ Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, 109–33.

Now, to make use of these notions in my own theorising, I must refrain from ascribing these characteristics to individual persons and instead look to how positions of enunciating subjects are constructed as relatively universal or particular. I say relatively, again, for I see this as a matter of relational configuration, or degree. That is to say, to speak on behalf of “I”, “me” or a limited field of experiences or expertise, can be recognised as an enunciation from a relatively particular position. In comparison, to speak on behalf of a general or universal standpoint, a “we” that takes up the representation of a universal or totalising signification can be regarded as an enunciation of a relatively universal position. “The former represents himself, in him the representer and the represented are one”²¹⁶, you could say. Equally, the political demands made in the debate can also be positioned along the same scale. As recognised from the post-Marxist theory of hegemony, when a particular element of discourse takes up the representation of a range of disparate elements (signifiers, demands, subject positions), this is what Laclau would call a hegemonic practice.

The appeal to the audience must also be taken into consideration. If the enunciation is aimed at a situated, particular, relatively narrow audience – or a broader general public. Indeed, the context of articulation – whether public or field specific: if the speaker is called upon to explain, enlighten and interpret a specific occurrence or situation; acts in formal representation; or if the speaker’s authority is more or less independent of context and can move between subjects and contexts without losing legitimacy, belongs to this particular-universal dimension. Although some forms of arguments are attainable only for an audience surpassing certain thresholds (alternative political journals for instance) while others are available to broader audiences in relatively open and less restricted or exclusive forms and fora of cultural and political articulation (mass media), they individual statements may still vary independently in appeal.

Forms of Engagement and Appeal

Although I strive to distance myself from the study of personal characteristics or career trajectories, there are substantial parts in the earlier theories of intellectuals that can nevertheless tell us something about what sort of practices and strategies shape, make and distinguish the appeal and engagement of different types of intellectuals. Mannheim makes a distinction between different types of intellectuals based on qualities and roles. He differentiates between those intellectuals that are sensitive towards antagonistic views of the world through critical, empathetic, sympathetic qualities – and those who are self-centred and manipulative. The roles of intellectuals also vary, as they may act as catalysts for, or mediators of, public opinion, interests, and ideas. Critical and cultural intellectuals use insights beyond any formal teaching process, gained through personal, emotional, and spiritual experiences, which have to

²¹⁶ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 305.

be communicated in a different way than the knowledge used by experts and specialists, which is instead specific for a particular field, teachable and repetitive.²¹⁷

Rather than seeing these aspects as characteristics of an individual intellectual person, I make use of these notions in terms of modes of persuasion and rhetorical strategies. Hence, passionate engagement, affective appeals and emancipation are treated as rhetorical aspects of utterances in the debate. This means that seemingly informative and technical arguments must be analysed as they may still function as mediations of ideology, even if the style of argumentation and persuasion is less affective. The concerns, arguments and demands articulated may differ both in terms of range (particular or universal) and character (instrumental, technical, rational, humanist, aesthetical, moral, or ethico-political, and so on). Part of the analysis has been to categorise and typologies the various intellectual subject positions articulated and correlate dimensions of the enunciated positions with the forms of engagement and appeal.

In short, the types of subject positions and enunciated positions uttered and inhabited in the debate, can be distinguished from one another. Based on differences in particularism, universalism and attachment of an enunciated position, concern, and appeal, and in combination with various forms of engagement, ideal types of the performance of an intellectual function, that correspond to different forms of critical engagement and public appeal, can be distinguished. In the process of articulating, mediation of ideology, negotiation and demand-making – in providing a way of speaking about things like “privatisation” and render them meaningful and comprehensible in relation to other elements of discourse – utterances can be aimed at a broader audience; vindicate universal values through a passionate and engaging manner; employ an emotional mode of persuasion; express feelings as well as reason in public proclamations; or engage in a rational, field-specific and instrumental manner. How I analyse, categorise, and examine the performative “doings” of utterances in the debate, articulated in the hegemonic struggle around “privatisation” in the public, medialized debate, will be explained in the following section.

Towards rhetorical political discourse analysis

This research project is situated within the established paradigm of post-structuralist discourse theory. The difference between this approach and other discourse-centred perspectives have been mentioned in chapter 2. It is safe to say that one of the most significant differences between post-Marxist discourse theory and for instance Critical Discourse Theory, is the lack of a concrete set of methodological tools and techniques.

²¹⁷ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*.

While the discourse analysis school of Laclau and Mouffe involves great theoretical and ontological advances it lacks in methodological answers. Thus, other poststructuralist discourse analysts have influenced my methodological approach in search for methods that are applicable within the existing framework. Although post-Marxist thinkers are making methodological progresses based on those theories, for this type of material I prefer the practical approach in the study of political rhetoric.²¹⁸ Instead, like others of this paradigm²¹⁹, I have turned to a rhetorical approach. In rhetorical political analysis the objects of analysis of course differ, but generally consists of existing and “already” produced material, like speeches, policy documents or meeting minutes, produced for, by and in particular rhetorical situations

In my analysis, I have studied utterances in related to privatisation in medialised public debate. To analyse the shifts in ways of defining and speaking of privatisation, in a relational setting of counter-concepts and political positionings, I have looked at how political demands for (increased or decreased) privatisation are framed. With inspiration from previously mentioned works of the so-called Essex school of discourse theory, I have paid attention to what use is made of the politics of equivalence and difference in order to be able to map out the relations made between subject positions, political positions, relational definitions between discursive elements and attempts at fixation of meaning in the discourse on privatisation. In this process, political lines of demarcation are drawn between political forces. As described in Laclau’s *On Populist Reason* (2005), the construction of **political frontiers** that divide social fields into opposed camps, between the people and the state for instance, operate through the drawing of equivalences between disparate elements, such as “people”, “rights”, “freedom” and “the common man” against a common enemy, like “the state” or “social democracy”, for instance. It can also be expressed in the way that a group or subject position opposed to, let us say, state regulation in policies concerning university education, are linked together in a broader coalition against state regulation per se. This way, particular demands can be linked together forming an **equivalential chain** where each demand represents not only itself but the totality of the other demands. Thus, one single demand can be the tip of an iceberg symbolising a dispersion of unformulated social demands. The logic of **difference** involves instead the disarticulation of equivalents in the chain of demands and identities. This may include a differential

²¹⁸ I also refrain from Glynos’ and Howarth’s logics approach because it provides a framework that seemed too rigid and inflexible for my own project. While Glynos and Howarth focus on social, political and fantasmatic logics, any cultural logics are, from a sociological perspective, blatantly lacking. And, as I have already explained, this is a dissertation less focused on what fantasmatic narratives could possibly cause individuals to identify with one fantasy or the other – as questions of enjoyment and identification lies beyond the scope of this research project. Cf. Glynos and Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*.

²¹⁹ Norval, ‘The Things We Do with Words-Contemporary Approaches to the Analysis of Ideology’, 313–346; Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*.

incorporation of demands to accommodate difference (as in the practices of a dominant regime, for instance).²²⁰

Investigated in this study, are the practices of expressing beliefs, thoughts, ideas, and concepts as arguments uttered in a debate. In the process, those beliefs, concepts and so on are turned into elements of contestability within the discourse. By looking at argumentative practices (understood as articulations which link together diverse elements of discourse), my analysis captures some of the attempts to (re)define and contest existing conceptual chains and frameworks within the discourse on privatisation. I examine the struggles around “privatisation” in the public medialised discourse. To see how common sense is (trans-)formed, I observe the dissemination of concepts and how they move through institutions (in this case media); are emphasised, de-emphasised, redefined, and redeployed. To do this, I start out with a presumption that those arguments are uttered and enacted on the basis of prior institutionalised systems of meaning, i.e. discourses, which ‘draws attention to political action as a distinct kind of creative, intellectual and pragmatic activity’²²¹.

Strategies and styles of argumentation

The type of argument within the rhetorical situation²²², i.e. the debate on privatisation, can be difficult to identify. So too can the contents of arguments, since the actual subject debated is not always clear. An opinion piece does not always include specific political demands or attempt to move the reader to action, while a review of a book or play might express precisely that. The subject under dispute is itself established through argumentative struggles, where forces compete to fixate and establish the point of dispute. This struggle of how “privatisation” as an element under contestation is negotiated into a relatively stable and naturalised element, is part of what I set out to examine. In reading, coding, and analysing the empirical material, I have borrowed some of the techniques from rhetorical approach to discourse theory, as proposed by political scientists and theorists like Herbert Gottweis and Finlayson. The inspiration for this project is still mainly powered by the Essex School of post-structuralist discourse theory, whose methodological transparency can be debated:

A question that often arises with respect to our approach concerns the identification of relevant rhetorical figures or theoretical concepts that constitute an explanatory chain. How do we know what counts in reality as an empty signifier, or a relevant metaphor or metonym? As against subsumptive logics, which are invariably built-upon a spurious logic of scientific operationalization that sets out the necessary and sufficient conditions

²²⁰ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*.

²²¹ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 560.

²²² The rhetorical situation concerns the relations between addresser, addressee and topic.

for ‘applying’ a concept to an object, we favour an approach based on intuition, theoretical expertise and the method of articulation. This means that the researching subject has to immerse herself in a given discursive field consisting of texts, documents, interviews, and social practices, before drawing on her theoretical expertise to make particular judgements as to whether something counts as an “x”: Is “x” a metaphor, logic of equivalence, or an empty signifier? She then has to decide upon its overall import for the problem investigated. Such theoretical expertise is acquired by learning and using the specific language games which forms the grammar of the researcher’s theoretical approach.²²³

Although I sympathise with this approach, it does not give us many concrete tools for interpretation of an empirical material. Since I attempt to analyse ‘beliefs in contradiction with each other’²²⁴, disputes over political ‘decisions and courses of action’²²⁵, I find the rhetorical political analysis (RPA) presented Finlayson, useful to account for the specificities of political reasoning and argumentation, as RPA allegedly:

broadens our horizons as to the ‘rationalities’ on which politics is based, extending them into areas that involve the affective, the traditional, the figurative and the poetic and which require us to examine the multiple influences on styles and strategies of political argument.²²⁶

In this perspective, familiar theoretical concepts like narrative, tradition and rules are utilised to understand political argumentation. The way we order our statements, is what Finlayson and Gottweis call **narratives**. A narrative is a type of organising perspective or mode of explanation, that organises enunciations and give them an order, structure, coherence, fullness, or closure. ‘Narratives bring elements of meaning, clarity, stability, and order into what usually tends to be the complicated and contradictory world of politics’²²⁷, as Gottweis puts it. For instance, occurrences can be constructed as events, naturalised in a sequence of cause and effect through presenting them in an order of beginning, middle and end. Ordering and simplifying events in a certain way may imply the presence of certain kinds of characters, events, and actors, ‘tacitly constructing a particular version of “how we got here” and of where we are going’²²⁸, according to Finlayson. Narratives can either be specific, concern a particular event; or more broad and subtle – such as a narrative of the bureaucratic welfare state, crisis, or

²²³ Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*.

²²⁴ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 552.

²²⁵ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 552.

²²⁶ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 560.

²²⁷ Herbert Gottweis, ‘Political Rhetoric and Stem Cell Policy’, in *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice*, ed. by Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis (Durham, [N.C.] USA, 2012), 221.

²²⁸ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 557.

change. Or, as I have found in my empirical material, an historical narrative can help to frame a demand and legitimise certain claims. Gottweis further argues that various kinds of narratives are embedded in every culture, wherefore it is possible for its members to use them to transmit messages, even if an actor cannot freely choose or deploy a completely random narrative. A speaker is confined by the ‘given discursive possibilities [that] describe the large reservoir of narratives, which can be mobilized for political purposes’²²⁹. Statements can thus be ordered to create a narrative acceptable by the different intended addressees.

The contingent, individually reproduced (but collectively co-constituted) inherited beliefs which colour peoples’ actions can be conceptualised as practices of “tradition”. Appealing to such traditions can be a strategy for justification, whether it is conscious or not. In moments where antagonistic traditions are dislodged or clash with narratives – when neither can be taken for granted, contestation over meaning and interpretation usually arise. That is where the argument becomes central. Those moments where convention is suspended or called into question – or in terms closer to poststructuralist discourse theory: moments of dislocation, articulatory practices like arguments serve to create or maintain the meaning of concepts.²³⁰

When studying an utterance, I have looked to several points of the argumentation. One such aspect is the “facts” of an argument, what “the case” is, what happened or “if” a thing is, as in “this has been privatised”, for instance. Another aspect concerns *the naming* of things, through negative or positive connotations or simply by defining what a thing “is”, i.e. what is meant by “privatisation”. Arguments of quality focus on “what” kind of thing it is, e.g. “state ownership is morally indefensible”.²³¹ Yet another aspect concerns whether an issue should be argued about at all. Arguments of place thus attempt to include or exclude certain issues of the agenda before the argument has even begun, and can thus be understood as attempts to border in or expand a discourse. Regarding the content of an argument, Finlayson argues that it is crucial to study how focus is directed to highlight some things and tone down others. For instance, in an utterance or text on a certain issue, such as privatisation of a specific public-sector service, certain aspects will be emphasised or de-emphasised, defined and redefined in particular ways, while relating to a broader universal context of political discourse. Connections between the particular and universal domains/levels may be established implying some sort of commonality (what I call a hegemonic practice and will return to in the next chapter) or possibly broken up in an attempt to disestablish such a link in a counter hegemonic effort. Again, an argument for privatisation of a particular service may be justified by the need for public sector cut-backs, individual freedom or the right to private property. Connecting an argument or notion to deeper political

²²⁹ Gottweis, ‘Political Rhetoric and Stem Cell Policy’, 221.

²³⁰ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 552.

²³¹ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 554.

ideologies and naturalising those connections is fundamental to political dispute. Whereas Finlayson warns that:

[...] contemporary conditions may make this ever harder yet ever more necessary as the network of governance comes to involve so many 'particular' interests (private providers, professional experts, consultants and policy entrepreneurs) that connections to the 'universal' domain become stretched thin, making policy harder to explain and legitimate to those who are not specialists.²³²

I treat this as a subject of study in relation to intellectual functions and positions. Rather than assuming that connections to the universal are 'stretched thin' - I identify and analyse these practices in terms of form and content. Do such hegemonic universalising practices break the rules of engagement or are they part and parcel of certain rhetorical situations?

Yet another subject of concern in RPA that is useful for my analysis is to recognise how an articulation is uttered in and adapted to a situation that is part of a history of previous speech acts. Thus, rhetorical style or **genre** as a manifest of historically-shaped, institutionalised, forms of talk can be identified and analysed in the more general generic features of political discourse. These styles may be observed as more distinct ritual moments or more discrete conventions as institutional codes. Authority may be exercised through stylistic features such as clarity or an actual lack of style, rhetorical tropes, or emotion, which allows formality to obscure facts and claims - as demands are presented as descriptions.²³³ This stylistic feature might be constitutional for the performance of the intellectual function through certain types of subject positions.

To increase the 'persuasive force of our arguments'²³⁴, a speaker may invoke common opinions and appeal to 'popularities' to relate a point of view to the popular opinion, Quentin Skinner tells us. To accommodate an argument to the audience and their understanding, a speaker thus makes use of generally accepted assumptions, widely shared beliefs, or the prejudices of the hearer.²³⁵ To examine and identify ways of appeal such as the sets of **commonplaces**, or the common-sense values accepted as justifications in argumentation – what they are and how they are used: this is the purpose of a rhetorical political analysis. Finlayson suggests that frameworks of arguments may be shaped by different sets of commonplaces. How commonplaces become accepted and employed is left for the researcher to find out. As I set out to understand how a particular political perspective can become common sense, the idea of commonplaces and how to spot them has proved useful. Commonplaces are connected to the persuasive appeal of an utterance, which in rhetoric is categorised into three main types:

²³² Finlayson, 'From Beliefs to Arguments', 555.

²³³ Finlayson, 'From Beliefs to Arguments', 556.

²³⁴ Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge; New York, 1996), 116.

²³⁵ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, 111–20.

ethos, *pathos*, and *logos*. These analytical categories may be useful in determining what sort of strategy a speaker is using and whether a certain mode of appeal is representative for certain subject positions. The logical justification tactics, quasi-logical arguments or enthymemes of **logos** may be practiced to varying degrees among actors in the debate. *Logos* signifies a type of persuasion through argument in itself, by a process that seemingly proves the true state of things. This is usually an appeal to reason by means of rational argumentation, deduction, or induction.²³⁶ Quasi-logical arguments such as enthymemes are incomplete arguments that rely on commonplace pre-conceptions. An enthymeme, where ‘the premises are generally no more than probable’²³⁷, provides only parts of a syllogism, relying on the audience to supply the missing premise(s). In other words, an *enthymeme* rests on (de)activation of commonplaces and ‘the construction or validation of a premise from which further deductions can logically follow’²³⁸. Here is an example from the empirical material:

The nursery loses the municipal subsidies, the economy gets worse and it becomes harder for the staff to do a good job, which leads to more children swapping nursery. [...] Deterioration into slum and segregation of the child care system, schools and elderly care may be the result of the new competitive situation.²³⁹

The missing premise in the argument above is that a competitive child-care system necessarily entails the creation of winners and losers, with privileged children ending up in ‘winner’ institutions and disadvantaged children ending up in ‘loser’ institutions. The argument relies on the audience to make this connection between competition and segregation through a commonplace of competition-induced inequality; a premise not accounted for in the argument itself.

Ethos refers to the character or authority of the speaker. As Gottweis points out in his revival of Aristoteles, *ethos* does not refer to an internal quality, but ‘is a procedural phenomenon that comes into existence in action; it is a discursive praxis that is based on exchange and interaction and depends on the perception of audiences’²⁴⁰. An articulation asserting the expertise, formal qualifications or experience of a speaker may imply authority over a specific field. Appeals towards sympathy and identification with a speaker, a feat associated with the charisma of a speaker, can be the means for an intellectual to speak on behalf of “the common man” or posit him/herself on the same side as “the people” against bureaucracy or party politicians, for instance. This type of *ethos* on the other hand may imply a more universal authority instead of a particular, attached, field specific expertise. On the subject of **pathos**, Finlayson points out that an

²³⁶ Gottweis, ‘Rhetoric in Policy Making: Between Logos, Ethos, and Pathos’, 237–50.

²³⁷ Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, 112.

²³⁸ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 558.

²³⁹ Ann-Charlotte Alstadt and Conny Malmqvist, ‘Valfrihet i Vaxholm’, *Thm.*, 1992/4 (1992), 12.

²⁴⁰ Gottweis, ‘Rhetoric in Policy Making: Between Logos, Ethos, and Pathos’, 242.

appeal with or to emotion ‘is probably central to any appeal that seeks to motivate others to act’²⁴¹, but does not develop this argument any further. Gottweis demonstrates the analysis of pathos in policy analysis as a focus on the emotions implemented in discourse. Here, emotions function as vehicles of argumentation for the speaking subject. To mobilise an audience against an inimical position, a speaker can employ a strategy that emphasises the emotions of the audience. However, emotions and the language of passion should be considered as discursive and rhetorical practices, in the shape of communicative performances and modes of argumentation – rather than things carried by the vehicle of rhetoric.²⁴² Finlayson questions whether appeals to emotion are more likely to be found in a public political discourse rather than in closed, internal political debates.²⁴³ I will show how pathos is employed within the local, public political discourse which constitutes the study’s empirical material. All of these concepts have been used in the coding scheme that I have constructed for this study (see appendix I). As Gottweis interjects, no rhetorical situation is exclusive to one ideal type of rhetoric or the other. Instead, it might prove useful to speak of combinations of etho-pathetic argumentation, or logo-pathetic constellations, and so on.²⁴⁴

The use of images, figures and **metaphors** can be treated as strategies for ‘re-description of terms, phenomena, and actions’²⁴⁵, invoking commonly associated characteristics to emphasise certain features, suppress others and establish a chain of negative or positive associations. Metaphors can connect subjects of political debate to everyday life, ideas, and practices. Through creative conceptual connections, metaphors organise our thoughts and open up for new ways of thinking as they frame and reframe concepts. New conceptions can be made available as metaphors make them appear in a new light. This way, chains of reasoning develop and organise our conceptions as well as arguments. Politics is for instance often organised in special terms of “left” and “right”, “forward” and “back”.²⁴⁶ Thus, when “universities” are replaced by “knowledge factories”, when the “nourishing sector” becomes synonymous with the private sector and the “draining” or “wasting” sector²⁴⁷ becomes a euphemism for the public sector, it is practices of re-definition through the use of metaphor. While metaphors add to a re-aggregation of meaning **metonyms** are movement of displacement to something contiguous such as when The Social Democratic Party becomes “the Party” or “the State”. The trope of metonymy can also symbolise the way in which a particular group or speaker located in a particular sphere takes up responsibility issues in adjacent spheres of social relations as a hegemonic practise. Still, there is not always a clear-cut difference

²⁴¹ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 558.

²⁴² Gottweis, ‘Rhetoric in Policy Making: Between Logos, Ethos, and Pathos’, 237–50.

²⁴³ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 558.

²⁴⁴ Gottweis, ‘Rhetoric in Policy Making: Between Logos, Ethos, and Pathos’, 237–50.

²⁴⁵ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 558.

²⁴⁶ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 558–59.

²⁴⁷ Or, in Swedish “tärande”, is a metaphor for the public sector frequent in the empirical material.

between the two and both tend to be tropological.²⁴⁸ Thus, to identify metaphors and metonymical is relevant for this study since metaphorical argumentation might be associated with certain intellectual practices and metonyms can be used as a hegemonic practice, as discussed in chapter 2.

These analytical concepts are the main tools that I have used in my attempt to identify, analyse, and categorise the performances of an intellectual function, as articulated in the hegemonic struggle around “privatisation” in the medialised public debate at the time. To account for the conditions of articulation and formation of such subject positions through which the intellectual function is performed, I have also tried to account for the “rules of engagement” that structure the debate.

Rules of engagement

Discourses are structured by sets of **rules** which uphold and demarcate a local discourse. These rules are contested, rearticulated, and instituted in the process of engagement in a context of contestability, where participants in the discourse are aware of, and aim to persuade others. This way, one might try to create or possibly break up a shared interest, belief, or consensus. Finlayson highlights the need to locate the corpus of arguments for analysis within their respective rhetorical situation, that is, in the context of relations in which they are articulated. The rhetorical situation of an argument tells us something of the specific local **rules of engagement**. In the case of parliamentary debate – or in this case, mass medialised debate, ‘only certain people can speak, if chosen, and they speak according to procedural rules that function independently of the particular matter being discussed (which discussion will help to reaffirm those rules).’²⁴⁹ I will return to this notion of what orders the debate in the analysis, but as emphasised in my discussion on discourse and subject positions further ahead, these rules of engagement are of course not all that regulates debate. The relational roles, positions and identities of participants is of utmost import. However, the dissemination and reproduction of political communication in new contexts introduces uncertainty into the identities of and relations between participants, since it is not always clear who the intended audience is.

Mediating institutions, such as printed and broadcast media, publishers and so on, with “pre-cultivated publics” and trust, may act as a buffer and a filter, as Patrick Baert and Josh Booth argue. The established mediators of these institutions separate speakers from publics, but also edit, review, accept or decline contributions to exclusive platforms.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*.

²⁴⁹ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 554.

²⁵⁰ Baert, Patrick and Booth, Josh, “Tensions within the public intellectual: political interventions from Dreyfus to the new social media” in *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 25:4 2012, pp. 111-126.

Practices that position and privilege certain arguments, subject positions, or positions of enunciation are built in to these selection processes. Despite all these gatekeepers and thresholds of mass media, many debate contributions are accepted, published, and distributed, even if they articulate a counter-hegemonic standpoint. Nevertheless, mass media may be considered a significant force in hegemonic orders, formations, and regimes, and of course in informing the general, public discourse. It provides a forum where speakers are given time and space to represent themselves, larger groups, other actors, or standpoints. Of course, this involves a process where some actors and articulations are selected in exclusion of others at the hand of editors, publishers and so on. Equally, the emergence of new actors in the debate, such as the emergence and increasing popularity of a particular politicised journal, may from a post-Marxist perspective be understood as a position formed in a dislocation of discourse, i.e. the contemporary crisis.

Summary

The first thing a researcher needs to do is to specify a corpus of argument for analysis, or so argues Finlayson in his definition of rhetorical political analysis.²⁵¹ This might be as a single speech, periodical selections or ‘longer-term exchanges on some particular issue over a particular issue over a number of years expressed in a range of forms’²⁵². As I study the exchanges in the long-term debate on privatisation in different forms and fora, over a six-year period, this dissertation belongs to the latter category. This dissertation is problem-driven, empirically informed, and yet engaged in theoretisation on the matter of the intellectual function in relation to hegemony.

With all this said, my approach is inspired, yet not bound, by the previous research conducted in a similar vein, most notably by Gramsci²⁵³, Mannheim²⁵⁴, Austin²⁵⁵,

²⁵¹ Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 554.

²⁵² Finlayson, ‘From Beliefs to Arguments’, 554.

²⁵³ Gramsci, *Gli Intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura*.

²⁵⁴ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*.

²⁵⁵ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

Pocock²⁵⁶, Laclau²⁵⁷, Mouffe²⁵⁸, Finlayson²⁵⁹, Gottweis²⁶⁰, Skinner²⁶¹, and Howarth²⁶². To analyse the empirical material, I have combined all these approaches and the tools that they provide into a list of questions and queries aimed at the material at hand. Exactly how these theories and analytical concepts have been put to practice is explained in the next chapter.

²⁵⁶ Pocock, 'Verbalizing a Political Act', 27–45.

²⁵⁷ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*.

²⁵⁸ Mouffe, *On the Political*.

²⁵⁹ Alan Finlayson, *Making Sense of New Labour* (London, 2003); Finlayson, 'From Beliefs to Arguments', 545–63; Alan Finlayson, 'Proving, Pleasing and Persuading? Rhetoric in Contemporary British Politics', *The Political Quarterly*, 85/4 (2014), 428–436.

²⁶⁰ Herbert Gottweis, 'Stem Cell Policies in the United States and in Germany', *Policy Studies Journal*, 30/4 (2002), 444–69.

²⁶¹ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. by James Tully (Princeton, N.J., 1989).

²⁶² David Howarth, 'Complexities of Identity/Difference: Black Consciousness Ideology in South Africa', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2/1 (1997), 51–78.

Chapter 4

Empirical Material and Research Methods

The great difficulties which confront scientific knowledge in this realm [of the political] arise from the fact that we are not dealing here with rigid, objective entities but with tendencies and strivings in a constant state of flux. A further difficulty is that the constellation of the interacting forces changes continuously. Wherever the same forces, each unchanging in character, interact, and their interaction, too, follows a regular course, it is possible to formulate general laws. This is not quite so easy where new forces are incessantly entering the system and forming unforeseen combinations.²⁶³

In remarking on the difficulties remaining in the relationship between theory and practice, Mannheim's reasoning resembles Laclau and Mouffe's insistence on the contingencies, antagonisms, and constitutive character of political-discursive forces. This and historical sociological approaches that draw on Gramsci and Foucault fuel my inspiration. Therefore, I recognise the importance of studying a discourse under specific local and historical conditions²⁶⁴. By analysing statements in a debate, I can study the arguments and definitions produced for contemporary audiences, as well as the rhetorical political practices and positionings involved.

In my methodological approach, I take inspiration from previous studies of public discourse and political debate. Still, I would like to emphasise the challenges surrounding the methods of this project. One internal contention within this project is the combination of a post-structuralist framework with a traditional sociological conceptualisation of "intellectuals" and how to research "them". Because post-Marxist discourse theory often lack hands-on advice on methodological issues or techniques the everyday handicraft that has resulted in this thesis has been itself a process of negotiation, inspired by discourse analysis and rhetorical political analysis. What is more, is that Foucauldian theoretical analyses of discourse and "intellectuals" often lack

²⁶³ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 103.

²⁶⁴ This contextualising/non-contextualising strategy is also discussed by Andrew Abbott as a type of fractal heuristic. See Andrew Abbott, *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*, Contemporary Societies (New York, 2004).

in terms of empirical research – and so do many arguments of the existence, or non-existence, of hegemony and “the intellectual”. This dissertation is an attempt to empirically flesh out what is often mere theoretical assumptions surrounding the concepts of intellectuals and hegemony: to put the Foucauldian and the Laclauian theoretical projects into practice, i.e. to trace the intellectual function and the subject positions that perform it in struggles for hegemony, through utterances in a localised historical discourse.

A willingness to understand hegemony and the intellectual function motivates my choice of theory and methods of analysis. Decisions on empirical material and methods for data gathering hinged on these principal matters. Likewise, my project was problem driven, rather than problem-solving. It is different from data-, method- or theory-driven research, which is respectively animated by data; techniques for gathering and analysing; or the desire to confirm a certain theoretical outlook. Starting out from the problem of “the intellectual” in relation to discursive shifts and hegemonic processes, my intention is to challenge existing accounts and theoretical frameworks that surround this phenomenon. It was in the process of reading and attempting to analyse the empirical material that I realised that neither the discourse theoretical approach presented by Laclau and Mouffe, nor the traditional theories of intellectuals, was adequate to explain the role and varieties in the performances of the intellectual function – which is how the rhetorical political analysis came in to the picture. Problem-driven discourse theory ‘begins with and challenges the political circumstances within which such theories emerge and operate’²⁶⁵. In retrospect, I can say that I approached my subject in a manner of Foucauldian problematisation, Peircean abduction or retroduction, and thus similar to the logics approach presented by Jason Glynos and David Howarth, even if I do not follow the logics of critical explanation any further²⁶⁶. I would like to stress the significance of this approach to both the methods and outcomes of the study. Starting from the idea of privatisation, as it is reflected and rationalised in concrete practice enables me to analyse the processes surrounding meaning making, hegemony and positionings in the discourse.

The Foucauldian heart of this method consists in problematisation: in questioning existing, taken for granted facts, beliefs, *credos*, or truths. To study neoliberalism as Foucault did, involved an investigation of how the role of government and state in securing economic growth and efficiency was constructed as problematic, and how the solution to this problem was constructed in demands to preserve the freedom of markets from state intervention.²⁶⁷ Neoliberalism, privatisation politics, and the intellectual function (or the lack of “intellectuals”), are phenomena that confront

²⁶⁵ Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 319.

²⁶⁶ Glynos and Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*; Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*.

²⁶⁷ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

society and social scientists today – and to understand them, it is necessary to examine their contingent historical and political emergence. Instead of seeing the past in the light of the present, the purpose is to find out what history can tell us about the construction of the phenomena later recognised as privatisation – or the role of the intellectual function, at this point in time and social formation.²⁶⁸

Selection of timeframe and data

Periodical journalism, in the broadest sense, is not just the intellectual's natural habitat: it is also the noise made by a culture speaking to itself. It is the medium in which the question of intellectuals has been most frequently put, and the repetition in the answers is part of what makes this rather scorned source so evidentially valuable [...]²⁶⁹

The empirical material consists of utterances in a public discourse, produced for a more or less general public audience, attainable for other actors in the local, historical context of medialised debate in Sweden during the years 1988-1993.²⁷⁰ This does not mean that the entire societal discourse is mirrored in my analysis and I do not claim to capture or represent the debate on privatisation across all societal sectors. I have nevertheless strived to make a relatively broad and inclusive selection of available fora to better understand the practices and processes related to conceptual shifts, argumentation, negotiation, and meaning making – in short, articulations, through utterances in the medialised public discourse. Although the primary sources of analysis consist of medialised arguments and utterances, this is neither a media analysis, nor a survey of these specific fora – but rather of the discourse on privatisation represented therein. I use the selected material as a source to trace and analyse the privatisation discourse as it unfolds in various fora. From a post-Marxist perspective, I chart conceptual shifts, the making and breaking of chains of equivalence, and the construction of political frontiers. But by the help of performative perspectives and rhetorical political analysis I have been able to analyse the performances of the intellectual function through the arguments and utterances in the debate. The focus of the analysis is therefore the practices, strategies and formations articulated in the debate on privatisation as represented in the empirical material²⁷¹. There is a point in doing this from the

²⁶⁸ See Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 3; Griggs and Howarth, *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom*.

²⁶⁹ Collini, *Absent Minds*, 435.

²⁷⁰ I would also like to point out that when actors are mentioned in the empirical chapters, the information and presentation of said actors is the information presented in the empirical material. Any exceptions to this format will be clearly stated, as e.g. “what is not mentioned in the article”.

²⁷¹ Since my interest lies in analysing the practices, processes, and formations *within* this particular discourse, what is outside of discourse and unknown or un-presented to the actors will be of less

“outside”, as it would be impossible for the actors subjected to a hegemonic situation to recognise it for what it is: that is the all-encompassing nature of hegemony.

Not all contributions to the debate on privatisation will transform the political landscape, nor do they all intend to. Some contributions, actors or events are attributed significance long after the moment of articulation has passed. Others are activated as part of the collective memory when they transcend from one context to another.²⁷² Similar to, and with inspiration from Finlayson and Martin (2008), I confine this project to an examination of the issues discussed (meaning-making struggles, hegemonic practices and processes, mediation of ideology in the debate et cetera) in relation to the contributions to the debate on privatisation, *at the time*.

To distinguish positions by determining the representation of discursive relations in the discourse at the time, is a prerequisite of my project. Since other authors have failed to recognise intellectuals in their own time, I argue that instead of referring to the elusive intellectual as a figure of the past it is simply difficult to identify intellectuals in your own time²⁷³. A historical approach thus seems suitable to examine the discourse in question, to discern the positions/-ings, articulations and struggles within – struggles which were perhaps more difficult to distinguish for the actors involved at the time. Then again, studying “intellectuals” is not the whole project. To analyse the workings of hegemony within a specific discourse can only be done, as I see it, by looking at arguments, utterances, descriptions, coalitions, practices, strategies and expressed meaning makings - i.e. articulations, within that historical discourse.²⁷⁴

Timeframe

The Swedish 1990s crisis (described further in chapter 5) motivates my choice to study a Swedish debate in the years 1988-1993. By centring the time-span before and after the onset of the 90s crisis, that climaxed 1990-1993²⁷⁵, I capture both the years of debate leading up to the crisis; the construction of causes, content, and solutions once the outbreak is apparent; as well as months of early stabilisation in 1993; but before the

significance to the discursive positionings, formations and shifts at the time. I am not looking for any insider information that would have been inaccessible to other actors in this discourse. The information that was available to shape the interpretations and definitions available to co-producers of that discourse (systems of beliefs, positions, and discursive practices) needs to be observable in the historical data.

²⁷² Finlayson and Martin, “It Ain”t What You Say...”, 453.

²⁷³ Cf. Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*; Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*; Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology* (Oxford ; New York, 2003).

²⁷⁴ For a more detailed explanation of this sort of approach see Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

²⁷⁵ Kommittén Valfärdsbokslut, ‘Valfärdsbokslut För 1990-Talet: Slutbetänkande, Fritzes Offentliga Publikationer, Stockholm, 2001’; *Valfärd Vid Vägskäl: [Utvecklingen under 1990-Talet]: Delbetänkande*, Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 0375-250X ; 2000:3 (Stockholm, 2000) <<http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2000/01/sou-20003>> [accessed 27 September 2017].

elections (EU referendum and national general election) of 1994. By conducting a preliminary survey of the medialised public debate in general, I hoped to find out which questions were publicly debated, when, and in which fora. I therefore conducted a pilot study of printed Swedish mass media 1988-1995 (for further details see appendix I). Although several issues are discussed during the time period in question, privatisation stood out as question less researched, relatively polarised, and sufficiently debated in a variety of fora. This pilot study also showed in which fora the debate took place – both in terms of the frequency of articles pertaining to privatisation in mainstream printed media, but also which alternative, outside sources that were referenced in mass media.

As it turns out (and as discussed in chapter 1 and appendix I), the public opinion shifts dramatically in the years between 1988 and 1993: from a generally negative attitude to privatisation of public sector services and ventures in the years leading up to 1988; to a historical high peak in positive attitudes by 1990; and a strong negative opinion of privatisation by 1993²⁷⁶. These shifts in public opinion cannot be traced back to any singular implementation of privatisation policy and span across the left-right political party divide.²⁷⁷ Not that this is a dissertation that studies the construction of a public opinion, but these dramatic shifts could be mirrored in an increased activity and polarisation in the medialised debate on privatisation. Precision of the time period was further supported by previous research on Swedish debate and opinion climate, as well as discursive shifts and representations of the welfare state in media at the time²⁷⁸.

With reference to other studies of debate and discourse looking at Swedish mass media in the late 80s and early 90s, such as Kristina Boréus' and Stefan Svallfors' quantitative analyses²⁷⁹, I chose to examine shorter selections of periods within the selected six-year period. Boréus studies the debate on developing countries, but she chooses to quantify her content analysis by classifying and measuring authors' status and concepts used.

²⁷⁶ Attitudes to privatisation of public business, schools, health, and elderly care fluctuate greatly: from being regarded as relatively “bad” proposal in 1988, to a “quite good” proposal in 1990 – the most radical change then takes place and by the next poll in 1992 or 1993, it is generally regarded as a “really bad” suggestion. See Nilsson, ‘Offentlig sektor och privatisering 1986-1996’. See graph in appendix I.

²⁷⁷ Again, see Nilsson, ‘Offentlig sektor och privatisering 1986-1996’; Svallfors, ‘A Bedrock of Support?’, 806–25. It should be mentioned that Svallfors has made periodical selections only and thus reaches a different conclusion – namely that the public’s support of the public sector only increases. Also, after conducting a simple regression analysis of my own, using the same source material I found a correlation between age and attitude towards privatisation – which could explain some of the correlation between attitude to privatisation and party affiliation.

²⁷⁸ Sören Holmberg and Lennart Weibull, *SAMHÄLLE OPINION MASSMEDIER 1990* (Göteborg, December 1992); Svallfors, *Välfärdsstaten i pressen: En analys av svensk tidningsrapportering om välfärdspolitik 1969-1993*; Svallfors, ‘The End of Class Politics?’, 53–74; Stefan Svallfors, *Välfärdsstatens Moraliska Ekonomi: Välfärdsopinionen i 90-talets Sverige* (Umeå, 1996); Boréus, *Högerväg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*; Torbjörn Nilsson and others, *Moderaterna, marknaden och makten: Svensk högerpolitik under avregleringens tid, 1976-1991* (Huddinge, 2003).

²⁷⁹ Svallfors, *Välfärdsstaten i pressen: En analys av svensk tidningsrapportering om välfärdspolitik 1969-1993*; Boréus, *Högerväg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*.

Over a 20-year time frame, Boréus makes shorter incisions: one opinion piece per day the first week of February, April, October, and December 1969 through 1989, in national newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (DN). Hence, within the whole six-year stretch of time for my study, I examine the mass media sources in-depth in the same way – over selected time periods, as I explain below. For the complete analysis, I also use digital databases to find articles relating to privatisation.

Data selection

To make sure that this mass medialised debate was more than just a bone of contention among elite actors, I studied surveys of both the newspaper distribution, circulation, and readership (i.e. what was the main sources of news and information at the time, and to what degree where the daily papers read).²⁸⁰ Based on sociologist Stefan Svallfors' research on the weight of various debate fora in the debate on the welfare state at the time, it is safe to say that the main fora for debate at the time were the specific opinion sections in leading daily (regional and national) newspapers. To encompass a broad spectrum of speakers and participants in the public discourse on privatisation, I chose to include both opinion pieces in daily newspapers as well other forms of contributions to the debate, including: culture sections, columns, comic strips, radio, and television tableaux in the newspaper material, as well as two periodical cultural and political journals, and a radio programme. This constitutes my primary sources to locate and trace the discourse on privatisation in Swedish public debate. In other words, articles in other papers, books, reports, films, parliamentary debates, and other sorts of publications referenced in these primary sources are also included in the analysis. Some of these references now feature in chapter 5, as part of the context that frames the discourse on privatisation in Sweden, 1988-1993.

In total, this thesis covers a range of sources from 1988-1995. In daily national newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (DN), I examine August-October in 1988 and 1993 in full – as well as digital database searches in both Retriever Research and DN's online archive from 1988-01-01 to 1994-01-01 (in a search using primarily the keywords “priv*” and “private alternativ*” – but also related terms like “deregulation”, “regulation”, “decentralisation”, “debate”, “culture”, etc, depending on hits). In daily regional newspaper *Arbetet*, I only study August-October 1988 in full, and rely on complementary database searches (which uncover a limited selection). In broadcasted radio programme OBS! I listened to January-March and September-October in 1988, January-May in 1990 and December 1993 through February 1994, to follow up an opinion section series on right wing politics. With the two political periodical journals

²⁸⁰ Svallfors, *Välfärdsstaten i pressen: En analys av svensk tidningsrapportering om välfärdspolitik 1969-1993*; Holmberg and Weibull, *SAMHÄLLE OPINION MASSMEDIER 1990*; Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*.

I have been able to focus my attention two both how privatisation is debated, but also how hegemonic practices of coalition building, the founding of both projects, and performances of the intellectual function are articulated outside of the mass media format. I cover the full issues of *Nyliberalen* 1989-1993; and TLM 1989-1995 (to include a retrospective jubilee issue in 1995).

Mainstream media: Dagens Nyheter and Arbetet

Based on this initial research I chose to study two mainstream daily newspapers. The Stockholm-based, politically neutral (although later liberal) national daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* ('Today's News' or DN for short) due to the central status of its opinion and cultural pages, and regional Malmö-based *Arbetet* (The Labour) as a relatively significant, but politically more left leaning counterbalance.²⁸¹ DN has been published since 1864 in Stockholm and was Sweden's most circulated daily national newspaper at the time. *Arbetet* was first published in Malmö 1887 as a weekly magazine but became a daily morning paper in 1962 and remained so until its demise in 2000. During the years scrutinized in this study, both papers were published seven days a week, with special editions on Sundays to attract additional subscribers. While DN was of an outspoken liberal political tendency on and off again from the outset, it remained so from 1924 to 1973, declared itself as politically independent in 1974, and later settled as 'independent liberal' 1998²⁸². *Arbetet*, as the name suggests, was social democratic from the start and later more independent but part of the so-called *A-press* - a social democratic media concern founded in 1947, but filing for bankruptcy in 1992 after a long struggle that very nearly toppled *Arbetet* too²⁸³.

While mass media can be considered a significant force in the formation of hegemony or the shape of the general societal discourse, it also provides a forum where contributors are given time and space to represent themselves and other actors. On the other hand, this involves a process where some actors and articulations are selected in exclusion of others at the hands of editors, publishers and so on. My selection does not focus on editorials, since it is generally agreed that they serve a different purpose and speak to a more private audience; but guest editorials, op-eds, and a few instances where

²⁸¹ Svallfors, *Välfärdsstaten i pressen: En analys av svensk tidningsrapportering om välfärdspolitik 1969-1993*. For distribution figures see table 1, sub-section *Overview of the empirical material*. With reference to Tidningsenheten Kungliga Biblioteket, 'Svenska Dagstidningar 1900-2015', *Sökformulär för nya hundstedt dagstidningar (NLD)* <<http://ow.ly/tHIQ30grMjc>> [accessed 21 January 2015]. However, I have not been able to retrieve the same information regarding the readership and audiences of OBS, TLM or *Nyliberalen*. Thélème Föreningen, 'TLM: Thélème', *Ask.Kb.Se*, 2009 <<http://ow.ly/6moM30grMw>> [accessed 28 September 2017]; Frihetsfronten and Nyliberalens vänner föreningen, 'Nyliberalen: Frihet - idéer och praktiska lösningar', *Ask.Kb.Se*, 2009 <<http://ow.ly/tB4630grMBx>> [accessed 28 September 2017].

²⁸² See political tendencies in Kungliga Biblioteket, 'Svenska Dagstidningar 1900-2015'.

²⁸³ *Mångfald Och Räckvidd: Slutbetänkande*, Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 0375-250X; 2006:8 (Stockholm, 2006) <<http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2006/01/sou-20068>> [accessed 2 February 2017].

the editorial's header is along the lines of "increase privatisation!", are considered in the analysis. Since I wish to leave the categorisation of intellectuals open to as many forms of public "speakers" as possible, I found it necessary to consider other outlets for debate and critique as well. Hoping that alternative voices and cultural forms of critique would surface on the culture sections of the mainstream media, I encompass these pages in the printed press and the national radio programme for cultural and intellectual debate. Finally, as not to exclude the already marginalised voices I also include outlets outside of the mainstream media.

Gatekeeping and exclusion: the rise of the alternative media Nyliberalen and TLM

Most Swedish newspapers have special opinion pages for general debate, which attract a considerable number of contributors seeking publication. Boréus and others point to the privileged status of DN in the Swedish mass media landscape. The opinion page in DN is considered 'to be the most attractive arena of this kind in the Swedish press'²⁸⁴. A notion exemplified by the fact that only 12 percent of articles submitted to the opinion page of DN in November 1989 were eventually published. While this page covers a range of topics and speakers, some are thus bound to be excluded.²⁸⁵ Against this backdrop of old media formats, new alternative fora, and ways of using media emerge. New groups start to communicate politically actively and strategically. Communication strategies are changing in various ways among different sets of actors as business, think tanks and right-wing activists unite against a disorganised left wing. Neoliberal socio-political movements play new roles in the political process around privatisation of public sector services. These actors articulate themselves as marginalised by the mainstream elite media and form their own outlets for political communication. In order to include those forms of expressions that may be excluded by editors of the dominant newspapers, I turn to alternative arenas of debate. I thus am able to trace the formation of two political coalitions in the empirical material. Both create their own vehicles for meaning making: the journals *Thélème* (later TLM) and *Nyliberalen* ("The Neoliberal"). The mere existence of these two journals supports the argument that certain actors, or subject positions if you will, are excluded from the main debate fora.

According to my initial pilot as well previous research²⁸⁶, two alternative periodicals gain a certain significance and attention even in mass media and political discourse at the time: *Nyliberalen* and TLM. These are two independent periodical journals similar in format, frequency, genre, and style. Their contributors are active in various contexts,

²⁸⁴ Kristina Boréus, 'The Shift to the Right: Neo-Liberalism in Argumentation and Language in the Swedish Public Debate since 1969', *European Journal of Political Research*, 31/3 (1997), 263.

²⁸⁵ Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*; Petersson and Carlberg, *Makten över tanken*.

²⁸⁶ See Boréus; Stig-Björn Ljunggren, *Folkhemskapitalismen: Högerens programutveckling under efterkrigstiden* (Stockholm, 1992); Anders Ramsay, 'Inledning', *Res Publica*, 3/94/27, 13–22.

organisations, and debates. *Nyliberalen* was first printed and circulated in 1983 by a group of engaged neoliberal political activist. Editors in chief during this time were Anders Varveus (1982-1992) and Johan Norberg (1993-1997)²⁸⁷. From 1990 *Nyliberalen* is published as an organ for the then freshly founded neoliberal/libertarian organisation “Frihetsfronten” (the Freedom Front).²⁸⁸ Issues from 89-90 include features on activism and more practical political campaigning, while later issues are of a more philosophical character. TLM is issued between 1989 and 2001 as culture journal by an association with the same name²⁸⁹. It has no editor in chief, but all members of the editorial board are listed – some of whom stay active longer than others²⁹⁰. The periodical is a product by students at Stockholm University; reports of sessions and discussion from the campus café are perhaps therefore plenty. The name *Thélème* is a reference to the works of French Renaissance humanist François Rabelais, who creates a humanist ideal-world in the Abbey of Thélème, built by the giant Gargantua. In this intellectual utopia, where well-bred men freed of all constraints and servitude are prompted to virtuous action, the Thélèmites live by one rule only: ‘Do what thou wilt’²⁹¹. In 1992, the editorial office decides to re-name the journal from *Thélème* to TLM, possibly to mimic major publishing house Bonniers’ BLM²⁹². Early issues of *Thélème* (hereafter TLM) feature critical analyses of matters related to academia and university policies. Later volumes have a more general scope with a more prominent political touch.

Nyliberalen and TLM function as more open outlets that allow for a more colourful, polemic, and outspoken debate, than the opinion pages or culture sections of DN and *Arbetet*. Renowned authors, professors and politicians contribute to and feature as member of editorial councils in *Nyliberalen* and TLM. Several of these feature on the editorial, opinion, and cultural pages of DN at the time, but still choose to contribute to TLM and *Nyliberalen*. Such contribution *could* just as well have been sent to DN or the other national (and thus second largest) daily newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD),

²⁸⁷ Succeeded by John-Henri Holmberg (1997-1999), Erik Lakomaa, Kristian Tiger (2004-2007), Hans Egnell (2007-)

²⁸⁸ Nyliberalens vänner Föreningen, *Nyliberalen: För Kapitalism Och Individuell Frihet* (Stockholm, 1989), Kungliga Biblioteket National Library of Sweden <<http://ow.ly/Heri30gtMof>> [accessed 20 January 2015].

²⁸⁹ Thélème Föreningen, *Tlm: Thélème* (Stockholm, 1992), Kungliga Biblioteket National Library of Sweden <<http://ow.ly/ppT630gtMpm>> [accessed 20 January 2015].

²⁹⁰ This includes Göran Greider (1989 - 2001); Ozan Sunar (1989 - 1992); Erik Tängerstad (1989 - 1992); Peter Antman (1989 - 2001); Ulrika Milles (1989 - 1992); Anders Sjölander (1989 - 1993); Tomas Lappalainen (1992 - 2001); Thomas Jonter (1992 - 1999); Moa Matthis (1992); Berit Greider (1992 - 1994); Mats Wingborg (1992 - 2001); Stefan Carlén (1992 - 2001); Ann-Charlotte Altstadt (1993 - 2001); Conny Carl-Axel Malmqvist (1993 - 2001).

²⁹¹ See TLM n. 5, 1990.

²⁹² *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* (*Bonniers' Literary Magazine*) published between 1932 - 1999 and 2002 - 2004 was Sweden most prominent literary journal. Hans-Erik Johannesson, ‘Nationalencyklopedin BLM’, 2015 <<http://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/l%C3%A5ng/blm>> [accessed 23 January 2015].

but the nature of the argument, the critically outspoken attitude or form of appeal might have broken the rules of engagement that regulate the gatekeeping in mainstream media outlets. Instead, the in-depth discussions and ideological, philosophical formations take place in these alternative outlets.

The struggles, visions, beliefs, obstacles. and opportunities presented in these young media outlets prove a rich material. Hence, in the section concerning formations of the discourse, in chapter 8, TLM and *Nyliberalen* are represented to a greater degree than the already established mainstream media or party-political coalitions. Because my intention is to show the construction of discourse coalitions and formations within the discourse, the two alternative media outlets in making provide something more and other than the continuity repetitive political practices represented in the mainstream media. Because a more in-depth debate takes place in these specialised journals and because of the captivating narratives surrounding the founding myths of each periodical, I end up studying these two journals more intently in this regard.

Broadcast fora

The radio programme *OBS! Kulturkvarten* (literally ‘N.B. The Cultural Quarter’) on the national public service radio, provides an additional source where live debates take place between various actors: from authors, to academics, cartoonists, artists, journalists, politicians and so on. Describing itself as a programme for “idea debate”, it includes topics of a general, cultural, societal, and philosophical relevance. National broadcasts were attainable to a broad audience, independent of selective subscriptions. My hypothesis was that OBS would offer a meta level discourse with analyses of and references to the ongoing debate in other forms and fora. The programme ran on weekdays (mornings, afternoons, and evenings, including re-runs) and was broadcasted from Malmö.²⁹³ Obtaining information about the content, theme, or title of the broadcasting without listening in on each and every episode over the six-year period proved tricky²⁹⁴. I made several fruitless attempts to contact and obtain the original notes from OBS’ editorial office at the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, in case these would contain information about the matters discussed on each show. The national digitalised media archive in Stockholm do have the broadcastings on file in a digitalised catalogue where the programmes are attainable – not collected in a folder, but filed separately through the original programme listings in a collection of individual, daily recordings through the years. I found that I would either have to spend an disproportionate amount of time and resources on listening to the (thrice a day, every

²⁹³ ‘Svensk Mediedatabas (SMDDB)’ <<http://ow.ly/gPjx30grLs5>> [accessed 23 January 2015].

²⁹⁴ I have scoured old programme listings and tableaus to find all broadcasts which could include references to privatisation. I was able to use the National Library’s database service for media, *Svensk Mediedatabas*, to search for programme descriptions including specified keywords, such as privatisation (even as ‘privat*’), or (de)regulation, sell offs, free schools, monopolies, freedom of choice, etc. However, the description of each broadcast is so short that not much comes up.

day) episodes available in the underground stacks blasted into the bedrock beneath the National Library in Stockholm, which was under renovation at the time of my visits – or, since the archivists had no possibility of sharing the files with me other than mailing each episode on a separate compact disc, I had the not so tempting possibility to individually order around 4500 CDs to sift through from the convenience of my own office. The combination of difficulties with access to the material and a less clear assurance about the importance of OBS as a public debate forum led me to, in the end, concede to a limited selection of broadcastings from OBS!, which is listed in table 1 in the following section.

Overview of the empirical material

This amounts to a historical empirical material comprised of print and broadcast media material: opinion and culture sections (including reviews, features, columns, and comic strips) in two leading daily newspapers (regional and national); a radio program for public idea debate on cultural, societal, and ideological matters; one periodical politico-philosophical journal on the right side of the political spectrum; and one periodical cultural journal on the left. All of which will be described in further detail in the next section. These as well as references and contributions to the ongoing debate are treated in the analysis, since the selected empirical material represents limited sections of the overall discourse. Statements in these fora, as well as references to other contributions in the ongoing debate are part of the analysis. By tracing the debate, through more or less direct references, some of the articulations omitted by mass media are part of the analysis. I consider the relevance of “external” reference based on their significance in relation to the debate on privatisation, to the performances of the intellectual function, and whether or not they were attainable to the broader public at the time – i.e. some references are relevant in relation to the construction of a rhetorical ethos, while others serve as analogue, for example. I strived to include whatever mentions of books, films, plays or music engaged in the privatisation debate that I found, since these contribute to the totality of discourse and thus influence any formations of hegemony²⁹⁵. To

²⁹⁵ Sadly, such hopes were in vain. Amongst cultural utterances there are concerts and records released to raise money for organisations such as Greenpeace, or Cultural Survival, and Rainforest Action Network. One example is a manifestation held in September 1988 (in prospect of the general election later that month), when ‘three silent minutes’ are held for the culture sector in a protest against the low grants dedicated to the cultural sector - an initiative to a mini-protest led by Hasse Alfredsson (popular comedian, actor, script- and playwright). As cultural policy is argued to have been forgotten in election debates, criticism is voiced in opinion sections (‘Kulturarbetare mot en borgerlig regering’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 16 September 1988, section Debate, 4.) and editorials (‘Ut med kulturen!’, *Arbetet*, 1 September 1988, section Editorial, 2.), or re-narrated in reports from squatting-protests against the lack of cultural investments for the youth, and so forth. Other spheres of culture are more geared towards personal contemplation at this time. For instance, a famous protest singer of the time is commanded in a record review for making the private a public matter (‘Musikrecension: Mikael Wiehe’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 14

capture the immediate contexts and analyse the full situation that the reader would face, the frames of arguments – including adjacent contributions, announcements, articles, or spreads – are all part of the analytical process.

With this selection I cover: political debate and cultural critique; contributions in national and regional circulation; articulations of a broad general character and outreach; as well as more specialised, in-depth discussions on the subject of privatisation. By focusing on a specific question over time, I attempt to build on longer periods of meaning making, which are sometimes overlooked in research that focusses solely on the periods of intense debates among politicians in election time, for instance. In the list of references I refer only to the general selection of sources, but the complete reference to each source is provided in the footnotes. The following table shows an overview of the empirical material.

Table 1. Overview of the empirical material

Primary sources by type, political tendency, method of data collection, time-period, distribution figures and number of articles/issues included in the final selection of contributions pertaining to the debate on privatisation.

Source	Type of media	Political tendency	Method of data collection	Time period analysed	Distribution	Final selection
Dagens Nyheter (DN)	Daily newspaper (national)	Independent	Microfilm (+ digital archive with full sources)	1988-1993 (August-October, 1988 and 1993 in full)	383500-412773 (Sunday editions: around 50 000-10000 extra copies.)	Circa 200 articles
Arbetet	Daily newspaper (regional/local)	Social Democratic	Microfilm (+ digital archive with limited information)	1988-1993 August-October, 1988 in full	105300-114800 (Sunday editions: 96900-104500)	Circa 25 articles
Nyliberalen	Periodical: political and philosophical journal	Neoliberal	Entire issues in original format	1989-1993 (no issue published in 1992)	unobtainable	10 issues (260 pages coded)
Thélème (TLM)	Periodical: Cultural and political journal	Left	Entire issues in original format	1989-1995	unobtainable	16 issues (740 pages coded)
OBS! Kulturkvarten	Radio programme (national public service)	Neutral	Selections from media archive	January-March, September-October, 1988. January-May, 1990. December 1993 - February 1994	unobtainable	Limited

September 1988, section Kultur, 26.). Similarly, Billy Bragg, an equally central British protest pop singer focuses more on personal than political matters, according to the review of his record “Workers Playtime”. Statements by politicised actors, which could have focused on political demands, often focus on individual, personalised issues during these years. A review of the memoirs by the former leader of the leftist party focuses solely on his personal characteristics, rather than politics, in a telling example (Mikael Löfgren, ‘Vi hade kunnat göra annorlunda’, *Dagens Nyheter* (8 September 1993), section Kultur.).

Considerations regarding scope and limitations

Let me emphasise that the empirical material selected for this study only represents limited sections of the overall discourse. It serves as an empirical example or starting point but represents a cross section of the public debate in the matter of privatisation. The empirical material exemplifies the positions and arguments made in the debate on privatisation in particular – and in general, how hegemonic struggles are played out; what strategies are employed to gain interpretive privilege; which practices are used to negotiate continuity and change in a public, political debate; how the intellectual function is performed; and how subject positions are enunciated in such contexts. This is not an exhaustive analysis of the political public discourse at the time, nor a systematic demonstration of the contributions to the politics of privatisation as such.

Nevertheless, strong tendencies towards standardisation among the few established news media in Sweden, which on the one hand forces the researcher to make a smaller selection, also increases the possibility of generalisation. Boréus draws attention to the similarities among mass media's opinion pages, but also to the parliamentary debates – both in terms of content, concepts, and linguistic styles. Even if main national newspapers DN, *Svenska Dagbladet* (hereafter SvD, was, and is, the second largest national daily newspaper) and *Aftonbladet* diverge ideologically, she discovers the same socio-political tendencies and conceptual shifts in all three papers. The Swedish debate is thus relatively coherent, even if it takes place in divergent fora. Furthermore, Boréus argues that the large media actors are leading and influential in the debate, which might serve as an explanation to why the smaller papers (like *Arbetet*) at the time lack any greater ideological debate. The most prominent difference is not between papers, she argues, but between sections. The editorial pages in DN and SvD are significantly more neoliberal than the rest of the public debate.²⁹⁶

Without being overly presumptuous, one could assume that the different sources represent different sectors of the media, as well as divergent political standpoints, journalistic styles, and character. The latter, in terms of the types of subject positions represented by speakers and contributions that make it through the series of gate keepers to the final publication. Instead of letting such assumptions colour the selection of contributions, and subsequently the analysis, I leave these open to question. I.e., what the various sources represent, what type of contributions or subject positions that are represented in which source and what the specific rules of engagement seem to be for each forum, have been part of the analysis – rather than mere background information.

While the contributions in DN, *Nyliberalen* and TLM often refer to either other articles in DN; or other daily newspapers like SvD; the two evening tabloids *Expressen* and

²⁹⁶ Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*, 309–10.

Aftonbladet; I have found no references to the largest regional paper *Arbetet*, nor to the radio programme OBS! in either of the other sources. All sources refer and position themselves in relation to DN. Some of the regular contributors to TLM are published in DN on an increasingly regular basis. *Nyliberalen*'s relation to mainstream medialisation is more complex, and bound up with a broader range of outlets, organisations, think tanks and publications. After having made this discovery; realised the lack of debate contributions pertaining to privatisation in both *Arbetet* and OBS; encountered methodological difficulties with OBS, as discussed above; and scoured the television and radio tableaus published in DN for mentions of debates on privatisation – the remaining three sources (DN, TLM and *Nyliberalen*) become the focus of analysis. The lack of privatisation debate in OBS and *Arbetet* is nevertheless considered part of the result.

What I neglect to take in to account is the debate programme broadcasted nationally on Swedish public service television at the time (*Speciellt*). My intention was to trace and locate the original source if such occasions of televised debate was mentioned in other sources – however, such occasions were rare (less than a handful). Equally, international sources for information and negotiations in the debate on privatisation available to the general public in Sweden were scarce at the time before the internet age and consequently omitted.

In the analytical chapters of this dissertation, I account for the discourse in general and include excerpts from the published media material. To illustrate a certain tendency in the material, I use expressive or telling examples from the vast collection of statements available to emphasise a point of analysis. In search for any statements mentioning or connoting on the concept of privatisation (i.e. on the phenomena itself or privatisation of specific services without using the word “privatisation”, such as mentions of “free market”, “freedom of choice”, “deregulation”, “private alternatives”, “state monopolies” and so on), I have read through entire issues the two journals, listened to complete episodes of the radio programme, and studied both opinion pages and culture sections along with the front pages, comic strips, columns, op-eds and first spreads in the two daily newspapers. The selection process in which I determine the relevance of each contribution in relation to the question of privatisation among the many utterances in the debate, as it is represented in the chosen fora, significantly limits the empirical material, however.

While on the subject of concepts, I should mention that the original material is in Swedish. I choose to translate the examples I use in the analytical chapters. In doing so I stick close to the original wording, sometimes resulting in a use of words or phrasings that might sound odd in an English vernacular. When in doubt, I discuss the different possibilities of interpretation and translation in the text or in a footnote.

While I strive to understand the relations between speaker and public, I do not account for the reception among readers, as I only include public replies and (at the time)

contemporary medialised dialogue, in my analysis. This means that I exclude potential relations between actors that is not brought to the public eye. While other types of research might be more concerned with the inter-personal relations among actors in the political field or the individual readers' interpretation of events and phenomenon, I choose to focus on the stage in-between: the demands articulated to the public; the rhetorical strategies used in the argumentation to sway the reader; as well as the way a speaker positions him-/herself in relation to other positions upon the public, politicised playing field.

Because the purpose of this project is to analyse the performances of intellectual functions in relation to hegemony, in this case taking place in a particular local, historical discourse - any supplementary accounts of background information or individual reflections lie outside my study's purpose and methodological framework. Although alternative methods, like interviews, could provide an additional source for triangulation, another form of triangulation is possible through an extensive discourse analysis of available texts, scientific sources, documents, and reproduced accounts - in contemporary outlets at the time. Thus, I attempt triangulation through different sources, rather than methodological paradigms, and let the discourse and scientific or historical accounts to be the sole "determinate" factors. As it is undeniable that discursive shifts, struggles and temporary fixations of meaning take place, the mere content of discourse is not what I set out to study. What is under investigation here is rather how arguments are used and what the consequences might be. The position I maintain is that discursive practices constitute subject positions, through which the intellectual function is performed. What I try to find out what relation this has to practices and processes of hegemony.

Attaining, processing, and analysing the material

My methodological approach for processing and analysing the empirical material is inspired by post-structuralist discourse theory and the rhetorical political approach explained in chapter 3. The details on attaining and processing the material can be found in appendix I. The empirical material is treated as text. Each utterance (be it in an opinion piece, a comic strip, an advert, or a broadcasted debate) represents a contribution to the debate. Some contributions may be more or less significant for the outcome or shape of the debate, but all are none the less part of the wider discourse available to the public. Crucial in my first and secondary selection of the relevant material is to ask: what information has been available to the reader at the time? This means that adjacent contributions and aspects of the immediate context that could influence readers' understandings, interpretations and meaning-making processes are

considered. It also means that I purposely refrain from analysing the background, alternative affiliations, or retrospective reconstructions of the speaker.

Coding: Constructing a grammar for intellectual subject positions

Like most analyses of text and discourse, my analysis involves a process of coding the material.²⁹⁷ Because this research project is an explorative one, the construction of a grammar specific to the project is part of the process. This is done by linking specific theoretical and empirical elements together, in order to account for the struggles around the concept of privatisation and various rhetorical and political practices and processes involved, along with the performances of the intellectual function and articulations of subject positions. In the coding process, I started out with a theoretically informed yet open reading, to allow potential patterns to emerge from the material. The coding scheme (see appendix I) which was therefore initially abstract and inclusive, and finetuned as the cyclical analytical process of this dissertation evolved. This coding scheme is based partly on post-Marxist discourse theory, partly on rhetorical political analysis (RPA) and partly on my approach to the study of the intellectual function, subject positions, and enunciated positions. Yet, I first turned to RPA once the empirical analysis was underway – when realising that the “mere” discourse analytical approach of charting positionings, demands, frontiers, chains of equivalence and articulations of difference (and so on) need to be complemented with an approach tuned to the practice of argumentation.

Many of the analytical tools for this project are borrowed from RPA. This means that I constructed codes for: the constructions of and appeal to the authority and character of the speaker (ethos); the emotional appeal and engagement of an argument (pathos); and the logical foundations the quasi-logical syllogisms of arguments (logos) – which includes dissections of the ‘commonly accepted premises’ which an argument often implicitly builds on (enthymeme). Through a closer examination of what is left out of the argument it is possible to trace (and code) the invocation of common maxims, taken-for-granted beliefs held by the audience (commonplaces). Metaphors (coded as well) may be used to re-define privatisation and connect it to the values of adjacent conceptualisations²⁹⁸. The end result, presented in the empirical analysis, is the product of a retroductive procedure where theory is developed in confrontation with the empirical material.

For this project it has been central to analyse the enunciated position and appeal of an argument, as well as the character, authority, emotional appeal, and engagement of the speaker. It proved that especially enunciated positions of speakers became important,

²⁹⁷ This is explained in detail in appendix I.

²⁹⁸ Finlayson, ‘Rhetoric and the Political Theory of Ideologies’, 751–67.

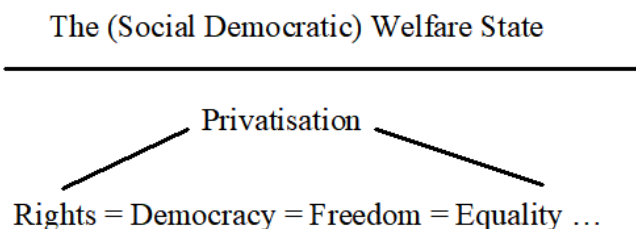
not just in understanding the intellectual function or charting subject positions, but in analysing hegemonic practices and strategies in the debate. Both the subject positions made available and those actively inhabited are included in the analysis. This has enabled an analysis where it has been possible to for instance connect emotive appeals to certain types of subject positions, certain political positions to corresponding demands or commonplaces and narratives to ethos. This process morphed into a typology over the ideal types among intellectual subject positions represented in the material, as explained in the second chapter of the empirical analysis.

For me, the coding manual that emerged by allowing the theoretical framework to be confronted with the empirical material – resulting in a grammar specific to this project – became the backbone of the dissertation. Chapters 6-8 in this thesis, the empirical analysis, is structured largely based on those very codes. So is the typology of intellectual subject positions that I have developed in the process. In short, from the initial coding came a whole range of theorizing through a retroductive process, inviting a dialogue between theory and the empirical material.

Charting the discourse

In order to get an overview of the material, connect the different types of dots and identify the links in chains of equivalence and politics of difference, I found it useful to chart the various subject positions, demands, concepts, political frontiers, and formations represented in the debate on privatisation. In practice, this means that I would take a blank paper (or tape huge canvases to the walls of my office) and mark out the subject positions, signifiers and political demands articulated in the debate. This was not a clustering exercise, but an attempt to charter the relations between such elements of the debate, i.e. the chains of equivalence and difference. Hence, on each paper there would be bold red line demarcating the political frontier, the boarder between what was articulated as a differing, oppositional element – and those that were articulated as adjacent, equivalent elements. With inspiration from Laclau's *On Populist Reason*, I would thus visualise the range of political demands made, in relation to privatisation as the signifier that took up the surplus representation of this whole chain of demands, would be on the "good" side of the line, pitted against an oppositional signifier on the "bad" side of the political frontier. Although my maps include additional elements, they share another similarity with Laclau's later works. There is room for ambivalent relations, marked then by a dotted line. On a map representing the discourse in *Nyliberalen*, for instance, "Sweden", "the Law", "FMSF", "Fremskritt", "The Moderate Party" and "The New Democratic Party" would be placed as ambiguous elements behind the dotted frontier of political uncertainty. If I explain this in the terminology and diagrams of Laclau, the discourse on privatisation as it is

represented terminology and diagrams of Laclau, the discourse on privatisation as it is represented in *Nyliberalen*, can be illustrated with the following diagram:



In this simplified representation, the Social Democratic Welfare state represents an oppressive regime and is separated by a political frontier from the demands of other sectors of society (demands for rights, democracy, freedom, equality and so on). These demands are relationally defined and distinguished from another, but are connected through their common opposition of the oppressive regime. The demand for privatisation becomes the signifier for the whole chain of demands. In other words, privatisation can be treated as a tendentially empty signifier that rival coalitions are trying to, or unintentionally successfully, fill with meaning. The demands for human rights, democracy, freedom, and equality (among others) are floating signifiers under the representation of privatisation. They and equivalential chains between them will be under contestation and pressure from rival projects, like TLM.

Such charting or mapping serve both to trace continuity and change in the discourse, in terms of definitions, descriptions and valuing of “privatisation”. It also helps me to identify different available subject positions in the debate – and the enunciated positions that can be linked to the intellectual function. Starting out with the idea to determine which contributions to the ongoing debate that can be identified in connection to an intellectual function – I end up with a distinction of various but relationally defined ideal types *among* the different subject positions through which the intellectual function is performed – as articulated in the debate. Instead of researching the relationship between intellectuals and “their” publics, I have chartered the enunciated positions of “the individual”, “the people”, “the Neoliberal”, “TLM”, “we”, “us”, “The Left”, “the Timbro right”, “The Party”, and so on. What was coded as “speaking on behalf of” became a visible position on a map of relational identities, demands and positions. As several subject positions were articulated in relation as adjacent to one and other, against a common enemy beyond the red line, I was beginning to see the formation of coalitions in the discourse. By physically drawing a

visible political frontier and charting out the dots of elements, positions and demands articulated on either side, I could visualise how the social space was being divided into two oppositional camps.

That is to say, I study utterances in the medialised public debate on privatisation. By charting the debate through the articulation of subject positions, positions of enunciation, demands and the drawing of political frontiers, I identify whether the demands for privatisation were enunciated from an individual position or a universal standpoint; and framed as a particular demand or as a universal right. This way, it becomes possible to visualise the struggles, antagonisms, chains of equivalence, subject positions, points of identification, and so on, constructed through the performances of the intellectual function.

Part 2 at a glance: how to study hegemony and the intellectual function through discourse and arguments

In short, the analytical approach that I use in this thesis is developed partly through re-interpretations of classic sociological theories of Antonio Gramsci (in terms of hegemony and intellectuals) and Karl Mannheim (when it comes to his sociology of intellectuals, primarily). The other part comes from post-structuralist theory and Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, David Howarth and others of the Essex School's development of "hegemony" through a post-Marxist discourse theory. The post-structuralist approach opens up for a relational account of discourse and the contingent economic, social, cultural, and political elements, institutions and actors that form and are formed by discourse (such as the state, market, or media). It also enables an analysis that focuses on the arguments and positions uttered in the debate.

Post-structuralist discourse analysis is often criticised for disregarding individual agency. The attention to enunciated positions makes for an analytical amendment in an attempt to take those shortcomings into consideration, without subscribing to a completely voluntarist account. A relational constitution of subject positions entails that agency is located in the relation between speaker and audience. With the help of rhetorical political analysis (RPA) developed by Alan Finlayson, I can show *how* certain demands are argued for, *how* various positions are articulated and how the different communicative strategies and practices involved might be linked to the Foucauldian positions of enunciating subjects in the discourse. It becomes possible to show how these positions and strategies are connected (promoted, pushed out) to certain fora. It is with these post-structuralist approaches that I am able to reconceptualise the traditional notion of "the intellectual" in confrontation with the empirical material.

Instead of falling into the fallacies of either personification or totalisation that plague most research on “intellectuals”, I attempt a study of an ensemble of the system of relations in which such activities have their place (the public debate on privatisation) within the general complex of social relations that constitute the social world. Here, I treat “the intellectual” in two ways, and neither refer to an actor identified as intellectual based on a *priori* determined set of personal qualities, qualifications, or vocational commitment. The argument I present here is that “the intellectual” must be understood as an active practice through performative speech: a “doing”. I re-conceptualise “the intellectual” as a function performed by various subject positions in a discursive structure. All contributions to the debate are conceptualised as articulations in a discourse and may be understood as practices of an intellectual function – but they are all *enunciated* from different positions. What the intellectual function amounts to and what characterises this performance is part of the analysis and can only be answered by a thorough investigation of this local discourse at the time. By focusing on a specific debate, in a historical context, I capture a field of struggle constituted in relation to more generalised processes and hegemonic struggles at the time.

Methodologically, this means that I question the existing ideals and trademarks of a “great” intellectual that are used to identify “intellectuals” today. Starting instead from the performance of the intellectual function, I investigate what type of rhetorical practices and strategies are employed (rather than the actors who use them), to find out what constitutes divergent ideal types of subject positions, at this point in time. To ask how and what subject position perform an intellectual function is to move beyond traditional and normative assumptions about intellectuals that still colour most research on the phenomena of the intellectual – or at worst, use the postulates of economic theorists to understand social phenomena (as in the frequent quotations of Hayek’s ‘second-hand dealers in ideas’²⁹⁹). Turning to a post-foundationalist approach thus means abandoning many of the assumptions that continue to thrive in other approaches.

Through my empirical analysis, I trace and typologise the vast range of subject positions constituted in the debate – narrowing these down to a set of three ideal types through which the intellectual function is performed, namely: “experts”, “spokespersons” and

²⁹⁹ Scholars like Plehwe and Walpen use Hayek’s thoughts on intellectuals to analyse neoliberal intellectuals. Hayek thus simultaneously becomes the object of study and provides the framework with which to analyse that same object. Equally, Hayek’s own distinction between experts and intellectuals as ‘second hand dealers in ideas’ or ‘knowledge filters and disseminators’ is treated as a reliable theoretical source to interpret the role of (socialist) intellectuals. It is of course problematic to prioritise an economics expert’s writings on a matter – not of economics – but of sociology of knowledge, over a long tradition in research on the role of intellectuals. Dieter Plehwe and Bernhard Walpen, ‘Between Network and Complex Organisation: The Making of Neoliberal Knowledge and Hegemony’, in *Neoliberal Hegemony: A Global Critique*, ed. by Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen, and Gisela Neunhöffer, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (London; New York, 2006), 27–50. They are not the only ones that fall for the neoliberalists own terminology, see also Radhika Desai, ‘Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony’, *New Left Review*, I (203) (1994), 27–64.

“public intellectuals”. Each ideal type consists of several subject positions constituted, ascribed, and occupied in the debate. In chapter 7, I try to explain and illustrate *how* I arrive at this model and why it is a useful tool to make certain analytical distinctions. In short, to analyse how and by whom (i.e. which subject positions) the intellectual function is performed; how; and how it connects to hegemonic processes, I have constructed this typology from subject positions, enunciated positions, rhetorical strategies, and practices articulated in the discourse. I do this by starting out from a specific local and historical discourse with its own rules and constructs.

The next part of the dissertation is focused on both the context and content of the debate on privatisation in the medialised public discourse. The purpose of the following chapter is to provide the reader with an adequate background to the debate. Following this contextualisation is the empirical analysis, which is structured hierarchically into three aggregated parts. Starting from the smallest unit of analysis, the concept of privatisation, I move up to the more complex relations of subject positions and discursive formations. The three analytical chapters thus correspond to and answer the research questions in turn. The first part of the analysis consists of an overview of the central tensions articulated in the attempts to define and fixate the meaning and content of “privatisation” in the debate. This is presented through a set analytical themes emanating from re-definitions and re-descriptions of the concept privatisation – and the chapters are divided into sub-sections according to these themes. Between the first and the second chapter, an interlude explains the character of the empirical material and highlights some of the changing conditions in the media landscape, at the time. From here I develop an analysis of the practices and strategies involved in the formation of intellectual subject positions and functions in the debate, in the second part of the empirical analysis. Lastly, in the eighth and final analytical chapter, I focus on the political standpoints and frontiers drawn in the debate, as well as the articulation of formations and coalitions among the dispersed elements of this particular discourse.

PART III

Context and Content of the Privatisation Debate in Sweden 1988- 1993

In which the discourse on privatisation is contextualised historically, politically, and geographically, before we delve into the empirical analysis of how ideological beliefs are instated as commonsensical in a public, medialised debate.

Hegemonic formations, practices and process have been the focal point of what is often abstract or merely theoretical discussions. What I try to do here is to explore the processes, practices and strategies involved in hegemonic struggles through an empirical material. Fixation of meaning does not occur on its own but through discursive struggles and articulations by participants in discourse. An individual, unidentified actor lacks relevance to discourse analysis, as one must take up a position, be determined and rendered meaningful, in order to have significance in discourse. Here, I engage in an empirical analysis of the articulatory and argumentative practice involved in struggles around meaning making; utterances and arguments that shaping the form, content, and commonplaces in the debate on privatisation, as represented in printed and broadcast mass media material at the time.

Now, negotiations around continuity and change in the debate on privatisation is best understood in a broader perspective of the development and political contestation around the Swedish welfare state-project, in relation to other struggles and processes that have become increasingly transnational. Specific local historical conditions determine the possibilities for articulating political demands and subject positions in the debate. That is why this part is divided in two: the context and content of the debate.

Chapter 5

There and Back Again: Building and Dismantling the Welfare State

When it comes to choice, Milton Friedman would be more at home in Stockholm than in Washington, DC.³⁰⁰

In November 1983, right wing political activists decided to act up against state monopolies. A private pre-school called “Pysslingen” was launched with economic support from big business. In 1984, the social democratic government prohibited the sanctioning of public funds to municipalities for childcare run by for-profit private enterprises, through a law known colloquially as “lex Pysslingen”. In 1992, the newly elected centre-right coalition revoked this law, generating an increase in private childcare that has continued to this day. Since the mid-1980s, telecommunications, postal services, electrics, railroads, electric utilities, pharmacies, alcohol retailing, vehicle inspection, housing and real-estate properties, emergency stockpiling and bunkers have been turned into joint-stock companies or completely privatised. Private nurseries, schools, emergency rooms, health and elderly care have also become common.³⁰¹

The debate on privatisation of the public sector in Sweden as it unfolded from 1988 to 1993 is geographically and historically specific, yet inscribed in debates and material restructurings of society that are much broader and with far reaching traces in history. A complete account of this context is almost impossible to produce. Nevertheless, in order to provide an adequate understanding of the course of events in Sweden during these turbulent years, and to understand the context and conditions of the articulation of demands for privatisation, it is necessary to cover at least some of this vast ground. This chapter, therefore, consists of an excursion across time and space to frame the

³⁰⁰ ‘The next Supermodel’, *The Economist*, 2013 <<http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21571136-politicians-both-right-and-left-could-learn-nordic-countries-next-supermodel>> [accessed 11 April 2016].

³⁰¹ Svensson, *Marknadsanpassningens Politik*; Innovationsupphandlingsutredningen Sverige, *Innovationsupphandling: betänkande*, Statens offentliga utredningar (Stockholm, 2010); Kent Werne and Olav Fumarola Unsgaard, *Den stora omvandlingen: en granskning av välfärdsmarknaden* (Stockholm, 2014); ‘Från Lex Pysslingen till Valfrihet’, *SvD.se* <<https://www.svd.se/fran-lex-pysslingen-till-valfrihet>> [accessed 2 September 2017]; Nilsson and others, *Moderaterna, marknaden och makten*.

empirical analysis that follows. The narrative includes broad sweeps dealing with the history of the Swedish welfare state (and the welfare state project more widely³⁰²); the crisis of Keynesianism; the history of neoliberal thought; and the implementation around the world of neoliberal policy in general and privatisation in particular. The more immediate Swedish context is dealt with by considering the most important political developments in the years leading up to the period covered by the empirical analysis and by accounting for the fiscal crisis that hit Sweden in the early 1990s. By including the most significant material conditions, policies, and political decisions that my analysis leaves out, this chapter complements and situates the research and empirical material – both in terms of welfare state changes, implementations of privatisation, and the media landscape at the time.

Crisis of Keynesianism and the welfare state project

Here, I highlight a few focal points and theoretical perspectives in the many studies of the development or restructuring of the north-western welfare state. Looking at how these changes have been explained, I argue that my own thesis makes an important addition to our understanding of social change in general and this socio-historical context and case in particular. Much of these existing research and explanations, focus on material changes; shifts in the modes of production, market conditions and the manufacturing industry. A good deal of these analyses include cultural perspectives, taking the shifts in ideas, values, and meanings into account as part of a larger puzzle in turning the “modern”, “Fordist” or “industrial” society in to a “post-” existence sometime after the 1970s economic crisis³⁰³.

³⁰² A vast array of welfare state research has been committed to categorizing different welfare state models – but that is not what I am interested in here. Here I simply wish to outline a general descriptions and analyses of ‘the’ welfare state, and particularly the case of Sweden as a welfare state (and not as a nation or regime). As any other researcher inspired by Gramsci and Foucault, I argue that the Swedish state cannot be treated as a single, solitary homogenous actor. On the contrary, it must be said to consist of a range of active practices, processes, and institutions – and most importantly: people – from local to supranational level. As many other north-western nations, the power structure of the Swedish state is rooted in institutionalised gendered and racialized class divisions and the various interests created through the introduction of capitalism – and the work of socio-political movements in the late nineteenth century.

³⁰³ Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York, 1973); Bob Jessop, ‘The Regulation Approach, Governance and Post-Fordism: Alternative Perspectives on Economic and Political Change?’, *Economy and Society*, 24/3 (1995), 1995; Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique* (Cambridge, 1989); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Post-Contemporary Interventions, 99-0859163-0 (Durham, 1992); Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Theory and History of Literature, 99-0459953-X; 10 (Manchester, 1984).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, politicians, social scientists, and economists focused on how to restructure states and their apparatuses to avoid a return to the Great Depression that crippled capitalist economies on both sides of the north Atlantic in the 1930s. Monetary politics based on the theories of economist John Maynard Keynes gained recognition and became an important influence on states' interventions in market processes. This shaped the form of the Western welfare state as we would recognise it today.³⁰⁴ A political project characterised by state intervention, social transfers, 'large-scale income maintenance programs, state-regulated prices in agriculture and housing, and state-provided schools, hospitals and other medical and personal services'³⁰⁵ to counteract social injustice. To ensure national socio-political stability, peace was made between capital and labour in several countries (as in the Swedish class compromise of 1938). To ensure international relations, the Bretton Woods agreement (whereby the value of the dollar had been pegged to the price of gold and all other currencies were pegged to the dollar) was signed and various international institutions economic and peacekeeping organisations were set up³⁰⁶. In the 1950s, newly formed trade agreements and associations on supranational level planted the seeds for what was to become the European Union. A variety of social democratic, Christian democratic and dirigiste states were forming, in Europe.

The states' responsibility of procuring full employment, economic growth and social welfare systems became the focus of state restructuring. As David Harvey describes, market processes, entrepreneurial and corporate efforts of capital were being embedded by social and political regulations and constraints, state planning and welfare systems that would ensure a healthy and productive workforce. Such economies expanded over the 1950s and 1960s. Public expenditure increased and so did the extent of these welfare states. Collectivist state building, active planning, interventionist politics and Keynesian control of fiscal and monetary policies largely characterised the growing post-war economies. In Sweden, and other countries, this was a time when representation of workers' interests, organisations and representation gained political influence and became part of the state apparatus.³⁰⁷

The 1970s brought fiscal crises and stagflation. The Bretton Woods-system broke down and the oil crisis became apparent in 1973, which challenged the type of

³⁰⁴ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 1, History, Policies, and Institutions 1884-1988*.

³⁰⁵ Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 1, History, Policies, and Institutions 1884-1988*, 13.

³⁰⁶ Like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade-cum-World Trade Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

³⁰⁷ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Östberg, 'Radikaliseringsvägar i Sverige', 14–21; Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 1, History, Policies, and Institutions 1884-1988*.

embedded liberalism that had been developing since 1945.³⁰⁸ Many socialist regimes in Europe employed corporatist strategies to overcome this new crisis through increased state control and regulation. The Scandinavian tradition of a strong social democratic welfare state remained more or less intact and retained popular support.³⁰⁹ However, as the left struggled to keep up with the requirements of capital accumulation, the support for corporate rather than corporatist solutions increased. Rising unemployment and accelerating inflation fuelled discontent among citizens. As the tide of economic theory turned, government designed remedies were often described as government failure. It was in this context that Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan rose to power in the UK and US respectively. The economic politics of western governments during the 1980s were largely characterised by an increased emphasis on the roles of investors, stock and shareholders in the modern capitalist system.³¹⁰ Rather than implementing a type of regulation instating bureaucratic rules in the face of increasing unemployment and economic recession, the modern regulatory response to market failure in the 1980s and 1990s was to reproduce the outcomes of a true market through economic modelling.³¹¹ Those central global economic forces formed after the Second World War started to favour private rather than government projects and encourage free markets; privatisation of publicly owned industries and services; New Public Management; and Public-Private Partnerships. With the collapse of the second world, such approaches flourished.³¹²

³⁰⁸ Mark Blyth, *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century* (2002).

³⁰⁹ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 1, History, Policies, and Institutions 1884-1988*.

³¹⁰ Krishan Kumar, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society: New Theories of the Contemporary World* (Oxford, 1995); Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1987); Nilsson and others, *Moderaterna, marknaden och makten*; Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*.

³¹¹ Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*, 81; David Graeber, 'Anthropology and the Rise of the Professional-Managerial Class', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 4/3 (2014), 73–88.

³¹² Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*; Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*.

Neoliberal theory turns to politics: the early years

Powerful ideological influences circulated through the corporations, the media, and the numerous institutions that constitute civil society—such as the universities, schools, churches, and professional associations. The ‘long march’ of neoliberal ideas through these institutions that Hayek had envisaged back in 1947, the organization of think-tanks (with corporate backing and funding), the capture of certain segments of the media, and the conversion of many intellectuals to neoliberal ways of thinking, created a climate of opinion in support of neoliberalism as the exclusive guarantor of freedom. These movements were later consolidated through the capture of political parties and, ultimately, state power.³¹³

It is to the idea-debate and arguments behind these changes that we now turn. A theoretical development took place behind closed doors, parallel to the restructuring of post-war states. A group of economists, historians and philosophers, survivors, and exiles of the Nazi regime, gathered in Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland, in 1947. At the heart of this think tank in formation was Friedrich von Hayek, seen as the creator of the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS), which has been described as the *fons et origo* of contemporary neoliberalism³¹⁴. Others included in this exclusive group are Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, Karl Popper, and George Stigler.³¹⁵ Hayek proposes a binary opposition of “market” versus “planned” economy to warn against a society under total control of Keynesian (or Marxist-Leninist) principles. Despite both political and financial support, this movement remains at the margins of both policy and academic discourse until the 1970s.³¹⁶

The Central Bank of Sweden created the Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in the memory of Alfred Nobel in 1969. This is not an authentic Nobel-prize but a bold paraphrase on the Nobel foundation to benefit from its reputation. As it happens, a Swedish member of the MPS, economist Eric Lundberg, was an official at the bank and instrumental in the creation of the prize.³¹⁷ Many members of the MPS have been awarded the so-called Nobel Prize in economics since the 1970s. Lundberg held the

³¹³ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 40.

³¹⁴ Radhika Desai, ‘Neoliberalism and Cultural Nationalism. A Danse Macabre’, in *Neoliberal Hegemony: A Global Critique*, ed. by Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen, and Gisela Neunhöffer, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (London; New York, 2006), 223.

³¹⁵ Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009).

³¹⁶ Plehwe and Walpen, ‘Between Network and Complex Organisation: The Making of Neoliberal Knowledge and Hegemony’, 27–50; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

³¹⁷ Avner Offer and Gabriel Söderberg, *The Nobel Factor: The Prize in Economics, Social Democracy, and the Market Turn* (Princeton, NJ, 2016); Frédéric Lebaron, ‘Le “nobel” D’économie. Une Politique’, *Actes de La Recherche En Sciences Sociales*, 141–142, 62–66; Plehwe and Walpen, ‘Between Network and Complex Organisation: The Making of Neoliberal Knowledge and Hegemony’, 27–50.

award ceremony speech in 1974, to congratulate Hayek's attempts at 'enhancing the viability of a liberal, individualistically orientated social system', 'increasing attention to the problems of socialist central planning' and the conclusion that 'only through a far-reaching decentralization in a market system'³¹⁸. Two years later, Lundberg presented a speech again, this time to Friedman. In time, the theories promoted by Hayek, Friedman and their followers began to exert influence in a variety of policy fields, particularly in monetarist matters, as these theories start to gain wide spread recognition.³¹⁹

By the late 1970s, free market protagonists were organising across the world, and Sweden was no exception. Neoliberal theory entered the front stage of politics, especially in the US and UK. Various well-financed think-tanks and scholarly circles (particularly at the University of Chicago, where Milton Friedman dominated) fiercely promoted neoliberal economic theory.³²⁰ The Chicago School deregulation economics favours competition, consumer choice and consumer welfare. The first experiment with neoliberal politics on state level followed the 1973 Chilean coup d'état. Pinochet hired Chicago School economists to reverse nationalisations, privatise public funds, property, natural resources, social securities and so on. Chilean privatisation policies were brutal and swift in the hands of the military regime, and included reforms akin to the Swedish free-school-reform and pension system-transformation, as early as the 1970s.

Still, the UK and US have is often treated as the vanguard of privatisation politics. There, the neoliberal revolution was accomplished by consent rather than coercion, and with wisdoms from the failures in Latin America. "Freedom" functioned as a common signifier in the demands for civil rights, women's movements, anti-war protests, and neoliberals alike. The intrusive oppressive state was articulated as the enemy, both of the socio-political movements of 1968 – and for the emerging neoliberal movements. Friedman was also a significant influence on the politics of Ronald Reagan, whose economic deregulation politics shaped 1980's USA.³²¹ Meanwhile in the UK, the conservative party under Margaret Thatcher was victorious in the 1979 general election. Privatisation was a crucial ingredient in the subsequent Thatcherite regime, along with a reformation of trade unions, lower taxes, and a reduction of public spending.³²²

³¹⁸ Erik Lundberg, 'The Prize in Economics 1974 - Presentation Speech', *The Official Web Site of the Nobel Prize* <https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/1974/presentation-speech.html> [accessed 3 September 2017].

³¹⁹ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

³²⁰ Plehwe and Walpen, 'Between Network and Complex Organisation: The Making of Neoliberal Knowledge and Hegemony', 27–50; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

³²¹ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Manuel Riesco, 'Chile, A Quarter of a Century on', *New Left Review*, I, 238, 1999, 97–125; Manuel Riesco, 'Is Pinochet Dead?', *New Left Review*, II, 47, 2007, 5–20.

³²² Anthony Seldon and Daniel Collings, *Britain under Thatcher*, Seminar Studies in History, 99-0117395-7 (Harlow, 1999); Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*. Seldon and Collings, *Britain under Thatcher*, 27.

Thatcher also set out to privatize all those sectors of the economy that were in public ownership. The sales would boost the public treasury and rid the government of burdensome future obligations towards losing enterprises. These state-run enterprises had to be adequately prepared for privatization [...] often through shedding labour. [...] But the aim here was also to change the political culture by extending the field of personal and corporate responsibility and encouraging greater efficiency, individual/corporate initiative, and innovation. British Aerospace, British Telecom, British Airways, steel, electricity and gas, oil, coal, water, bus services, railways, and a host of smaller state enterprises were sold off in a massive wave of privatizations. Britain pioneered the way in showing how to do this [...] The legitimacy of this whole movement was successfully underpinned, however, by the extensive selling off of public housing to tenants. [...] Thatcher forged consent through the cultivation of a middle class that relished the joys of home ownership, private property, individualism, and the liberation of entrepreneurial opportunities.³²³

The success of Reagan and Thatcher's economic policies can and have been measured in various ways. What Harvey emphasises is however the way in which political, ideological, and intellectual positions that at first seemed to be minority were made mainstream under Reagan and Thatcher.³²⁴

Much like the Chicago school, a *public choice theory* of political and economic theory is developed at the University of Virginia by authors such as James Buchanan (also MPS member and "Nobel" laureate). Suspicious of most government action, public monopolies, career-driven political figures and public officials, this approach argues that politicians are subjected to lobbying and acting in self-interests they may create a system of distribution which favours already privileged actors. Therefore, a public sector narrowed down to include only very basic protectionist services, with most societal functions assigned to the market, is the ideal for the Virginia public choice school.³²⁵ In general, neoliberal theorists argue for a minimalised state. Based on strong individual private property rights, such approaches argue that individual freedoms should be prioritised and guaranteed by a renovated rule of law, institutions supporting the free functions of markets and trade, and minimal or marketised state-like structures. Contractual obligations and engagement would be at the heart of both legal systems and the forces that would uphold such systems (police, prisons, et cetera). Freely negotiated contractual obligations hold a certain sanctity in such perspective that are inspired by classic liberalism. Accordingly, because contracts and the individual right to freedom of action, expression, and choice must be protected - the state must use its

³²³ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 60–61.

³²⁴ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

³²⁵ James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1962).

monopoly of violence to safeguard these freedoms and rights – but there ends the state’s scope.³²⁶

Freedom of choice becomes the only option

Political investments in the following decades are increasingly aimed to promote “freedom of choice” for clients (rather than patients or citizens), market mechanisms within the governing systems, and private entrepreneurship. The “targets approach” to managing public services is based on indicators and quantitative evaluations. New methods of management are introduced into different sectors of society.³²⁷ All over the world, privatisation policies have been implemented in variegated ways, extents and with diverging outcomes. Contextual conditions, institutional arrangements and socio-economic power relations vary on national, local, and regional levels. Just as important are the pragmatic negotiations that surround the attempts of turning ideals into realities.³²⁸ In several cases, privatisation has been used to rally voters, making the general election into a question of reform – where “reform” meant privatisation. As a symbolic issue for politicians, privatisation has become an issue representing diverse neoliberal demands, in post-structuralist terms.³²⁹ Large parts of Latin America experienced a wave of privatisation starting in the 1980s. Several authors point to the ideological aspect of these projects where macroeconomic conditions played a smaller part than (not necessarily democratic) political willingness. Privatisation has functioned as an ideological battleground, rather than a mere practical solution.³³⁰

Privatisation politics is said to have gained hegemonic status in Argentina during the 1990s, as public expenditure was regulated under ‘new criteria of morality and austerity’³³¹ and severe privatisation policies were implemented with parliamentary consensus. This discursive shift was, according to Sebastián Barros, a response to a dislocation of the social order brought on by the ongoing economic crisis. The transformation of the economy was presented as a necessity, not only as the right course

³²⁶ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Raleigh, N.C., USA, n.d.); Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York, 1974); Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*; Friedrich A. von Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty. The Definitive Edition* (Chicago, 1960).

³²⁷ Florence Faucher-King and Patrick Le Galès, ‘New Labour Och Skapandet Av Utvärderingssamhället’, *Fronesis*, 32–33, 2010, 157–74; Christopher Hood, ‘Gaming in Targetworld: The Targets Approach to Managing British Public Services’, *Public Administration Review*, 66/4 (2006), 515–21.

³²⁸ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

³²⁹ Gavan McCormack, ‘Koizumi’s Coup’, *New Left Review*, II, 35, 2005, 5–16.

³³⁰ Medeiros, ‘Asset-Stripping the State’, 109–32; Manzetti, *Privatization South American Style*.

³³¹ Sebastián Barros, ‘The Discursive Continuities of the Menemist Rupture’, in *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. by Francisco Panizza, Phronesis (London, 2005), 268.

of action – but as the only option.³³² Even trade unions supported privatisation policies – contrary to the interests of its members, and ‘became private entrepreneurs as owners of public utilities, trains, cargo ships, and pension funds.’³³³ Elsewhere, in answer to Mexico’s bankruptcy in the 1980s, the rescuing trio (the IMF, the World Bank, and the US Treasury) insisted on budgetary austerity, far-reaching privatisations, reorganisation of the financial markets to accommodate foreign capital and flexibilization of labour markets. This sparked socio-political conflict and military repression when labour contracts were sold as part and parcel of privatisations. With the emergence of new economic crises, Mexico and Argentina were later forced into increasing debts, devaluation, increased unemployment, and socio-political crises.³³⁴

At the collapse of state socialism in Europe, neoliberal forces utilised this historical window of opportunity administer economic shock therapy and a wave of privatisation in Eastern Europe. This window was at times widened by unexpected forces.³³⁵ Dorothee Bohle and Gisela Neunhöffer’s show how neoliberal networks in Poland, which were otherwise narrowly confined, manage to shape major aspects of the transition process following from the breakdown of the communist order by mobilising popular support, building discursive coalitions, and constructing the neoliberal privatisation project as only alternative imaginable to the former, discredited stateist system. Like Sweden, Poland was hit by an economic crisis at the turn of the 1980s into the 1990s, which was *constructed as* a result of state socialism – a notion instituted as a common sense via mainstream analyses. The communist regime used force to implement “purely” economic reforms, encourage transformation of state enterprises into joint-stock or limited-liability companies or even privatisation. Emerging neoliberal forces made odd bedfellows, first with the communist regime and later with Solidarity. In accordance with my own findings, the emphasis on private property, individualism in an open attack on collectivist values, were central to the Polish neoliberal formation. Privatisation was articulated as a crucial demand on the way to

³³² Barros, ‘The Discursive Continuities of the Menemist Rupture’, 250–73.

³³³ Maria Victoria Murillo, *Labor Unions, Partisan Coalitions, and Market Reforms in Latin America*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge, 2001), 2.

³³⁴ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Barros, ‘The Discursive Continuities of the Menemist Rupture’, 250–73; Manzetti, *Privatization South American Style*; Riesco, ‘Is Pinochet Dead?’, 5–20.

³³⁵ See for example Kevin Adamson, ‘Romanian Social Democracy’, in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, ed. by David J. Howarth, Aletta J. Norval, and Yannis Stavrakakis (Manchester ; New York : New York, 2000); Anders Åslund, *How Capitalism Was Built: The Transformation of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia* (Cambridge, 2013); Marc Weinstein, ‘Solidarity’s Abandonment of Worker Councils: Redefining Employee Stakeholder Rights in Post-Socialist Poland’, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38 (2000), 49–73; Dorothee Bohle and Gisela Neunhöffer, ‘Why Is There No Third Way? The Role of Neoliberal Ideology, Network and Think Tanks in Combating Market, Socialism and Shaping Transformation in Poland.’, in *Neoliberal Hegemony: A Global Critique*, ed. by Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen, and Gisela Neunhöffer, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (London; New York, 2006), 89–104.

reform (to stave off the dangers of collectivism).³³⁶ Similarly, a team of Western economists advised the transformation of the Soviet Union. One of them, Anders Åslund, holds privatisation as the most significant policy on the road to capitalism. Privatisation, he argues, has a twofold purpose: to align business incentives with the public good and to form a political “bulwark” against any regression back to communism. The most important aspect of privatisation in this case was not how it was implemented but how *quickly*.³³⁷ As we shall see, this notion is also represented in the empirical material, in addition to Åslund himself.

Firms, industries, and services, in Sweden and many parts of Europe, had previously been protected from complete market competition. But in the 1990s competition and changeover of assets from public to private ownership, was being implemented in various ways – aided by technological change, internal administrative divisions, and partial sell outs. The creation of markets (where there were none) by state intervention, increased contracting, complete privatisations, a mimicking of internal markets within the public sector, and the implementation of new public management in every sector imaginable, has been seen as trademarks of neoliberalism.³³⁸ But how could such dramatic shifts take place in country like Sweden – with a strong social democratic electorate, a regime characterised by consensus rather than coercion, and a crisis that could have been framed as proof of the ineffectiveness, just as well as the superiority, of market mechanisms? What made this transformation of regulations and eco-political attitudes possible?

³³⁶ Bohle and Neunhöffer, ‘Why Is There No Third Way? The Role of Neoliberal Ideology, Network and Think Tanks in Combating Market, Socialism and Shaping Transformation in Poland.’, 89–104.

³³⁷ Åslund, *How Capitalism Was Built*.

³³⁸ See Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*. It should be mentioned that other researchers ascribe the increased marketisation *by state intervention* as an *ordoliberal* project see Mirowski and Plehwe, *The Road from Mont Pèlerin : The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*; Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

The local and historical context: crises and privatisation politics in Sweden

Det finns ett folk av en särskild sort; Nere vid piteälva
Och våran slogan är jädrigt kort; Det kan vi göra själva

Vi är ett frejdigt folk gunås; Nere vid piteälva
Och ingen behöver tänka åt Oss; Det kan vi göra själva

Och kommer det gubbar när det är val; Nere vid piteälva
Behöver dom inte hålla nåt tal; Det kan vi göra själva

Vi vill inte ha löften ifrån AMS; Nere vid piteälva
För tingel-tangel och billigt krams; Det kan vi göra själva

Vi behöver inget systembolag; Nere vid piteälva
För läskedrycker av alla de slag; Det kan vi göra själva [...]

Ja vi skiter i order och direktiv; Nere vid piteälva
För leva våra egna liv; Det måste vi göra själva³³⁹

In the late 1980s, the tide has turned on the social-democratic state-building project. Highlighted in the quote above is precisely this. Politicians, labour market policies, state regulation and top-down ideology are out of favour in the public eye. But it was not always so. At the height of the Great Depression, the Swedish Social Democratic party takes government office for what was to become 44 years of nearly uninterrupted rule³⁴⁰. This strong station left the Party more or less free to internally debate, plan and build what we now refer to as the Swedish welfare state. The Swedish Social Democrats chiselled out their own place in history. Class conflicts were negotiated and stabilised around a compromise where a centralised trade union structure bargained collectively with the capitalist class. Ideals of a redistributive socialism, progressive taxation, elaborate welfare services, reduced income inequality and poverty marked the shape of the Swedish welfare state. The political culture, debate and society of this time-period is often referred to as products of a social democratic hegemony.³⁴¹ The party which

³³⁹ Ronny Eriksson, *Kvad*, Aotom taotom, 1986.

³⁴⁰ With the exception of three months in 1936. Sweden had but three prime ministers between 1932 and 1976 – all of them Social Democrats. In the years 1976-1982, Sweden has four different constellations of centre-right regimes.

³⁴¹ Johannes Lindvall, *The Politics of Purpose: Swedish Macroeconomic Policy after the Golden Age*, Göteborg Studies in Politics, 0346-5942 ; 84 (Göteborg, 2004). Pontusson, 'Radicalization and Retreat in Swedish Social Democracy', 5–33; SCB Statistiska Centralbyrån, 'Historisk statistik över valåren

was once a labour movement had effectively become state. This is unique in a liberal democracy, not just for labour-parties but for any party as such.

As in almost all advanced capitalist societies, socio-political and ideological tensions were sharpened, and a new wave of labour unrest hit Sweden in the late 1960s and early 1970s. People would march, sign petitions, write letters to editors, voice their opinions and challenge both local and national decision makers on everything from matters of war, nuclear power, or the lack of child day-care centres to elm-trees under threat³⁴². As the crisis of Keynesianism loomed large, the national social democratic trade union confederation (LO) turned to the Social Democratic party for legislative action and proposed to democratise working-life. Expansions of public welfare services, insurances, and policies together with reformed industrial policies followed in the 1970s.³⁴³ The state passed acts which promised to give labour a governing influence on the firm's decisions regarding production. This strategic change from negotiations with the reluctant the Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF) – to legislation, brought fast, short term gains for workers in the 1970's. Taken together, all these labour-friendly proposals were perceived by SAF as a collective legislative assault on business's management rights. Unsurprisingly, it resisted. Therefore, in parallel to what occurred in the United States, a sense of oppression under state and organised labour grew among employers.³⁴⁴

What really set the Employers Confederation on a collision course with the trade unions was the proposal for the “wage-earners funds” (WEFs). The idea of the WEFs were introduced by trade union-economist Rudolf Meidner in 1975, as collective shareholding tax-financed funds. By means of capital ownership, workers' influence over the economy would increase by this proposal: the revenue of a 20 percent profit tax on corporations would be used to buy out most of the capital shares and put the control of funds in the hands of the trade union and result in a type of co-ownership. Intended as a means to democratise the economy and slow down the concentration of economic power in private hands – the WEF-proposal was treated by business as a frontal assault on the sanctity of private ownership. Controversy and powerful opposition, even from

1910-2014. procentuell fördelning av giltiga valsedlar efter parti och typ av val', *Statistiska Centralbyrån* <http://www.scb.se/sv/_Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Demokrati/Allmanna-val/Allmanna-val-valresultat/12268/12275/Historisk-valstatistik/32065/> [accessed 27 June 2015]. Cf Åsa Linderborg, *Socialdemokraterna skriver historia: historieskrivning som ideologisk maktresurs 1892-2000*, Atlas Akademi, 99-3423719-9 (Stockholm, 2001).

³⁴² Daniel Helldén, 'Demokratin utmanas : Almstriden och det politiska etablissemanger', 2005 <<http://su.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:197665>> [accessed 22 January 2017].

³⁴³ Erik Bengtsson and Örjan Nyström, 'Konvergens eller divergens?', *Fronesis*, 32–33, 2010.; Pontusson, 'Socialdemokratin, marknadsekonomi och solidariteten', 139–56. Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*, 60–61.

³⁴⁴ Blyth, *Great Transformations*; Pontusson, 'Socialdemokratin, marknadsekonomi och solidariteten', 139–56; Erik Åsard, *Kampen om löntagarfonderna : fondutredningen från samtal till sammanbrott* (Stockholm, 1985); Sjöberg, *Löntagarfondsfrågan - en hegemonisk vändpunkt*.

the top of the social democratic party, preceded the belated instatement of the funds in 1983.³⁴⁵

While left-leaning peoples' movements had a long-standing tradition of taking to the streets in protest and celebration, the Swedish right's moments of collective mobilisation are few. Yet, on the fourth of October in 1983, conservative forces rallied tens of thousands of (mostly business) people to march through the financial district of Stockholm and down to the Government's quarters, in a protest against the WEFs.³⁴⁶ In 1983, relations between the labour unions and employers organisations deteriorated.³⁴⁷ A rising tide of right-wing rhetoric centred on individual liberties and freedoms opposed what they identified as oppressive taxation policies of the Swedish state, as we shall see. 'These debates reverberated throughout the media and gained increasing currency in the popular imagination'³⁴⁸, Harvey argues.

A final consequence of the WEF-line of politics would be the abolition of private capitalism and the instatement of socialism. This is what makes David Harvey's exclaim that 'probably nowhere in the Western world was the power of capital more democratically threatened in the 1970s than in Sweden.'³⁴⁹ However, this never came to pass. In mobilising strong against the WEFs, SAF built a financial leverage the would outshine any other business organisation in the world, in economic comparison and started to invest more and more in the politics of ideas. Thus, the *Centre for Business and Policy Studies* (SNS), think tank *Timbro* and publishing house *Ratio* were formed. 'Ratio was founded in 1978 with the aim to increase factual, logical and knowledge-seeking contributions to the public debate – to serve individuals independence, private enterprise, free research and technological development'³⁵⁰. Ratio's activities were controlled by a 'scientific council'³⁵¹. *The Swedish Free Enterprise Foundation* (NÄFO) and the *Joint Committee for Private Commerce and Industry* (NÄSO) were re-mobilised in the 1980s to organised public education on campaign issues; to fund and form think tanks and publishing outlets.³⁵² Largely funded by SAF, The City University and City University Press were founded as a private university in 1988 by actors and academics with ties to Ratio, Timbro and some who later moved on to the Mont Pèlerin Society. The City University primarily provided research and education in economics, but closed down in 2001. Many of the etatist research reports and monographies from the

³⁴⁵ Åsard, *kampen om löntagarfonderna*; Sjöberg, *Löntagarfondsfrågan - En hegemonisk vändpunkt*; Blyth, *Great Transformations*.

³⁴⁶ Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*, 136.

³⁴⁷ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

³⁴⁸ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 113.

³⁴⁹ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 112.

³⁵⁰ Torgny T. Segerstedt, *Det politiskt omöjliga* (Stockholm, 1988), 2.

³⁵¹ Segerstedt, *Det politiskt omöjliga*, 2.

³⁵² Blyth, *Great Transformations*.

City University Press were authored by individuals (at the time, later or earlier) active in the Conservative party, its youth organisation, its student association, *Nyliberalen*, or Timbro.³⁵³

The work of Swedish neoliberal think tanks at the end of 1970s was likely done with inspiration from the UK and the US. Accounts of exchanges between the UK's *Institute for Economic Affairs*, *Adam Smith Institute* and Swedish Ratio, not in the least in questions about privatisation, are published in Ratio's own booklets.³⁵⁴ All these "institutes" employ strategic publishing of "reports" and "essays" – connoting a scientific quality and officiality associated with established research institutes, universities, official government reports and councils.³⁵⁵ SNS promoted critical economic research on the Swedish welfare state model and disseminated these new ideas to decisionmakers and economist – targeting an small but influential audience. The ideas became highly influential the development of Swedish socio-economic policies and institutions during the late 1980s and early 1990s.³⁵⁶ While SNS were successful in marketing the idea of a "system failure" of the Swedish welfare state to economists and politicians, Timbro took this debate to the broader public.³⁵⁷

In the meantime, the Conservative Party took office in 1976, for the first time in four decades. According to Harvey's analysis, the conservatives failed to realise their own demands due to strong labour unions, and despite a continued campaign of ideological contestation and business mobilisation in the late 1970s, the Social Democrats returned to power in 1982.³⁵⁸ This marked the beginning of third way politics in Sweden. Centred on devaluation, a right-wing fraction of the social democratic party, consisting mainly of young economists proposed increased business profits, private sector

³⁵³ Such as: Anders Borg, *Generell välfärdspolitik: bara magiska ord?* (1992); Helena Riviere, *Meningen var ju att hjälpa människorna, inte att ta ifrån dem ansvaret* (1993); Håkan Arvidsson, Lennart Bemtson och Lars Dencik, *Modernisering och välfärd* (1994); Anita Lignell Du Rietz, *Myten om jämställdhet i välfärdsstaten* (1994); Ulf Kristersson, *Det socialpolitiska arvet* (1994); Gunnar Du Rietz, *Välfärdsstatens finansiering* (1994); Stefan Carlsson, *Socialtjänstens kompetens och funktion* (1995); Thomas Gür, *Staten och nykomlingarna* (1996); Karin Busch Zetterberg, *Det civila samhället i socialstaten* (1996); Emil Uddhammar, *Arbete, välfärd och bidrag* (1997); Hans L Zetterberg och Carl Johan Ljungberg, *Vårt land – den svenska välfärdsstaten. Slutrapport från ett forskningsprogram* (1996)

³⁵⁴ Janerik Larsson, "Thatcher och "det politiskt omöjliga", in *Det politiskt omöjliga*, ed. By Torgny t. Segerstedt (stockholm, 1988), 45–64.

³⁵⁵ Madsen Pirie, *Think Tank: The Story of the Adam Smith Institute* (London, 2012); 'MOU : Medborgarnas Offentliga Utredningar', 1988; 'Konjunkturrådets Rapport', 1974.

³⁵⁶ Blyth, *Great Transformations*, 216.

³⁵⁷ As Kristina Boréus' shows in her study of the public debate, neoliberal opinion pieces increased from 30 percent to 70 percent from 1975 to 1989 in conservative daily press (*Svenska Dagbladet*) and from 15 to 30 percent in the more mainstream *Dagens Nyheter* between the years 1971 to 1989. Boréus, *Högerväg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*.

³⁵⁸ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

expansion by reducing wages and public-sector resources.³⁵⁹ The deregulations and devaluations that followed had disastrous effects on the Swedish economy and labour market.³⁶⁰

Real estate roller-coaster, bank bailout, currency crash

The late 80's and early 90's proved to be eventful times for the people in Sweden who were facing a major social, financial, and political crisis marked by mass unemployment, tumbling property values and austere credit crisis. By the beginning of the 1990s, or what Sven Hort calls the *decennium horribile* of the Swedish welfare state, Sweden was on the brink of financial collapse³⁶¹. Combined effects of underfunded tax reforms, implemented in the middle of a booming real estate market; increasing demands for loans; rising prices secured against mortgage assets; deregulation of banking; and the lifting of exchange controls, added fuel to the fire of the credit market boom. The social democratic government did not realise that the bubble was about to burst even in 1990. When finance companies collapsed, banks started to call in their loans and the credit crunch commenced. A complex set of symptoms including deflation, collapsing real estate prices, and roaring interest rates took the inflation-fighting social democrats by surprise in 1991. The 1991 election showed a record low support for the Social democratic party and a centre-right coalition government continued on the neoliberal road that the Social Democrats had laid out.³⁶² Despite labour market policies introduced by the new conservative regimes, Swedish industrial output had fallen by 12 percent and unemployment had risen from just over 4 percent to around 9 percent a year into the conservative take-over. By 1992, the export industry was collapsing. Business, conservatives, and social democrats all pushed towards a EU-membership (official on the January 1st, 1995) to solve their problems.³⁶³ Every Swedish government in the 80s and 90s introduced reforms to privatise state-owned business more or less,

³⁵⁹ Kjell-Olof Feldt, *Den tredje vägen : en politik för sverige* (stockholm, 1985); Blyth, *Great Transformations*; Ryner, *Capitalist Restructuring, Globalization and the Third Way*.

³⁶⁰ To offset imbalances, the Social Democratic government abolished the bond-holding requirements for banks in 1983, thus adding to further credit market liquidity. Restrictions on purchases of shares were lifted and in May 1985 the Riksbank abolished interest rate regulation. In November 1985, the so-called November revolution occurred when the Riksbank abolished limits on loan ceilings (much like earlier development in the United States). See also Hans L. Zetterberg and Carl-Johan Ljungberg, *Vårt land - den svenska socialstaten : slutrapport från ett forskningsprogram*, socialstatsprojektet, 99-1580443-1 (Stockholm, 1997).

³⁶¹ Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*, 25.

³⁶² Blyth, *Great Transformations*; Sjöberg, *Löntagarfundsfrågan - En hegemonisk vändpunkt*; Åsard, *kampen om löntagarfonderna*; Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 1, History, Policies, and Institutions 1884-1988*; Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*.

³⁶³ Blyth, *Great Transformations*.

encourage competition and entrepreneurship as well as contribute to the abolishment of the monopoly situation for public utilities and services.³⁶⁴

The reason behind the crash was put down to overloaded welfare budgets rather than market liberal ideas – and both politics and analyses treated cuts in public welfare and state expenditure as the only available option. Paradoxically, the elaborated welfare system designed to protect workers from changes in the workplace, for instance, is what allowed the state to implement far-reaching economic deregulations.³⁶⁵ Carl Hamilton and Dag Rolander proclaim that the catastrophic mistakes of the Swedish government (1991-1993) were due to a cognitive locking that made only one solution possible³⁶⁶ - exemplified by the government policy statement of 1991: ‘politics of the only way’³⁶⁷. Blyth credits the Social Democrats’ adoption of business ideas and conservative path dependence in policies to the homogeneity of economists and economic opinion in Swedish public discourse.

For the [social democratic party] SAP, deficit reduction, inflation control, and balanced budgets, rather than full employment and an equitable distribution of income, became the cornerstones of macroeconomic policy after 1994. The privatization of the pension system, the public good that brought the middle classes into embedded liberal institutions, has been discussed in the Riksdag, and private provision has been de facto accepted. In short, the SAP is still cognitively locked into these new economic ideas, thereby obviating any chance of rebuilding the old institutional order. Given that the economy had improved from its 1992-3 low point and that the 1994 election clearly signalled that the public did not want any more *laissez faire* policies, the question remains why the SAP accepted these policy commitments.³⁶⁸

The Swedish welfare state and its social support systems has, and still is, financed partly through taxes on income, goods, employer payrolls, properties and so on. Demands to lower taxes were on top of the agenda for the conservative Moderates with their own neo-liberal “Reaganites” and “Thatcherites” during the 1980s and 1990s. Part and parcel of this strategy was to slim down the welfare state and open up for private initiatives to compete for tax funding. Entrepreneurship was a high priority issue for the conservative-liberal coalition of 1991-1994. Their manifesto, “New Course for Sweden”, encouraged entrepreneurship in previously protected, non-profit sectors.

³⁶⁴ Pontusson, ‘Socialdemokratin, Marknadsekonomi och solidariteten’, 139–56.

³⁶⁵ Pontusson, ‘Socialdemokratin, Marknadsekonomi och solidariteten’, 139–56. For a comparison of New Labour’s Third Way of privatisations see Raco, ‘The New Contractualism, the Privatization of the Welfare State, and the Barriers to Open Source Planning’, 45–64.

³⁶⁶ Carl Hamilton and Dag Rolander, *Att leda sverige in i krisen: moral och politik i nedgångstid*, Norstedts Storpocket, 99-1618851-3 (Stockholm, 1993).

³⁶⁷ Carl Bildt, *Den enda vägen* (Stockholm, 1994).

³⁶⁸ Blyth, *Great Transformations*, 237–38.

First came preschools, then primary and (primarily) secondary education. The health sector and elderly care in particular was to be a golden privatisation prospect. New conditions for private contractors emerged from the deregulation of strict rules and regulations for public welfare systems in education, health, and care services. State monopolies were opened up to competition. Local initiatives were highly encouraged, but not as often the result.³⁶⁹

Right-wing upswing?

It is commonly agreed that a general shift in public opinion from socialism towards market values took place in the 1980s. The 1991 election survey ascribed the loss of power by the Social Democratic Party to an ideological swing among the voters.³⁷⁰ However, through an analysis of attitude and opinion surveys, Stefan Svallfors was able to show that the increased support for market solutions on questions like the provision of child and elderly care, did not include an opposition to state and local authorities. Private enterprises were simply preferred before family based provision. In fact, public support for state provision of said services, along with education and social work, has been relatively stable over time. Support for the private sector did double; but support for state provision outshines support for private enterprises in most issues.³⁷¹ Of course, the reason that the support for state provision might seem to be a stable, or even increasing trend over time, could be that Svallfors collected his data from three national surveys in Sweden: in 1982, 1986 and 1992. This means that the important and turbulent years in-between are left out. It is precisely in the years from 1989 to 1992 that the SOM-institute discovered the most drastic shift in public opinion regarding privatisation of public sector services: from a strong tendency in support of state provision, to a strong support for private provisions, and back to a stronger support for public provision³⁷². Nevertheless, Svallfors concludes that:

³⁶⁹ Svensson, *Marknadsanpassningens politik*; Stolt, Blomqvist and Winblad, 'Privatization of Social Services', 560–67; Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*; Bildt, *Den enda vägen*; Walter Korpi and Carl Bildt, *Halkar sverige efter?: Sveriges ekonomiska tillväxt 1820-1990 i jämförande belysning* (Stockholm, 1992).

³⁷⁰ Mikael Gilljam and Sören Holmberg, *Väljarna inför 90-talet: en sammanfattning av några resultat från 1991 års valundersökning* (Stockholm, 1993).

³⁷¹ While the support for private child care is the extreme case that doubles from 10 to 20 percent; the support for public provisions is stable around 48.5 percent, in the years 1986-1992. On the other end, the support for private enterprises within social work doubles from 2 to 4 percent as the support for state provided social work drops from 87.8 to 85.5. I.e., these shifts are marginal. Svallfors finds an even greater stability in the question of how to finance welfare policies. Changes in support for tax financing are negligible. Support for the state financing of education, health, child care and elderly care is still strong and increasing in several areas. Svallfors, 'The End of Class Politics?', 53–74.

³⁷² Nilsson, 'Offentlig sektor och privatisering 1986-1996'.

the sudden loss of legitimacy for welfare policies envisaged by some interpreters is hard to detect at the level of ordinary citizens' attitudes. The present crisis of the Swedish welfare state is not emanating from any grass-roots revolt against the present organization of welfare policies.³⁷³

According to Boréus' analysis of the political shifts public debate, the "elites" (i.e. professional politicians, university professors, CEOs, leaders for large firms, trade unions and organisations, and so on), and not "the common people", were the ones to first veer rightwards.³⁷⁴ This conclusion is in accordance with opinion polls from Swedish elections, for example. The public opinion began to shift several years after "the elite", politicians and economists had adopted to the neoliberal agenda and advocacy groups had propagated for it. Boréus does mention opinion moulding activities and organised political propaganda, but not the forces behind this.³⁷⁵ Although ideas have had a great impact on economical thinking, I argue that they do not necessarily emanate from the economic discipline.

Still, the sustainability of the welfare state was debated by social scientists, politicians and intellectuals left and right. With the fall of the Berlin wall in the rear-view mirror, many economists, and many political scientists and sociologists, argued that the welfare state was becoming too expensive and inflexible.³⁷⁶ Elements of competition, internal markets, and performance targets such as profit maximisation were introduced into state institutions. This way, marketization *within* organisations forced organisations to allocate resources among their own departments along market logics such as pricing. Subjecting state institutions to the model of business corporations, greatly affected the public sector from within.³⁷⁷

³⁷³ Svallfors, 'The End of Class Politics?', 69.

³⁷⁴ Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*, 63. It should be mentioned that according to Boréus analysis, these "common" workers are completely absent from mainstream media's opinion pages.

³⁷⁵ Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*.

³⁷⁶ Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*; Lars Jonung, 'Ideologisk tystnad. Lindbeckkommissionen talar inte klarspråk, skriver Lars Jonung', *Dagens Nyheter*, 21 August 1993, 4; Assar Lindbeck, *Nya villkor för ekonomi och politik: Ekonomikommisionens förslag: betänkande*, Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 0375-250X; 1993:16 (Stockholm, 1993); Assar Lindbeck, *Turning Sweden around* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994).

³⁷⁷ David Harvey, 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism', in *Urban Politics*, 4 vols (London, 2010); Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*.

Implementation of privatisation politics: towards a tax-financed welfare market

Even if this is not a dissertation about privatisation as such, but processes and practices involved in the meaning making of the debate, further contextualisation, and definitions are in order, to show how privatisation has been treated in both theory and practice. Definitions of privatisation largely agree that it refers to the transfer of services, enterprises and assets owned and controlled by state authorities into to the private sector. Political negotiations and bargaining around privatisation schemes have often led either to half-way houses – where governments take the role of customers using private contractors to deliver certain services – or to public-private-partnerships. Another similar mode of operation is new public management, where the government still provides a service through its own employees, who are now expected to act as private profit-making firms while users of their services are treated as customers in a market.³⁷⁸

Instances of privatisations of elements of the public sector have been more prominent in some areas than others. Scepticism towards total marketisation have limited the extent of privatisation and competition especially among the health services, which are usually regarded as tougher nuts to crack for proponents of privatisation.³⁷⁹ Later on, private entrepreneurs became engaged in these areas as well.³⁸⁰ In this section, I give a few examples of implementations of privatisation politics in the areas of education, infrastructure and communication, as well as health services - most of which Torsten Svensson has explained in detail³⁸¹. But first, I will return to the story from the opening of this chapter.

³⁷⁸ Bo Rothstein and Shirin Ahlbäck Öberg, *Politik som organisation : förvaltningspolitikens grundproblem* (Stockholm, 2010); Louise D. Bringselius, *Personnel Resistance in Public Professional Service Mergers: The Merging of Two National Audit Organizations*, Lund Studies in Economics and Management, 107 (Lund, 2008); Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*.

³⁷⁹ Nilsson, 'Offentlig Sektor Och Privatisering 1986-1996'; Svallfors, 'The End of Class Politics?', 53–74.

³⁸⁰ CF. Stolt, Blomqvist and Winblad, 'Privatization of Social Services', 560–67; Blomqvist, 'The Choice Revolution', 139–155.

³⁸¹ Svensson, *Marknadsanpassningens politik*.

From Pippi Longstocking to Private Schools

For more than 150 years', foundations and corporations tied to Wallenberg-family has dominated the Swedish business sector and shareholder market.³⁸² A small but powerful capitalist class resulted in a disproportionate system where a few families dominated the means of production.³⁸³ The most telling modern example of this type of welfare capitalistic regime, is big business' intervention in the welfare sector politics through the introduction of private centres for child day-care, via "Pysslingen". "Pysslingen" was named with inspiration from Astrid Lindgren's children's stories. In 1976, Lindgren herself became a symbol for the anti-tax agencies when a bureaucratic short circuit in taxation caused several taxes to be added on to each other. Lindgren made a public comment in the guise of a satirical tale of the witch *Pomperipossa*, who in all essence is in favour of a tax-financed welfare system, but is forced to pay a staggering 102 percent in taxes, just like the author herself. Published on the culture section of one of the leading evening papers, the story of *Pomperipossa* quickly gained the attention of media, responsible social-democratic politicians and conservatives in opposition.³⁸⁴

"Pysslingen" was the early test-balloon of privatisation in the (pre) school sector. The government came down hard on "Pysslingen" when it was launched in 1983. Children needed to be protected from profiteers, the argument went, and within less than a year the government had legislated against funding private for-profit companies with tax money. Today, for-profit welfare enterprises such as child care health, education and so on, funded with public money, are common – but in the 1980s it was more or less unthinkable.³⁸⁵

"Pysslingen" was the first welfare company in Sweden, operating under the multinational home appliances producer "Electrolux" – which in turn is a Wallenberg-owned conglomerate. Electrolux had a key role to play in the "Pysslingen"-debate, and consequently in the coming deregulation of education. The "Wallenberg-sphere" also owns companies in charge of primary and secondary education – and a private university founded by one of the earlier generations in 1908.³⁸⁶ Since the revival of "Pysslingen" as a legalised private education provider, it has spread significantly. Today, "Pysslingen" is owned by a mother company (which also owns several other private education providers under various names and forms), which is owned by a company, which is owned by a company, and so on, until higher up the chain where Wallenberg-

³⁸² Peter A. Swenson, *Capitalists against Markets: The Making of Labor Markets and Welfare States in the United States and Sweden* (New York, 2002).

³⁸³ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

³⁸⁴ Astrid Lindgren, 'Pomperipossa I Monismanien', *Expressen*, 2007

<<http://www.expressen.se/noje/pomperipossa-i-monismanien/>> [accessed 11 January 2017].

³⁸⁵ Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*, 142.

³⁸⁶ Swenson, *Capitalists against Markets*.

owned Investor sits as major shareholder.³⁸⁷ In short, by breaking up a state-owned monopoly, the unintended consequence is perfect opportunity for existing dominant market forces to create even larger monopolies. The centre-right government of 1991-1994, appointed a commission to analyse the government's proposals of privatisation, regarding state owned enterprises. The commission was to assess prices, timing, conditions; propose ownership structures and industrial solutions regarding every single sell off, to guide government decisions.³⁸⁸ The work of the commission was classified. However, members of the parliament criticised the president of the commission and the minister of business for their strong connections to the Wallenberg-sphere, and for profiting privately on these affairs (and for turning down deals that would not favour the Wallenberg-sphere).³⁸⁹ When the Social Democrats returned to office in 1994, the new minister of business closed down the commission, to put a stop to 'ideologically motivated privatisations'³⁹⁰.

Education

On the matter of education, Sweden has long been a pioneer in the marketization and privatisation of primary and secondary education. The municipalisation of the Swedish education system in 1989 was part of the Social democratic government's ambitions of decentralisation. Private alternatives were of yet a controversial question at the beginning of the 1990s. The idea of "freestanding" schools was however born in the early 1980s, with the Social Democrats in power. These so called "free schools" were still state funded and intended to function as a specialised, pedagogical complement to the public-school system. The combination of this free school system, municipalisation of funding and the conservative party's demands for freedom of choice in education

³⁸⁷ The mother company of "Pysslingen" and the rest of the concern is seated in off shore financial centre-cum-tax haven Guernsey. Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*, 142. AcadeMedia AB, *AcadeMedias Årsredovisning* (Bromma, Sweden, 2012) <<http://ow.ly/X5jU30gtNht>> [accessed 16 January 2017].

³⁸⁸ Per Westerberg, 'Privatiseringskommissionen Kommittédirektiv 1992:1', 1992 <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/kommittedirektiv/privatiseringskommissionen_GGB11> [accessed 4 September 2017].

³⁸⁹ 'Granskning av statsrådets tjänsteutövning och regeringsärendenas handläggning konstitutionsutskottets betänkande 1992/93:KU30 - Riksdagen' <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/granskning-av-statsradens-tjansteutovning-och_GG01KU30/html#bbil> [accessed 25 January 2017]; 'Granskning av statsrådets tjänsteutövning och regeringsärendenas handläggning konstitutionsutskottets betänkande 1994/95:KU30 - Riksdagen' <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/granskning-av-statsradens-tjansteutovning-och_GI01KU30/html> [accessed 4 September 2017].

³⁹⁰ 'Riksdagens Snabbprotokoll 1994/95:22 Tisdagen Den 15 November' <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/protokoll/riksdagens-snabbprotokoll-19949522-tisdagen-den_GI0922/html> [accessed 4 September 2017].

paved the way for further privatisation measures.³⁹¹ Financial and organisational responsibilities remain in the hands of local government, who are obliged to take on extra students when private providers go bankrupt. A voucher system is used to induce competition among public and private schools to attract parents and children, or consumers, with “the freedom of choice” to elect which school receives the pay check. A similar situation presents itself to universities, where even departments within a faculty are forced to act as competitors on a market over limited resources – between faculties, colleagues and universities. The education business has become dominated by a handful major firms that push out smaller providers, effectively cutting out competition. This reflects a tendency towards dominance of established for-profit firms in the education market. Tax money funds nearly all private schools; but in the board of these companies you would find outspoken neoliberals and nepotism.³⁹²

Infrastructure and communication

In 1991, the social democratic regime proposed a conversion of several state bodies into subsidiary companies, including the Swedish railroad system; telecommunications; the postal service; the state energy authority; and the National Forest Enterprise. In the late 80s, the railroad service had already been split up into autonomous companies under state monopoly to act as competitors on a free market. With the right-wing government of 1991-1994, less profitable parts of the railroad service were sold off and private providers were introduced on Swedish railroads. Even more radical steps were taken to fully privatise the rail traffic, but the social democratic successors in 1994 put these plans on hold. The state energy authority was very nearly subjected to privatisation, but political renegotiation led to a conversion of *Vattenfall* into a subsidiary company, owned by the state but run independently, by the beginning of 1992.³⁹³ The immediate result was major and sudden layoffs and desolation of remote communities, where substantial parts of the labour force had been engaged in *Vattenfall*. It was not until 1994 that the government made the decision to deregulate the energy market, a decision which were realised first in 1996. In 1993, the previous telecommunication authority was converted into a state-owned company and the former monopolies in postal delivery, radio broadcasting and telecommunication was broken by the

³⁹¹ Svensson, *Marknadsanpassningens Politik*, 154–60.

³⁹² Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*, 119–20. Swedish universities has largely been protected by privatisation so far, with a handful of old private universities and colleges surviving from the late 1800s and early 1900s, a couple of creative, cultural collages launched in the 1960s and 1970s, and another fistful of private alternatives with a psychology or theology focus launched since the very late 1980s early 1990s. See Marie Kahlroth and Magdalena Inkinen, *Universitet och högskolor: Årsrapport 2016* (Stockholm, 2016) <<http://ow.ly/A4xn30gtNmG>> [accessed 17 January 2017].

³⁹³ Svensson, *Marknadsanpassningens politik*, 102–4.

introduction of new “actors” on these newly constructed markets; then in 1994, the postal delivery was converted in to a state-owned company.³⁹⁴

Health services

Health services in Sweden have generally been run by regional governments and financed partly by tax money, and partly by user fees (even in the public system). While public health services increased rapidly in the mid-twentieth century, a small number of for-profit private health service providers survived. These private practitioners later become important sub-contractors. Attempts to stabilise the fractured finances and steer the old strong state towards a weaker future resulted in legislative changes paving the way for private initiatives financed by public funds. Since these changes in the 1990s, outpatient clinics have been sold off or contracted, major hospitals have been privatised, and the market for private alternatives among care takers and insurances have skyrocketed. Privatisation in this sector was used as a political strategy to reduce waiting times and guarantee faster treatments. Publicly subsidised patients turned to private providers when the time limit was exceeded, resulting in increased public private partnerships among hard-pressed counties.³⁹⁵

Domestic care of disabled and elderly, as well as nursing homes have to an increasing degree been contracted out to private providers. While contracting is the most common way of introducing private alternatives in these sectors, political scientists Paula Blomqvist and others have shown how the term privatisation in elderly care is treated synonymously with contracting, in Sweden.³⁹⁶ As local governments are responsible, some have outsourced services to private contractors, while others have introduced a voucher system to enable “free choice” among existing providers. Like the health care sector, a few non-profit, voluntary, small-scale, local alternatives have been active in services to the elderly and disabled, for many years. On a national level, disabled associations have had an empowering effect on their members and were a political force to be counted with at this time. The 1991 conservative led government cleverly joined forces with these pressure groups to push a proposal encouraging small-scale private initiatives in a sector dominated by a bureaucratic, impersonal, and strained public

³⁹⁴ Svensson, *Marknadsanpassningens politik*, 108–11.

³⁹⁵ Lundqvist, ‘Privatisering - Varför och varför inte?’, Svensson, *Marknadsanpassningens Politik*; Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*.

³⁹⁶ Stolt, Blomqvist and Winblad, ‘Privatization of Social Services’, 560–67.

service. Extended “choice” of provider and type of service was promised nationally and quickly implemented by right-wing regimes on a municipal level around the capital.³⁹⁷

Parallel to the old public welfare system, a new private welfare system supported by public financing, has emerged. Competition between public and private welfare providers have increased. Concentration processes in the private business sector have as well, and for-profit firms have expanded and pushed non-profit initiatives out of the market.³⁹⁸

Specific context of the analysis: media landscape

In 1986 certain events stunned both media, politicians, and people. An unknown assailant assassinated the prime minister in the street, as he and his wife were walking home from the cinema one evening. News of events spread, and were broadcasted on international radio, before reaching the national radio and television. For the first time in Swedish history (but ever since), news were broadcasted around the clock to keep citizens updated on events. This was a country which by applying to monopoly solutions like the rest of the Nordic countries and the UK, had opted for a public limited company with all rights reserved to broadcasting media.³⁹⁹ Hence, we would have been able to hear the news on one of the three national radio channels. Pictures of confused police officers and dazed ministers would have been televised on *both* channels. Perhaps we would have received the news through one of the main daily

³⁹⁷ Blomqvist, ‘The Choice Revolution’, 139–155; Stolt, Blomqvist and Winblad, ‘Privatization of Social Services’, 560–67; Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988–2015*.

³⁹⁸ Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988–2015*, 118–19.

³⁹⁹ A reorganisation in 1977 removed the monopoly paragraph and opened up for a new company structure being instituted in 1978 Stig Hadenius and Lennart Weibull, *Massmedier: En Bok Om Press, Radio Och TV* (Stockholm, 1989), 173–74. Swedish Radio (SR) becomes the parent company of Swedish National Radio, Swedish Local Radio, Swedish Educational Broadcasting and Swedish Television. The owner is still independent from the state; representatives from both press, business representations and later social movements [folkrörelser] were allowed to buy shares in the company. Both ownership and party affiliation among board members of SR was heavily debated in the 70s. As Hadenius and Weibull have previously shown, the rudimentary differences among the various actors involved made it ‘impossible for the broadcasting media monopoly to be able to act’ Hadenius and Weibull, *Massmedier*, 195. Private and business actors started broadcasting pirate radio. The Swedish Employers Association (SAF), who had been part of the Swedish Radio concern’s management, started with rival broadcast in 1986. Both owners and outside forces were questioning the existing model. Both the radio and television and monopolies are in effect broken in 1993, following political decisions in the preceding years, as new commercial companies are allowed to broadcast on the terrestrial television network and purchase radio frequencies. Hadenius and Weibull, *Massmedier*; Hadenius and Weibull, *Massmedier*.

newspapers, *DN*, *SvD*, *G-P*, or *Arbetet* (the latter which along with the rest of the labour movement's papers is threatened by bankruptcy by 1992).⁴⁰⁰ In short, the media landscape was much more limited in the late 1980s than it is today, with a few dominating actors. Considering the even scarcer number of news desks, news agencies or debate fora available through the three radio channels, the two television channels (all part of the same company) or the handful daily newspapers, a certain degree of uniformity or standardization is only to be expected.

Kristina Boréus' study (1994) of the right-wing upswing of neoliberalism and the struggle over language in Swedish public debate in 1969-1989, provides an informative backdrop for my own work. Through a quantified content analysis of parliamentary material, political party platforms, as well as opinion pages, culture sections, and editorial pages in daily newspapers⁴⁰¹, Boréus examined attempted reconceptualisations in the general debate, as well as the debate on developing countries. By tracing actors and their corresponding perspectives on politics, people and society, Boréus tried to ascertain whether a neoliberal hegemony could be said to exist by the end of the 1980s. She did this by comparing the 'share of right wing and non-right-wing ideas' – or rather contributors – at different points in time (an approach which I discuss and contend in chapters 1, 2 and 4).

Boréus gives several reasons for why a neoliberal hegemony did in fact not exist in the medialised public debate by 1989. These include the possibility to value material inequality as unjust, to consider the public sector as something other than merely "draining"; to speak of collective rights, of human needs beyond mere survival, of the right to health care, and of human beings as something other solely rational beings. In short, non-neoliberal conceptions still occurred in public debate.⁴⁰² Now, others would argue that the market has long since been the model for the state's activities⁴⁰³, an aspect of neoliberal hegemony that is not considered by Boréus. Moreover, as I explain in the following chapters, several aspects, and dimensions of public discourse in the late eighties and early nineties were in hegemonised by a neoliberal coalition.

The starting point of Boréus' project was to study the neoliberal hegemony, but she made a mistake in presuming that a clear-cut antagonistic relation existed between the labour movement (i.e. social democrats) and business – without further investigation. Political positions of who's right, who's left and who's neoliberal also appear pre-constructed. These *a priori* assumptions that guide Boréus (and many other researchers)

⁴⁰⁰ Hadenius and Weibull, *Massmedier*.

⁴⁰¹ The actual selection is more complicated, as Boréus has done a sort of randomised narrower, limited selection of opinion pieces to track the general debate, hopping through the time period – while following articles from official representatives from the Swedish Employers Association and the Social Democratic party and Union (LO) more (but not completely) extensively through the time period in question. See Boréus, *Högervåg: nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*, 356–61.

⁴⁰² Boréus, *Högervåg: nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*, 302–9.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

cloud many analytical judgments that could have shed light on murky waters. Several of the aspects Boréus list as neoliberal, conflict with the beliefs and arguments articulated by the self-defined neoliberals in my material, which begs the question: how do we define what is really “neoliberal”? Hence, where Boréus chooses to select her material depending on the official political affiliation of the author – I deliberately study all contributions to determine the enunciated positionings in each statement. My approach allows for flexibility in terms of actors and their political position, and letting the discursive negotiations be the focal point of the analysis – and not the actors.

Summary

Political and social forces attempted to create a popular support for privatisations and contributed to re-shape the Swedish welfare state in the late eighties and early nineties. Since then, the horizons and conceptions of the available alternatives of welfare state policies have narrowed⁴⁰⁴. While discourse in itself is not material, it has a material *character*, with far-reaching consequences. When contingent meanings and definitions become naturalised - a way of speaking becomes more than a language – it becomes a matter of hegemony. Meaning-making processes, definitions and interpretations of political problems and solutions effect political decision making and implementations of policies. In the empirical analysis of this project I wish to shed light on such processes and practices by placing these pivotal years under a magnifying lens: to find out how certain perspectives came dominate or gain interpretative privilege in the public debate.

The way we think about the welfare system today is a result of these earlier struggles, challenges, and changes, on global and local level. Political debates, arguments and beliefs have been turned into policies. The discursive shifts and government decisions made in the late 1980s and early 1990s are still in effect, one way or another. Many of these were aimed at decentralising and communalising national strategies to regional councils and local municipal agendas. Research and scholarly debate regarding welfare state changes during this period have treated privatisation as one element among others and focused on certain instances of privatisation, or changing relations between central state bodies and municipalities. Medialised public debate on privatisation thus reveal a more general concern.

Because most services and business that were privatised during this period were already under local or regional control and provision, features on privatisation occur earlier and more prominently in local news reports, than they do in national debates. of *DN* and *Arbetet*. Even if the municipalities and administrative systems of the public sector

⁴⁰⁴ Hort, *Social Policy, Welfare State, and Civil Society in Sweden. Vol. 2, The Lost World of Social Democracy 1988-2015*.

experienced the most significant changes, this is not mirrored in the empirical material. As we shall see, the contributions to the public debate is centred on general issues rather than singular instances of privatisation. Hence a lack of open outrage, contestation or demands in national debate fora. Demands *for* privatisation are at times articulated in the editorials in *DN*, although these are very short and brief, they are often explicit and on point. The case for *Thélème* (hereafter TLM) and *Nyliberalen* is of course very different, as they lack the same categorical divisions between debates, reports and so forth.

To fully understand the discourse of privatisation it is not enough to study its origin from external perspectives of an imposed academic discourse concerned with larger processes and more important phenomena, such as modernisation, post-Fordism or globalisation. That is a way of seeking causes that lay outside of any actual ideological movement. Instead I argue that we must understand privatisation in terms of its own particular mode of discourse. The meaning of “privatisation” is internal to a specific discursive regime, and within that specific discursive regime a kind of theory of the social is produced. Privatisation is not an isolated discourse, it functions as a mode of articulation definitions of society, politics, and ideology. It operates as a specific ideological discourse, not just responding to events, but interpreting them and constructing various political frontiers and subject positions in the process. It is always linked to other ideologies and gains legitimacy through associations various elements in established discourses. Because, as Radikha Desai shows, ‘the task of understanding shifts in hegemony over relatively short periods of historical time requires an understanding of intellectual and ideological processes at a more conjunctural level’⁴⁰⁵. The Swedish 1990’s crisis is just such a conjunctural phenomenon: a struggle for hegemony in a period of the organic crisis in and of the welfare state.

⁴⁰⁵ Desai, ‘Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony’, 37.

Chapter 6

Continuity and Change: Establishing Common Sense in the Discourse on Privatisation

There was a big high wall there that tried to stop me;
Sign was painted, it said Private Property;
But on the back side, it didn't say nothing;
This land was made for you and me.⁴⁰⁶

This chapter deals with the signs and signifiers used in the medialised public debate on privatisation. In this debate, the notions of private property and ownership play a central part along with changing attitudes towards the welfare state project. Another important element which – much like the lines quoted above – seems to have been largely forgotten by posterity is the moral nature of the arguments that entered into the debate. Just like the verse which was eventually rediscovered deep in the archives of the Smithsonian, I have tried to excavate and salvage the moral agendas that characterised the privatisation debate. All of these elements are important to have in mind when I proceed to consider the arguments in depth, in the next part.

The focal points of my analysis are the various ways of articulating privatisation as part of a narrative around the welfare state, as either a historical progression or perversion; as a question of ownership; as a moral demand; or, as a technical solution. These analytical conclusions also structure this chapter. Narratives are for instance employed to portray the development of the welfare state as either a progression or a perversion. A nature state of individual ownership is invoked appeal to the popular opinion (which, as explained in chapter 4 and 5 was largely sceptical towards privatisation of public services). By making use of generally accepted assumptions regarding the legitimacy of taxation, theft and the primacy of human rights, neoliberal protagonists appeal to sets of commonplaces. The opponents of privatisation largely fail to invoke such common-sense values accepted as justifications in argumentation, as we shall see.

⁴⁰⁶ ‘The Story of Woody Guthrie’s “This Land Is Your Land”’; Guthrie, *This Land Is Your Land*.

In this chapter I return to many of the theoretical and analytical concepts introduced in part 2. A re-articulation of politics is based on the re-articulation of concepts, such as “privatisation”, “regulation”, “state”, “market”, and so on. These are redefined, redescribed and revalued in processes of negotiation around change and continuity in policy agendas – as well as in processes of persuading the public. More than the mere content of debate, the chains of informal assumption made possible by quasi-logical argumentation are scrutinised in this chapter. Narratives, metaphors, and metonyms are used to redescribe terms, phenomena, and actions within the discourse on privatisation. Definitions, descriptions, and rhetorical tropes of analogy are constitutive of the discourse on privatisation, as they construct the nature of the event or phenomenon. While metaphors function through substitution among terms and images on paradigmatic level, creating analogical relations in the process (“a sick system”), metonyms function on a syntagmatic level by displacements and builds on adjacent concepts (“The European Union” becomes “Brussels”). Both the metonymical “taking up” (e.g. when a particular political demand takes up the representation of a range of demands) and the process whereby that metonym shades into the analogical metaphor (when this relation becomes naturalised), is what Laclau refers to as hegemony.⁴⁰⁷ These rhetorical aspects are part of the logical dynamics of logos (but supported by the construction of ethos and pathos, which are analysed further in chapter 7). This chapter is structured according to central nodal points, commonplaces, and narratives used to redefine, redescribe and revalue privatisation policies.

The discourse on privatisation is by no means isolated, rather, it informs subsequent political developments through a naturalisation of certain values which come to be taken for granted. The natural, historic legitimacy of private, individual ownership appears as a common sense in the debate; although, as we shall see, it has a set of histories and (Derridean) traces of the past, as well as present conjunctures and allusions of possible futures. A common-sense understanding of private, individual ownership is established as the natural state of thing: a belief that holds together the entire political field that I have studied. Furthermore, the common sense of private individual ownership as a moral right – and the state as a consequentially morally illegitimate actor, influences the direction of common moral values. If we consider privatisation as a mode of re-articulating the common sense and lending neoliberal ideology a natural legitimacy, it becomes possible to perceive both the privatisation discourse in its singularity as well as its relation to the totality of the societal discourse which it helps to re-create. Those forces or actors trying to define privatisation as an ideological question are excluded from (or at least not as visible in) the medialised public discourse. If it is discussed in relation to economic distribution and equality, it is brought forth through arguments that portray the wealthy and well-to-do as privileged in the existing

⁴⁰⁷ Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, 63.

regulated, state-ised system⁴⁰⁸. Late in the studied debate, by late 1993, the alternative, left-leaning periodical TLM begin to connect the eruption of privatisation demands to the disappearance of questions and demands for equality and redistribution politics.

There is a certain imbalance between the sources represented in each section, simply because the different sources and the contributions represented therein have different tendencies or internal discourses. In the daily national newspaper DN, articulations in relation to privatisation surface more in the opinion pages than in the cultural sections (apart from regular news features). In the regional daily newspaper *Arbetet*, contributions regarding privatisation policies are scarcer. There might be explanations for this in terms of local politics, since the southernmost region and city of Malmö – where the social democratic paper is based – a long line of social democratic governance is disrupted by right-wing parties in 1985-1989, and again in 1991-1994. The opinion pages seem dominated by local politicians who promote their cause.

In the national public service radio programme for public idea debate on cultural, societal, and philosophical matters, OBS – the discussion concerns other matters than privatisation. Although OBS includes largely the same actors that are published in DN and the two periodicals (TLM and *Nyliberalen*), they discuss more wide-sweeping matters of discursive shifts, ideology, philosophical concepts, intellectuals, freedom of speech, literary criticism, the contemporary political landscape, etc, as well as problems abroad: The Soviet Union, East and West Germany, etc. They relate to established literary magazine *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* (BLM), the people's movements and right-wing think tank *Timbro*. In short, the debate ranges on everything from war to Habermas' latest article on German identity, but do not concern privatisation. In 1994, speakers in OBS initiate discussions on marketisation and deregulation as part of the new direction of right-wing politics (while the left is left untouched).

The two periodicals represent two competing sides in the discourse on privatisation. While moral arguments predominate in one journal, technical arguments are used in the other. In these instances, I have also felt the need to illustrate the width and depth of the material, especially in when it comes to the moral range of neoliberalism, which has been largely left out of previous research (as argued in part 5). In some sections, *Nyliberalen* or TLM will seem to dominate, despite their marginal position in relation to the massified mainstream media. These two sources nevertheless appear to be a fertile growing ground for arguments used in the public debate. It is also in these sources that the more intriguing examples are found, as the format of the two periodicals invite elaborate and in-depth discussions on privatisation (among other issues).

Moreover, I strive to structure each section chronologically, when the argument allows. Since certain concepts arise in one forum before others, this means that the two

⁴⁰⁸ E.g. Anders E. Borg, *Generell välfärdspolitik - bara magiska ord?*, Socialstatsprojektet, 99-1580443-1 ; 1992:2 (Stockholm, 1992).

alternative journals might seem to take precedence as they serve as fora for developing arguments and conceptualisations that are later repeated in the mainstream media. In the following sections and sub-sections, I describe general tendencies found in the empirical material and highlight these with illustrative examples from the studied sources (but I refrain from a completely exhaustive account of all utterances available in the vast empirical material).

The welfare state as progression or perversion

Privatisation politics becomes a signifier for both right wing politics and threats to the existing order of the social democratic welfare state. Early in the debate, from 1988-1990, many utterances in the debate attempt to define and explain the concept of privatisation; in later years, it is used more as a reference to signify certain types of policies and political projects. The phenomenon becomes instituted and accepted as a natural feature of the time. Consequently, as privatisation becomes a question of extent (rather than existence), privatisation politics are also subjected to critique. Paradoxically, as the struggle regarding the mere presence of privatisation politics is won by its proponents, such politics also become *more* of a focal point to its antagonists. The narrative arrangements, describe a sense of ‘how we got here’⁴⁰⁹ and frame the Social-Democratic welfare state as either a progressive, positive societal development – or a perverted, negative evolution of an autocratic Leviathan.

Narratives of change and continuity

Historical narratives are frequently used as an ideological legitimisation strategy in the debate. Different types of governance, organisation and actors are attached to privatisation – or state-isation – politics. In the one corner, stands the option of a public organisation, provision and owning of services and functions incorporated into a state. In the other corner, stands actors on a capitalist market ready to take over the ownership and (self-) regulation of public sector services and ventures. Nostalgic narratives, which idealise a warm and caring past prior to the state’s take-overs of business and welfare services, are often used to argue for private alternatives and market solutions. Nostophobic narratives – arguing that we have escaped from the poor conditions of the past and that attachment to the past are unjustified idealisations of a society, in which women and workers were much worse off – are more often what characterises the arguments defending state organisation and public-sector services against privatisation.

⁴⁰⁹ Finlayson, ‘Rhetoric and the Political Theory of Ideologies’, 12.

Both sides of the debate use postalgic narratives to articulate a utopian yearning and speak of what is yet to come, to legitimise their claims for change and continuity respectively: if we just privatise and form a new type of state; or if we just continue on the route set by social democratic politics. Both proponents and opponents of privatisation recognise the problems of the economic crisis, underfunded welfare sectors and increased unemployment as a result of politics in parliament and markets during the 1980s, but propose different visions of the future. Proponents herald self-regulating markets, capitalist progress, and complete privatisations as the solution to these issues. The opposition struggles with a clear alternative. The progressive construction of a social democratic future spirals back through an idealised past of workers engagement, but fails to construct an alternative imaginary. This lack of an alternative vision is a consistent tendency among opponents to privatisation. In TLM, for instance, opponents of public sector solutions are criticised for being outmoded and unawares, as they dream of by-gone times⁴¹⁰.

[A society] where the individual has the freedom to decide over their family's need to care is just a circumlocution of the olden days' unpaid women's labour. So: women's freedom is so far deeply connected to the so-called state. Or, rather, with the political democracy [...]⁴¹¹

Here, the nostophobic narrative is used as a counter-argument to market governance of the welfare sector. Traditionally, men are connected to the productive industrial sector, and women to the re-productive, care and welfare sector. 'We know', the author asserts, that women lose out in market solutions. This is common knowledge, perhaps, to women, or to the readers of TLM. The argument is summed up with the logical conclusion that progression of the political democracy, organised in the form of the 'so-called' state, has led to better conditions for women. Here, a link of equivalences is established between women's freedom, political democracy, and the state. Such an argument hints at an ideological framework and perception of democracy far from that which is represented in both mainstream media and the alternative right-wing project *Nyliberalen*. In these other fora, the discourse is rather dominated by the belief that an extensive public sector, collectivism, and socialism, is anti-democratic and leads to less freedom – for all.

In an earlier article from TLM, the reader is presented with countering logos arguments, displacements, commonplaces, and semi-rhetorical questions, with a similar historical narrative of the welfare state as a progression. Here, readers are presented with references to contributions to the debate in DN and other 'opinion pages'. The preamble explicitly challenges the dominant perspective as the author attempts to assert

⁴¹⁰ Gunilla Thorgren, 'Alla skulle ju vara med', *TLM*, 1993/1994/17/18 (1993), 39–43.

⁴¹¹ Thorgren, 41.

a different interpretation of cause and effect, as the only option available. ‘The public sector is not the problem in our economy, as alleged in the everyday topical discussions’⁴¹², which in turn is re-narrated as negative images of the public sector, as a ‘dinosaur, doomed to go under, because history and the economic facts has left it behind’.⁴¹³ With an historical account of how things *really* are, the critique of the expanding public sector is portrayed as an old complaint raised by right-wing politicians for centuries. In this contribution, the reader is faced with a re-narration of events and an historical account that redefines the diminishing industrial sector and the growth in the public sector as a ‘natural structural development’ of a modern capitalist society. In an analogy between the old agricultural society and the new industrial society, the author *explains* that improved manufacturing techniques in both areas increase production while needing fewer and fewer workers in the line of production. What the public sector ‘really is’ is the solution – not the cause – of the contemporary socio-economic issues.

Deregulation or decentralisation?

The conceptualisation of privatisation is intimately entangled with demands for deregulation to the point where the two concepts become almost synonymous. These elements, or signifiers, reinforce each other as questions pertaining to privatisation are discussed mainly in terms of deregulation and (to a certain extent) decentralisation. No demands for increased centralisation or regulation are articulated in the debate. Both deregulation and decentralisation indicate an un-doing, a rolling back, or removal of an existing order or system. In short, something has extended too far, asserted order beyond its rightful reach, extent, and utility. This “something” is most often the state or, more specifically, the organisation of the social democratic welfare state⁴¹⁴. Few exceptions in mass media criticize this ‘neoliberal’ view⁴¹⁵, or even argue that the

⁴¹² Stefan Carlén, ‘Flykten från verkligheten’, *TLM*, 13, 1992, 36–39.

⁴¹³ ‘Terrifying tables’ are presented on the opinion pages of mainstream media by Bo Södersten (not introduced as an economist or former social democratic politician here – perhaps the reader is expected to know who he is) and ‘such debaters’ as chief economists at SAF – which the author clearly positions himself against.

⁴¹⁴ See e.g. Erik Moberg, ‘Statens ansvar bör bli smalare’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 30 December 1991, section Op-ed, 2; Harry Schein and Ingemar Eliasson, ‘Stiftelse eller kaos’, *Dagens Nyheter* (26 March 1992), section Debatt, 4; Håkan Arvidsson, ‘Staten kan inte fylla tomrummet. 80-Talet punkterade drömmen om människan befriad från socialt ansvar’, *Dagens Nyheter* (1 July 1992), section Kultur och Nöje; Henrik Åkerman, ‘Alla har vi våra svin i skogen’, *Dagens Nyheter* (17 June 1993), section Debatt, 4; Anders Isaksson, ‘Dags att tänka nytt’, *Dagens Nyheter* (15 February 1993), section DN Debatt, 4.

⁴¹⁵ P-C Jersild, ‘Vad händer på högrekanten? Anarkokapitalisterna vill privatisera precis allt.’, *Dagens Nyheter* (12 January 1992), section Op-ed, 2.

privatisations have gone too far⁴¹⁶. In the privatisation debate, two different narratives represent opposite poles of a tension in the ways the welfare state is defined and described as either an historical progression or a modern perversion of the social.

Demands for the state to “deregulate” one thing or the other, implicitly aim to expand the financial or capitalist market. The sectors targeted for deregulation are always (potential) markets. The radio broadcasting services are described as overly regulated, so were taxis, alcohol provision, and electricity; as well as child, health, and elderly care.⁴¹⁷ Deregulation is never framed as a question of reducing administrative measures or control mechanisms affecting various groups of the population. Nor is it about relinquishing restrictions of social benefit systems, abandoning complicated corporate structures or giving up managerial control of workplaces in favour of flat, leaderless organisations. Such demands would not resonate within this discourse. In *Nyliberalen*, regulation is by definition and common knowledge, a negative intervention in people’s lives; ‘the problem is that in the Swedish society people’s lives are thoroughly regulated by political decisions’⁴¹⁸. The enthymeme here, the unexpressed premise included as an informal logical assumption, is the implicit “state” before “regulation”. This line of argument draws upon a premise, value or common sense held by the author and hopefully supplied by the audience: the state imposes regulation. Such assumptions are possible because of existing taken for granted values and understandings. The assumption that regulation is imposed by the state – and agreed upon and implemented through collective decision making, for instance – should be held by the audience, in order for this enthymematic argument to be meaningful. No alternative, critical approaches attempt to sever the links articulated between market, deregulation, and privatisation. Market liberal perspectives not only dominate but execute an interpretive privilege within the discourse.

Demands for less centralisation function in a different manner, partly because “centralisation” carries a trace of power and social democratic politics. Things that may be subjected to decentralisation include governmental jurisdictions, authorities, various public service provisions and responsibilities (education, healthcare, et cetera). Both

⁴¹⁶ Beng-Erik Andersson, ‘Marknaden hotar barnen’, *Dagens Nyheter* (17 October 1993), section Debatt, 4.

⁴¹⁷ E.g. Per-Arne Sundbom, ‘Gör daghemmen till företag!’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 16 August 1993, section DN Debatt, 4; Mikael Löfgren, ‘Det vi byggt upp rivs ned’, *Dagens Nyheter* (19920427), section DN Kultur; Per Westerberg, ‘Sänkt skatt gynnar företag’, *Dagens Nyheter* (27 May 1992), section DN Debatt, 4; Åkermark, ‘Privatisera Systemet!’, *Dagens Nyheter* (17 September 1993), section Diverse; Maria Larsson Bergom, ‘Kärnkraften avvecklas inte’, *Dagens Nyheter* (17 December 1993), section DN Debatt, 4; Elisabet Höglund and others, ‘Privatisera TV 2!’, *Dagens Nyheter* (11 February 1992), section DN Debatt, 4.

⁴¹⁸ Anders Varveus, ‘Ord och handling’, *Nyliberalen*, Editorial pages, 1989/1 (1989), 2. N.B. I have chosen to translate the Swedish term “människor” as ‘people’, rather than the literally translation to ‘humans’, as it is used here (and elsewhere) to signify a plurality of persons rather than members of a particular species.

deregulation and decentralisation are common demands in the discourse on privatisation in all examined fora. “Decentralisation” is a concept or demand under contention from antagonistic forces who try to claim it as their own, and thus used as an argument by both those *for* and those *against*⁴¹⁹ privatisation. While centralisation is a wide concept that often include regulation, demands for decentralisation do not necessarily pertain to marketisation. Decentralisation demands are, however, also applied to matters of internal public-sector organisation and administration.

On the other hand, demands for decentralisation are also aimed at markets currently monopolised by a joint-stock company in which the state is the major shareholder. These demands seldom extend as far as to threaten systems which are fundamental to the liberal democracy (like the legal, electoral, or decision-making systems). Demands for complete autonomy for certain sectors of the state or market (be it geographical, horizontal, or vertical) would not resonate in the discourse. Although economic “free zones” for business have later been suggested⁴²⁰, no such demands are made at the time. Just as there are no demands made for the state’s deregulation or decentralisation in relation to indigenous groups, or withdrawal from the northern geographical area, where the Swedish nation state cuts across vast lands of natural resources Sapmi. While privatisation could have been used as a demand to claim land ownership by rights of possession since time immemorial, on behalf of the Sami population – against state expropriation, no such claims are articulated.

On the matter of regulation, one author (in *Nyliberalen* no. 3, 1993,) clearly opposes ‘harmful’ regulations, albeit as part of an argument in the debate on EG membership. In a discussion on different perspectives on ‘freedom’, the author refers to a ‘conservative liberal’-perspective represented by ‘Smith, Hume and Hayek’; ‘In this perspective it does not become ‘a matter of course’ that another country’s regulatory system is better than Sweden’s because it has fewer regulations’⁴²¹. Regulations adjusted to the market, are according to his perspective, to be preferred over a *limited number* of regulations that are nevertheless determined by the authorities:

⁴¹⁹ See Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, ‘Partiet har fel människosyn’, *Dagens Nyheter* (13 September 1993), section DN Debatt.

⁴²⁰ ‘Riksdagens Snabbprotokoll 1996/97:29, Tisdagen Den 19 November’, 1996 <<http://ow.ly/UguQ30gpoGS>> [accessed 8 September 2017]; Utredningen om nystartszoner Sverige, *Nystartszoner: Betänkande* (2012) <<http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/108/a/197199>> [accessed 8 September 2017].

⁴²¹ Carl-Fredrik Jaensson, “Ett Liberalt Nja till EG,” *Nyliberalen*, Editorial pages, no. 3 (1993): 12.

This is interesting for the EG-problems because you sometimes get the impression that Sweden will need to re-regulate in a way that might entail a minor de-regulation, but that many areas will at the same time be subjected to more arbitrary, and therefore more harmful, regulations. That central rules are historically established and therefore more impersonal and passive is probably more important than that they are few.⁴²²

The article reveals that what is often referred to as “deregulation politics” does not lead to a complete abolishment of regulation. Instead, it implicates an implementation of *different* regulations. Re-regulation might involve de-regulation, as stated above, although the author makes a clear distinction between these two separate phenomena. Furthermore, the article promotes a conservative-liberal perspective which accordingly prefers an increased number of regulations adapted to the market in favour of fewer, but more harmful regulations. Here, quality comes before (low) quantity in regulation policies – something quite contrary to the neoliberalist ‘total phase-out of the welfare state’ and anti-regulations approach to politics represented by other contributors to the journal. On the other hand, the author positions the ‘conservative’ perspective in opposition to the ‘need to reform the western democracy’. Accordingly, because democratic processes depend on majority decisions, public spending is inefficient and ‘rides roughshod over some people’s preferences in favour of others’⁴²³.

This is a recurring ideological principle among the contributions in *Nyliberalen*; public ownership and majority decisions are unfair as it allows some people favourable conditions on someone else’s expense (and that contractually negotiated relations of voluntariness would be a better solution). This line of argument, where the majority rule of the contemporary (social democratic) society is linked to collectivism, totalitarianism, Socialism, Nazism, and fascism in a chain of equivalence, is strongly promoted in *Nyliberalen*⁴²⁴. Arguments against majority rule are proposed both in DN⁴²⁵, *Nyliberalen*⁴²⁶ and in publications from Timbro⁴²⁷, but such arguments are countered in DN (by members of Thélème)⁴²⁸.

⁴²² Carl-Fredrik Jaensson, “Ett Liberalt Nja till EG,” *Nyliberalen*, Editorial pages, no. 3 (1993): 12.

⁴²³ Carl-Fredrik Jaensson, “Ett Liberalt Nja till EG,” *Nyliberalen*, Editorial pages, no. 3 (1993): 12.

⁴²⁴ Johan Norberg, ‘Hitler, alla tiders störste socialist’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/6 (1993), 20–28.

⁴²⁵ Hans Zetterberg, ‘Var tid har sina reaktionärer’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 29 August 1992, section Kultur och Nöje.

⁴²⁶ Jaensson, ‘Ett Liberalt Nja till EG’, 10–12; Hayek, ‘Varför jag inte är konservativ’, 40–45; Anders Varveus, ‘Yttrandefriheten - Det civiliserade samhällets viktigaste grundval och kännetecken’, *Nyliberalen*, Editorial, 1989/2 (1989), 2–3; N N, ‘Tystnaden börjar mullra’, *Nyliberalen*, 1989/3 (1989), 3; Christian Gergils, ‘Döda Poeter’, *Nyliberalen*, 1, 1990, 2; 35-39.

⁴²⁷ Maciej Zaremba, *Minken i folkhemmet* (1992).

⁴²⁸ Göran Greider and Tomas Lappalainen, ‘Den enda vägens utopi’, *Dagens Nyheter* (14 June 1992), section DN Kultur; Göran Greider and Tomas Lappalainen, ‘Den falska bilden av samhörighet’, *Dagens Nyheter* (14 July 1992), section DN Kultur.

The best illustration of this chain of equivalence is found in an issue of *Nyliberalen* from 1989. The article 'One hates in groups' concerns racism, anti-Semitism and other forms of hate and collectivist political ideologies⁴²⁹. The most interesting aspects of this contribution is that a word such as 'finance yuppies', which might be considered an insult thrown at young, upper class men fraternising in what is commonly considered the more affluent or "posh" areas of Stockholm (quite possibly including members of the editorial staff) in the late eighties, is treated as an equivalent to such derogatory terms as 'nigger', 'Jewish pigs' and 'fucking fags' – in opposition to 'collectivist political ideologies'. As such it is a clear example of the connections made between racism as a collectivist ideology and socialism as the most extreme form of collectivism. This leads to the enthymeme that socialism is just racism under another name. This quasi-logical argument can likewise be made by showing how socialists, through their collectivist thinking, fail to see the individual differences between young upper-class men and therefore ascribe them to the same group: the aforementioned finance yuppies that the reader has already been informed is the derogatory equivalent of 'nigger'.

Another example is found on the very same page, where the social democratic minister of finance Kjell-Olof Feldt is accused of launching a form of Glasnost in his ministry. This piece constructs a similar chain of equivalence intended to connect the social democrats in Sweden to the faltering Soviet Union; the reader is left to make the inference that the social democratic regime may be approaching its own politics of dissolution. None of these articles carry a signature, but since they are printed on the editorial spread along with the listing of the editorial staff, there is little doubt about who is speaking.

A question of ownership

In 1988, a book is published by Timbro and its title translates into "Private Property – about ownership and morality". It is written by a Swedish philosopher and member of the editorial council of *Nyliberalen*. In *Nyliberalen*, it is mentioned several times. It is quoted at length on the editorial page of DN, on the 15th of February 1989, and again in 1991, when a member of the Freedom Front and the editorial office of *Nyliberalen*

⁴²⁹ "Nigger". "Jewish pigs". "Go home to Iran". "Finance yuppie". "Fucking fags". "Wogs". There are more examples. An infinite number. You have heard them yourself or seen them scrawled on hoardings and leaflets.' (Anders Varveus, 'Man Hatar I Grupp', *Nyliberalen*, Editorial pages, 1989/1 (1989), 3.) This sort of thinking which ascribes and only acknowledges a person's belonging to a group, rather than judging each individual human by their own actions, is a form of collectivist thinking. 'Racism and group thinking thus derives from the same sort of outlook on mankind as the collectivist political ideas.' (Varveus, 'Man hatar i grupp', 3.) The final argument is to oust racism by honouring the importance of the individual instead of the collective.

argues for the moral virtues of neoliberalism in the cultural pages of DN⁴³⁰. The book addresses questions of the individual's rights and private property through historical and philosophical perspectives. The author takes a clear stance for the sanctity of the individual, 'against the collective, public power'⁴³¹:

The property right does actually have an entirely special standing. In contrast to most other ethical theories, the theory of property rights, and other rights connected to this, such as freedom of thought and speech, simply and solely constrict physical violence [...] In those rare instances when someone really wants to defend a system of private ownership, this is done in terms of economic efficiency and social stability. Even if it is not always completely clear, this is essentially a *collectivist* defence for the rights of the sole individual – a relation which is hardly wholly satisfactory for all those who feel that the individual must be prioritised above the collective, in a moral regard.⁴³²

The human being's natural ethic suggests that people shall be allowed to make their own decisions, at least in terms of their own person and property. Efficiency is something we achieve because people in general are capable to make rational decisions in regard to their own concerns. Every form of mixed economy is ethically deficient and creates neither efficiency nor moral justice.⁴³³

By attachment to a natural right to private ownership, and by the employment of historic narratives describing private ownership as the state of nature, privatisation appears to stem from the very nature of people and history. Thus, proponents of privatisation can legitimise their demands as an expression of the latent character of human beings (if not of society as such). State-isation is treated from a neoliberal political standpoint as a modern perversion: stealing, regulating, and coercing private property under state control and unlawful proprietorship. This historical narrative is to a certain extent repeated by some of the contributions in TLM, although there, the development from private property, multiple market actors and unregulated capitalism – to public ownership, monopolisation and state regulated capitalism is presented as a progression of modernisation. A progression which is presented as the result of the labour movements struggles and the social democratic political project, not as any natural development of neutral forces, market or otherwise.

The notion of private ownership as the natural order and the public sector as illegitimate state-ised private property, is a common convention within the privatisation

⁴³⁰ Christian Gergils, 'Kapitalismen är anarkistisk', *Dagens Nyheter* (12 July 1991), section Kultur, 22.

⁴³¹ Ingemar Nordin, *Privat Egendom: Om ägande och moral*, Det Frivilliga Samhället, 99-0789945-3 (Stockholm, 1988).

⁴³² Nordin, *Privat Egendom*, 9–10.

⁴³³ Nordin, *Privat Egendom*, 104.

debate. This commonplace is most noticeable in *Nyliberalen*⁴³⁴, but shows up in DN too. A narrative of the history of social democratic politics, is provided on several occasions. One example is a contribution to the opinion pages of the Saturday edition of DN in August 1993, by a professor of economics. The argument presented is that the public sector has been developed ‘at the expense of market economy, a range of markets have regulated or eliminated’ and certain reforms have ‘socialised saving’⁴³⁵. This list goes on to paint a picture of political decisions which regulate investments as well as housing, land, credit, capital, and exchange markets. Chains of equivalence are drawn between social democratic politics on the one side and entrepreneurs and private ownership rights on the other:

Public monopolies prevented the emergence or development of private initiatives. In this socialist imaginary world there was little understanding for the creation of new business, for entrepreneurs, for private ownership rights and for functioning labour and capital markets, that is to say for the driving forces behind the capitalist growth process.⁴³⁶

Just as in the many contributions to *Nyliberalen*, state regulations are interpreted as a threat to the superior workings of capitalist market systems. The social democratic welfare state is described as a perversion that threatens the “given” right private ownership – an argument that is deconstructed in of the following section.

Collective or common ownership is mentioned in DN on two occasions in relation to privatisation, as far as I can tell. It is mentioned either as a problematic feature of a power-hungry regime; or as a means to rouse voters. One such occasion is an opinion piece in November 1992 by a spokesperson for the conservative party, who argues for a privatisation of health insurances and speaks of collective ownership as a feature of centralised, corporatist organisations. Here, collective ownership becomes synonymous with collective responsibility and concentration of power – in opposition to plurality and vital market economics.⁴³⁷ The other example is from December 1993, and plays on the “clearances” and “sell outs”-discourse, where the state is argued to have sold out “common property” to bargain prices. Common ownership and state ownership are used synonymously in the article. It is quite possible that the reference to “common” property and everyone’s access to forests is part of an appeal and strategy to persuade

⁴³⁴ See for example John-Henri Holmberg, ‘Istället För Hopplöshet’, *Nyliberalen*, 1990/1 (1990), 12–17; Norberg, ‘Hitler, alla tiders störste socialist’, 20–28; Christian Gergils, ‘Zarembas Kluvna Liberalism’, *Nyliberalen*, Debate, 4, 1993, 17–23; Nils-Eric Hennix, ‘Möte Med Socialismen’, *Nyliberalen*, 4, 1993, 7; Johan Norberg, ‘Robert Nozicks Filosofi’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/4 (1993), 35–39; Mats Hinze, ‘Varför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister?’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/4 (1993), 58–62; Mats Sylan, ‘Därför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/6 (1993), 9–11.

⁴³⁵ Jonung, ‘Ideologisk tystnad. Lindbeckkommissionen talar inte klarspråk, skriver Lars Jonung’, 4.

⁴³⁶ Jonung, ‘Ideologisk tystnad. Lindbeckkommissionen talar inte klarspråk, skriver Lars Jonung’, 4.

⁴³⁷ Gunnar Hökmark, ‘Privatisera sjukförsäkringen!’, *Dagens Nyheter* (2 November 1992), section DN Debatt, 4.

the audience to align with the oppositional social democratic spokesperson (or “we” of ‘social democracy’, union leaders and business leaders) against the sitting conservative minister of business in prospect of the ‘approaching election’⁴³⁸. Despite the clear intention to reassert the value of common ownership, this utterance nevertheless shows that an individualistic perspective on ownership has the interpretative privilege in the debate. To make the reader interpret ownership as a collective activity, “common” needs to precede, define, and modify the word “ownership”. In other contributions, it is clear that the word “ownership” implies private, individual ownership, and needs no explanation of further definition. While discursive shifts, emerging neoliberal coalitions, politics, and media strategies is discussed in OBS, questions on ownership or privatisation are not, as far as I have been able to discern.

The idea that ownership could be something collective is not really an option. Ownership is pre-dominantly treated and defined as individual proprietorship. This tendency is visible in all the sources that I have analysed. State ownership or assets are treated as a proprietorship under the state as *one actor*, not as collective ownership involving all members of the state. This is the role of commonplaces, i.e. the common-sense values accepted as justifications in argumentation – in the structuring of arguments and attempts to redefine and redescribe “privatisation”. Even in left-leaning TLM, this commonplace is reiterated, in an interview with economist Douglass North in 1994, for instance. Another example can be found in the 1992 issue, called ‘A Defence of the Welfare state’, where a historical analysis account for the origin and creation of the public and common. Using arguments that are strikingly similar to the rhetoric of *Nyliberalen*: ‘everything starts with violence’, ‘the origin of the state’ stems from the need of ‘protection from violence’, which ‘is originally done under private management’⁴³⁹. This is partly explained in the following pages as the author engages with Thomas Hobbes to explain the origin of the state.

In the same issue, a heavy-handed critique is aimed against a report from right wing think tank-project “The New Welfare”⁴⁴⁰. According to the statements in TLM, the Swedish Employers’ Association (SAF) is planning to replace the welfare state with a night watchman state, as presented on SAF’s latest congress. This “market economic ideal” has apparently been presented in the reports from “The New Welfare”. Among

⁴³⁸ Anders Sundström, “En ny Celsiusskandal”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 13 December 1993, section Debatt, 4.

⁴³⁹ Tomas Lappalainen, ‘Publiken’, *TLM*, 4 (1992), 68. ‘A skilled perpetrator of violence “tax” their surroundings’ and thus, because ‘it is impossible to distribute protection selectively’ ‘coercion is inevitable – and here there is no difference between private security companies (Mafiosi, feudal lords, etc name dependent on historical context) from the modern states of today’...

⁴⁴⁰ Patrik Engellau’s project “The New Welfare” or “Den Nya Valfärden” produced a vast range of reports that paraphrased the state’s public reports (SOU) and were called “the Citizen’s Public Reports” (or “Medborgarnas Offentliga Utredningar”, MOU). Engellau’s project was financed by the employers’ association SAF, whose members contributed to these reports. For a more extensive analysis see Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*.

other things, these reports allegedly suggest significant cuts in the public sector, privatisation of insurances and employment offices, adding ownership rights to the constitution and selling out state assets⁴⁴¹. Again, whenever the right to ownership or property right are mentioned, it always alludes to an individual, private form of ownership. This is a taken for granted common sense assumption, even among the opponents of neoliberal thought, in all examined fora. This is further demonstrated in the following sections.

Selling out state assets

Framing particular instances of privatisation as simplified “sales” may be a strategy to either place oneself on an equivocal middle ground between the two antagonistic poles of privatisation politics. Such an ambiguous positioning can appeal to an ambivalent audience – both proponents and opponents of privatisation, at the same time. Utterances in DN and *Arbetet* define privatisation as a question of economics and monetary values, by framing it in terms of “sales”. As privatisation is attached to these adjacent market metaphors, it becomes not a question of organisation, administration, or ideological concerns, but a question of economic efficiency and numerical cost calculations. Even if the intention behind some of these arguments may very well be to mobilise the audience against privatisation and negative images of the public sector; they serve to reify the notion of the privatisation as the economically superior solution and public provisions as, perhaps of higher quality, but nevertheless of an economically deficient system. In short, pro-privatisation arguments are reiterated even in articles that clearly argue against privatisation policies.

“Clearance” or “sell outs” are two definitions or names used to signify the phenomena of privatisation, but which in the end are unsuccessful in their attempted fixation. The word “clearance”⁴⁴² is sometimes used as a synonym for privatisation, and functions as analogous to retail and commercial sales (as in a shop that sells off its products for a lower price than their original value). This becomes clear when studying the opinion section in *Arbetet*. A local Social-Democratic politician argue against the ‘clearance’⁴⁴³ on municipality properties, in 1988. Implied in this argument is an opposition against selling public properties at a low price – but it does not necessarily signify an opposition against privatisation as such. ‘Selling out’⁴⁴⁴ is another euphemism used around 1988 and onwards, which does not in the same way connote on privatisation to a lower price than the product’s or service’s estimated value, but is still used metaphorically to inscribe privatisation with a negative value. Although the notions of “sell outs” or

⁴⁴¹ Alstadt and Malmqvist, ‘Valfrihet i Vaxholm’, 7–13.

⁴⁴² “Utförsäljning”

⁴⁴³ Wessling, “Gå ut i verkligheten!”.

⁴⁴⁴ E.g. Curt Persson, ‘Systemskifte’, *Arbetet*, 5 September 1988, section Pressdebatt, 3.

“clearances” seem lesser or only marginally decisive in the definition of privatisation, these concepts are nodal points (i.e., the central concepts in relation to which privatisation is defined as relatively fixated) in the part of the discourse on privatisation as it is represented in *Arbetet*. For some reason, the contributions in *Arbetet* take up this ambiguous relation to privatisation, which lacks a clear-cut opposition to privatisation per se. Instead, they focus on the way implementations of privatisation politics are handled by right wing politicians. Since privatisation is discussed to a relatively narrow extent in *Arbetet*, these concepts gain a relatively central position – in this particular forum. I.e. these are the nodal points I found when identifying the few contributions referring to privatisation in *Arbetet*. In the remaining sources, these concepts do not structure or define the notion of “privatisation” in the same regard.

Attempts at naming privatisation phenomena as “clearances” can be found in DN too. One example is published on the front page of the Culture and Entertainment insert; featuring as the Saturday column, it has a greater potential of a wide readership and distribution. Because of the framing of the article and the timing (the weekend edition has a larger number of subscribers) the speaker – or argument – has been given an advantage by the editors. It comments on the proposal of privatising one of the two television-channels: TV2. The author makes a reference to a contribution featured earlier the same week on the opinion section in the same paper, where employers of the channel’s main news programme made demands for its privatisation themselves (though not in terms of “clearances”). Beneath the headline “The Clearances on TV2 is a Threat to Democracy”, the author argues for privatisation per se, but against privatisation in this particular case.

THERE ARE AREAS where privatisation probably is a necessary route to find alternatives and a flexibility that will create reasonable proportions between supply and demand. Child care is one of those areas. Health care is another. But the success of some of the first privatisations seem to have brought out a dangerous euphoria: everything will be fine as long as you privatise.

The Moderate Unity Party are expected to shortly present a proposal to sell out TV 2 to private interests. This is a proposal with catastrophic cultural-political consequences.⁴⁴⁵

Just as in the examples from *Arbetet*, to speak of “clearances” becomes a way of speaking against particular instances of privatisations at unsatisfactory circumstances, while maintaining a neutral or positive attitude to privatisation politics in general. Privatisation is assumed to lead to a maximisation of profits, in numerical terms, while state-provision is equally assumed to include a higher quality and representation of narrower, yet important, subjects that will educate, rather than merely entertain, the

⁴⁴⁵ Eva Ekselius, ‘Utförsäljning av tv 2 är ett hot mot demokratin’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 15 February 1992, section Krönikan/Lördag, 15.

public. I.e., competition might work in other sectors, but not when it comes to areas of culture.

A month later two opinion pieces are published on the same page, debating the potential 'state-isation' of TV 2 (in order to be able to sell it). One, written by ten representatives of various social movements (from churches to theatres, and trade unions) question the 'dismantling of the national broadcasting media group'⁴⁴⁶. In this contribution, the minister of media from the Liberal (as of 1990) People's Party, is criticised. A threatening line of conflict is drawn up between the 'Sweden of social movements' and the minister. The conservative party's intent to 'break' the previous 'political unity' in the matter, is questioned with great emphasis. The authors 'we' address the minister and the government by pointing out the paradox of a right-wing government embarking on socialisation. But then again, further deduction is possible, by a reference to the Swedish news agency *TT*:

However, you can, if you read other articles, see a conceivable and unpleasant line [of thought or events]. "The Moderates want to privatise the local radio and sell out TV 2 to the highest bidder", *TT* informs.

Is that how it is supposed to be happen: First you get rid of all social movement influence, then you begin with the dismantling of the national broadcasting group?⁴⁴⁷

Even if "sell outs" is used (and not questioned) as a concept here, it is in a reference to a recent news headline. Now, between this large piece and the right-hand margin, there is another opinion piece on the same subject. The former social-democratic prime minister of Sweden 'attacks' the minister of media for pulling the wool over parliament. 'We can no longer trust the government'⁴⁴⁸, the headline concludes. Here, the author uses a historic narrative to speak of previous agreements made between the government and the right-wing parties on the one hand, and 'we social democrats' and the parliament on the other. 'The Social Democrats' and the large and unified 'parliament' is treated as one and the same position in relation to the minor governing parties.

The Social Democrats and their party leader is used to signify political unity and the good of the 'listeners/viewers', while the government come to signify a splitting up of previous alliances. As the faults of the current politics under the current minister of media are lined up one by one, the fifth argument gets to the point at hand, namely that the 'proposal to state-ise SVT and the radio company is heading for a clearance of TV 2, the local radio and the P3-net'⁴⁴⁹. Thus, "clearance" can be employed as metaphor for privatisation, which redescribes the said policy-proposals in negative

⁴⁴⁶ Thomas Bolme and others, "Ska SR Skrotas?", *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 March 1992, 4.

⁴⁴⁷ Bolme and others, "Ska SR Skrotas?", 4.

⁴⁴⁸ Ingvar Carlsson, "Vi kan inte längre lita på regeringen", *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 March 1992, 4.

⁴⁴⁹ Carlsson, "Vi kan inte längre lita på regeringen", 4.

terms. In these instances, the “selling out” or “clearances” of existing public services is portrayed as a threat to the existing system. But the sales rate of state owned assets can be articulated from a different perspective.

It is clear that the editorial page of DN takes a positive stance towards privatisation. Op-eds vary more: some take an antagonistic stand towards privatisations ‘of everything’⁴⁵⁰ or the way it has been conducted⁴⁵¹, while some make more concrete demands for privatisation and marketisation⁴⁵². One example, among several, can be found in an editorial from DN 1992, where the “sales”, “clearance” and privatisations underway are criticised from the point of view of the market’s capacities, and ownership distribution. The question is not what, or how much that should be privatised – but how quickly:

but the question becomes how fast companies can be privatised, how much capital markets can generate without disturbing the provision of risk capital to the already private firms. It is difficult to judge the government’s prognosis before it’s been tested in practice, but it can be bold to build investments in infrastructure on funding from clearances of the state-owned companies.⁴⁵³

“Clearance” is used as synonymous to privatisation in general; treated as a neutral adjacent concept simply signifying a practice in the terms of the market. It becomes neutralised and harmless – void of any sarcastic or critical connotation. A similar tendency is visible in contributions from the conservative minister of business at the time, who uses a narrative of radical progression to describe the increased sell offs and privatisations of state assets and ventures. The Moderate Party minister’s narrative is not just one of success, but one where “Sweden” and “the state” becomes two separate, even oppositional, entities. Here, it is not the state – but business that guarantees the welfares of citizens in the future.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁰ Jersild, ‘Vad händer på högrekanten? anarkokapitalisterna vill privatisera precis allt.’, 2.

⁴⁵¹ Hans Bergström, ‘När Ideologerna Skjuter Sig I Foten’, *Dagens Nyheter* (28 February 1992), section Op-ed, 2.

⁴⁵² Harry Schein, ‘Privatiseringar’, *Dagens Nyheter* (15 June 1993), section Op-ed, 2; Harry Schein, ‘Marknaden’, *Dagens Nyheter* (25 February 1992), section Op-ed, 2; Zetterberg, ‘Var tid har sina reaktionärer’.

⁴⁵³ n. n., ‘Statens företag till salu. Statliga företag bör privatiseras – men hur mycket orkar marknaden köpa?’, *Dagens Nyheter* (19 December 1991), 2.

⁴⁵⁴ Per Westerberg, “Inget avsteg från privatiseringsvägen”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 5 October 1992, 4.

A human right

Together with the principles for the individual property right, this [that theft, deprivation of freedom, and physical coercion is a criminal act] naturally entail that the political (coercive) power should be minimised. The state's task is to at most make sure that the fundamental human rights in society are protected from outer and inner aggression – no more. Each legislation, taxation, or other intrusion that strive towards more ambitious reforms within society is itself a criminal act.⁴⁵⁵

“Rights” is used as an empty signifier represented under the demand for privatisation. The right to ownership is a central part of the neoliberal political agenda and ideology. It is a matter of individual ownership, which is not only privileged and desirable, but the only type of ownership imaginable. This reasoning builds on the neoliberal discourse's own established maxims. In the local discourse of *Nyliberalen* the question of privatisation is stabilised and relatively fixed through references to human rights, such as freedom of speech, or freedom in a more general sense. This can be traced to a philosophical discourse with references to Rand and Nozick. Here, and in the mainstream media fora, the right to ownership is always and without exception defined as an individual human right. The state has no business in owning anything, since the state's only rightful function is to protect the fundamental individual rights. Hence, when speakers invoke the “inviolable right to ownership”, this refers back to the idea of private ownership as one of the fundamental aspects of society, along with the right to life and freedom.⁴⁵⁶ Such claims become visible in mainstream media over the years, but are largely absent in the part of the material represented in TLM (apart from exemplifications of the neoliberal common sense in critical replications and comments).

The precedence of the private and individual over the public and collective, is dominant in the local discourse of *Nyliberalen* from 1989 and onwards. Here, the notion of the right to ownership as the most fundamental right is used to argue *for* privatisation and *against* any sort of state involvement or intervention in what is seen as a nature state. Contributors do not always explicate that the ‘right to ownership’ or ‘property rights’ refers to an individual right, rather than collective owning, perhaps because it is taken for granted as a known fact⁴⁵⁷. The same tendencies become visible in the other fora for debate as well, especially by 1992-1993. In 1993, one of these authors points out that

⁴⁵⁵ Nordin, *Privat Egendom*, 96.

⁴⁵⁶ E.g. sylvan, ‘därför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister’, 9–11; Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 12–17; Johan Linder, ‘Christian Gergils - En svensk rebell’, *Nyliberalen*, 1989/3 (1989), 5–10; Gergils, ‘Zarembas kluvna liberalism’, 17–23; Anders Varveus, ‘Detta är Frihetsfronten’, *Nyliberalen*, 1990/1 (1990), 20–21; Christian Gergils, ‘Avskaffa invandringsspolitiken’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/3 (1993), 14–19.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Carl Lidbom, ‘Stå upp för Sverige, Bildt!’, *Dagens Nyheter* (5 November 1993), section Op-ed, 2; Greider and Lappalainen, ‘Den enda vägens utopi’; Göran Greider, ‘När makten gick folket förbi’, *Dagens Nyheter* (13 May 1993), section DN Kultur.

the conservative government is proposing to add to the constitution, that the ‘principle of the private property right is inviolable’⁴⁵⁸. Through *Nyliberalen* and the references made therein to other types of contributions (books and authors) the right to private ownership can be traced to a classic liberal ideology. These connections between human rights, individuals and ownership are explained in some of the lengthier features, often with reference to a nature state of individual appropriation of property based on a Lockean notion of the right to the product of one’s labour⁴⁵⁹.

On the whole, the position represented in *Nyliberalen* is less centred on demands towards policy changes for privatisation; and more on a defence against state intervention and threats against human rights, such as freedom of speech, freedom of choice, and individual property rights. For instance, in the editorial of the first issue of *Nyliberalen* in 1989, the whole purpose of producing the periodical is explained as to ‘bring together people who are interested in working for a development of society where people’s right to life, freedom and property is guaranteed’⁴⁶⁰. The fight for the right to property (along with life and freedom) is thus part of the founding narrative of *Nyliberalen*. It is clearly a central value and political demand, since it is recurrently put forth by the various contributions over the years⁴⁶¹. On the same page as this initiating editorial sits a small advertisement for a ‘European conference’. A European Neoliberal congress is to be organised in France, in connection to the jubilee of the French revolution, as arranged by the representatives from the organisation Libertarian International⁴⁶². The theme of this conference is human rights, and includes seminars such as; ‘The foundation for the human rights’, ‘The state versus the individual’s rights’⁴⁶³. Another feature in the same 1989 issue reports from ‘the neoliberal international, Libertarian International’, ‘world congress in Swaziland’⁴⁶⁴. This is a full spread feature with pictures of who’s who amongst the different international delegates, and what they said. Professor Steve Pejovich (US) is described as ‘one of the foremost representatives of the property rights-school’⁴⁶⁵.

⁴⁵⁸ Greider, ‘När makten gick folket förbi’.

⁴⁵⁹ One such feature is a lengthy discussion on the philosophy of Robert Nozick: Norberg, ‘Robert Nozicks Filosofi’, 35–39.

⁴⁶⁰ Varveus, ‘Ord Och Handling’, 2. Again, the word used in *Nyliberalen* is ‘humans’ [mänskornas], which is more inclusive than ‘men’ and connotes less on a leftist, nationalist or populist tradition as the Swedish word for ‘people’ [folk], but I find that ‘humans’ does not provide the same aesthetical and colloquial standard in English as it does in Swedish.

⁴⁶¹ E.g. Linder, ‘Christian Gergils - En Svensk Rebell’, 5–10; Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 12–17; Gergils, ‘Avskaffa invandringspolitiken’, 14–19.

⁴⁶² ‘Alain Dumat, vice Mayor of Paris and Henri Lepage, author of *Tomorrow, Capitalism*.’ ‘Europeisk Konferens’, *Nyliberalen*, Editorial pages, 1989/1 (1989), 2.

⁴⁶³ ‘Europeisk Konferens’, 2.

⁴⁶⁴ Henrik Bejke, ‘Nyliberal Världskongress i Swaziland’, *Nyliberalen*, 1989/1 (1989), 14.

⁴⁶⁵ Bejke, ‘Nyliberal Världskongress I Swaziland’, 14. Here it is also suggested, without greater detail, that neoliberal solutions to the abolishment of apartheid as ‘market economy is incompatible with apartheid’ (p. 15)

Pejovich highlighted how economic development and property rights are intimately connected. With private ownership anyone can devote themselves to innovative enterprise while you in e.g. Soviet must belong to the power elite. [Robert] Poole [editor of the journal *Reasons*] is one of USA's foremost experts on privatisation and showed that a surge of privatisation is sweeping over the whole world.⁴⁶⁶

This is just one out of many examples that show how arguments for the right to private ownership, is close at hand and often followed by a discussion on privatisation. In connection, the phrase 'fundamental rights' is repeated by various actors throughout 1989-1993⁴⁶⁷. In 1989, a biographical tribute to one of the journal's founding members, explains to the reader what the concept 'rights' means in a neoliberal terminology, and how this 'rebel' and 'enlightenment man'⁴⁶⁸ criticises the use of common the concept:

To have right, preaches neoliberalism, has a deeper meaning [...] All men have natural rights, this teaching tells. They have a right to life, freedom, and ownership. It is no more difficult than that. All other 'rights' must be drawn up against these three fundamental rights, to gain any legitimacy.⁴⁶⁹

Rights such as freedom of speech follows this notion, according to the article, while the right to labour does not measure up to 'our natural rights'. To claim a right to work would demand someone else to provide work opportunities, while the claim of private property does not impose claims on others, or so goes the justification for this demand. These 'natural rights' tell us something of the ideology proposed by the utterances in *Nyliberalen*; 'the fundamental idea that man is declared to be of full majority with rights to his/her own life, freedom and property, and without a millimetre of compromise in the last'⁴⁷⁰. In several similar contributions, the connection between the right to private ownership and the neoliberal ideology is outspoken and clear. This right to private ownership is defined as *fundamental*, along with the right to life and freedom⁴⁷¹.

⁴⁶⁶ Bejke, 'Nyliberal Världskongress i Swaziland', 14.

⁴⁶⁷ E.g. Sylvan, 'Därför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister', 9–11; Gergils, 'Döda Poeter', 2; 35-39.

⁴⁶⁸ Linder, 'Christian Gergils - En svensk rebell', 8.

⁴⁶⁹ Linder, 'Christian Gergils - En svensk rebell', 9.

⁴⁷⁰ Linder, 'Christian Gergils - En svensk rebell', 9.

⁴⁷¹ For instance: adverts for book orders from the journal itself markets, books (in English) from the Institute for Humane Studies, who have compiled a selection of texts on the 'significance of the right of ownership to the life of men. Mentioned among other concerns is the question "Is property theft?", clearly paraphrasing Proudhon's famous assertion that property is indeed theft, and turning it topsy-turvy, in 'Nyliberalens Bokbeställning', *Nyliberalen*, 1989/3 (1989), 11. Among the authors in this volume are Murray Rothbard, Israel Kirzner and F.A. Harper. Harper is also the founder of HIS and member of the Mont Pelerin Society. Other examples are Sylvan, 'Därför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister', 9–11; Holmberg, 'Istället för hopplöshet', 12–17; Linder, 'Christian Gergils - en svensk rebell', 5–10; Gergils, 'Zarembas kluvna liberalism', 17–23; Varveus, 'Detta är Frihetsfronten', 20–21; Gergils, 'Avskaffa invandringspolitiken', 14–19.

Freedom, life, and ownership are all treated as equally important rights, naturally belonging to all humans, according to the neoliberal perspective, formulated in *Nyliberalen*. All other rights are secondary and follow in line behind these three. If any other ‘right’ would conflict with these fundamental three, as they are interpreted here, they can in fact not be considered rights at all, according to this line of reasoning.⁴⁷²

The argument to protect ownership against outside violation could just as well have been asserted by a proponent of collective ownership, attempting to safeguard common property from capitalist interests. The meaning of a word like “ownership” is in itself neutral and not by necessity linked to an individualistic, neoliberal perspective. While the same argument should be open to re-articulation from a collectivist perspective, just as much as an individualistic perspective, and the latter takes precedence in the privatisation debate. A more detailed example can be found in a longer contribution to *Nyliberalen*, 1990, which aims to ‘present a political alternative’⁴⁷³ to contemporary parliamentary politics. The author (part of the ‘editorial council’) embarks on this mission by laying out a set of fundamental principles in politics: ‘right and wrong’; and the relation between people and state. That ‘each human being owns him-/herself and has the right to freely decide over him-/herself’ ‘means that no human being has the right to decide over another’⁴⁷⁴. Accordingly, the rights to life, freedom and ownership are inviolable or sacrosanct. Because the ability to express oneself depends on the means of communication, and those who control them, freedom of speech is presupposed by the right to ownership. This is explained beneath the sub-heading ‘Fundamental right to ownership’:

The special aspect of neoliberalism, which in Sweden presumably has shown itself to be the most controversial, is the emphasis on the right to ownership as an equally central human right as the right to freedom or the freedom of speech. But without the right to ownership no other human rights are possible to maintain.⁴⁷⁵

The right to ownership is fundamental and decisive for all other individual freedoms (of speech, trade ‘including artistic freedom’) and the right to free choice ‘of education, housing, childcare, healthcare’, for example. Thus, the argument turns into a demand for “freedom of choice”, signified by private ownership. Apparently, this right is under threat from the state’s “‘right’” – note the sarcastic quotation marks – to ‘at any time’ seize the results of ‘my’ labour (via taxation) with dire consequences for people’s ‘motivation’ and ‘belief in the future’. Aided by such quasi-logical justifications, it can be argued, that the right to ownership needs to be protected against all forms of

⁴⁷² Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 12–17.

⁴⁷³ Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 12.

⁴⁷⁴ Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 12.

⁴⁷⁵ Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 16.

intervention. The argument against state intervention is not based on the sanctity of markets, or firms, as many analyses of neoliberal ideology and politics have claimed; but on individual, human rights. The author opposes public monopolies, regulation and control, while demanding protection of the right to ownership and freedom of trade against confiscation.⁴⁷⁶ These notions and exact choice of words regarding tax as a form of “confiscation” is later re-narrated in DN as a symbol of the new common sense, in an article published by two of the regular contributors to TLM, no less:

Through the new one-sided definition of democracy, it becomes possible to for instance equate increases in taxation for the well-to-do, with confiscation. The people’s will is erased as a feature of democracy, which in that way becomes a sort of rhetorical pendent to the market, in the new climate of debate.⁴⁷⁷

In other words, the definitions used in contributions to *Nyliberalen*, which at first seem marginalised and other-worldly, are two years later perceived by opposing, leftist actors as examples of ‘the climate of debate’.

A neoliberal alternative to the current social order is presented beneath the headline ‘Anarchy – a form of mixed economy’, in an issue of *Nyliberalen* from 1993. This is a contribution to an ongoing discussion on the financial conditions for a night-watchman state, in *Nyliberalen*. The author asserts that voluntary finance, by those who ‘value the protection of life and property’, would create a state in which ‘you have the right to defend yourself and your property yourself or by proxy [...] without reprisals’⁴⁷⁸. Demands that the state should stay out of private affairs are supported by claims that private parties (courts, prisons, police and so on) could provide a better alternative to the existing, coercive system. This logical line of reasoning is thus based on the assumption, or unspoken premise, that private initiatives are better than public. A couple of pages ahead, one of the members of the editorial office interviews a: ‘former professor in Sociology, head of Sifo, editor in Chief of *Svenska Dagbladet*, today most famous as Moderaterna’s foremost ideologist’, who also frequent both op-eds and cultural sections in DN during 1992. The ‘ideologist’ criticises liberalism as such, for not developing ideas of how ‘the right ownership functions governing’.⁴⁷⁹

By 1993, the notion and centrality of the right to private, individual ownership is commonplace in the neoliberal discourse. Several articles and issues in *Nyliberalen* can exemplify this point. Regular, long-term contributors, members of the editorial office and even the editor in chief assert the centrality of private, individual, ownership. The

⁴⁷⁶ Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 17.

⁴⁷⁷ Greider and Lappalainen, ‘Den enda vägens utopi’.

⁴⁷⁸ Mattias Svensson, ‘Anarki - en form av blandekonomi’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/7 (1993), 11.

⁴⁷⁹ Christian Gergils, ‘Hans L Zetterberg - en konservativ nyliberal?’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/7 (1993), 29.

right to private ownership provides the solution for a range of issues, from environmental preservation to immigration⁴⁸⁰.

For the neoliberal vision of a free immigration involves of course at the same time a number of obvious rules which are built into a free, capitalist society. Not in the least, the right to ownership. And ownership right together with freedom of agreement and contract does not lead to chaos, but to a spontaneous order.⁴⁸¹

The logical conclusion of such reasoning is that the state's sole task is to defend the human rights. According to Ayn Rand-inspired perspective that develops in the later years of *Nyliberalen*, the state has but three legitimate functions to protect people from crime, from invaders and to decide in legal disputes via the police, the defence, and courts.⁴⁸² The obvious consequence of such logics is that the state itself has no right to taxation or the maintenance of tax funded ventures.

'Capitalism', Rand writes, 'is a social system based on the recognition of individual rights including the right to ownership, and in which all property is privately owned'.⁴⁸³

Again, it is clarified that the right to private ownership is central to the neoliberal agenda. This argument brings us back to the definition of 'property' as something which is always in the hands of private individuals and can never be owned – only stolen – by the state.⁴⁸⁴ This narrative presented in the articles on Ayn Rand and Robert Nozick, fuel notions about the relationship between individuals and state structures.

These 'philosophical', 'inviolable', 'individual', 'human' rights and freedoms are again and again used to argue for political demands in various contributions⁴⁸⁵. Their consequence and legitimacy outrank those bound by and implemented by democratic legislation, according to several contributions – both in *Nyliberalen* and in other neoliberal contributions to the debate. This becomes evident in an opinion piece by a

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. 'Nya Böcker Från Fronten', *Nyliberalen*, 1993/3 (1993), 24–25; Gergils, 'Avskaffa Invandringspolitiken', 14–19. By posing rhetorical questions to the reader, the author asks if a free and un-regulated immigration wouldn't lead to chaos, segregation and increased racism – the answer, of course, being 'no'. 'Regulations are the problem', as the bold letters of one sub-heading declares. Taxation, regulation and prohibition of establishing businesses, along with legal disputes over taxes, 'detention orders against porn-film directors, raids against illegal entertainment clubs (presumably Tritnaha, the Freedom Front's own club) and other nonsense' from state authorities, result in a 'failure to maintain respect for the right to ownership', which accordingly shatters 'incitements to create prosperity.' Regulations which hinders the free functioning of business impedes employment and puts a stop to the capitalist society's 'self-regulation'

⁴⁸¹ Gergils, 'Avskaffa invandringspolitiken', 16.

⁴⁸² John-Henri Holmberg, 'Den objektivistiska filosofin', *Nyliberalen*, 1993/5 (1993), 30.

⁴⁸³ Holmberg, 'Den objektivistiska filosofin', 31.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf Nordin, *Privat Egendom*.

⁴⁸⁵ Thomas Rådberg, 'Snyltgästparadoxen', *Nyliberalen*, Letters, 1993/4 (1993), 6.

longstanding member of the editorial office, who at length discusses a recent book published by Timbro⁴⁸⁶. The author of the book is a historian and journalist from DN's culture section. According to the contributor to *Nyliberalen* the book is 'so good, that words are not enough to describe its elegance'⁴⁸⁷. Beneath the sub-heading 'natural law-liberal', the journalist uses the book to support his own claim and criticise the conceptualisation of democracy within the social democratic welfare state project, from an individualistic perspective:

There are individual rights that a majority may never violate because they are 'human rights, not democratic' – and Zaremba coarsely reminds us that it was the 'simple logic of democracy' which brought Hitler to power.⁴⁸⁸

The foundation of universal human rights is traced to the idea of humans as moral beings, and a violation of such rights is always regarded as an evil. This is, apparently, the point with the remark that taxation is theft' which entails, not necessarily a demand to immediately get rid of all taxes but:

a wish to bring into the debate the dimension that taxation actually is that the powers that be/the majority [sic] forcibly appropriates something which belongs to another human being, that which is part of a human's right to ownership⁴⁸⁹.

It is clear that this definition of the meaning of taxation is an established truth in the local, neoliberal discourse coalition – and that it is *not* yet a common sense to the mainstream public discourse. Furthermore, taxation is depicted as a means for the elite and majority to extort money from individual human beings. The state then signifies both an elite, a majority rule and an oppressor that ignores universal human rights. This way, a question of human rights can be turned into a discussion on the right to private ownership and used to support the established oxymoron "tax is theft", which I explicate in the next section.

Taxation becomes theft

That 'tax is theft' is a recurring slogan which appears in bold letters on the front cover of *Nyliberalen* in 1990, and is thereafter available to order on coffee mugs, tiepins, shot glasses, decals, and cigarette lighters via *Nyliberalen* and the Freedom Front, who uses various strategies to disseminate this message. This is also a part of a repeated syllogism: taxation is a form of coercion or theft, theft and coercion are illicit, and because the

⁴⁸⁶ Zaremba, *Minken i folkhemmet*.

⁴⁸⁷ Eva Ahlberg, 'Vi kräver lika rätt', *Nyliberalen*, Letters, 1993/4 (1993), 17.

⁴⁸⁸ Gergils, 'Zarembas klivna liberalism', 18.

⁴⁸⁹ Gergils, 'Zarembas klivna liberalism', 19.

public sector and all its services is financed by the reaps of such illicit activities it must be regarded as illegitimate. From the neoliberal individualistic perspective, as explained in a feature from the 1990 issue, any intrusions on the right to ownership is seen as a violation of individual rights, whether executed by ‘an individual criminal or a collective’⁴⁹⁰ that demands obedience. What is the collective criminal alluded to here? Most likely, it refers to the state in its current form. Neoliberalism, accordingly, only acknowledges the necessity of a state whose purpose is to safeguard people’s rights and freedoms: the state has no more rights than any individual person. Through a series of quasi-logical arguments, enthymemes, and analogies, it is argued that confiscation of income cannot be delegated to the state – because no-one has the right to delegate to authorities that which does not belong to them – and because no individual has the right to confiscate another’s income, the state has no right to confiscate an individual’s income by levies. In short, tax is theft. Instead, ‘according to neoliberalism the function of the state is and should be to protect every individual’s right to life, freedom and ownership’:

Taxation means that humans are forced to give up money that they have earned through their own labour; if they refuse they are subjected to coercion or force. Neoliberals consequently consider taxation to be the same thing as theft – the robber or thief also takes your money and threatens you with violence if you do not hand it over. And because neoliberals reject tax, they also reject all public ventures that is financed with tax money.⁴⁹¹

This comment illustrates how fundamental the opposition against public enterprises financed through taxation (like public sector services) is to this neoliberal position. Through the use of metaphors, such as portraying the state as a thief – or even a robber – that uses the threat of violence to coerce individual victims. Consequentially, a necessary legislation is one that:

... protects the individual’s freedom of trade and ownership against confiscation, theft, state-isation, robbery, legislation which restricts competition, fraud, slander, patency crimes, copyright-crimes and so on.⁴⁹²

Note how state-isation is placed right between theft and robbery in the analogous list of things that ‘the individual’s freedom’ needs legislative protection from. The author argues that ‘enormous legislations’ violate the individual’s rights and regulate ‘how large part of their own income the individual is allowed to have at one’s disposal and how the larger, confiscated part of his income is exploited’. In an attempt to negotiate the changes in state functions, the author uses analogies and metaphors as well as a

⁴⁹⁰ Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 17.

⁴⁹¹ Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 13.

⁴⁹² Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 17.

historical and dystopian narrative to depict the development – or rather perversion – of the state. Having deviated from its “natural” (neoliberal) function to guarantee individual freedom and become a ‘machinery’, surpassing any individual criminal, the modern state (by analogy, equally criminal) is devoted to using ‘force and violence to limit and control the lives and freedom of members of society’. This, the author argues, is defined as ‘inhuman’ in a neoliberal perspective. Again, such arguments highlight the centrality of the right to ownership – and not any kind of ownership, but individual ownership – to the neoliberal agenda as it is articulated in *Nyliberalen*.⁴⁹³ The right to private individual ownership is treated as a fundamental right wherefore any and all which threaten that right are naturally illegitimate and harmful.

In an opinion piece in DN, in 1992, members of TLM engage in a debate with another contributor to DN (who in an anthology published by Timbro has argued against the existing structures of the welfare state and political democracy). The two journalists solemnly state that ‘when it comes to taxation, practices of majority rule have been identified as a crime against the private property right’⁴⁹⁴. This statement clearly refers to the notions of private ownership that are present in *Nyliberalen* at the time. Although such arguments had up to this point been kept out of the mainstream debate, an unlikely speaker introduces them. The proponents of a ‘collectivist sense of belonging’ argue ‘that it is the will of the people that should govern in the state, through majority rule’⁴⁹⁵. However, the notion that ‘tax is theft’ is not repeated to any greater extent in mainstream media (except with reference to members of the Freedom Front). Nevertheless, there are those who continue to demand lower taxes and describe the state’s intrusion on individual freedom in terms of a percentage equal to the taxation levels at the time⁴⁹⁶.

Neoliberal utterances and publication mobilise this more general assumption or popular opinion against high taxes in several projects. Such claims are supported in an issue from 1993, by then editor in chief of *Nyliberalen*, discussing the philosophies of Robert Nozick. Here, individual’s natural rights are explained with reference to the state’s utility.⁴⁹⁷

In the same way as John Locke 300 years before, Nozick asserts that each and all have the right to life, freedom, and property. The individual owns itself and has the right to dispose of its own life completely freely, as long as she does not violate anyone else’s

⁴⁹³ Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 17.

⁴⁹⁴ Greider and Lappalainen, ‘Den falska bilden av samhörighet’.

⁴⁹⁵ Greider and Lappalainen, ‘Den falska bilden av samhörighet’.

⁴⁹⁶ Jan Bergqvist, ‘Bekänn färg, Westerberg!’, *Dagens Nyheter* (17 March 1993), section Debatt.

⁴⁹⁷ Norberg, ‘Robert Nozicks filosofi’, 35.

equal freedom. The individual also owns its work, and its products, thereby the right to ownership.

These rights are equal to all and may not be violated by any individual or amalgamation of individuals, like the state for example. The only form of state which is compatible with the natural law [attn. natural 'right' in Swedish] is the minimal night-watchman state, which has as its sole duty to defend it. Violence and coercion is forbidden, all voluntary relations allowed.⁴⁹⁸

So, the right to individual ownership rests on the individual's right to the product of their labour. By combining labour and material (which originally, presumably, belongs to no-one), the individual acquires property. This is how the author leads the reader to arrive at the logical conclusion, beneath the headline 'tax is forced labour'⁴⁹⁹, that all violation of the right ownership is stealing, not just property, but stealing labour. This argument implies, on the other hand, that labour itself is not necessarily forced, but voluntary. It is only taxation that is forced, in this perspective – and taxation is *always* a type of coercion. It is never described as a commonly agreed, legitimate means of financing common services and infrastructures. On the contrary, that the result on one's labour is being 'taken' without consent is considered an act of violence. 'Why, the state is stealing my labour which is the reason why I own money, and theft of labour is to be considered as forced labour.'⁵⁰⁰ The individual is positioned in an oppositional relation to taxation/theft (as a form of state violation). This is how the quasi-logical argument stating that tax is theft, which is so often recurring, relies on the pre-conception of the right to ownership of one self and the product of one's labour – and can be used as an enthymeme in persuading readers to oppose the perverted welfare state.

In an opinion piece in DN (1993), criticism of municipalities' socialisation of business activities coincides with demand for private business to be allowed to act alone on the market. Beneath the headline: 'The Municipalities kills off the businesses'⁵⁰¹ – a representative from SAF attacks right-wing governed municipalities for using tax revenue to establish municipal 'business ventures'. Using the same arguments as we have seen in *Nyliberalen* and publications from Timbro, the author makes use of the now established notion that taxation is a form of coercion in the course of her argument:

⁴⁹⁸ Norberg, 'Robert Nozicks filosofi', 35.

⁴⁹⁹ Norberg, 'Robert Nozicks filosofi', 38.

⁵⁰⁰ Norberg, 'Robert Nozicks filosofi', 38. Cf. Nordin, *Privat Egendom*.

⁵⁰¹ Introduced in the article as 'Saf representative responsible for questions on the relation between business and public sector' see Monica Werenfels Röttorp, "Kommunerna slår ut företagen". Saf angriper borgerligt styrda kommuner för att använda skattemedel till att konkurrera ut det privata näringslivet.', *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 September 1993, Saturday edition, section Debate, 4.

Business should be conducted with one's own, voluntarily invested money – not by coerced levies. Ownership has significance for how a venture is run. It is an old and well-known knowledge that you look after your own money in a different way than common.⁵⁰²

The author argues that municipalities' and civil servant's attempts to run business is no less than socialisation. Although the exact logic of the argument is left unexplained, readers might be expected to draw their own conclusions based on the two assertions that tax money is nothing but private money levied by force; and what is then rightfully private finance, is turned into joint-stock companies in the hands of municipalities and civil servants. Privatisation is thus defined as the opposite of 'socialisation' and 'state-isation'; all concept and oppositions that circulate in DN and *Nyliberalen*, *Arbetet* and TLM. A general convention that originates in the alternative, neoliberal *Nyliberalen* and later resonates on the opinion pages of DN, is, as we have seen, to define tax funding as financing based on 'tax revenue from coerced levying' in contrast to 'one's own, freely invested money'⁵⁰³.

A moral agenda

We now come to the analysis of how privatisation is inscribed with a certain value: whether it is something good or bad for society or individuals. Privatisation is not always ascribed such an ethical value. Some contributions argue for or against privatisation in terms of bureaucratic or economic efficiency. My argument is that these are the two primary and opposed ways of redescribing, redefining and revaluing privatisation, which are available in the public discourse. Either privatisation of the public sectors is defined in terms of technical systems or as a moral issue. The 1990's crisis itself is defined as a moral one where actors are questioning the legitimacy of the existing system. From what I have been able to discern, the blame of the fiscal crisis and the staggering unemployment rates is directed at the state and the existing economic system. Individual loan takers, house-buyers or unemployed are not blamed for their "own" misfortunes. For the most part, when neoliberalism and free market proponents are analysed and criticised retrospectively from a post-1990's perspective, the focus falls on economical values and efficiency arguments, but within the neoliberal discourse at the time, privatisation is discussed very much in moral terms. Ownership and private property is treated as a fundamental human right, a question repeatedly connected to

⁵⁰² Werenfels Röttorp, "Kommunerna slår ut företagen". *saf angriper borgerligt styrda kommuner för att använda skattemedel till att konkurrera ut det privata näringslivet.*, 4.

⁵⁰³ Werenfels Röttorp, 4.

morality. What happens when a politicised question like privatisation is negotiated and redefined as a question of moral right and wrong?

The demand for privatisation in moral terms develops in *Nyliberalen*, is reiterated in mainstream media fora, and mentioned on occasion in TLM. By explicitly seeking to direct the public's attention to the more important moral aspects of privatisation, rather than efficiency arguments – a free market and privatisation is defined as the *only morally acceptable option*. 'Moral' becomes part of the struggle to redefine and fixate the meaning of privatisation, and other related signifiers. Utterances in TLM frame the public-sector control of welfare services as treated as the only morally viable option, but this belief is not actively mobilised as part of the privatisation debate. In *Nyliberalen*, the state itself signifies immorality. The state is described as an actor that uses coercion or exerts violence to steal private property from the individual, as explained in the previous section. According to many of the statements in *Nyliberalen*, a "free market" is the only morally acceptable option:

Then the people's understanding of the free market's efficiency will gradually be combined with the conviction that it is only the free market which is also morally acceptable. In the long run, this realisation will lead to that the moral aspect will be more important for people than the efficiency aspect.⁵⁰⁴

Published on the editorial section of first issue of *Nyliberalen* (1989), this contribution argues for free market solutions as a matter of ethics, rather than one of economic efficiency. This quasi-logical argument, or enthymeme, rests on the unstated premise that coercion, oppression, and theft is immoral. Taxation then, is a form of coercion, oppression, and theft - and since the public sector is in turn funded by tax revenue it is immoral. Hence, the *free* market, in a *free* society (i.e. 'the absence of coercion'), where 'people can see to their own needs of, for example, child care, education and health care *without* public funding and production' is the only morally acceptable society.⁵⁰⁵ Visible in these statements is also a negative definition of freedom (freedom "from", rather than "to"), that recurs in *Nyliberalen*. Freedom is defined as the absence of state intervention, coercion, restrictions, and regulations, which are seen as super-imposed by a collective through majority rule over the individual human being.

In an op-ed in DN, 1991, a typology of states, based on a distinction of extent (broad vs narrow) and character (soft or hard), is presented. The Swedish social-democratic welfare state is described as broad and primarily soft – in contrast to the night-watchman state which is a narrow and hard state built on an elementary system of justice effectively prevents citizens from harming one and other – but not much else. Several arguments are brought up to prove that the Swedish welfare state is too wide (as it intervenes in people's lives by restricting smoking, financing cultural activities,

⁵⁰⁴ Varveus, 'Ord och handling', 2.

⁵⁰⁵ Varveus, 'Ord och handling', 2. Emphasis mine.

and acting out solidarity by supporting the state's monopoly on violence). To persuade the reader to align with the demand for a Swedish night-watchman state, the author uses a moral appeal:

It nevertheless seems like the narrow state has a considerable merit for freedom. And the hard state at least has the advantage that the distinction between right and moral is kept clear, which is important from an efficiency point of view. State production of morality become at least as listless and ineffective as state production of goods and services.⁵⁰⁶

While this statement might seem nonsensical, it clearly indicates that these sorts of arguments can and are being accepted and published on prime positions, in mainstream media, at the time. It is quite possible that the arguments presented here, for an increased limitation and night-watchman-isation of the Swedish state, resonated with the larger discourse. At least if we are to believe the author, who begins the article with a reference to a government declaration, pointing to the now common belief that the state and the society are two separate entities.

Some arguments contend the dominant description of the 1990s crisis as an economic crisis. Instead, it is framed as a political and moral crisis where the state, politically 'has assumed larger undertakings than it is capable to handle' and morally 'has, year after year, denied tens of thousands of people their so called "rights"'⁵⁰⁷. Although this argument is not developed further, it resonates with previous neoliberal contributions. Equally, the same author argues in an opinion piece a month later, that tax policies 'have eroded morals in all social classes'⁵⁰⁸. Other contributions to DN also blame the welfare state – but its benefits rather than coercive means – for depleting society of old bourgeoisie and worker's morals alike.⁵⁰⁹

Moral perspectives on individualism and (decreased) taxation is also the subject of publications from *Ratio* at the time⁵¹⁰. One such publication by a former editor in chief of SvD (who features regularly on the DN op-ed at this time as well, and is being interviewed and reviewed in *Nyliberalen*⁵¹¹) is heavily criticised by two members of TLM in DN's culture section, following the publication of an anthology from *Ratio*. Taxation is likened to theft, and the state to the mafia, in an analogy to the nature state where private profits ruled, and no public sector existed. Through an historical narrative, these two leftist journalists proceed to repeat the story of the rational

⁵⁰⁶ Moberg, 'Statens ansvar bör bli smalare', 2.

⁵⁰⁷ Anders Isaksson, 'Välfärdens guldmakare', *Dagens Nyheter* (14 January 1993), section DN Debatt, 4.

⁵⁰⁸ Isaksson, 'Välfärdens guldmakare', 4.

⁵⁰⁹ Hans Bergström, 'Den bekväma människosynen', *Dagens Nyheter*, 14 September 1993, 2.

⁵¹⁰ Erik Dahmén, ed., *rätt och moral i ett modernt borgerligt Sverige* (Stockholm, 1992). For more information on *Ratio*, see section "The local and historical context: Crises and privatisation politics in Sweden" in chapter 5.

⁵¹¹ Gergils, 'Hans L Zetterberg - en konservativ nyliberal?', 24–29.

development of state and market, in a way that could have been written by neoliberal proponents, up to the point where the authors argue in favour of public solutions before private; ‘in cases where the market is un-economic’⁵¹². Morally, the development of a state and public sector is accordingly a success story because it promotes equality. The authors are actively and explicitly trying to link together “the state”, “society”, “equality”, “democratic” and “collective” in a chain of equivalence to compete with the ‘past decades’ anti-etatism’. This anti-etatism is present in mainstream media, but more than that, it grows, develops, and flourishes in *Nyliberalen*: “The state authority has only one morally defensible function: to protect people against those groups or individuals who try to use violence, coercion or deception.”⁵¹³

Thus, it becomes clearer what may be meant by expressions such as ‘theft’ or ‘stealing’ (i.e. taxation) and ‘human rights’ (i.e. free speech, the right to private ownership). Implied in metaphors of the ‘immoral’ and ‘rotten economical system’⁵¹⁴, signified in equivalence to theft, to force and coercion – in opposition to human rights, to freedom and to “what is right” – is the state and the welfare system. Traces of the same commonplace surface in countless issues of *Nyliberalen*. The state is ‘demoralising’⁵¹⁵ for an innumerable amount of reasons, and ‘as tax is theft, a state can never be accepted’⁵¹⁶. At the core of such arguments is the notion that a neoliberal society without a state is the ‘morally and practically superior’ form of society. The state is simply ‘not morally defensible’⁵¹⁷. In passing, statements in *Nyliberalen* such as ‘Ownership is moral right, not a juridical paper term’⁵¹⁸ or; ‘A moral state does of course not have the right to initiate violence against anyone, and has therefore not the right to steal money – not even to finance its enterprise’⁵¹⁹, further illustrates the centrality of ownership and property rights as a question of moral values. The latter quote is furthermore an enthymeme in the sense that the self-evident and unexpressed premise is that taxation is understood as theft and an act of violence against the individual – where the (welfare) state and the tax funded public sector is consequently morally wrong. In other sections, the moral philosophy of neoliberal legends like Robert Nozick or (here) Ayn Rand frames the relation between state, capitalism, the individual, morality and private property rights:

⁵¹² Göran Greider and Tomas Lappalainen, ‘Den falska bilden av Sverige’, *Dagens Nyheter* (16 September 1992), section DN Kultur.

⁵¹³ Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 13.

⁵¹⁴ Anders Varveus, ‘Välfärdsstaten - den gigantiska lögnen’, *Nyliberalen*, 2, 1989.

⁵¹⁵ Gergils, ‘Avskaffa invandringsspolitiken’, 17.

⁵¹⁶ Hinze, ‘Varför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister?’, 69.

⁵¹⁷ Hinze, ‘Varför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister?’, 59.

⁵¹⁸ ”Ägande är en moralisk rättighet, inte en juridisk pappersterm.” Norberg, ‘Hitler, alla tiders störste socialist’, 27.

⁵¹⁹ Svensson, ‘Anarki - en form av blandekonomi’, 11.

Capitalism is the order where everything is privately owned and where all relations between people build on voluntariness. [...] Capitalism was/is right by plain moral, ethical reasons: because it takes its starting point in the human being as she is and respects her rights.⁵²⁰

Not only is the reader provided with a definition of capitalism based on the extent of private ownership and voluntary inter-human relations (in contrast to the Marxist definition of ‘exploitation and abuse’⁵²¹). Readers are also informed by the logical argument that this is a morally correct system since it is based on the human ‘as she is’, i.e. ‘driven by egoism’, and ‘respects her *rights*’. Which rights, the author refers to, is unclear. The only specific right mentioned is the right to self-determination, which is in turn linked to free enterprise and business:

... in the modern welfare state where politicians have ignored people’s rights to self-determination and where the requirements for free enterprise for a long time has been eaten into, where business – the foundation for our prosperity – is stagnating in the present situation.⁵²²

Here, the ‘moral and stirring’ defence of free capitalism, (individual) freedom and libertarian ideas comes to stand against ‘the ideas of the welfare state, socialism, racism and fascism – in short collectivism’⁵²³. This way of linking together the chains of equivalences between the welfare state, socialism and what is described as other forms of collectivism and totalitarianism, namely fascism, racism and national socialism is a common feature of the contributions in *Nyliberalen*, but also occurs in DN. In DN, several authors refer to, and warn of, the consequences of swift and extensive privatisation politics in Russia and the US. However, none, not even in TLM, compare the privatisation politics at the time to similar transformations in Poland, Chile, or the rest of Latin America (as discussed in chapter 5). Readers are time and time again presented with the argument that capitalism is a morally superior system, by utterances in both DN and *Nyliberalen*.

In *Nyliberalen*, one author explains that although capitalism is commonly thought to be right wing and these neoliberals in *Nyliberalen* are ‘extremely’ pro-capitalism, they should not be signified as ‘extreme right wing’. This position is already taken up by ‘racists/fascists’ positions and hence *not* compatible with ‘liberalism/neoliberalism’. In fact, since neoliberalism is in favour of immigration, open borders, equal rights to liberty, opposed to moralism and legislation which regulates peoples voluntary conduct,

⁵²⁰ Christian Gergils, ‘Ayn Rand finns bara där’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/5 (1993), 12.

⁵²¹ Gergils, ‘Ayn Rand finns bara där’, 12.

⁵²² Gergils, ‘Ayn Rand finns bara där’, 13. Again, I have chosen to translate the Swedish word ”människor” (literally “humans”) to “people”, for aesthetic reasons.

⁵²³ Gergils, ‘Ayn Rand finns bara där’, 13.

and so on (the list goes on) – it is the *opposite* of the traditional right wing. Now, so goes the argument in *Nyliberalen*, but contributions to both mainstream media and even TLM partake in this project of articulating difference between a new and an old right wing of politics.⁵²⁴ Of course, since left is equal to socialism, i.e. ‘state hugging, denial of private ownership right’ and ‘coercive (tax) funding of all that is important in society’⁵²⁵, these neoliberals can only be said to be neither left nor right, according to themselves. The primary demand articulated in such articles is not for economic or individual freedom, or even for ‘libertarian capitalism’⁵²⁶, but for the abolishment of the left-right categorisation of the political field.

In one edition of *Nyliberalen* – a special on Ayn Rand – a longstanding member of the editorial council, discusses the right to ownership in an essay on the objectivist philosophy. The rights acknowledge by this objectivist perspective are the rights to life, freedom, property, and the right to search for happiness without restriction. ‘In order to survive, the human being must appropriate and produce property of various sorts [...] and no one has the right to hindered it by force’. Here, (individual) rights is a moral concept: a right is a moral principle which defines the freedom of action for a human being in social contexts – and ‘thus becomes a prerogative which can never be morally violated’. Again, the reader is faced with the logical argument that ‘no group can have any rights other than those which fall on its individual members’.⁵²⁷ Accordingly, the economic system is a result of the individual’s moral and rights.

There are many articles on Ayn Rand in *Nyliberalen* that interestingly enough take this moral agenda as a starting point. Because private rather than public or common ownership is the outset, the foundation of society and market is the individual and its’ private property, which has later been expropriated by the state. This is a worldview which could be compared to a one where the common resources of a society instead are understood to have been unfairly appropriated by certain individuals. In *Nyliberalen*, enthymemes such as the slogan ‘tax is theft’ can be traced back to the essential commonplace that property must initially have been private, and later confiscated by a state. That is the only option imaginable. As confiscation of property of an involuntary party/individual is theft, taxation is equal to theft: an act which violates the inviolable individual right to ownership. Many quasi-logical arguments rely on this commonplace pre-conception that public sector services are immoral since they are based on tax revenue, which in turn is theft and an act of violence by the state against the individual – an argument which can be backed up by the common knowledge that theft and violence is illegal.

⁵²⁴ See e.g. Göran Greider, ‘Borgerligheten’, *TLM*, 4, 1992, 52–58.

⁵²⁵ Christian Gergils, ‘Höger är vänster är förvirring’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/6 (1993), 18.

⁵²⁶ Gergils, ‘Höger är vänster är förvirring’, 18.

⁵²⁷ Holmberg, ‘Den Objektivistiska filosofin’, 30.

An alternative moral argument is presented in TLM. One example from 1992, is an utterance that contests what is described as existing, dominant presumptions. By posing counter arguments ('why do the public sector have to expand?')⁵²⁸ it supplies both economic and moral answers. The economic reasons are explained in terms of public profit: consumption of public services has positive effects on the whole social economy – while consumption of private services is ruled by price mechanisms and rationing that will lead to profits for providers, but exclude those who cannot afford to pay for health care et cetera. Since society stands to profit from healthy individuals, market mechanisms fail to take the total socio-economic gain into account. So far, the author uses a rational, calculating argument to defend the public sectors girth. The moral reasons for having a wide range of public sector services is 'simply that it is fair to via the tax card take from the rich and give to the poor'. Furthermore, he questions whether 'is it really morally right that private entrepreneurs will be allowed to profit on tax money that I have payed because I want society to look after and take care of the elderly, the weak and the sick?' He does not contend he presumption that property and money is private ("tax money that I have payed"), but builds on the same premise as the neoliberal discourse. The argument centres on the moral cost of privatisation of 'moral-cultural functions'.⁵²⁹ Altruistic common morals are namely at the risk of being replaced by a self-interest and market ideals.

On the other hand, the author argues, the market economy is dependent on a moral-cultural climate that make people follow rules and contracts in economical transactions. 'When private self-interest invades the common [note: not "public"] sector, community moral and the collective character is lost'. As a conclusion, the public provision of health care and education, along with the general community moral, are framed as auspicious in socio-economical terms, 'even for the pure market economy'⁵³⁰. Hence, after a long discussion on moral values and issues of privatisation and the promotion of self-interests that it brings, the author does not challenge market economy per se. Instead, the public sector is re-defined to fit in to a market economic framework - as economically "auspicious". Privatisation is in turn depicted as a problem because it threatens to collapse the altruistic, moral cultural climate that the market economy is dependent on.

Otherwise, attempts to frame the opposition to privatisation in moral terms are few. On the contrary, when moral aspects of privatisation are discussed in TLM, it is with reference, or subjection, to a neoliberal discourse. For example, a book review of "Private Property – about ownership and morality"⁵³¹ features in 1993. This is the same publication by Timbro that is mentioned in the beginning of this section. The book is heavily criticized to the point of ridicule – without really being explained. Here the

⁵²⁸ Carlén, 'Flykten från verkligheten', 38.

⁵²⁹ Carlén, 'Flykten från verkligheten', 38.

⁵³⁰ Carlén, 'Flykten Från Verkligheten', 39.

⁵³¹ Nordin, *Privat Egendom*.

reader is presented with yet another reference to the state apparatus as the “largest criminal organisation in the country.”⁵³² Mentioned in passing is also the ‘neoliberal economist James Buchanan’ and his opposition to public property. Buchanan features all the more in *Nyliberalen* as both subject and object of debate. Buchanan’s restrictive perspective on common ownership is contrasted with more direct defences of the right to ownership based on natural law. Thus, TLM reiterates neoliberal conceptualisations and unwittingly contributes to spreading the neoliberal ideology without forming an alternative agenda or mobilising any forces strong enough to compete with these neoliberals.

A technical solution

When privatisation is not treated as a moral issue, it is discussed in practical, administrative terms of efficiency, bureaucracy, or centralisation. Such arguments are presented from positions left, right, and centre. In TLM, the first three years (1989-1991) mark an initial phase where utterances in the periodical take up a pro-decentralisation position. In later years (1992-1995), contributions start to argue against privatisation. A similar tendency is visible among left-leaning contributions in the mainstream media as well. Efficiency-arguments, whether used to defend or oppose the welfare state system, nevertheless serve to instate economic, administrative, and managerial efficiency as prioritised values, central to the contemporary society and function of state and market systems. The political left, stuck in this technical perspective, afraid to defend the “big state” in the aftermath of the fall of communism (as discussed in chapter 5), fail to mobilise, or unify their social, political, economic, and cultural forces in this debate. Does a technical argument, however logical, factual, and well-referenced it might be, really entice, engage, persuade, or mobilise the audience? What these moral and technical lines of argument do have in common is the notion of a shift from a politics of left and right, and distribution of resources; to a politics of right, wrong and efficiency.

In 1993, when private child care has been lawfully allowed, the director of the Swedish Competition Authority argues for a further privatisation of nurseries, without actually using the word privatisation, in an opinion piece headlined ‘Make the nurseries into businesses’⁵³³. This is a fairly typical line of argument for those published in DN: the article is informative; it speaks of the needed permits from the county administrative board, it blames the lack of privatisation (establishing and shifting nursery administration into private hands) on the lack of knowledge among local government

⁵³² Nordin as quoted in Mats Wingborg, ‘Att påverka mälaren’, *TLM*, 1993, 2, 55.

⁵³³ Sundbom, Per-Arne, ‘Gör daghemmen till företag!’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 16 August 1993, section DN Debatt, 4

employees, and highlights the potential conflicts of interests that may arise when the municipalities are faced with competition between their own nurseries and private nurseries. The municipality is positioned as a central actor in the establishment of private alternatives to child care. Market, business, and private health care solutions are positioned in opposition to the municipalities and the public welfare system. At the same time, the demands and solutions formulated by the author are in many instances individual: “let the parents decide”, “educate the employees”. What becomes clear in this article is that privatisation (if not mentioned by name) is treated as an administrative matter. The problem that the author sees, and tries to solve, is the prophesised lack of available seats in nurseries. Municipalities are cutting back on child care while awaiting a rapid increase in private alternatives, in the aftermath of new regulations in 1992 (alternatives which are not established fast enough due to the fears, negligence and ignorance among municipality administrators), according to the author. The question of whether or not to expose child care to market competition is narrated in technical terms of efficiency, administrative systems, and forms of management – not as a question of political right or left, socialisation or privatisation. Another interesting aspect of this opinion piece is precisely that it is an opinion piece published in DN, but speaks to local government officials and administrators. I.e. it is aimed at an internal audience, not at the broad and general readership of the DN opinion page.

In a critical reply to this article, published two weeks later, a PhD candidate in political science, accuses the director of the Competition Authority of making false claims. An argument that is based on a report from the very same authority:

The competition authority’s survey does not show any indications of differences in expenses between day care run by municipalities and day care run in alternative forms. Nevertheless, the authority presents conclusions that the alternative day cares are run more efficiently.⁵³⁴

Again, privatisation is not named as such, but the debate is clearly on the same topic. Furthermore, this example highlights how opposing parties no longer challenge the occurrences or existence or private “alternatives” by 1993; the opposition is not on the offensive, but defensive. This author highlights the political agenda of the original contribution, but still establishes the foundation of ‘the argument on measured costs and efficiency’⁵³⁵. Yet another reply is published within a week, where the director defends his original position and makes further arguments to alternative forms of governance, ‘competition solutions’ and increased efficiency in the public sector⁵³⁶.

⁵³⁴ Lars Farago, ‘Privata daghem dyrare’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 3 September 1993, section DN Debatt, 4.

⁵³⁵ Farago, ‘Privata daghem dyrare’, 4.

⁵³⁶ Per-Arne Sundbom, ‘Korrekt rapport om daghem’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 9 September 1993, section DN Debatt, 4.

This efficiency discourse flourishes on the opinion page of DN: As mentioned in the preceding sections, a contribution by a representative from the Swedish Employers Association confronts right-wing politicians on municipalities level for using tax revenue to run municipal business activities that may compete with private business initiatives, on the DN opinion section in September 1993.⁵³⁷ These municipalities, under bourgeois control, are accused of ‘socialisations in the name of efficiency’⁵³⁸. This critique is interesting because efficiency-arguments are often (in retrospect) thought to have been used as part of the pro-privatisation rhetoric – but here, the proponent of privatisation reproach fellow right-wing actors of being motivated by efficiency. Another contribution, this time *against* privatisation, illustrates the same type of efficiency-argument through a critique of the conservative minister of business’ rapid privatisation policies, in an opinion piece from December 1993;

[The state-owned forestry enterprise] Domän have also under long periods defied corporate financial estimates and pursued forestry in areas with very weak profitability.⁵³⁹

The point of the argument here is that the state-owned forestry company may very well be less efficient, and even consciously so, in comparison with private business, that function according to strict commercial logics. By prioritising small, private businesses as part of ‘a long-term responsibility’, the state-owned companies aim to aid struggling communities and thinly-populated areas in the northern inland region. The author commends the state’s “Domän” company for defying business economic calculations and engaging in low-profit areas and projects, for local and regional reasons. In short, the author argues long term responsibilities for local and regional development in remote parts of the country might be more important than short term gain, for state-owned companies. Again, this contribution reproduces the notion that private sector companies are equal to economic efficiency and profit, while state owned companies equal economic loss. Using the now established metaphor of ‘clearances’ and ‘discount prizes’, the social democratic spokesperson on business politics calls attention to previous sells outs of ‘common property’ to mobilise against the conservative Moderate party’s ‘declaration of war’: ‘Natural resources, that which we all own, is now to be sold out to only a few’ and function ‘on strict commercial basis’. By reference to past ‘scandals’ the author’s constructs the privatisation plans for Domän as a practice of selling out common property for ‘ideological reasons’⁵⁴⁰, a critique that is later fundamental to the social democratic regime’s decision to close down the “privatisation committee”, as explained in chapter 5.

⁵³⁷ Werenfels Röttorp, “Kommunerna slår ut företagen”. Saf angriper borgerligt styrda kommuner för att använda skattemedel till att konkurrera ut det privata näringslivet.’, 4.

⁵³⁸ Werenfels Röttorp, 4.

⁵³⁹ Sundström, “En ny Celsiusskandal”, 4.

⁵⁴⁰ Sundström, “En ny Celsiusskandal”, 4.

In TLM privatisation is often spoken of in technical terms or defined as a question of instrumental organisation of the welfare state. Arguments against privatisation and in favour, or rather in defence of the public sector are formulated as questions of delegation and administration. Critique is first and foremost instrumental and dominated by technical talk of ‘transfer systems’⁵⁴¹, which are apparently arguably cheaper when they are run by the state than if they would be run by private actors. By lining out economic arguments it is possible to make a case for redistribution politics in defence of a progressive redistribution system. In one such example, the opposition (two chief economists from SAF) is criticised for demanding that funding of public services should be transferred to private households through a shrewd definition of economic efficiency:

It is of course a political positioning that they do beneath the cover of fighting for greater economic efficiency. Were it that the enterprise would be operated entirely on a private welfare market, it would immediately be much more difficult to achieve the fair distribution that the labour movement have always fought for in Swedish political history.⁵⁴²

Here, the author uses a metaphor to illustrate these economists as working under the cover (cloak, guise, mask, or semblance) of economic efficiency – when in reality, they are not, he tells us. So far, efficiency is still a concern. But *of course*, the author interjects, their contribution is rather a particular, un-neutral, and politically attached stand taking; instead of an objective efficiency analysis. I.e. he appeals to a commonplace understanding of what constitutes a believable argument. Through a historical re-narration, the author appeals to a sense of national tradition represented by the wide mass movement of workers. On the other hand, such an argument assumes that the reader sympathises with this sort of tradition and subject position, rather than that of the employers’ organisations. But, as the text continues, the reader is confronted with an argument from the social democrats, namely that private entrepreneurs should be allowed to compete with public providers. Again, the author counters such mainstream arguments, which are brushed off as wishful theoretical thinking rather than ‘actual reality’⁵⁴³. By various premises less clearly explained, private entrepreneurs’ aspiration for profit is said to result in less quality and public control of the service provided: that is, another enthymeme for the audience.

Efficiency arguments are sometimes used in attempts to turn-the-tables of the debate. Several technical accounts are provided in TLM. In one case, the author uses a narrative

⁵⁴¹ By which the author means ‘pensions, health insurance, parents’ insurance, unemployment insurance, occupational injury insurance and so on’. Thorgren, ‘Alla skulle ju vara med’, 40.

⁵⁴² Carlén, ‘Flykten från verkligheten’, 38.

⁵⁴³ Carlén, ‘Flykten från verkligheten’, 38.

based on both technical and instrumental reasoning, as well as on tradition, values, morals, and religion – and surprisingly, rational choice theory.⁵⁴⁴ The article starts off with a short report of the current situation of ‘insane-economics’ and re-narrates the opposition’s arguments for freedom of establishment and marketisation of the health care sector. It paints a picture of the coming future and formulates a pre-emptive critique. With references to business journals, the author claims the Swedish healthcare ‘cheap’ by international comparison; the commercialisation of public health care would lead to less control of costs; and lists a number of bullet points to prove that the privatised American healthcare system, is inefficient, expensive, and failing. Thus, facts, technicalities and cost-efficiency arguments are used to counter demands for privatisation – but no counter-demands are made. In short, while a morally founded opposition to privatisation politics could have been articulated in *TLM* (or *DN* or *Arbetet*), such arguments are largely absent. In *TLM*, a large part of the argumentation is instead directed at counter acting the efficiency-arguments that dominate the managerial, administrative debate in mainstream fora.

Relatively few contributions argue in favour of privatisation based on efficiency concerns. The technical argument or position is taken up by the opponents rather than the proponents, of privatisation.⁵⁴⁵ A possible explanation for the opposition’s (to privatisation) adaptation of a managerial, technical, and administrative terminology is that proponents of privatisation tend to contrast privatisation to an economically unprofitable or non-sustainable public sector. That is to say, the opposition to privatisation may have picked up their arguments from the privatisation-proponents, and assumed that the demand for privatisation indirectly is an issue regarding the design of an efficient and sustainable versus in-efficient and non-sustainable economic system. On the other hand, the opposition of privatisation politics constructs and fights an enemy that is in part the result of a vivid imagination. A straw man of economic efficiency arguments in favour of privatisation is constructed. At the same time, the opposition’s own fallacy of falling into such arguments in their defence of the public sector, constitutes a paradoxical blind spot. The real threat, which questions not just the utility or efficiency of the public sector, but its *legitimacy*, is the moral critique aimed at the very notion of collective ownership, state, and democracy in its existing, social democratic shape. This passes by relatively unnoticed.

⁵⁴⁴ Tomas Lappalainen, ‘Den tickande bomben’, *TLM*, 1993/1994/17/18 (1993), 46–49.

⁵⁴⁵ E.g. Sanna Westin, ‘Arton år på SKF Mekan’, *TLM*, 1993/1994/17/18 (1993), 12–25.

Summary

According to my analysis, a neoliberal social imaginary, in which the welfare state is constructed as a perversion of a natural state of individual ownership, effectively hegemonises the debate. This discourse is recreated in different fora and co-constituted by political positions left and right. As even oppositional subjects accept the premises asserted by a neoliberal agenda, certain arguments (e.g. “tax is theft”) become meaningful in the discourse, while others become unimaginable (e.g. “work is theft”). The neoliberal formation sets the agenda and leads the discourse, and other subjects adapt accordingly. No neoliberal actor recreates the discourse of the left, to the same extent that the left recreates, references, and reproduces the neoliberal discourse.

“Privatisation” thus function as a signifier; a concrete yet symbolic issue, for more abstract demands such as “freedom” and the “right” to “private” ownership. It is not just contributions debating privatisation, regulation or centralisation that mention the concept of privatisation. Rather, as the year’s progress, privatisation becomes a symbol for the transformation of the welfare state. The creation and successful population of a moral universe creates a social imaginary that sets the boundaries of the discourse. By doing so, the neoliberal discourse of private, individual ownership and privatisation as something that is morally right, gains interpretative privilege, dominates the discourse, and becomes relatively fixed in relation to surrounding elements. Built in to this process are the many separate practices of establishing the different parts of these arguments and assertions as logical conclusions in a long chain of equivalences from taxation to theft – from property to private. As we have seen, the definitions of privatisation are part of a larger chain and takes on meaning and form in particular moments of political and social practice. The meaning of privatisation is a result of contestation, conjunctural articulation and attachments to other elements of discourse which inscribe the word “privatisation” with meaning. “Privatisation” is always part of a discursive articulation of particular time or society – or simply a product of external forces.

Is the meaning of the phenomenon or concept of privatisation eventually determined and fixated in this discourse? Yes and no. Privatisation as such becomes a common reference in the debate. Through a process of naturalisation, the mere presence of privatisation as a phenomenon of the modern Swedish welfare state comes to be taken for granted. Furthermore, through a process of naturalisation, privatisation becomes an accepted truth as an economically superior solution to economic deficiencies in the state apparatus. The neoliberal idea that private ownership historically precedes public, common ownership is equally accepted as truth, whereby arguments that refer to this original state of nature are able to resonate in the entire discourse. This definition in turn might, and is perhaps even likely, to have influenced the understanding of the privatisation that is available in the public discourse twenty-five to thirty years later (see chapter 1 and 5). Privatisation is instituted as a more or less natural phenomenon of

the modern welfare state, in the course of this debate. Parallel to a questioning of the extent and reach of the receding state and public sector – the question of privatisation also becomes one of reach and extent, but in terms of the private sectors expanse.

The concept “privatisation” sticks, possibly by the appeal to individual rights, freedom and democracy, that are attached to the demand for privatisation. It comes to represent something akin to a totality – a universal identity. It is my belief, or conclusion rather, that “privatisation” functions as an ideological point of identification and dis-identification with particular political projects. It is important to remember that no single articulation in the debate can instate the common sense-interpretation of privatisation. A common-sense understanding is something more dynamic, complex and takes on a different shape than all the different definitions put together. The notion that ownership is primarily private nevertheless clearly dominates in the debate. State ownership becomes a perversion, and the notion of common ownership is used on occasion, but is far from commonplace in the debate. On the contrary, the primacy of private, individual ownership as the natural state of things is effectively decontested and instated as a matter-of-fact.

Privatisation is framed as a moral issue, where protagonists for privatisation are defending rights (to ownership for instance) from a threatening state power and the antagonists are positioned as opponents of freedom, rights and in the end the individual; of you, the reader, and of me, the speaker. By redefining privatisation as a moral question of right and wrong – instead of a political-ideological question of left or right – the question of privatisation can be universalised and hegemonised: saying that it does not matter if you are left or right, all the same, privatisation is a matter that bridges that divide, unifying actors left and right. Privatisation is still “right” and state expenditure, regulation and so on is “wrong”. Defining privatisation as a moral question rather than an ideological one down plays the politicised and polemic aspects of the issue.

The moralising of privatisation is an ideological practice as it de-politicises and reframes the question as one of right or wrong, for or against. It is difficult to argue against that which is morally right, just as it is difficult to be on the defence and act the part of the antagonist, rather than the proponent of change (and freedom, liberty, and democracy). It is equally hard to refer to a political landscape characterised by of politics/policies of redistribution of income when the left-right divide is no longer recognised.⁵⁴⁶ Attempts to reframe privatisation as an ideological issue may henceforth be branded as partisan.

Thus, privatisation as a fixed, universalised concept is hegemonised through a creation and population of a moral universe rather than through proposing and recruiting

⁵⁴⁶ For a similar discussion on the depoliticization and the consequences of an exclusion of antagonisms (or antagonisms) in a political world deprived of a left-right divide, see Mouffe, *On the Political*.

followers to the “right” technical system. Even though some contributors to the debate may previously have resisted or opposed privatisation, subjects somehow accept and conform to this particular practice and policy as privatisation becomes a commonplace reference in the debate. In order for a particular belief to become naturalised and uncontested, it must “grip” subjects appeal to values, known “facts”, myths, or commonplaces that are already relatively fixed, established, and stable in discourse – something that is already recognised as good or desirable. That can be a possible reason as to why the appeal to the moral aspect of privatisation works, because it connects to what the members of a certain discursive formation agree is a positive value. In the discursive formation of the protestant liberal democratic-project of modernity we signify as “Sweden”; “morally right” is already recognised as an important value. “Technically correct” is not acknowledged as an important value, and therefore the political left’s arguments that appeals to the desirability of a properly functioning organisational system, fails. Solutions that neither connects to any known, set, fixed, or agreed upon common value of import are unsuccessful. Instead, such possibilities of cooperatives, civil society solutions, or socialist ideals hang by loose connections to dispersed elements in discourse, they become isolated demands as the proponents of these solutions are unable to unify it with other established goals or demands. This leaves room for the proponents of the public sector-ideal to connect to established values of gender equality, modernity, and progress in their counter-argument to privatisation. However, these arguments gain little spread or resonance in mainstream debate fora, which are instead dominated by myths of progression by marketisation, individual ownership, and the perversion of the social democratic welfare state that ‘went too far’⁵⁴⁷.

Because the practice of privatisation as such becomes accepted by previously – or potentially – opposing forces, it is possible to conclude that a form of hegemonic rule or order that dominates, grips, and holds its subject through discursive practices and appeals. All in all, the moral definition of privatisation gains interpretative privilege and dominates the debate. It wins the meaning-making struggle of public discourse. Private, individual ownership is created as a universal human right, a right which can be appealed to for legitimisation of demands for privatisation. When demands for privatisation that refer to this premise are recognised by – or rather resonates in – the broader discourse, even the opponents of privatisation buy into the founding myth of private, individual ownership as a universal right or natural phenomenon. That is how privatisation becomes the only option available, and state-isation or common-isation are not articulated as realistic – or imaginable – demands.

⁵⁴⁷ Thorwaldsson, ‘Partiet har fel människosyn’.

INTERLUDE

Changes in the Media Landscape

The empirical case takes its starting point in the late 1980s when the communicative landscape in Sweden was characterized by a small number of fora for debate in print and broadcast media. A handful national and regional daily newspapers dominate the press, and a strong public service monopoly provide broadcasted media. As the available fora for open debate become fewer and more specialised, the role of the gatekeeper becomes more important, and the few who are accepted on to the public arena may gain a more central position. In this context two periodicals with the purpose to politicise emerge on opposite sides of the political spectrum, as alternatives to traditional media: *Nyliberalen* and TLM.

The opinion pages and culture sections in national papers such as the ones that I study in DN and *Arbetet* may induce more or less simultaneous collectively shared immediate emotional or political reactions from readers⁵⁴⁸. *Nyliberalen* and TLM are neither as widely read as DN or *Arbetet*, nor do they have as punctual distributions (ranging from one to eight issues a year). These alternative outlets do however provide a setting for longer and more complex, philosophical lines of reasoning. Both *Nyliberalen* and TLM position themselves as alternative fora for ideological (in the case of *Nyliberalen*), cultural (in TLM's case) and political debate; i.e. broad and open fora. Because a more in-depth debate takes place in these specialised journals and because of the captivating narratives surrounding the founding myths of each periodical, I study these two journals more intensely. As I see it, they function in primarily three ways; to produce and distribute ideology; to provide a common point of identification, organisation, and communication for a broad range of readers; to provide a platform for those beliefs and

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. R. Eyerman, 'Intellectuals and Cultural Trauma', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 14/4 (2011), 453–67.

subject positions that would not gain entrance to the mainstream media⁵⁴⁹. The radio programme OBS hardly feature in the analytical discussions because of the absence of contributions relating to privatisation in said fora. Although I found no relevant comments on this matter in the time period that I examined⁵⁵⁰, that can also be regarded as part of the result. In this type of spoken “idea debate” relating to societal and cultural matters, according to the programmes own description, there is little discussion that pertain to, what in the medialised public discourse is referred to as, the “everyday debate on topical issues”. The concrete eco-political transformations of ownership relations in the welfare state is not a matter discussed in this forum.

Gatekeeping and Exclusion

But what is dangerous for a nation is not always that which is broadcasted on TV. What is dangerous is instead that which is not broadcasted. If TV is not used for spreading knowledge about other human beings, people, and cultures – then we get an anxiety-ridden xenophobia. If TV is not used for shedding light on latent social conflicts, discussing them, letting oppositions confront – then we get panicky and violent reactions that build on anxiety and ignorance. If TV is not allowed to function as a medium for the so called fine arts – then we get a country which is more impoverished of deeper insights, destitute of moral reflexion.⁵⁵¹

The exclusion of certain types of intellectuals from the main opinion sections is not only visible to the researcher, but also discussed by those who then create their own fora for debate. The late eighties and early nineties are times of change in media, leading up to the networks and massification of media that we are used to today. Many of the contributions to the debate, even when speaking of privatisation, are aware of the immanent transformation. Utterances and arguments in an ongoing debate are specific and contextual in nature, as they are often drafted as a response to recent occurrences and aim to address a broad audience. Any contribution to the debate must negotiate

⁵⁴⁹ As Boréus and others have shown, the Swedish mass media landscape is dominated by “elite” actors in politics and business. Boréus’ analysis shows very clearly how very few un-attached or un-organised writers get published on the opinion pages of DN – a highly unbalanced figure compared to the ration of contributions sent to the paper. Boréus, *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989; Demokrati och makt i Sverige [Elektronisk Resurs]*; Petersson and Carlberg, *Makten över tanken*.

⁵⁵⁰ I have done a digital search in the national media database where short descriptions of the broadcasted programmes are now featured, and found only one episode during the given time frame. It is a book review, aired in 1992, on John D. Donahue and Karl G. Fredriksson, *Den Svåra Konsten Att Privatisera* (Stockholm, 1992). A translation into Swedish of John D. Donahue, *The Privatization Decision: Public Ends, Private Means* (New York, 1989). Another episode from 1992 does seem to concern “the civil society” in relation to market economy, but I have not had a chance studied that particular episode.

⁵⁵¹ Ekselius, ‘Utförsäljning av tv 2 är ett hot mot demokratin’, 15.

with different relational contexts: the immediate framework and fora, the wider debate, the local institutionalised genre of opinion pieces, cultural pages, or the specific journal, and the institutional contexts of the speaker (in terms of profession, party affiliation, intellectual, social, or political position). The framing and constrictions of a mediated articulation forces the author(s) to focus on what really matters and appeal to the intended audience. Many of the surveyed contributions provide a snapshot and crude picture of ideology in action.

Something other observed at the time, are the changes in the layout of DN. In 1988, there are two opinion sections following the editorial spread. The first one (page four) is a 'culture' section, featuring an opinion piece, usually as well as book reviews and a column. On the opposite page there is simply an opinion section for 'debate', featuring one or two articles. The types of utterances on these two opposite pages contrast. The cultural opinion section includes different sorts of authors named as philosophers, journalists, writers et cetera, who speak on a variety of concerns, mostly articulated as general political issues, sometimes with greater emotional engagement, often arguing and making demands in the face of the powers that be, always with a critical stance. The other opinion section on the opposite page is frequented to a greater deal by politicians; representatives from interest groups, firms, institutions, or organisations; economists or other professional experts, who speak on particular issues at hand, who inform and explain rather than argue or articulate demands, and who present their claims as truth. As the cultural opinion section is pushed aside in 1990, the type of intellectual activity prominent in those opinion sections are also excluded from a significant debate forum.⁵⁵²

In 1993, a contribution to the cultural section links private ownership of mass media and to a growing right-wing intellectualism and a reinforced conservative opinion.⁵⁵³ This is a long article, with the word 'debate' in the header. Main media owners are mentioned (Bonnier, Stenbeck and others) as proof of monopolisation, and private ownership of media is tied to private interest – which in turn is connected to conservative opinions. The papers attachment to private ownership is presumed to seep through and effect which contributions are published. Through a personal, chronological narrative as a claim for local authority, one journalist tells a story of the struggle for publishing critical columns or opinion pieces. The article is written in metrical form with the numbers 1-22 marking every new section, argument, or verse. The argument turns into a revelation of the monopolisation of the newspaper sphere, much like a note of warning against standardisation. The author assumes the position

⁵⁵² Again, Boréus points to the same tendency, but as she makes incisions in the time period – rather than follow the development genealogically as I do, these are not described as shifts but as simple facts. Cf. Boréus, Kristina. *Högervåg: Nyliberalismen och kampen om språket i svensk debatt 1969-1989*. Diss. Stockholm Univ. Stockholm: Tiden, 1994.

⁵⁵³ Karl Erik Lagerlöf, 'Farväl till Dagens Nyheter', *Dagens Nyheter*, 14 September 1993, section Kultur, 2.

of a defender of the public's perspective, demanding resistance against standardisation and monopolisation. The 'conservative newspaper owners' are singled out as a threat to pluralism in media and democracy. When the 'yes'-camp of EU-supporters are published but any retorts are neglected. Right-wing think tank *Timbro* is also mentioned as a part of a fuzzy right wing, as political boundaries are drawn between left and right; independent opinion makers and mass media. This is a dramatic articulation where the author explains his recent defection from the newspaper. Here, metaphorical redescriptions depict opinion pages as 'megaphones': an analogy with reference to amplifiers for individual voices, used for crowd communication in speaking both to and on behalf of the masses:

The cultural pages have been depoliticised during the 80s and 90s. The leftist counterpart that used to be there have shrunk or been exterminated while right wing intellectualism grows. [...] What happened to the large part of the public who have no channels to the opinion pages and no other megaphones and whose voting rights have been hollowed out by the continuous centralisation and – and I am tempted to say – manipulation of the political life? [...] Where shall independent opinion makers who want to analyse the situation with concern for them turn?⁵⁵⁴

In this statement, which defends intellectualism and increased awareness, the author positions himself as an independent opinion maker whose responsibility is to defend the public's right to a pluralistic social debate. The following morning includes a reply from the editor of the culture section of the same newspaper. His utterance enters into a controversy with the previous contribution. Under, 'Farewell to a colleague', the argumentation unfolds into three main topics: concentration of ownership, the task of the cultural editorial office and 'leftist liberalism's role in the ongoing ideological shift'⁵⁵⁵.

Is there a radical liberalism in Sweden? And if so, is it banned from Dagens Nyheter? Is the editorial office for the culture pages, with a few exceptions, nowadays in cahoots with the Timbro-gang, obediently following the rituals of the so-called system shift?⁵⁵⁶

The editor is clearly posing rhetorical questions, but simultaneously articulating a sentiment which was likely brewing among contributors⁵⁵⁷. *Timbro* is mentioned several times in the article, as a centrally positioned element in relation to which other elements and actors are positioned, understood, and defined. That is to say, in this contribution, "Timbro" or "the Timbro-right" (as its opponents often say) becomes the

⁵⁵⁴ Lagerlöf, 'Farväl till Dagens Nyheter', 2.

⁵⁵⁵ Arne Ruth, 'Farväl till en kollega', *Dagens Nyheter*, 15 September 1993, section Kultur, 2.

⁵⁵⁶ Ruth, 'Farväl till En Kollega', 2.

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. Arne Ruth and Lars Åke Augustsson, *Arne Ruth talar ut : minnen, medier, moral* (Stockholm, 2013).

nodal point which other elements of discourse are constituted in relation to. It structures the disturbed discourse and stabilises floating elements, and the threatened identity of DN, mass media, and the cultural editorial office. The struggle over the privilege of interpretation, might in a sense be seen as mediation of ideology, but it is also about the creation of ideology and the dismantling of other ideologies. However, it does not end there. The function formed – or rather perhaps – the mediation of ideology is performed through a contestation of moral and political leadership. The function of mediating ideology is in a sense performed by all participating in a political debate, more or less explicitly.

The intellectual function of articulation and mediation of ideology is performed in DN, *Arbetet*, OBS, *Nyliberalen* and TLM. The journals, their opinion pages, editorials, or culture sections form subject positions themselves in the discourse. But the everyday utterances, positions of enunciating subjects and construction of relational subject positions, fill these with a political content. Right wing think tank *Timbro* performs the same function by virtue of active engagement in the debate, as well as publishing – i.e. distributing a certain brand of knowledge, or mediating a particular ideology, through both factual, political or fictional, moral and aesthetical works. Moreover, *Timbro* is constructed as a central actor by others in the debate.

The paradox is that Moderaterna's and the Timbro-right's ideas on freedom involves a greater proportion of coercion, while the slandered welfare state gives the old and their next of kin a freedom of choice which Moderaterna and the Timbro-right denies them.⁵⁵⁸

The 'Timbro right' is constituted as a political subject position similar, or attached, to that of the conservative party Moderaterna. While the enunciated position of the speaker in this case is aligning with the welfare state – speaking in defence of a large, anonymous group of 'elderly and their relatives', the conservative party and Timbro are depicted in opposition to all of these elements.

In DN and *Arbetet*, privatisation is mentioned primarily in reports or shorter, often local, news features. These report on implementations of privatisation (such as the first ever private maternity hospital in 1992) but less often subjected privatisation policy to scrutiny or in-depth analysis. Privatisation is not as often questioned, demanded, or subjected to debate, as it is merely accepted or mentioned as a feature of contemporary society – not until 1992-1993, that is. There are few examples of contributions that raise the question as early as 1988 in mainstream media⁵⁵⁹, but most comments surface *after* privatisation policies have already been implemented. It is more often a subject

⁵⁵⁸ Conny Malmqvist and Ann-Charlotte Altstadt, 'När barnen önskade livet ur sina föräldrar - om äldreomsorgen på "den gamla goda tiden"', *TLM*, 1992/4 (1992), 44–45.

⁵⁵⁹ On DN's culture-debate section 1988-09-11, concern is expressed by George Henrik von Wright, 'Välfärdsstaten och framtiden (1) privatisering rubbar jämvikten', *Dagens Nyheter*, 11 September 1988, section Kultur, 4.

featured in the separate insert called “Work and Money” - a section in DN which includes economic reports, stock exchange tables and news regarding the latest developments in private and public firms – as well as relations between trade unions and employers. I find only a handful of demands for state-isation, one of them being the conservative *Moderate party*'s attempt to state-ise parts of the autonomous, shareholder owned, public service media⁵⁶⁰. To create the conditions that will make a complete privatisation possible, the state would in this case have to buy out all other owners (press, business, and social movements) before said service could be sold out to private capital.

Emerging Platforms

To claim a marginalised position is a tendency perceivable among contributions in the smaller journals TLM and *Nyliberalen*, as well as in some of the contributions to the more well-established DN, *Arbetet* and OBS. Marginalisation may be expressed in different ways. The speaker may take up the representation of ‘the individual’ in a chain of equivalences to liberty, rights, property et cetera – in opposition to the state, power, bureaucracy, and public-sector services. While articulating demands for increased freedom from state intervention, the right to private property and so on, the contributors are portraying themselves as subjected to the state’s exercise of domination. This is one way of taking an ‘underdog’ position: to portray oneself as in opposition to dominant powers, as a radical or dissident - as a contender to ‘the establishment’ of the intellectual field is another way. In *Nyliberalen*, contributors own neoliberal political projects as practiced through the organisation the Freedom Front is recurrently portrayed as marginalised. Reportedly, its members are under prosecution; the police counteract their political activities; the relationship to their closest parliamentary party organisations (Moderaterna) is nigh on inimical.

Both TLM and *Nyliberalen* wish to create “places” for debates around ideas, philosophy and politics beyond party and parliament.⁵⁶¹ Contributors in both periodicals take up the positions of anti-establishment alternatives outside of mainstream media. They position themselves at a distance from ‘other’ media - be it “monopoly-media” or “information leaflets”. This is despite the dual commitment of many of the active contributors develop parallel careers as journalists, authors, and critics in mainstream media (several of them feature regularly in DN, OBS, SvD, *Aftonbladet*, and *Expressen*). The scorning of mainstream media abates in TLM, as these dual careers intensify, while the antagonistic spirit remains strong in *Nyliberalen*. In time, TLM even features

⁵⁶⁰ Carlsson, “‘Vi kan inte längre lita på regeringen’”, 4.

⁵⁶¹ Peter Antman and others, ‘[Editorial]’, *Thélème*, Editorial, 1989/1 (1989), 3; Varveus, ‘Ord och handling’, 2–3.

regular adverts for the culture section (only) of *Aftonbladet*. Somewhat contradictory, both periodicals feature sections of quotes from mainstream media. These quotes tend to show how the journal or one of its contributors have been spoken of in one of these mainstream platforms. Both *Nyliberalen* and TLM publish pieces that consist of statements various prominent figures, including: famous journalists, high-ranking politicians, popular scholars, significant editors in chief, well known authors, cultural sector workers, etc, who have been asked to state their opinion about the journal. This demonstrates their relatively wide spread recognition and show that both TLM and *Nyliberalen* were being read widely and considered relevant.

TLM position themselves against “the elite”, “the establishment” and “the cultural pages”, but there is no similar articulation of a marginalisation or an alternative to mainstream as is in *Nyliberalen*. On the contrary, their position is dual and ambiguous: vacillating between an intellectual journal for and by students – and a representative of social democratic ideals and the working commoners. TLM, as an actor as well as forum for debate, declares itself to be politicised and un-neutral as well as open, in contrast to the neutral and non-politicised academic journals and mass media. As stated in the first spread in the very first issue:

Thélème wants to occupy the unpopulated zone between uninteresting information leaflets and the purely academic journals that don't want to politicise.

We want to politicise.

The editorial staff of Thélème has no other authority than itself. We are never neutral, but we are open. We believe in persistence.

Thélème speaks because she is needed.⁵⁶²

Thus, TLM is positioned in opposition to existing media outlets. It claims a position as un-attached to any higher authority, as politicised rather than neutral, as open (perhaps, to readers and contributors), rather than closed off and excluding. This statement positions TLM against all negative characteristics articulated in an equivalential relation to mainstream newspapers (‘uninteresting information leaflets’) and periodicals. TLM aims to occupy that space between the academic and the direct distribution of information. This political zone, then, represents a moment of mediation between exclusive academic fora and the general, public discourse.

These two specialised periodicals (TLM and *Nyliberalen*) both start out as ‘alternative’ answer to a constructed lack of channels for open (as they put it) political communication. Both journals position and narrate their own story as that of the marginalised “outsider” – they do what others do not – they politicise, go further than

⁵⁶² Antman and others, ‘TLM’, 3. “Authority” corresponds to the Swedish “huvudman”.

any other and gives room to long philosophical-theoretical debates (on Rand or Adorno) more or less (in that order) attainable for a broader public. The contributors to TLM do position themselves in an oppositional relation to the ‘editorial pages’ and the ‘cultural pages’, and this is a recurring phrase. As discussed in chapter 8, the character, aim, identity and concern of TLM and the individual utterances featured therein, fluctuates over time.

A published article in printed mass media may find itself in the hands of almost anyone or everyone, traveling across space and time, such as when a researcher pick them up twenty-five years later from the vaults of a university library. The editors working with *Nyliberalen* seem to be aware of potential unintended readers, as several of the legal deposit copies⁵⁶³ of this journal which have been dutifully delivered to Lund University Library, are stamped with the traditional disclaimer ‘I am forced and compelled to do this’⁵⁶⁴, on the address label. *Nyliberalen* is launched in 1982, but has sporadic publications, that gain standard and continuity after the re-launch in 1989. The first issue of 1989 contains an inserted typewritten letter addressed to an anonymous ‘Dear Librarian!’, urging who ever might read *Nyliberalen* to tip off their ‘ideologically minded visitors about the existents of the journal’, signed by the editor.

Nyliberalen and its editors themselves posits the journal as unique or marginalised, as ‘Sweden’s only neoliberal journal’. In the first issue of 1989, coincidentally described as the first issue of *Nyliberalen* in its new form, a letter is inserted addressed to the ‘Dear Librarian’ who might end up with this copy in hand. It starts off with proclaiming neoliberalism to be the most talked-about out of all political ideologies today. It goes on to highlight, what may still be true today, that hardly anyone knows what neoliberalism is really about – and that an even fewer number say that they belong to this ideology. Here, the ‘we’ that is *Nyliberalen* positions themselves and their neoliberal ideology as outside of the political field, as something different from mainstream political parties. The Freedom Front, acting as the founder of *Nyliberalen* is treated as a marginal actor by parliamentary politicians at the time, despite personal connections with the conservative party’s youth organisation and established think tanks like the Mont Pèlerin Society. In the ‘press cuttings’ section of *Nyliberalen* n. 3 1993, an excerpt from an interview from the national evening paper *Expressen* with the party leader of liberal People’s Party, and member of parliament highlights precisely this:

⁵⁶³ According to the Swedish Legal Deposit Act established in 1661 and its’ present legislation, copies of printed material has to be sent to The National Library of Sweden (including sound and moving images) and Lund University Library.

⁵⁶⁴ In Swedish: ”härtill är jag nödd och tvungen”

-What comes to your mind when you hear: The Freedom Front?

- Gergils and those other lunatics who thinks that you should be allowed to sell narcotics freely?⁵⁶⁵

[Bengt] Westerberg [interviewed in Expressen 17th of March 1993]

Here, the Freedom Front is effectively reduced to one singular individual and some other neglectable lunatics engaged in *one* demand. This demand is framed in colloquial terms, as ‘selling narcotics freely’. When discussed in *Nyliberalen*, it is wrapped in more formal terms like ‘legalisation’. What the leader of the liberal party does here is to re-define the position represented by the Freedom Front as something more particular than the general demands so often otherwise put forward in the Freedom Front’s political actions and articulations, as represented in *Nyliberalen*. *Nyliberalen* strives to represent the Freedom Front and its demands as more universal than they started out as, as encompassing a range of demands and positions against a common enemy – what Laclau would call hegemony. What Westerberg does, in national mainstream media, is to make the Freedom Front appear as something much smaller and particular – than they portray and perceive themselves as – by reducing them to one member (who has featured in mass media) and his ‘fellow lunatics’ pursuing *one* aspect of the most radical issue that the organisation has been engaged with (out of many political, philosophical, and moral debates that have featured, at least in *Nyliberalen*). Nevertheless, the leader of the liberal party does admit to having knowledge of the Freedom Front.

Nyliberalen has more of a political activist approach than TLM, reporting back from libertarian conferences, running features on the Freedom Front’s political actions and do-it-yourself guides to civil disobedience practices such as home distilling. One early example is a feature from the Freedom Front’s renowned protest against alcohol regulations where they unlawfully sell alcohol in the major square and meeting ground of Stockholm. These articulations, political although they may be, are not directly formulated as demands for privatisation. Rather, at this stage, the demands are spoken in terms of ‘less regulation’, ‘freedom’ from the economic violence the state, bureaucracy and so on.



Figure 1 Front Cover
Nyliberalen no.3 1989

⁵⁶⁵ ‘Pressklipp’, *Nyliberalen*, 3, 1993, 46.

Nyliberalen uses headlines and front covers strategically but varyingly: for ‘home brewing – a fun and honest hobby’ a photograph of one of the members together with his distilling-apparatus covers the front; when the film *Dead Poets Society* premieres, it is featured on the cover to promote an interview with the author and an analysis in which the contributors to *Nyliberalen* draw the conclusion that the film communicates a neoliberal message; and so does Frank Zappa, apparently, whose face features on an issue following his death in 1993. In 1993 the whole layout becomes more minimalist and uniformly stylised in black and white, and the journal gains a new editor in chief (Johan Norberg).

The cover of the journal thus changes over time: from a stencil-like three-coloured zine, to a dramatic uniform black and white from 1993. In between there is a period of less clear-cut aesthetic identification, in 1990, the cover of journal features a dark picture of seven young men seated in a circle, in what seems to be a cave with lit candles. One of them, with his beret turned back-to-front, is playing the saxophone. The others are clearly focused on his playing, some while casually smoking pipes. They clearly share some socio-cultural identity, as they are wearing various combinations of the same uniform: white shirt, black tie, beige knit. This picture taken from a scene in the film *Dead Poets Society* (1989).

Overall, the journal takes on a different form in 1993. The distribution is more regular, there are eight issues for one year (instead of three, or one or zero), the internal structure is standardised and includes sections for ‘letters’ to the press, an opinion section, book reviews and ‘citations’ from other parts of media. Many of these books reviewed are published by either Timbro or the City University Press.

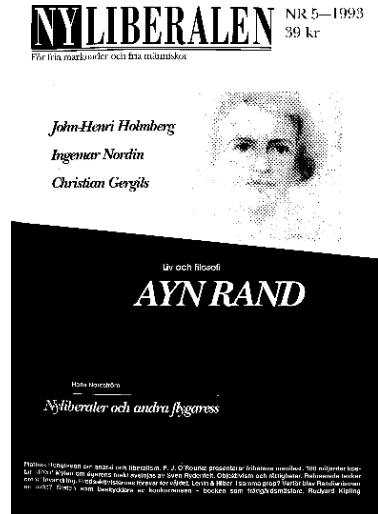


Figure 2 Front Cover
Nyliberalen no.5 1993

TLM becomes more aesthetically pleasing as time and perhaps skill progresses. The design of the early issues' does not convey or connect to the content of the journal. This changes partly in 1991 when the headline becomes part of the cover illustration. The covers are printed in a brownish red hue and black on natural brown paper. From early on, these have a clear template: during 1990 and 1991 the name *thélème* is printed in black bold lower-case letters on top, below features a stencil like print or collage, with the headlines on the bottom. In 1992 the journal changes name to *tlm* and from then on, the front is always covered by a photograph in black and white with 't.l.m.' printed as transparent bold letters within a red or black box. The first issues *Nyliberalen* of are in comparison simply more approachable and converts a clear message. The many photographs in TLM, which appear in relation to features, interviews and various forms of texts, also often lack any form of obvious connection initially – and when they do seem to illustrate the content of a contribution, there is seldom any information on what or who features in countless black and white photographs of nameless factory workers, women, dogs, and street life.

The dissemination and reproduction of political communication in new contexts such as TLM and *Nyliberalen*, and the new phenomena of think tanks, like Timbro – partnered with old strategies among participants attempting to mobilise political campaigns, result in a combination of political positions and identities that introduces uncertainty into the relations between participants (think tanks, journalists, writers). It is not always clear who the intended audience is.

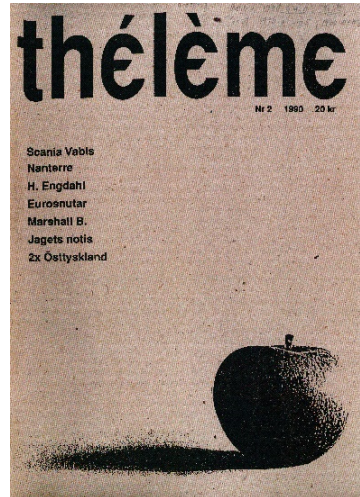


Figure 3 Front Cover
TLM no.2 1990

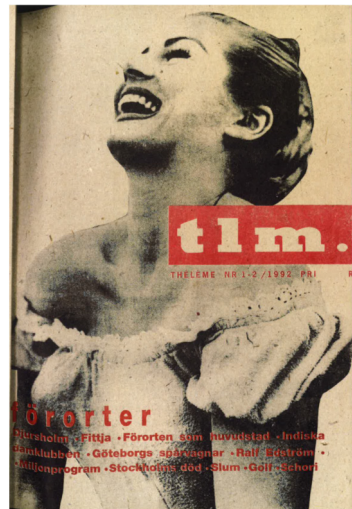


Figure 4 Front Cover
TLM no.1-2 1992

PART IV

The Intellectual Function, Positions and Formations in the Debate

In which performances of the intellectual function are analysed with attention to rhetorical strategies, positions of enunciation, and attachment – resulting in a typology of subject positions; and hegemony is analysed as a practice of coalition building and process of discursive formation.

The hegemonic struggle around privatisation is a political one, situated, not on the parliamentary stage, but in the broader sphere of medialised public debate. Unlike a struggle around policies or concrete decisions, this is a struggle over meaning making where the hegemony in/over/of public consciousness is at stake. The result of these struggles may nevertheless have effect on policy outcomes and the conceptualisation of privatisation as we know it today. In chapter 6, I demonstrated how privatisation and private ownership is treated as a morally superior system to collective ownership. This assumption is largely taken-for-granted in the examined mass media fora, but it is not there that the argument develops. This negotiation takes place first, and foremost, in alternative neoliberal periodical *Nyliberalen*, where a morally concerned discussion flourishes and becomes part of the journal's ethos. In left-leaning counterweight TLM, it is quite the opposite. There, the strategy used to keep and legitimise positions as relevant and credible is to appeal to technically correct authorities – much like the statements in the opinion pages of DN and *Arbetet*. Like the culture sections and OBS, contributions in TLM are preoccupied with analysing the ongoing struggle, rather than taking active part in it. It is to such rhetorical strategies and discursive formations of intellectual subject positions of the discourse that we now turn, as we move up to the final two tiers of this aggregated analysis.

Chapter 7

Towards a Typology of Subject Positions

The statements in the debate on privatisation are all uttered *from* somewhere: articulated implicitly in the rhetorical style and content of the contribution; explicitly signed with reference to an institutionalised, professional position, recognised role (i.e. president of an organisation, author, or philosopher) or social role ('mother', 'human rights advocate' et cetera). My main argument is that the intellectual function is performed through a range of subject positions that are themselves created and occupied by enunciating subjects in the debate. In this chapter I analyse the making of subject positions, the places from which statements are made; to and on behalf of whom one speaks, as well as the performance of ethos, pathos, and logos in those arguments. The theoretical themes discussed in chapter 3 are brought to the fore of the analysis.

To analyse the making of subject positions in the discourse I use the notions of enunciated positions, attachment, engagement, and the particular versus the universal, to categorise the various statements and subject positions into three ideal types: "experts", "spokespersons" and "public intellectuals". I argue that strategies of attachment and unattachment; rhetorical forms of engagement and appeal; argumentative styles and strategies, are all central to the formation of various types of intellectual subject positions in this context. Furthermore, I show which rules of engagement characterise the various fora for debate at the time and what this entails for the formation of intellectual subject positions. To identify what constitutes an intellectual, I first had to find, trace, and analyse the performance of an intellectual function, as defined by Ernesto Laclau in dialogue Antonio Gramsci, in articulations and utterances within the debate. With guidance from the rhetorical political approach as developed by Alan Finlayson, I have studied the rhetoric involved in such practices.

Gramsci argued that we must make distinctions based on the nature of the labour (neuro-muscular efforts) and position of the intellectual in relation to social groups, to analyse the function of moral and political leadership. Along the same vein I make distinctions *among* the various intellectual subject positions articulated in the debate on privatisation, as it is represented in the medialised fora of DN, *Arbetet*, *Nyliberalen* and

TLM. Utterances from radio programme OBS are largely absent here, because so few of the episodes pertain to the subject of privatisation.

As explained in chapter 3, all contributors to the debate are in a sense performing the intellectual function of articulation and mediation of ideology in public discourse. The distinctions I make here are thus not based on various actors' relation to their class, like Gramsci, but distinctions based on a combination of:

- The position and appeal of enunciating subjects, as more or less particular or universal.
- Outspoken relative attachment or un-attachment: how the enunciated position is presented in the context of articulation
- The use of rhetorical strategies such as character and authority (ethos); emotional engagement and mobilising appeal (pathos); logical, rational reasoning (logos).
- Concerns, arguments and demands: of a particular, technical, rational, instrumental, managerial, universal, humanist, aesthetical or moral nature, for instance.

I use these analytical constructs to sort out, categorise and typologise the vast range of positions articulated in the empirical material. The quotes and referenced utterances are all examples from the privatisation discourse – used to illustrate articulations and formations of intellectual subject positions. The important aspect here is not the individual actors themselves, but how various arguments that seek to persuade others, institute a common sense, or negotiate change, are at the same time constituting, articulating, and taking up certain positions. Some of those positions of enunciating subjects relate to certain types of arguments. Some fora allow for the articulation of certain types of subject positions and arguments, but not others. Certain rhetorical strategies are used to constitute one type of subject positions, but not another, and so on. This is what I try to explain in this chapter.

Enunciation, appeal, and attachment

In this section I present my analysis of the places from where utterances are made, and the rhetorical practices used to inhabit them. While the range of available subject positions (as explained in detail in chapter 3) is constructed and regulated through discourse, the enunciated positions of speaker are articulated along the axis of particular-universal and attachment-unattachment. Part of this positioning is the appeal of an utterance: *to* and *on behalf of* whom (or what) one speaks. These aspects are crucial if we are to fully comprehend the performances of an intellectual function.

Through public utterances, actors position themselves as well as other actors in terms of articulated institutional, political, social, cultural, and/or economic relations. Such positionings are value laden and will attempt to attach (or de-attach) a subject position to certain positions, phenomena, and practices: ‘right wing intellectuals’, ‘hash left’, ‘yuppies’ et cetera. The specific ideas about what the positions for and against privatisation seek to represent tell us the content of their ideological project.

Some contributions to the debate focus on the privatisation of a specific service or company, such as broadcasting services⁵⁶⁶. Standpoints for or against privatisation of said service are usually (if not always) articulated from a position tied to the company or service at hand, speaking only on behalf of that localised expertise and experience. Others are aimed more broadly, to persuade the publics, the readers, or the listeners on a larger issue such as the larger transformation of society, in which privatisation either gets to symbolise the whole, or is recognised as only one part of a larger puzzle. Even though I have studied the debate in different sources, there is a prominent consistency in the subject positions made available. These include ‘leftist intellectuals’, ‘experts’, ‘professors’, ‘authors’, et cetera. The value ascribed to each position varies between sources and utterances.

Now, related to creation of subject positions and the position-taking of enunciating subjects, is the articulation of attachment. There are many examples of this in the study fora, and some have already been mentioned throughout the analysis, more follow in the next section while further still are analysed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, I want to highlight the practice of active attachments and unattachments to established institutions, organisations, authorities, political parties, and so forth – in short, anything that could make the utterance perceived as partisan. In DN and *Arbetet*, there is a greater degree of articulated attachment: most utterances seem to be given access by their explicit role as representative or spokesperson for an organisation, of sorts. In OBS, there is a greater degree of unattachment among speaking subjects make general claims, regardless and detached from any formal position they may have as actors.

One example can be found in a column of sorts in the culture section of DN in August 1993, contributed by an author who frequents both the culture section in DN, OBS and TLM. It comments on a previous debate and the writer positions himself simultaneously against politicians, conservatives, business leaders, radical leftist feminists, and social democratic representatives. The author's own position is relatively *unattached*, both politically and professionally – he does not represent or speak on behalf of any organisation or political standpoint. The argument in the articles concerns privilege, politics and moral, combined with demands for decreased unemployment. The author, who has been active as a journalist in the culture pages for years, is now

⁵⁶⁶ Bolme, Thomas, Görel Byström Janarv, Sören Ekström, Stefan Gullberg, Kalle Gustafsson, Bertil Jacobson, and others, “Ska SR Skrotas?”, *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 March 1992, 4

presented as 'author and critic'⁵⁶⁷. He, in turn, positions himself against the previously mentioned chairman of Electrolux, who in an interview during the summer allegedly 'expressed himself as in favour of domestic servants and cutting back on their wages'. 'Large-scale business leaders and politicians' are bundled together and treated as similar subject positions. Prime minister Carl Bildt is somewhat sarcastically presumed to 'so far' be 'crawling across the floor with his Hoover'.

What happens here is furthermore that the subject position of Carl Bildt is humbled and described as an ordinary citizen, rather than a party and state representative. The president of the social democratic youth association (SSU) is described as a careerist and a "renewer" (with quotation marks) who 'thinks that he is young and bold when he puts his arm around some downy, conservative careerist and agrees with the latter that politicians have too much power and that we have lived beyond our means'⁵⁶⁸. A large part of the article is narrated through a historical perspective; describing an older generation, post-war optimism, and lower unemployment. Change and continuity is thus negotiated, as similarities between the 1930s depression and the 80s-90s-crisis are compared.

Particular or universal appeal

The position and appeal of enunciating subjects can be more or less particular or universal. That is, speaking to, from and on behalf of relatively particular or universal positions. Moreover, the concerns and demands of an argument vary accordingly, and may be of a particular, technical, rational, instrumental, managerial, universal, humanist, aesthetic, or moral nature, for instance.

One example can be found published in the opinion pages in DN, written by a representative for the social democratic youth organisation (SSU). By critiquing right wing politics and its liberal marketization discourse, including fractions within his own social democratic party, the contribution is positioned as relatively un-attached to parliamentary politics, but on the other hand the enunciating subject is positioned as a direct spokesperson for the youth association. As previously mentioned, even though this is a public statement it is obviously aimed at members of the social democratic party (primarily referred to as 'the party'). 'The Social Democrats' congress is opened on Wednesday'; 'the congress will be a measure of value of how far the party has come'; or 'the social democratic party-congress must deal with [...]'⁵⁶⁹. Not only is the author formally introduced as 'SSU-President' but makes clear that 'he' and others form a

⁵⁶⁷ Göran Greider, 'Unga och gamla sanna européer', *Dagens Nyheter* (2 August 1993), section Kultur.

⁵⁶⁸ Greider, 'Unga och gamla sanna européer'.

⁵⁶⁹ Thorwaldsson, Karl-Petter, 'Partiet har fel människosyn', *Dagens Nyheter* (13 September 1993), section DN Debatt

common position. Speaking on behalf of the organisation, he attempts to represent and articulate what the organisation “thinks”:

But now I – and many others in the young social democracy – am worried about the conservative forces advancement. [...] This is what SSU expresses by launching the term empowerment. SSU wants to bring up the discussion of the citizen’s right to be in control of their own life. This must be the most important question during the party congress. The reason why is self-evident. I believe in the individual’s will to private responsibility, in the genuine wish to have power of one’s own life.⁵⁷⁰

The writer engages in public discourse to unveil ‘the myth that you have power over your own existence just because you are a customer’⁵⁷¹. By claiming that he believes in the human’s desire for power over her *own* life, the argument reproduces an individualistic discourse where personal empowerment has primacy over the collective. As a spokesperson for the social democratic youth association it is in other words possible to demand the individual’s right to decide over their own life – but any collectivist perspectives or interpretations of “power” are left, not just unspoken, but erased from the social imaginary in this utterance.

The author speaks on behalf of a group and aims the statement at a particular group, to which he has an obvious and articulated attachment. He also refers to ‘the Kafka-corridors of Municipal Halls’ and quotes a hit from the 70s, by a well-known Swedish political rock group, in his protest against privatisation:

Power over one’s own labour, without a doubt, ends up high on the list of empowerment projects. That thought is not in any way new. Already in the 1970s, the rock group Blå Tåget wrote in “The State and the Capital” [sic]: ‘The tempo’s increased at the machines, here they’re drilling the elite, the production has no place for those who’ve gotten too badly beaten, but so that no one shall think that there is something wrong with the heavy piecework, he is treated as an illness case and taken care of by the so merciful workers’ health care’. Seldom has the relationship between the caring state and the exploitative capitalism been better depicted.⁵⁷²

It is unclear whether this is a strategy to reach a broader audience by appealing through cultural recognition, if it is a way of communicating with forces within the party who

⁵⁷⁰ N.B. the Swedish term “egenmakt” (literally “self-power”) translates into the English “empowerment”, although the former always to individual empowerment. Likewise, the Swedish “människans” (the “human being’s”) has been translated as the “individual’s” since it clearly refers to a individual human being. Thorwaldsson, ‘Partiet har fel människosyn’.

⁵⁷¹ Thorwaldsson, ‘Partiet har fel människosyn’.

⁵⁷² Thorwaldsson, ‘Partiet har fel människosyn’, 4. The official title of Blå Tåget’s original 1972 release was “The one hand knows what the other is doing” – it was informally perhaps known among fans as “The State and the Capital”. However, a very successful 1980s cover by punk band Ebba Grön was entitled simply “The State and the Capital”.

might have once have listened in agreement to that very same song, or if he simply thinks that Blå Tåget's wording is unsurpassable. Either way, referencing this cultural, political comment on society, albeit twenty years prior, hints at both the appeal of the author's utterance as well as the prevalent quality of an aesthetic form of critique. Instead of privatisation, the author, speaking for the SSU, proposes alternative solutions:

That is why empowerment to provide real opportunities to choose, is needed. We would like to see the formation of associations and non-profit organisations to solve common problems. This has always been and *is* the people's movement's solution to a defective state and unjust market.⁵⁷³

Here it becomes clear that the author is speaking on behalf of the organisation, as the 'we' he represents is formulating its own political proposal. This 'we' that is the Social Democratic youth organisation uses an historical narrative. To legitimise a political standpoint, the speaker constructs this belief in "empowerment" as something that the people's movement has 'always' stood for. So, SSU is aligned with the traditional people's movement, against 'a defective state' *and* 'an unjust market'⁵⁷⁴. The article is aimed towards the speaker's own party, as a publicly articulated statement in an internal, limited discourse.

The following day, the DN op-ed publishes a reply. A journalist and political scientist forwards these arguments and demands, but does so while directing himself to an even broader audience, mentioning that the SSU president's article speaks to fellow social democrats in an internal appeal:

Thorwaldsson poses the right question. He mainly addresses his own party. But the problem he presents needs to penetrate into all who combine social sensibility with technocratic inclinations, including several social liberals.⁵⁷⁵

This author uses an historical narrative to defend old ideals of *bildung*, labour ethics, and critique the lack of "old" morals and the social security morals of modern the welfare state. The position of the enunciating subject, as well as the appeal, is more universal than that of the SSU president's contribution. But this is a conservative, temporary alliance. The author uses the SSU president's contribution and standing to forward his own argument based on the same premise: "The welfare cannot be uncoupled from what happens with people's inner force and stature. It cannot just be "given".' Thus the argument is turned – with reference to the hard work of old social

⁵⁷³ Thorwaldsson, 'Partiet har fel människosyn'. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁷⁴ Thorwaldsson, 'Partiet har fel människosyn'.

⁵⁷⁵ Bergström, 'Den bekväma människosynen', 2.

democrats and working-class traditions and hard labour – into an argument of ‘sound’ values and efforts’ that ‘will again dominate Sweden after years of illusionism’.⁵⁷⁶

A somewhat typical example from *Arbetet* is a contribution by the (then and for only another month) Minister for Civil Affairs for the social democrats, published in the cultural opinion page in September 1988.⁵⁷⁷ This opinion piece is aimed perhaps at the reader and potential voter, but the author is mainly taking a shot at the liberal People’s Party. Like other social democratic contributions in *Arbetet*, the author differentiates between privatisation and clearances, but still criticises the People’s Party’s programme for being characterised by both. It is difficult to define the authors enunciate position. Although presented as Minister of Civil Affairs, he does not automatically *speak from* that position, nor does he automatically legitimise his presence in this debate – to critique a political party’s programme. Many contributions to *Arbetet* are articulated from similar positions of political spokespersons attacking oppositional representatives, focusing on specific instances of privatisations (of parking lots, properties, or childcare at the municipal level) and speaking to fellow politicians on a municipal level, members of their own party or possibly local constituencies.

At other times, when an articulation is aimed at no-one in particular, the author also speaks on behalf of no-one in particular – from an autonomous position that is announced without any relation to a party, organisation or even occupation. The very same actor may however be announced as attached to a particular party, organisation, or occupation in other articulations. Some contributions use the narrative of a national community, more so in *Nyliberalen* than any other source. The utopian, fictional short story by an author writing under pseudonym, uses ‘the Swedish people’⁵⁷⁸ as a strategy for legitimising their own position, as a way of saying, “look here, the Swedish people agrees with me and they (as one actor) can decide over future politics”; ‘The Swedish people had completely lost faith in the established parties. By not voting, one showed that a new order was wanted’. This rhetorical figure resurfaces, as ‘people of this country’, ‘the Swedes’, or ‘the Swedish people’.⁵⁷⁹ The two former are used as a way of legitimising a position, of lending authority to an argument and speaking on behalf of “Swedes” – while the latter, ‘the Swedish people’, is a subject position which is spoke *to*.

For example, beneath the headline ‘The Welfare state – the gigantic lie’ on the editorial of *Nyliberalen* (n. 3 1989), the editor utters a grievance regarding the extent and existence of the welfare state, speaking as a general ‘we’ of enslaved subjects under

⁵⁷⁶ Bergström, ‘den bekväma människosynen’, 2.

⁵⁷⁷ Bo Holmberg, ‘Fp:s vinglighet hotar välfärden’, *Arbetet* (8 September 1988), 3.

⁵⁷⁸ Frisam, ‘En dag i Göte B Hisingssons liv’, *Nyliberalen*, 1989/2 (1989), 17.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. Frisam, ‘En Dag i Göte B Hisingssons Liv’, 16–17; Johan Norberg and Christian Gergils, ‘Robert Nozick - Fortfarande Desperatliberal’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/4 (1993), 41–42; Sven Rydenfelt, ‘Den Svenska Valfärdsstatens Final’, *Nyliberalen*, 3, 1993, 13; Ingemar Nordin, ‘Hälsodefascister På Marsch’, *Nyliberalen*, 6, 1993, 4; Hans Nordström, ‘Skål För Friheten!’, *Nyliberalen*, 7, 1993, 23; Christian Gergils, ‘Expressen Igen’, *Nyliberalen*, 6, 1993, 4.

welfare state rule, and to the welfare state 'Thee'. The proposed political solution is close to the night-watchman state, mentioned in chapter 6. Here, the subject position of 'the welfare state' and the 'enslaved subject' are confused through the inconsistent use of 'you' and 'thee'.

But what are you if not a slave, when Thee takes two parts of our money, forces us into a central-planned school system and let us die in the que for healthcare? [...] Thee have two options to choose from [...] Thee are victims of a system which has outlived itself. In that case the proper action is to take off and commit to something honourable. Or Thee will continue to administrate a morally and economically rotten system. And continue to pretend and try to keep the gigantic lie alive. The lie about The Good Welfare State. The choice is between power and right, between coercion and freedom. Run fast; the lie and therefore the immorality grows larger for every day that passes. On second thought, some can stay and run the state's only morally appropriate task; the inner and outer defence. [...] Instead of trampling on the human rights, one protects them. Instead of stealing, one punishes those who have stolen.⁵⁸⁰

The 'thee' is described as a victim under the (welfare state) system, which is 'rotten' and 'immoral'. It is unclear whether or not the addressed 'thee' is a collective or individual subject. The welfare state is positioned as a foreign power; something not in the control of its citizens, but a means to control 'thee'. The welfare state represents power and coercion, a form of inorganic hegemony, so to speak. The editor calls out the lies that colour the system. In a sense, *Nyliberalen* takes up the position that speaks the truth, not to, but about power. The welfare state 'takes' money from the collective 'us', represents power and coercion, and builds on dishonest, morally, and economically rotten administrative system which has outlived its day. Furthermore, in this statement, as in many others, the negative definition of freedom is instated as common sense. The freedom from coercion and intrusions on behalf of the state recurs in all examined fora.

Similarly, in a debate-like article from the same issue, 'The silence begins to rumble', published without a signature opposite the editorial in *Nyliberalen* 1989, someone makes a remark supposedly on the behalf of the silent majority. The enunciative position from which the author speaks both to and on behalf of is a universal position, as a representative for 'human beings' in general:

The reason for this is that the system – even here the parallel to Eastern Europe is correct – is weakened. It is in a state of crisis. People are concretely experiencing how the Swedish welfare state, just like the communist one, no longer keeps its promises. They take note of how slogans sound increasingly hollow. Another reason, if not as strong, is that the alternative to the existing model is formulated all the more clearly. The crisis does not

⁵⁸⁰ Varveus, *Nyliberalen*, n. 3, 1989, p. 2

only consist in that the system no longer can “deliver”, the crisis is also moral. A growing number of people, mostly younger, are without a doubt questioning the legitimacy of the system and proposing a different vision of the good society: the neoliberal.⁵⁸¹

Included in the ‘growing number’ of younger neoliberals is most likely the editorial staff themselves, yet the speaker appropriates the representation of a larger, innumerable opposition of ‘humans’. The term used here in Swedish is not exactly “people” but “humans”. In Swedish, this can be used as an everyday concept, more inclusionary than “men” yet different from “people”, which connotes on national derivation, ethnic communality or a unified collective and have been used by both socialist and nationalist projects – an association that these neoliberal ideologists seek to avoid. ‘Humans’, then, signifies something more detached from such political values and is instead included in classical liberalist and humanist terminologies. The neoliberal focus on human rights is visible both in *Nyliberalen* and other contemporary utterances from authors and organisations proposing privatisation⁵⁸².

An example of an attempt at enunciate a position equivalent to “one of the people” can be observed in a contribution to *Nyliberalen* in 1993. The article is signed simply with the author’s name. No position, title, or organisational affiliation is mentioned, which is unusual for articles published in *Nyliberalen*. Beneath the headline ‘A small hope’, on what can be described as an editorial page consisting of several shorter texts, a regular contributor argues for privatisation in a short paragraph, quoted here in full:

The only way, system shift, and privatisation. Big words and, for a neoliberal, beautiful ones. But unfortunately, they were not put into practice. The road is as crooked as Bengt Westerberg’s morals, the system shift only exists in the heads of Rolf Alsing and not even Carl Bildt can describe the Bank support as a privatisation. To say something cruel about the completely failed right wing government is almost too easy, so I will settle for a humble exhortation to all the Swedes who dragged themselves out of bed that tragic Sunday in September 1991: A sick system will stay sick no matter how beautifully politicians lie about system shift, privatisation, and freedom. Keep sleeping next time!⁵⁸³

Here, the enunciating subject positions himself against representatives from both the Liberal People’s Party (Westerberg) and the conservative Moderate party (Bildt) as well as Alsing who was editor in chief of major social democratic evening paper *Aftonbladet* at the time. He positions himself against theses representatives of government and mass

⁵⁸¹ N, ‘Tystnaden Börjar Mullra’, 3. Again,

⁵⁸² E.g. Brunfelter, Ulf, Patrik Engellau, Gunnar Hökmark, Gustaf Petrén, Mats Svegfors, and Westholm, *En Ny Grundlag: Ett Förslag, MOU: Medborgarnas Offentliga Utredningar*, 0284-8767 ; 1988:1 (Stockholm, 1988); Dahmén, Erik, ed., *Rätt och moral i ett modernt borgerligt sverige* (Stockholm, 1992); Nordin, Ingemar, *Privat egendom: om ägande och moral, det frivilliga samhället*, (Stockholm, 1988)

⁵⁸³ Mats Hinze, ‘En liten förhoppning’, *Nyliberalen*, Editorial pages, 1993/1 (1993), 5.

media – the establishment if you will – and speaks to the people of Sweden. This contribution articulates a relatively universal and unattached position, not just in comparison to other articles published in the same journal, but to the contributions to the debate in general. He speaks from nowhere, but for neoliberals.

Differences in enunciated positions and appeals can be traced to the different sections of debate. One illustrative example can be found in two subsequent issues of DN, from 1988, when there are still two available sections for debate, one cultural opinion section and one opinion section. In the cultural opinion page, a ‘philosopher and author’ criticises privatisation in two articles, both part of the series ‘The Welfare State and the Future’. The author also uses his own concept ‘techno system’ referring to the alliance between science, technology and industry which threatens the independent pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge in this informative, yet argumentative article. But there are no references to any other sources for knowledge or authority. Instead, the author appeals to the ‘we’ that recognise the sequence of events that is narrated in an attempt to negotiate and interpret societal change. The author introduces analytical concepts which he has developed himself. Here, privatisation is defined in relation to demands for competition, internationalisation, industry, business, enterprises, and market forces: pitting the alliance between science, technology, and industry against the independent pursuit of knowledge. Privatisation is treated as a phenomenon of capitalism, which in turn is defined in opposition to socialism.⁵⁸⁴ In the articulation of concern and sympathy for people, by speaking as a ‘we’ and a humble ‘I’, in the face of abstract processes of industrialisation, aesthetic standardisation and harmful nationalisation – a relatively unattached position, with the possibility to engage in different questions; is enunciated from a relatively universal standpoint. Even if the author is presented initially as a ‘philosopher and author’ the contribution argues on matters beyond philosophy or literature, and on everything from personal reflections to ‘the balance of power’ in contemporary, and future, society.

On the same spread as the later of these two articles, the ‘chairman of Electrolux and Ericsson’ (one major home-appliances firm and one telecommunications company) argues *for* privatisation, which becomes a signifier for market competition and increased employment.⁵⁸⁵ He argues *against* monopolies, socialism, and aspects of public welfare. Speaking on a matter close at hand to his formal position as a chairman of two large firms and economic actors in Sweden - and on the Swedish labour market:

It is strange how a concealed socialisation continues in Sweden. One example of that is, as you know, the wage earner funds, where they have placed billions in the hands of a few amateurs who haven’t contributed to this country, through extra taxation on

⁵⁸⁴ von Wright, ‘Välfärdsstaten och framtiden (1) privatisering rubbar jämvikten’, 4; George Henrik von Wright, ‘Välfärdsstaten och framtiden (2) kanske krävs ett outhärdligt hot’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12 September 1988, section Kultur, 4.

⁵⁸⁵ Hans Werthén, ‘Låt pensionärerna jobba!’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12 September 1988, section Debatt, 5.

industry [...] The result of the current politics is a public-sector monopoly without competition. They have thereby created an industry sector that is too small [...] The solution has to be to introduce competition in the public sector. [...] Everyone knows that the need for care will increase in the future [...] I think that it is important that the public sector gets to feel the stimuli of competition. Each and all who work in a competitive industry can vouch [for this] [...] When Electrolux went into Pysslingen, the day care centre in Nacka [outskirts of Stockholm], leading representatives of state complained that “a Hoover salesman went in to the day care business”. I am not for an instant ashamed of being called “Hoover salesman”. [...] This convenient home appliance have probably meant more for women’s liberation than many formal speeches in party congresses.

He speaks not on behalf of his official position, but his professional experience and position strengthens his authority in this particular matter. This particularism is thus employed to legitimise the speaker’s “right” to make political claims and statements. All in all, this articulated position is all in all relatively particular despite attempts to draw attention to more universal values (women’s liberation) the utterances do not speak *on behalf* of the subject position of women. The utterance is on behalf of an “I”, who thinks, and an “Electrolux” who acts.⁵⁸⁶

In short, the subject position is formed through a co-constitutive process between speaker and audience. The position of the enunciating subject is formed in utterances that show from where the statement is made, whom the utterances speak on behalf of and to whom the statement is directed. For instance, a contribution to the debate which is aimed simultaneously inwards to (other) members of a certain party, is also articulated from a position of another member of that political party or youth organisation, speaking at the same time on behalf of a group within the party (to readers happening to be other members) or as a representative of that party (for readers who are not members of that particular party or organisation).

Ethos, pathos, and logos

Various strategies are used to appeal to the audience; the contributions employ metaphors, emotional engagement, reference to personal experiences and everyday practices. Some interact actively with the audience, encouraging them to sympathise or even act. Others refrain from such strategies and opt for a rational, apparently neutral argumentation to claim legitimacy and authority in the debate. These strategies correspond to the ideal types of rhetoric mentioned in the theory chapter. In my analysis, I have utilised ethos, pathos, and logos as analytical categories to understand

⁵⁸⁶ Werthén, ‘Låt pensionärerna jobba!’, 5.

the empirical material. While one or all of these types of argumentation are present in all contributions, regardless of media outlet, I have been able to observe certain tendencies. On the one hand, distinctions can be made between the different combinations of ethos-pathos and ethos-logos among the different fora. The combination of pathos-logos is rare, but do surface on occasion in the material. On the other hand, the particular strategies employed to shape an ethos differ as well. These combinations can in turn be seen in relation to the enunciate positions articulated in the process, as discussed in a section further ahead. First, I want to say something about the practice of asserting the character and authority of the speaker; the emotional appeal and mobilising engagement; as well as the rational and logical reasoning applied in persuading the audience.

To understand for example the ethos of an argument, it is necessary to analyse its character and pin point what constructs a speaker's authority. Can it be something articulated - a position, a reference, a correct type of argument? Or is it something in their professional position? And what comes first? Is something an effect or constituent of the other? Do I frame my arguments in a certain logical way because I am a professor in economics – or is my position as a professor in economics created by the way I frame my arguments? Is this what makes me different from the mere laymen and spin doctors of the debate?

Ethos-logos

The central statements in the debate, from which other actors attain the meanings of current phenomena, politics, and ideas, are legitimatised based on a discursive recognition of authority - whether that be dependent on attachment, neutrality or lack of emotional appeal. Such 'rules' that regulate claims for authority may very well vary between the local discourses, and over time in these different medialised debate fora.

One way to assert authority is by a matter-of-fact argument, by presenting a neutral, un-biased and firm position. In *Arbetet*, informative rather than agitating contributions regularly feature in both the opinion section and what they call the cultural debate. The types of ethos (or character and authority) created in these contributions is that of an "expert". The speaker establishes authority in a particular field or issue based on expert knowledge derived either from education, a professional attachment or first-hand experience. This creates a limited sort of locally attached authority which gives the speaker legitimacy only within that field. It is not transferrable to other situations or questions.

A somewhat typical example from *Arbetet* is a previously mentioned contribution by the Minister for Civil Affairs, mentioned in the previous section⁵⁸⁷. It is difficult to

⁵⁸⁷ Holmberg, 'Fp:s Vinglighet Hotar Vålfärden', 3.

define the author's enunciate position, but what is being done in the course of the argument is an expert assessment of the proposed politics, using technical terms and internal jargon to speak of the potential effects of privatisation politics on public administration. While these sorts of arguments are promoted, contributions tainted by a political engagement and attempts at mobilisation are in turn treated as less credible, as a headline in DN illustrates; "Scientific dishonesty". Anders Åslund has left the role of the researcher to become a purebred agitator⁵⁸⁸. A lack of pathos can thus contribute to the creation of a convincing ethos, and too much pathos risks undermining ethos.

Another example of this is a spokesperson clearly attached to the party as declared leader of the social democratic parliamentary group, who also speaks in the name of "we social democrats". The article is a reply to an earlier opinion piece from a group leader of the liberal People's Party – who criticised social democratic standpoints, and addresses him both directly and indirectly ('what shall we do about that unfreedom, Lars Leijonborg?', 'don't give up, Lars', or 'how can the group leader write that [...]'). The article is from 1993, with the centre-right coalition (including the liberals) in government and the Social Democrats in opposition. The social democratic author emphasises a definition of freedom focused on the individual (empowerment, development, and choice). A politics for 'a good society' must accordingly build on a combination of 'the collective' and the individual: collective decision making for increased individual freedom. Here, unemployment is defined as problematic because it encroaches on the individual freedom of choice. With reference to the social democratic party's own report "To Dare to Want!"⁵⁸⁹, which was critiqued in the aforementioned article, the author argues for people's (rather, "human's", using the word of choice favoured by the neoliberal discourse) 'possibility to choose and participate in the welfare'⁵⁹⁰. 'That enterprises can be pursued in separate forms', i.e. privately or publicly, is something that the social democrats ('we') not only 'take for granted' but 'see as a less important issue'⁵⁹¹.

With reference to a "new report" from the Industrial Institute for Economic and Social Research, the social democratic spokesperson reveals that implementation of privatisation policies has been more successful in municipalities ruled by social democrats, than in those ruled by right-wing parties – because the costs have been less in social democratic municipalities who have 'formulated contracts more precisely' and 'done their utmost to find more probable entrepreneurs'.⁵⁹² Hence, the argument here is a rational, cost-effective one, in favour of privatisation, in social democratic hands.

⁵⁸⁸ Stefan Hedlund and Kristian Gerner, "Vetenskaplig Ohederlighet". Anders Åslund Har Lämnat Forskarrollen För Att Bli En Renodlad Agitator', *Dagens Nyheter*, 28 January 1993, section Debatt.

⁵⁸⁹ Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, *Att våga vilja!*. (Stockholm, 1993).

⁵⁹⁰ Bergqvist, 'Bekänn färg, Westerberg!'

⁵⁹¹ Bergqvist, 'Bekänn färg, Westerberg!'

⁵⁹² Founded in 1939 by a club of directors in response to the growing Social Democratic movement, and frustration with the unwillingness of the Federation of Swedish Industries and SAF to actively engage in political radicalisation. For reference see Benny Carlsson and Mats Lundahl, *Ett Forskningsinstitut växer fram: IUI Från grundandet till 1950* (Stockholm, 2014).

Rather than an appeal to the people's freedom, the author slides into an appeal based more in logos than pathos. When the author does return to questions of power and freedom, it is to contrast the right-wing government's support for owners and producers with the Social Democrats support for freedom of choice, participation, and empowerment of the 'citizens who work or have children' in schools and kindergartens – and multiplicity of choice. In short, while the author clearly strives to assert a definition of freedom that contrasts to the 'extreme right perspective' (where taxation is the primary violation of freedom), the definition of freedom that is provided here connotes on a positivity, in the demand "to choose" and "participate" in society through privatised welfare services. Still, rather than something achieved through collective control or power – the collective comes into play only as a burden ("common problems") that affect 'our' individual possibilities.

When we make common decision to fight unemployment and environmental destruction, the goal with that is to give the individual human – all individual humans – greater possibilities of ruling one's own life. This sort of politics enables greater freedom.⁵⁹³

Thus, the degree of individual freedom – rather than the community's affairs, or a general, collective will – is at the heart of collective process of decision making and political participation. The privatised welfare state can then be defended on the basis of this individual definition of freedom, as the speaker returns to a collective appeal in his finishing statement. 'We Social Democrats' are posited against the failed 'Right-wing wave'. 'It is soon time for a new era, for a new politics for work, justice – and freedom of choice'⁵⁹⁴. Grasping for political authority, the author makes a reference to old-time Social Democratic leader Tage Erlander's programme for "freedom of choice", but Erlander's argument was not an individualistic one; it was one of solidarity, safety from unemployment and economic hardships, and adapting society's measures to each, according to their specific prerequisites.⁵⁹⁵

There is a subtle difference here in the perceived relation between the individual actor and collective society: whether a common society has been a solution to issues which individuals would not be able to solve on their own – or if the collective is a mere necessity in terms of organising decision making which boils down to measurable effects on individual freedoms. According to the leader of the social democratic parliamentary group; 'the most important thing to do today to increase freedom in Sweden is to pursue a policy that will take us out of stagnation' ("economic" is left implicit), 'gets growth going and provides chances of work and education for more' people.⁵⁹⁶ Here,

⁵⁹³ Bergqvist, 'Bekänn färg, Westerberg!'

⁵⁹⁴ Bergqvist, 'Bekänn färg, Westerberg!'

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. Tage Erlander, *Valfrihetens samhälle* (Stockholm, 1962). This statement borders on the classic socialist ideal "from each according to ability, to each according to need", but it is not a clear paraphrase.

⁵⁹⁶ Bergqvist, 'Bekänn färg, Westerberg!'

employment becomes a matter of individual opportunity and safety – not the safety of the collective or society as such – to be solved by an undefined ‘growth’. By referring to his own experiences; ‘after having participated in the finance committee’s dramatic meetings the past few days, I can see that’, the author creates an authoritative and credible ethos. It is also an exclusive or exclusionary ethos: only those present at the meeting can claim this position of authority.

The author also appeals to authority based on his formal position as group leader in parliament, as a social democratic spokesperson for the larger party (“we”) and by calling upon “reports” from both left and right-wing organisations, possibly in an attempt to persuade audiences across the board. The most obvious source of authority is his attempt at attaching himself to renowned and almost legendary politician Erlander (as prime minister Erlander led both party and government for 23 years uninterrupted, 1946 to 1969 – which is remarkable for any democracy) in a totalising “we social democrats” against individual members of the right-wing government⁵⁹⁷.

In *TLM*, the reader will come across the occasional factory floor report. In one such report, where the efficiency of private industry and privatisation is questioned, the author uses a personal narrative, representing (specialised, industrial) workers on piece work. This specific limited authority based on first-hand experience is used to argue and show how private industries are inefficient – contrary to the *perceived* privatisation arguments. It provides a detailed, empirical account.⁵⁹⁸

Another way of asserting an ethos is by attachment to existing sources of authority. The author’s presentations in *Nyliberalen* strives to assert authority by boasting of the various positions, employments, and engagements of the contributors. Stating that members of the editorial board are part of certain established organisations or publishing firms, for instance, gives the reader the impression that *Nyliberalen* too is a serious actor – a claim for legitimacy and authority. One author is presented as ‘one of the prominent figures within the Swedish Neoliberalism’ and has ‘written several books’⁵⁹⁹. This construction of authority goes on (for the same author, in another issue): the author *used* to work as an editor at Swedish publisher and think tank *Timbro* and currently holds the same position at publishing firm “Bra Böcker”, and:

⁵⁹⁷ Although, many names are mentioned they seldom come with any clarification of that person’s role or position. The reader is expected to know who Tage Erlander, Ian Wachtmeister, Bengt Westerberg, Carl Bildt, Bert Carlsson, Lars Leijonborg, Ingvar Carlsson, Bo Lundgren, Anne Wibbe and Lars Tobisson, is. All who are mentioned do have high ranking, if not leading, positions within parliamentary parties and government at the time (with the exception of Erlander).

⁵⁹⁸ Westin, ‘Arton år på SKF mekan’, 16.

⁵⁹⁹ Holmberg, ‘Istället för hopplöshet’, 12–17. It is not mentioned that these are rather unsuccessful sci-fi books.

when he doesn't devote himself to writing, he has among other things been editor for the journal *Gaudeamus*⁶⁰⁰, *Medborgaren*⁶⁰¹, *Nova science fiction* and *Gafiac*; he has also busied himself with book publishing⁶⁰², film critique and conference events.⁶⁰³

the way this author is described with a whole list of his current and former official positions, paid or unpaid can be a strategy for establishing authority, to call upon official credentials, but it can also be a way of legitimising neoliberal claims by showing that the speaker behind these claims is a member of established institutions. It also serves to illustrate the links between diverse elements – in short, to form regularities in the dispersion of elements that characterise public discourse.

Contrary to this tradition, the authors in *TLM* are never presented in this manner. They are simply stated by name and nothing else. This is a different sort of strategy whereby one's legitimacy as a speaker comes from one's position as unattached to any particular economic, social, or political interests. Nearly all contributors to *DN* and *Arbetet* include a standard interlude with some sort of author presentation. Sometimes it includes the professional role or attachment of the author, sometimes it does not. Some contributors to the debate are introduced as merely as "author" or "critic" while others are announced with profession, rank, company title or official organisational position. This follows no perceptible pattern. At all times, however, the name of the author is preceded or followed by a verb to describe the action of the utterance. Some authors "write", others "argue", "claim", "assert", "show", "question" or "scrutinise". Despite scrutiny, I have found no clear pattern that connects the type of utterance or author to one description and not the other.

Pathos-ethos

Articulations of an emotional appeal are relatively scarce in the main fora of *DN* or *Arbetet*. Nevertheless, there are of course exceptions. In the case of *DN*, the use of pathos in the debate on privatisation seems to decline over time. On the other hand, such expressions can be found in the culture pages even in 1993. In an article in the culture pages of *DN*, a relatively un-attached argument is supported by the use of

⁶⁰⁰ *Gaudeamus* was and still is the official magazine of Stockholm University's Student Union. The author of this articles was editor of the magazine between 1972 and 1973, and legally responsible for the publication between 1972 and 1974. Interestingly enough, one of the early members of the editorial board in Thélème is editor in 1988. See *Gaudeamus*, Stockholms högskolas studentförening, Stockholm, 1924 in Libris catalogue: <http://libris.kb.se/bib/3412556?vw=full> 2016-08-19

⁶⁰¹ *Medborgaren* (or 'the citizen') is been the member magazine for the conservative party *Moderaterna*. The author was editor of *Medborgaren* between 1977 and 1982.

⁶⁰² In other issues, it is clarified that the same individual has been employed at publishing house *Bra Böcker*.

⁶⁰³ Holmberg, John-Henri. "Ayn Rand: Ett legendariskt livsöde." *Nyliberalen* 1993, no. 5 (1993): 14–26.

metaphors and an engaging manner.⁶⁰⁴ The author speaks from personal experience and connects every-day practises, such as household chores, to more abstract power relations and systemic change. He poses questions directly to the reader. The statements are not addressed to any particular reader but uttered as if from a general standpoint to a broader audience of people of the same day and age. This is also an example which shows how actors can move and take up different positions in discourse. The writer, in this case, has gone from a relatively marginalised ‘outsider’ position in TLM, to journalist and later author and critic in the leading newspaper.

Another example published two days before the previous example. In an opinion piece, again aimed at local politics and politicians and again on the culture debate of *Arbetet* the main argument centres around socio-political attitudes of the conservative *Moderaterna*. Prioritising tax cuts and dismantling the social security systems, is treated as problematic in this (relatively) patho-centric argument:

What worries me most is after all not the cutbacks, discontinuations, queues, and desertion. No, it is the fundamental socio-political attitude itself and that everything seems to be negotiable, even basic principles of legislation.⁶⁰⁵

The argument develops into a critique aimed at the implementations of ‘harsh and often cynical market forces’, ‘lowering taxes at all costs’ and ‘dramatically reducing the public sector’. The author attempts to disclose a change in right wing political attitudes, by declaring not that a shift is obvious, or has happened, but that *his own impression* is that the ‘bourgeois – social conservative and social liberal – social politics, that I have come to know and appreciate’ has been transformed. What happens here is that conservatives and liberals are lumped together as one type of class based politics. Furthermore, the author, a former head of a municipal social services administration and current ‘president of the labour movements socio-political action group’ attempts to represent unity between the parties, as overarching the differences between himself as spokesperson for the labour movement and the right-wing politics – while the right-wing parties are in turn presented as fickle. Beneath the sub-heading ‘Neoliberalism’, he argues that statements from the municipal commissioner of finance is ‘an example of *extreme* neoliberalism’⁶⁰⁶, clearly positioning such politics as a marginal tendency. By voicing concerns of ‘frightening’ ‘clearances’ threatening the collective “us” and “our” ‘common property’, the author uses a historic, nationalistic narrative to play on a sense of belonging and collective identification:

⁶⁰⁴ Greider, Göran, ‘Unga och gamla sanna européer’, Dagens Nyheter (2 August 1993), section Kultur

⁶⁰⁵ Bengt Hedlén, ‘I Malmö är allt förhandlingsbart den svenska modellen skall skrotas’, *Arbetet*, 6 September 1988, section Kultur debatt, 3.

⁶⁰⁶ Hedlén, ‘I Malmö är allt förhandlingsbart den svenska modellen skall skrotas’, 3. Emphasis mine.

The basic provision of security as it has been built up over decades in our country, and what we usually sum up under the term “the Swedish model”, is what they want to scrap – and the Moderates in Malmö don’t think that the Social Services Act, our foremost expression of justice and solidarity, in any way corresponds to their ideology and view of humanity. [...]

In the Labour movement’s socio-political action group, we have close contacts with many who receive or needs society’s social services, aid and care, and have chartered and analysed the development and created a view of reality.⁶⁰⁷

Here, the author legitimates his claims by referring to a wider and qualified source of specialised, expert knowledge. To assert the author’s own worldview as the *one* worldview, this researched ‘reality’ is contrasted with the one represented in the moderate party’s ‘brochures’. This way, the author’s own rational analysis is contrasted with the enemy’s mere pamphleteering. Aimed at both the local public and local politicians with a ‘warning signal’, compelling the social democratic party and the people of ‘to a strong defence of the values that are at stake’.⁶⁰⁸

In turning from a narrow, administrative, local politician’s narrative to a concern for ‘all people’ in ‘protecting them from poverty’ and subsidies for the sick, the ‘handicapped’, the unemployed and so on, the argument becomes more pathos-centred and speaks of humanist rather than economic values. This also shows how privatisation can be a signifier of more wide-sweeping changes. By contrasting rights with dependency on charity, the ‘human rights’-argument to privatisation is displaced in a metonymical sense. This contribution provides an ethos based on the speaker’s specific expertise and experience in socio-political questions. Yet, this expertise is geographically constricted, as the focus of the critique and appeal is the politicians, and citizens, of Malmö. It should be mentioned that *Arbetet* is indeed a regional newspaper for the southern part of Sweden, where the city of Malmö is located. Nevertheless, the regional politics are not necessarily isolated from other levels of politics (be it national, cross-regional, or international). While clearly speaking to the constituents of Malmö and local politicians, the pathos of this contribution is visible in the concluding statement where he no longer speaks on behalf of himself, but on behalf of the collective and urges – not them, but ‘us’ to act in the coming (national, regional and local) election; ‘We have to take the warning signals seriously – we have the opportunity to do so on the 18th’.⁶⁰⁹ While there are no outbursts of anger, joy or despair in this article, there is a more subtle call for sympathy and solidarity with those less fortunate, as well as a re-instating of a common, group identity to mobilise the ‘we’ against the harsh and insensitive market forces in an overall etho-pathetic argumentation.

⁶⁰⁷ Hedlén, ‘I Malmö är allt förhandlingsbart den svenska modellen skall skrotas’, 3.

⁶⁰⁸ Hedlén, ‘I Malmö är allt förhandlingsbart den svenska modellen skall skrotas’, 3.

⁶⁰⁹ Hedlén, ‘I Malmö är allt förhandlingsbart den svenska modellen skall skrotas’, 3.

In an article with clear debating tendencies, one of the journalists in *TLM* (also member of the editorial office) argues against privatisation and its proponents, in this case Bo Södersten and the party secretary of *Moderaterna*, Gunnar Hökmark. In line with the rest of the contributions in *TLM*, the writer is not introduced as anything other than the author of the article. Nor does the author speak on behalf of anybody but himself. Although some comments like ‘let us not repeat the mistakes of the past’⁶¹⁰ or attempts to align his own position with the ‘political goal that the labour movement has struggled for’ connects his individual position to a larger one, most statements are personal, speaking from experiences to appeal to the reader:

I must admit that I am somewhat surprised by the recent attacks on social insurances. [...] At the moment I am on paternity leave and have the opportunity to experience my daughter’s exceptional progress. [...]

I have also so far been safe in the knowledge that if I get ill or get into an accident it does not necessarily entail a disaster for the whole family.⁶¹¹

These statements are also loaded with emotional appeal, grounded in everyday experiences that the many readers can be expected to share. The utterance thus encourages the reader to sympathise with the family father against changes of the system. ‘To which degree are the reasons to smash this system grounded on facts?’⁶¹². This time, the argument is questioning the factual relevance of arguments from proponents of a privatised social security system. Throughout this article the author uses an historical narrative to re-define the emergence of national social security systems as a labour movement project to render the ‘older market controlled social security systems’ more efficient and adequate for the good of all citizens. This contribution also counter criticism voiced by Hans Zetterberg and others who claim that bureaucracy is ignorant to the concerns of human beings. Once more using ‘history’ to assert the legitimacy of his statements.

It is not especially difficult to counter that critique. It is sufficient to refer to what it history looks like [...] The critique against bureaucracy also feels fairly artificial. It is very easy to reproach the bureaucracy, but in reality, it has proved to be the most efficient and just way to manage the social policies.⁶¹³

Criticism of bureaucracy is here brushed-off as fake or artificial, as an easy target of a simplified argumentation. The reference to ‘reality’ might be understood as a truth

⁶¹⁰ Stefan Carlén, ‘Varför finns det socialförsäkringar?’, *Tlm.*, 1, 1993, 28.

⁶¹¹ Carlén, ‘Varför finns det socialförsäkringar?’, 28.

⁶¹² Carlén, ‘Varför finns det socialförsäkringar?’, 28–29.

⁶¹³ Carlén, ‘Varför finns det socialförsäkringar?’, 29.

claim, again asserting the authority and legitimacy of the speaker who initially referred to his own experiences in real life.

In the first issue of *Nyliberalen* 1990, the 'leader' of the Freedom Front, who is also the editor in chief of *Nyliberalen*, formulates a manifest. A final statement aimed at the reader attempts to capture the engagement of both the active members and potential recruits of the Freedom Front, confirming the attachment between the organisation and the journal as its outgoing organ:

Are You not content with simply clenching your fists in your trouser pocket? Do You really want to do something to force the development in the right direction and throw out the state from our lives? Now there is an option. Now there is the Freedom Front. So now it is really only up to You. We will meet on the battle field!

The manifesto is written by the leader of the Freedom Front [...]⁶¹⁴

Speaking directly to You, the reader, assuming that You too have silently been clenching your fists in your pocket as You have not been able to find any suitable option to the current political hegemony (for the lack of a better word), well you may look no further! The Freedom Front awaits your action, it comes down to You. The state is used to symbolise inimical intrusion. According to the author, the development of society is going downhill, and it is time to act. Speaking as a collective and universal 'us', who are all subjected to the impositions of this state, the author aligns himself with the reader, against the state and current system. A manifest such as this could, with minor tweaks, just as easily have been written by any political radical organisation. The final line, proclaiming that struggles have already begun, followed by the caption declaring that the *leader* of the Freedom *Front* has written the manifest, seems almost militant or revolutionary in its appeal. This is a clear use of pathos in attempting to mobilise the audience to act. An emotionally engaging rhetoric here serves to rouse sympathy from the audience and engage the sleeping masses.

Pathos-logos

The use of a constellation of pathos-logos, or a logo-pathetic rhetoric combines an emotional or passionate engagement with nuanced rational reflection of the advantages or disadvantages in the discussion of a particular course of action, event, or policy. In this case, political discussions about privatisation usually tend to lean towards one or the other of the two poles, but at times involves considerations that have to do with feelings and emotions; strives to engage the audience through an emotional outburst; react with passionate exclamations; or appeal to the listeners sense of compassion; while

⁶¹⁴ Varveus, 'Detta är frihetsfronten', 21.

the same contribution can include a logical, deductive consideration that weighs various alternatives and arguments for and against privatisation.

As one of the regular writers in *Nyliberalen* promotes the night-watchman state, he argues that even though a neoliberal, stateless society is the most moral and practical society, privatisation of fundamental services such as the police force might not be accepted initially by an un-knowing public, which the reader might want to try to convince about the superiority of neoliberalism. In this article, the author does not aim to convince the reader of this idea, rather the subject at hand is to aid the reader in the work to convince others of the ‘ideas of freedom’ and ‘neoliberal philosophy’.⁶¹⁵ The reader is in other words assumed to already be convinced of the neoliberal ideology. In this sense, *Nyliberalen* is an example of a backstage⁶¹⁶ arena for the production of arguments, strategies, and ideology.

Although, as the author states, ‘to start by explaining how the police might be privatised’ is not recommended from a pedagogical standpoint, the very notion that the police should be privatised is not even negotiated – it is a taken for granted fact, a commonplace. Clearly, this is an appeal to reason or an attempt to assert a particular conception as the only reasonable interpretation; but what complements the use of logos is what seems to be decontested belief regarding the inefficiency of the state and the untrustworthy, anonymous, and distant group of politicians.

In the attempt to convince others of the moral and practical superiority of neoliberalism, it is likely that any greater success would not be achieved by starting out with explaining how the police could be privatised. A certain element of pedagogics is recommended. However, there is a great difference between being pedagogic in the promotion of the ideas of freedom and to try to conceal the maximally libertarian conclusion. The logical follow up question after having encountered the neoliberal philosophy for the first time is: ‘But if the state now is so inefficient and politicians are so autocratic, then why don’t we get entirely rid of it?’ [...] Now, if anarchy wouldn’t work in practice, what would happen then? If the security companies decided that war is more profitable than negotiations, and they would start to wage war until there was only one left? If that company then turned against their customers and started to steal from them? Assume that such a scenario would prove to be accurate, then I would be the first to complain, just as I point out that what we have got over us is nothing else than a state. So, what do we have to lose?⁶¹⁷

Paradoxically as is stated, the only logical attendant question to that of the complete inefficiency of the state and autocratic politicians is why one does not do away with the state in its entirety. Yet, the ‘work at hand’ for the neoliberal political subject is to

⁶¹⁵ Hinze, Mats, ‘Varför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister?’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/4 (1993), 58–62

⁶¹⁶ Cf. Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*.

⁶¹⁷ Hinze, ‘Varför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister?’, 58–62.

convince others of the moral superiority of the neoliberalism. This statement is seemingly directed towards his own movement (just as local politicians use the opinion page of *Arbetet* and the president of SSU use DN) and fellow neoliberal sympathisers, sharing reflections and experiences of strategies in ‘convincing others’ of the neoliberal agenda. On the one hand, this argument appeals to the reader to mobilise in the fight for neoliberalism. On the other hand, it shows how *Nyliberalen* functions primarily as an internal forum for the neoliberal movement to rehearse arguments, mobilise internal forces and discuss strategies.

Three ideal types of intellectual subject positions

The process and practice of articulation of subject positions, involves the constitution of certain nodal points, from which others attain and fixate the meanings of a concept, situation, or event. In a sense, the intellectual function, in terms of articulation and mediation of ideology (as discussed in chapter 3) is performed by all utterances in the medialised public discourse. These, I argue, can function as a type of nodal point in discourse – i.e. the performance of the intellectual function itself, or the subject position through which it is performed, gains a privileged point in discourse. To do so, the arguments and positions must be legitimate, based on a discursive recognition of authority - whether that be dependent on attachment, neutrality, or emotional appeal, et cetera.

Now, by correlating the type of enunciated position and appeal with the attachment, rhetorical strategies, and concerns of an utterance, it I find that in this material it is possible to make a categorisation among the vast number of performances of the intellectual function. This is the result of my coding process, in which I discovered patterns in the process. Startingp out from the enunciated position – wether particular or universal – and the relative attachment of the utterance to other elements of discourse, I found that particular and attached positionings more often corresponded to the use of ethos, as well as administrative concerns, and so on. Vice versa, a relatively unattached position is often uttered in combination with a universal position and appeal of the speaker, that typically employs a patho-centred argument, and so forth. By analysing the material in full, it became clearer that these could be categorised into three ideal types of subject positions that perform the intellectual function. I use the notions of enunciated positions, attachment, engagement, and the particular versus the universal, to categorise the various statements and subject positions through which the intellectual function is performed, into three ideal types: “experts”, “spokespersons” and “public intellectuals”

This function is increasingly performed by, what I call, **experts** and **spokespersons** – not simply due to a lack of intellectual individuals – but because of active, constructive

processes. The ideal type of the **public intellectual** is pushed out of the opinion sections in the mainstream newspapers, it is initially promoted in TLM, but later excluded there too. In the end, the only fora that promotes such articulatory practices are *Nyliberalen*, the editorial section of DN, and the DN culture section (to a limited extent). These three types correspond to the dimensions listed at the beginning of this chapter:

- The enunciate position and appeal, as more or less particular (*experts* and *spokespersons*) or universal (*public intellectuals*)
- Outspoken relative attachment (*spokespersons*) or un-attachment (*public intellectuals* and *experts*)
- The use of rhetorical strategies: ethos-logos (*experts*), pathos-ethos (*spokespersons*) and pathos-logos (*public intellectuals*)
- Concerns, arguments and demands: of a particular, technical, rational, instrumental, administrative, managerial (*experts*); or universal, humanist, aesthetical or moral nature (*public intellectuals*). (The concerns and demands of the *Spokesperson* is particular but variable, depending on the represented party)

Public intellectuals

Various strategies are used to appeal to the audience as the contributions speak with metaphors, emotional engagement, reference to personal experiences and everyday practices. Some interact actively with the audience, encouraging them to sympathise. Others refrain from such strategies and opt for a rational, neutral argumentation to claim legitimacy and authority in the debate. The former range of strategies correspond to the type of subject positions who engage and criticise through statements uttered from a general standpoint to a broader audience - speaking from nowhere, as a fellow human being or as the abstract collective “we”. To speak from a completely un-attached position, speaking on behalf of universal values, “humanity”, “the public” or “the people of Sweden”. In short, these sorts of enunciations signify the subject positions which I have categorised as “public intellectuals”.

The enunciated position of the public intellectual is relatively unattached to any particular groups, organisations, or formal engagement, independent of specific interests, as an all-embracing, universal position who speaks *on behalf of* the public, the ‘underdog’ or universal values (not just standpoints and positions). The addressee that is *spoken to* is a broader, often undefined, audience, such as ‘the people’ or ‘public’. A critical capability is often emphasised in definitions of ‘The’ intellectual, and although it might not be that all intellectuals are always critical of the dominant forces, constitutive for the public intellectual is an articulated self-critique of one’s own standpoint and a vindication of the right to change the regime of truth or express

opposing arguments. Since this type of contribution to the debate are publicly directed or mediated in less exclusive, particular, or specialised forms of cultural and political articulation, they are available to a larger audience without any major threshold or restrictions on availability/attainment. This unattached, universal position(-ing) may also entail a legitimisation and practical possibility to interpret phenomena and define meaning, in a range of fora, areas and fields and allow for movement between contexts regardless of content. Since these articulations are made not on behalf of a singular actor or field but in general, particular demands limited to a specific field or actor would in part due to this relative unattachment, be possible to articulate as universal in either humanist, aesthetical or political terms. To speak from a completely un-attached position is to speak from nowhere, to be outside or above the social order. Such positions cannot as easily be ordered in to an existing political or institutional structure. This expresses a potential threat to the stabilised borders of political discourse: by taking up contradictory and challenging positions, transcending contexts, and fora, making demands not on the basis of their own social position, but on the behalf of something more universal like humanity (a subject position which is very difficult to ignore or defame).

Freedom of speech is widely debated and constructed as a neoliberal demand in *Nyliberalen*. This vigorous vindication can partly be explained by the marginalised position constructed and occupied by the contributors to the journal. In several contributions, the reader is informed on the latest attempts to silence the neoliberal voices in mainstream media. In 1993, the journal is itself under threat as the police shuts down and locks up the premises used as editorial office, seemingly without reason. *Nyliberalen*, here spoken of as *one* actor, raises the issue partly due to its perceived fundamental significance for a democratic society partly because (the meaning of) the concept of freedom of speech is under threat. The role of public service media is questioned in the process, where privately-owned outlets is clearly favoured:

Om människor inte har möjlighet att själva söka sin egen information och bilda sig sina egna uppfattningar- om de istället bara har möjlighet att ta del av information och värderingar som filterats genom det statliga kontrollsystemet - så upphör demokratin att fungera.⁶¹⁸

Freedom of speech is discussed further in detail in the spread following the editorial pages. Here, an article signed by one of the editors, speaks on the shifts in meaning and usage of *freedom of speech*. According to this article, freedom of speech has as a concept become an empty word, 'interpreted as the right to think and deliver state approved

⁶¹⁸ Anders Varveus, 'Yttrandefriheten - Det civiliserade samhällets viktigaste grundval och kännetecken', *Nyliberalen*, Editorial, 1989/2 (1989), 2.

thoughts'⁶¹⁹. It becomes clear that the members of the editorial board of *Nyliberalen* construct themselves in a marginalised position under threat of 'the politicians', who in turn control the monopolised media sector, through press subsidies. This article, which is framed by a header saying simply FREEDOM OF SPEECH in capital white letters across a black banner, is signed by 'Einar Du Reitz, vice president of Fria Moderata Studentförbundet and member of the editorial board of *Nyliberalen*'⁶²⁰. Demands are made here to introduce competition into the media and information sector.

Even 'otherwise relatively liberal' papers are constructed as co-constituters of this 'unjust system' in exchange for subsidies. Politicians and pressure groups are said to influence the 'plebs' and attack 'the weakest enemy; the minority'.⁶²¹ Further demands are made to abolish the state's monopoly over broadcasting media; to cancel the state's economic subsidies for other magazines; to conquer the media monopoly through new technologies; to liberate what the state has commandeered; to defend the right to distribute sadomasochistic images; and to defend the freedom of speech. While aligning with higher values such as freedom of speech and culture, the author also speaks as representative of minorities, such as the 'harassed porn-trader', against pressure groups to defend the freedom of speech. An anonymous 'one' is often the position that the author takes up in an antagonistic relation to parliamentary politics, politicians, and that somewhat unidentifiable power who governs and regulates society. In the process of such argumentations, it is not only the construction of positions that are important, but the way these contributors also manage to seize the concept of "freedom" and articulate it within a neoliberal discourse – a feint that TLM is not able to contest, but merely reproduce.

Spokespersons

To speak on behalf of a larger group of individual actors is also a way to revise one's ethos and assert authority. To speak on behalf of all the members of the labour union for instance, is to claim authority and legitimacy to publicly express, not one's own, but the collective's opinion. Such is the role of the "spokesperson". For instance, if we return to the contribution to the opinion page in DN, where the "SSU-president" makes demands to the party's coming congress, we can see that the author speaks on behalf of the organisation he represents, as the "we", "I - and many others" or "SSU wants to"⁶²², and so on. This "we" is the Social Democrats youth organisation who use an historical narrative to legitimate their standpoint in representing what the people's movement "always" has stood for. So, SSU is aligned with the traditional people's

⁶¹⁹ Einar Du Reitz, 'Den odelbara yttrandefriheten', *Nyliberalen*, YTTRANDEFRIHET, 1989/2 (1989), 4.

⁶²⁰ Du Reitz, 'Den odelbara yttrandefriheten', 5.

⁶²¹ Du Reitz, 'Den odelbara yttrandefriheten', 5.

⁶²² Thorwaldsson, 'Partiet har fel människosyn'.

movement, against “a defective state” and “an unjust market”. The article is obviously aimed towards the speaker’s own organisation, primarily referred to as “the party”, as a publicly articulated statement in an internal, limited discourse. The spokesperson or representative of an organisation is already, of course, allied with or attached to an existing group and interest.

For instance, authors may speak in defence of what is described as a vulnerable subject position, such as that of children, the working class, or entrepreneurs, and thus represent a marginalised position. Consider, for example, an opinion piece by a representative for the union of physicians, criticising government policies through rational arguments with regard to economic and technical concerns particular for (a part of) the group that he is representing - although not once does he argue on behalf of a “we”. There is no trace of emotional engagement and the article is built up by figures and facts. He is not speaking to the public, but addressing the politicians more or less directly (“Can this really be the intention of the government parties?”⁶²³). The author engages in a question directly linked to the group he represents in opposition of a particular political reform. Thus, this is a particular and specialised contribution to the debate.

While the subject positions of spokespersons for an organisation or business are always then attached to particular economic and political interests, the subject positions of “authors”, “journalist” or “artists” speak for more universal aesthetical or humanitarian interests. Both in *Nyliberalen* and *TLM*, the more universal public intellectual is articulated in an opposing relation to the state, parliamentary politicians, “the establishment” and “power elite”. Many of the contributions in *Nyliberalen* use a narrative depicting ‘the individual’ as a universal subject position in opposition to the welfare state, where the enunciating subject always takes the side of the individual.

A concrete example can be found on the front page of *Arbetet* on Friday 2 September 1988 is headlined with ‘Malmö is sold off to below cost price’, while an opinion piece on the cultural opinion page is titled ‘Malmoers are Winners! Tyrstrup defends the clearances’⁶²⁴. The wording in the subheading hints simultaneously at a defence of and an attack on privatisation policies. In this case, it is questionable whether the author who is municipal commissioner for the People’s Party (*Folkpartiet*, or *Fp* for short) has chosen the subheading herself. However, in the article, it is clear that the author speaks on behalf of the people of Malmö, while attached a specific political party organisation. Another example from this exchange is ‘Fp’s Wavering Threatens the Welfare’ in *Arbetet* on the cultural debate on the following Thursday by the Minister for Municipal Affairs for the Social Democrats. This opinion piece is aimed at the reader and perhaps potential voter, but the author is mainly taking a shot at a political liberal party, the

⁶²³ Anders Milton, ‘Socialiserad sjukvård’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 27 September 1993, section DN Debatt, 4.

⁶²⁴ Kerstin Tyrstrup, ‘Malmöborna är vinnare! Tyrstrup försvarar utförsäljningar’, *Arbetet*, 2 September 1988, section Kultur debatt, 3.

People's Party. In the preamble to the article it is clear that privatisation and clearance are two separate things:

Folkpartiets's wavering in the view of the public sector can become a as large a threat to the welfare as Moderaterna's system shift, claims Minister for Municipal Affairs, Bo Holmberg, in this contribution to the debate. The party's programme 'Renewed Public Sector' is marked/characterised by privatisations and clearances, and by that one is battering down open doors.⁶²⁵

The welfare state and the public sector is under *threat* from the 'wavering' People's Party, whose politics are compared to that of the conservative party and their system shift. The People's Party are said to be proponents of privatisation and clearances. Just as battering down open doors, this is clearly meant to signify something negative. All three are connected as equivalents, along with the two parties Fp and M, in an antagonistic relation to the public sector and the existing welfare system.

By the end of 1993, there is a resurgence in contributions critical to the government's privatisation politics published in DN. One author who is featured several times is a representative from the Social Democrats presented as spokesperson for energy politics in late October, and as spokesperson for economic policies by December. In the first of these two contributions, the author does differentiate between privatisation, deregulation, clearances and sell outs. While deregulation refers to a process concerning market conditions making privatisation as a transformation of companies possible; clearances is regarded as a strategy in privatising, that is to say, as a manner or realising privatisation ideology. By re-narrating the questions apparently posed to him by a 'concerned' public, an implicit criticism is voiced regarding the sell-out of the state owned Vattenfall as well as 'all forms of clearances' and 'energy-political gambling'⁶²⁶. Speaking on behalf of a social democratic standpoint (but not necessarily the party) and on behalf of his position as a conduit for concerned constituents, the author speaks directly to the conservative minister of business – his fellow colleague, and opponent, in parliament.

Experts

Another ideal type of subject positions that is created in these contributions is that of the "expert". The speaker establishes authority in a particular field or issue based on expert knowledge derived either from education, a professional attachment or first-hand experience. This creates a limited sort of locally attached authority which gives

⁶²⁵ Holmberg, 'Fp:s Vinglighet hotar välfärden', 3.

⁶²⁶ Anders Sundström, "Uppgörelse om kärnkraften krävs", *Dagens Nyheter*, 27 October 1993, section Debatt, 4.

the speaker legitimacy only within that field. It is not transferrable to other situations or questions.

The uttered, enunciate position of the expert is particular; to speak only on behalf of this limited body of knowledge and represents only itself. Unlike the public intellectual, both spokespersons and experts have to abide to the rules of engagement in the debate in order to be reconstituted as, or keep their positions as spokespersons and experts, and the legitimacy and authority which refers back to that particular knowledge and position. For example, in an opinion piece where the author speaks on no-one's behalf but him/herself, recounting the development of political economy during the last decade in a relatively detached manner – as a neutral narrator, may be regarded as such. In this particular case, despite being published as an opinion piece, the author (presented as a discipline-less “professor”) does not posit any demands, but takes on the representation of an expert, an authority on the particular area in question, informing the reader and taking up a position against “debaters” (note the differential relation to “professor”) who represents a “misinterpretation” of the economic and political development resulting in the contemporary crisis.⁶²⁷

Another example of the use of particular knowledge and rational arguments can be found in TLM. Here, personal experience is a rhetorical trope used to appeal for authority on this particular matter:

Much has been said about how bureaucratic and inefficient the public sector is. I have never worked there, but I have hard time imagining that it can be any worse than my workplace.

It is said that you have to privatise in order for people to feel responsibility for the enterprise. That too sounds a bit funny to me, because SKF [Swedish ball bearing factory] is as privately owned as it gets. But those who own it take no responsibility for the production.⁶²⁸

This is from a factory floor report which goes on to question the argument of higher efficiency in the private sector, as well as the conventional assumption of causality between utility and wealth – i.e. how come the welfare in Sweden has been so high even though the labour (in private and public sectors) has been so inefficient? And why does Swedish society not get any richer despite efforts to increase utility? The main aim of this article is to explain the consequences and experiences of workers (in opposition to owners) subjected to changes in the local management and organisation of labour. The absent presence of an unknown pro-privatisation speaker (‘it is said that’) makes an entrance. This particular standpoint, of a privatisation protagonist using arguments of efficiency and personal responsibility, is made available in discourse through similar

⁶²⁷ Lars Jonung, ‘De tvåra kasten bär skulden’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 19 October 1993, section DN Debatt, 4.

⁶²⁸ Westin, Sanna, ‘Arton år på SKF Mekan’, TLM, 1993/1994/17/18 (1993), 12–25

articulations - but it is a position ascribed rather than occupied. In short, the construction of a straw man.

Transcendences between ideal types

Now, arguments concerning the efficiency, administration, and technical aspects of the public sector, that we saw in chapter 6, can be traced back to the rhetorical practice of *logos*, but not necessarily to a neoliberal or leftist political position. Instead, the employment of such arguments cut across the political divide. Efficiency arguments are usually enunciated by a relatively particular position, referring to particular knowledge based on experience or credentials – but regardless of political position. In short, it can be traced back to the ideal type of an expert ethos and argument. While such arguments are also articulated by enunciated spokespersons for the Social democratic party, for instance, I see this as a rhetorical strategy employed to gain access to the main debate fora. Several contributions to DN tend towards a transcendence between these ideal types between different statements in one and the same contributions. In those (few but increasing over time) examples, it is to be understood as a transgression between the ideal types of spokespersons and experts. Again, it indicates a tendency towards and “expert-isation” of the public political debate at the time. In contrast, the contributions in *Nyliberalen* are mainly uttered by spokespersons for the neoliberal movement or particular organisations in the early years, but as their legitimacy increases, they no longer need to act as spokespersons but can speak on behalf of humanity as a whole, as public intellectuals. In TLM, the tendencies are subtler: from enunciating relatively particular positions and appeals to students; through an increasing universalised ethos of leftist intellectuals with a cultural appeal; to a more particular representation of social democratic concerns and politics, on behalf of individual workers and to fellow leftist journalists.

That is to say, there may be temporary or diachronic transcendence between these intellectual types. Someone called upon to explain a specific occurrence or situation as an expert, who deviates from that route and instead actively engages emotionally in a more general matter is no longer speaking as an expert. A spokesperson, such as a representative for a union, who speaks on behalf, not of the organisation he or she represents, but on behalf of some other group or position, like ‘children’, is no longer speaking as a union leader. I have observed a shift during this time period in terms of how certain subject positions or practices are treated as legitimate or desirable. In DN there is an increasing tendency for spokespersons to veer towards, or incorporate elements, moments, or instances of an expert-type of communication. In many contributions, an enunciating subject which articulates the attachment of a spokesperson – clearly speaking on behalf of a party – will attempt to employ rational, technical arguments and refrain from emotional, passionate expressions favour

neutrality. In such instances, the authority of the speaker is usually split, or dual, between the authority that comes with the representation of a larger group and the authority that builds on a reference to (often second-hand) expert knowledge.

Experts, however, seldom transcend into spokespersons. Instead, the ideal type of the expert tends to transcend into a public intellectual appeal. Such instances are usually connected to a metonymic movement, for instance when particular experiences or specialist knowledge is articulated as a representative of something relatively universal. One such example can be found in a contribution to the debate surrounding public service television. Here, the author starts with a very practical, rational argumentation but then turns to a public intellectual appeal by constructing a threat that might have catastrophic cultural-political consequences. By drawing on experience as well as references to international knowledge, the author discusses the consequences of competition in cultural sectors and the effects on programme schedules:

Cuddly-cute cafés and common syrup until the news at about seven or half past. One hour of entertainment and a two-hour feature films. Towards midnight comes the debate shows, culture reviews, social magazines, in-depth interviews, foreign reports.⁶²⁹

The author does not account for all the links in the logical chain of effects that connects the introduction of private television channels with “syrup” on the tableau. Readers are just told that this has happened in France, where ‘they’ have at least five channels (compared to Sweden’s two), both private and public. Here, the enunciating subject takes up a relatively universal representation as the articulated ‘we’ becomes the population, or possibly journalists, of Sweden. Nevertheless, the claim that competition and privatisation lead to an overemphasis of entertainment and bestsellers, whether the public wants it or not, is a commonplace in this quasi-logical argumentation. The Moderate party is accused of wanting to ‘tear apart that which in opportune signification is often called “state-television”’ (as it is also called in the headline of an editorial of the very same publication nine days later⁶³⁰) and replace it with the ‘soft drugs of popular culture’, while the public service is here treated as synonymous to ‘values that cannot be measured in numbers’⁶³¹. By transcending from the particular, instrumental, and rational arguments to incorporate a more general, aesthetical concern, the author takes up the position of the public intellectual, if only momentarily.

⁶²⁹ Ekselius, ‘Utförsäljning av tv 2 är ett hot mot demokratin’, 15. The Swedish “tuttinuttiga” has been translated as “cuddly-cute”, for the lack of a better term.

⁶³⁰ ‘Statsradio’, *DN*, 24 February 1992, section Editorial, 2. As mentioned in the context chapter, the Swedish public service media are autonomous from the state and acts as an independent joint-stock company, at the time owned by a coalition of social movements, the state and representatives from business and press.

⁶³¹ Ekselius, ‘Utförsäljning av tv 2 är ett hot mot demokratin’, 15.

Arguments of an aesthetic, humanist nature or of moral concern, however, can only be traced back to the enunciate position of the public intellectual. Despite the *pathetic* appeal of the public intellectual – in defence and representation of the general public or the universal human individual – such appeals are treated as cultural elements and apparently thus not suitable for an opinion-page debate, on the future of the public sector.

Rules of engagement

At the turn of the decade, changes in the political communication landscape become clear. Significant fora for cultural debate are discontinued. Because these were frequented by more general claims regarding universal values, emotional and critically engaging contributions on a number of social, political and aesthetic issues – such concerns are depoliticised as they are moved to the cultural pages, marginalised or even, finally, excluded entirely from Sweden’s leading news paper DN. Left to dominate the debate are the sections where more direct concern or information regarding policies and parliamentary politics are proclaimed by subject positions attached to these more particular areas and interests. One could argue that the disappearance of the cultural opinion sections is a threat to the pluralism, open criticism, and negotiation of perspectives necessary for a democratic society. Another plausible outcome is that some voices become de-emphasised. I have observed a shift during this time period in terms of which intellectual subject positions or practices are treated as legitimate or desirable. The intellectual function is increasingly performed by experts and spokespersons in the leading printed press, especially following the discontinuation of the cultural opinion page in *DN*. Cultural concerns are marginalised in society as cultural fora for debate are excluded from the national daily newspapers and the cultural sector complains of lacking finances. The type of arguments, rhetorical strategies and appeal enunciated by the public intellectual are pushed out of mainstream media and force these actors to form their own outlets. Who will speak for the subject which lacks a representative voice (i.e. ‘humanity’ or ‘people’ against ‘power’)?

All the contributions analysed here have been located within their specific respective relational context and situation. As I have analysed the various utterances and arguments that provide definitions and apply values to “privatisation”, and the rhetorical strategies in these processes, I have also disclosed the fora, the framing and argumentative genre of the argument; which source, which page, what section, at what date; related adjacent or sequential articulations, headlines, and so on. This tells us something of the specific local rules of engagement. Now, certain rules of engagement order the debate and are decisive for who – or rather what type of subject position – can and cannot make utterance, and *how* those utterances should be articulated in each

forum. Each local discourse (in *Nyliberalen*, *TLM*, the opinion sections in the daily newspapers, the cultural pages or the broadcasted debates) has its' own set of rules, but there are commonalities that connect them within the larger public discourse at the time. In the private meetings of these organisations other rules of engagement would apply, just as there would be other 'rules' at work in public meetings, in debate books, pamphlets, policy documents, reports, dissertations, political speeches and so on. These rules of engagement are of course not all that regulate debate. As emphasised in previous sections, the relational roles, positions, and identities of participants are of utmost import.

Most comments on privatisation politics in *Arbetet* are published in the section for cultural debate, other on the section for press-debate, which usually consist of clippings from other papers. In DN, most contributions *critical* to privatisation are published on the culture pages, or on the cultural opinion pages before it is discontinued in 1990. The scarcity of broad channels for political communication allow for an elite control of media. Editorial boards function as gate keepers, deciding which type of argument gets published and where, and journalists fear the commercial owners' political and economic interest will influence mainstream political debate and public opinion⁶³². As political communication is governed by the rules of engagement in regard to both format, genre and fora, certain types of arguments and voices are excluded from the public opinion debate.

In DN, the opinion section is primarily coloured by a use of an ethos-pathos constellation. Here, readers are faced with contributions of particular positions, appeal, and engagements. These usually serve to inform an audience rather than make any outspoken political demands. They also lack in terms of outspoken struggles or actual debate. Readers are also dragged into internal quarrels among professional politicians, of different echelons. Some of these seem to use the opinion page to voice an internal conflict in public, other seem to use the opportunity to also engage with and appeal to the public – or voters, in the hope of establishing some sort of sympathy. In short, the opinion page in DN (although not the former cultural opinion-section) is marked by enunciate positions articulating both attachment and a specialised expertise. Although various subject positions feature here (politicians, professors, CEO's, economists, medical doctors, social movements, and union representatives, et cetera) these enunciated positions and practices of ethos and logos largely correspond to the ideal types that I have categorised as "spokespersons" and "experts".

The editorial pages in DN present an opposite image. Although formally excluded from my analysis, I have of course looked at the editorial in the process of analysing the whole picture, so to speak, that is presented to the reader. Here, the editors themselves usually need no presentation or ethos to establish their authority (which is in a sense built into the genre), unless to introduce a new columnist on the editorial page. There is equally

⁶³² Lagerlöf, 'Farväl till Dagens Nyheter', 2.

little use of logos in these types of self-asserted contributions. Here, readers are instead faced with an almost singular articulation of pathos, usually spoken from an unattached, universal position, sometimes from an “I” that needs no organisational or professional attachment to legitimise its authority. These utterances are also often aimed at the world in general. This is also where demands are uttered without apologetic argumentation or rational foundation.

The culture sections are interesting objects of analysis because they include both utterances of debate contributors and indirect demands, claims and articulations of cultural expressions that are reviewed, retold, and referenced by the journalists. Thus, the contributions are criss-crossed by a variety of constellations among pathos, ethos, and logos. On the other hand, there are few or no comments on privatisation in the references to those indirect sources (like music, plays, books). If a concern about privatisation is voiced, it is usually from a particular position of first-hand experience regarding the transformation of some cultural institution or organisation.

The cultural opinion page in DN, which is eventually discontinued, displays a predominance of pathos-logos constellations articulated from and to relatively universal positions. Equally, a wide range of universal, and less particular, demands are articulated in this section, which does not necessarily include demands regarding the cultural sector – but rather of cultural, aesthetical, ethical, or social concerns. Along with the regular culture section, the cultural opinion page is where political standpoints that criticise capitalism, industrialisation, and standardisation – along with the direction, character, and ideals (rather than management) of education, infrastructure, or politics – and so on, found a forum for public outreach.

The opinion pages in *Arbetet*, whether cultural, political or press-cuttings, function as fora for local questions and local politics, firmly situated in *Malmö*. The debated political issues, scandals, or politicians, as well as those contributions of a more cultural concern, usually speak of municipal matters. *Nyliberalen* features contributions similar to those found on the editorial page of DN. The argumentations here are coloured by a frequent use of pathos, and some measure of logos. An ethos is usually constructed by attachment to existing sources of legitimacy and authority. Here, a strong appeal to pathos is used to engage and mobilise the reader, while a philosophically natured and in-depth reasoning employ logos to persuade the reader.

The character of the contributions to TLM is similar to that of the culture section in DN. The type of ethos articulated here is also based on experiences of hands on labour, of place or based on historical references. At the same time, there is clear ideal of unattachment. While the authors articulate a relative unattachment to existing groups, parties, institutions and so on the attachments of those who constitute the opposition may be “exposed” as a bias that colour their standpoint. While this unattachment may be a claim for authority, references to scholars, historians, and sociologists function as sources to legitimise one’s arguments in those cases where a claim of experience clearly

cannot be employed. At other times, the paper merely includes features from the “real” world. Through the years, TLM seem to become more and more of a forum for specialised, narrow issues, in a one-sided dialogue with parliamentary politics. To gain legitimacy and entrance to that sphere, they adapt their own rules of engagement to align with that of DN’s opinion page.

A case of missing subject positions

Women and workers stand out as subject position which explicitly lack representation in this debate. One or two contributions raise the issue of women’s interests in relation to privatisation (or rather civil society solutions) and the marginalisation of women’s voices in both TLM and *Nyliberalen*. Although I have not come across any articulation regarding the position of women in the debate as it is represented in DN and *Arbetet*, these fora do seem to have a slightly higher degree of representation of women as subject positions.

In the case of TLM, the gender division among the editors was imbalanced from the get-go. This changes over time, but the tangible gender division among steady members of the editorial board is not TLM’s only gendered problem. The significance of gender is not limited to the gender of the person(s) behind the statement. It is just as much a question of which perspectives are included, of who is represented, spoken to, and spoken for. In these cases, however, the articulations in the journal speaks to, from and about an actively male-gendered position. A whole double-length special issue in 1990 is dedicated to intellectuals, but these intellectuals are, and can only seemingly be, men. The only woman mentioned is Brigitte Bardot, who is quoted without context, frame, and reference with the phrase ‘intellectuals bore me’ - printed on the back cover. This issue includes several articles on the writings and philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre; a longer piece by Pierre Bourdieu which has been translated and reprinted. Here, several photos depict Sartre as he distributes magazines, together with his wife Simone de Beauvoir, or sits at a café smoking with his wife Simone de Beauvoir – she sits closer to the camera, partly concealing her husband and apparently engaged in conversation with someone seated outside of the frame. Not once is she even mentioned, despite being a fundamental figure of feminist theory and philosophy. Instead, other contributions speak clearly of intellectuals as men, and of women as ‘easily seduced young ladies [...] a sort of intellectual groupies’. One article, enunciated from the position of a female philosopher, tries to explain the lack of women voices in academia and debate as a result of the long-lasting exclusion of women from higher education and philosophy, thus, there was no possibility for women to become intellectuals.

Furthermore, the contributions in TLM tend to speak as and of men. When providing anonymous or imaginary examples and metaphors, the contributions in TLM speak of

“him” and “his”. In *Nyliberalen*’s case, it is the reverse. Most often “her” or “she” is used to speak of human beings. The representation of women among the authors and editors is, however, even scarcer. Interestingly enough, this is also brought up, discussed, and defended by the ideological argument that neoliberalism is a pro-women, or feminist ideology, and hence, *Nyliberalen* does attempt to take up the representation of female subject positions. When the journal receives a new chief editor in 1993, the new guise and structure of *Nyliberalen* includes an expansion and standardisation of the letters to the editor section – giving an extended publishing space for external contributors. This way, several female voices are included on such diverse topics as homophobia⁶³³ and private property rights.

Class, especially the middle class, has become a point of dis-identification. The neo-liberal argument, as it is articulated in *Nyliberalen* and other neoliberal articulations referenced therein⁶³⁴, is attach welfare state functions such as public health care to the middle class and middle-class interests. Utterances here redescribe the welfare state and its public service functions as services controlled by the authorities and directed at the middle and upper classes. Utterances in *Nyliberalen* takes up a position in opposition to the middle and upper classes, allying themselves with common people, ‘men’ and ‘the individual’ (but not necessarily workers) in opposition to the state, government and general “powers that be”. Utterances in TLM speak from the positions of working individuals, members of the middle and upper classes, and university students alike. They declare an oppositional standpoint and construct ambiguous relations to the middle class, who is well-read, intellectual and has show “a unique solidarity to the welfare state”⁶³⁵. While the working class features in reportages, often as distant, sometimes exotic subjects who “have dinner at five o’clock” and watch television, middle-class women are positioned in a chain of equivalences with privatisations and tax-reductions for home help. TLM effectively constructs working and “under” classes as equivalents in opposition to the Social Democratic Party.⁶³⁶

In 1993-1994 TLM starts to engage in the class struggle and connects privatisation in China to poor working conditions for labourers. Certain reportages also portray the factory worker as an intellectual, or at least self-reflective force where political debate has failed to take their position into account. Privatisation is articulated as something negative for the subject position of workers. The subject positions of ‘intellectuals’ and

⁶³³ Ahlberg, ‘Vi kräver lika rätt’, 8. One such example is published by the chairperson of The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights (RFSL) in a dialogue with the person legally responsible for the publication of the ‘anti-communist’ paper *Contra*, who has previously been accused of homophobia by members of the editorial team of *Nyliberalen*.

⁶³⁴ Such as Borg, *Generell välfärdspolitik - bara magiska ord?*

⁶³⁵ Cf. Greider, ‘Borgerligheten’, 52–58.

⁶³⁶ Greider, ‘När Makten Gick Folket Förbi’; Anna-Klara Bratt, ‘Krönikan’, *TLM*, 1, 1993, 34; Göran Greider, ‘När Perspektiven Tar Slut’, *TLM*, 1, 1993, 20; Mårten Blomberg, ‘Lagd Student Ligger’, *Thélème*, 1989/1 (1989), 20–23.

‘politicians’ are also articulated in opposition to ‘workers’ or ‘the common man’. Still, class is by no means a nodal point.

As I consider both class and gender as subject positions or constructions in the discourse, it is clear that these are not as central to the political debate climate as they were in earlier decades (as discussed in chapter 5). In the mainstream debate, class becomes a construct of a historical society or the Eastern bloc, Asia, or South Africa. The exception is the more liberal contributions which call for increased mobility for individuals to have the same possibilities for social mobility (by the privatisation of public services like schools, for example) – those previously mentioned conservative-liberal ideologists who oppose the ruling classes on the editorial pages of DN.

Summary

It is necessary to reach out through broader fora to mediate ideas, beliefs and arguments to a broader audience. In a time before the massification of media, those actors, or as I argue, subject positions who were not allowed access in the mainstream debate created their own outlets. In the overall debate, a range of subject positions perform the intellectual function of articulation and mediation of ideology. Here I use three overarching ideal types as analytical constructs. While *public intellectuals* are frequently found on the culture pages, this type of enunciate position is pushed out and reduced to alternative media, such as cultural or political journals (which they themselves finance and publish) or other fora (literature, music, i.e. different cultural expressions). *Experts* and *spokespersons* are favoured by, or at least more frequent in mainstream media and may be perceived by gatekeepers (in both printed and broadcast media) to have a higher legitimacy and authority. In the struggle over hegemony in the debate, these ideal types correspond to different forms of critical engagement and public appeal.

Since these subject positions are constituted by different degrees of attachment and represented positions the *concerns, arguments and demands* presented may differ accordingly, whether it be particular demands, technical, rational concerns and instrumental, economical “efficiency”-arguments or universal demands, humanist, aesthetical and moral concerns, ethico-political and sympathy-arguments. The mediation of ideology, articulation, and persuasion through engaging and *emotional* articulatory practices for a broader audience (to vindicate universal values et cetera), while expressing feelings as well as reason in public proclamations, hints at a different subject position than a rational, un-engaged rhetoric. Whether or not the articulatory practice is public engagement and emancipation, or information and expertise, is a dimension which also includes the context of articulation. There is a difference in these situations, dependent on: whether the statement is aimed at a broad audience or field specific; called upon to explain, enlighten and interpret an occurrence or situation; in

formal representation – or if one’s authority is independent of context and can move between subjects and contexts without losing legitimacy.

This also bridges on the issue of knowledge production versus distribution and builds on Gramsci’s differentiations between creators of philosophy, art, et cetera mere “administrators” and divulgators of pre-existing, traditional, accumulated intellectual wealth⁶³⁷. Although in this context of an actual debate, all intellectual subject positions present are more likely to be engaged in knowledge distribution than production. Some articulations are attainable only through surpassing certain thresholds while others are available to broader audiences in relatively open and less restricted or exclusive forms and fora of cultural and political articulation.

Furthermore, it is possible to argue that there are differences between the moral call for privatisation and the politico-managerial debate on resources, efficiency and governance. It is however difficult to decide if concepts, beliefs, or argument articulated from a certain position are picked up and resonate *because* other actors refer to these subject positions as nodal points in stabilising contingent elements and rendering events and occurrences meaningful. How arguments come to resonate, and concepts stick within the broader public discourse is a process of both reciprocal resonance with other positions, arguments, and common senses of discourse – as well as the strength of the argument under construction, with the aid of rhetorical tropes.

As the analysis shows, the outlets for medialised debate and the type of arguments and positions represented there, changes over time. On the one hand, in-depth debate is pushed out of the mainstream fora, but endorsed by the alternative outlets. Logical argumentation, expert reasoning and managerial concerns are common on the major opinion page, while articulations of demands and politico-philosophical beliefs is pushed out. The mainstream opinion pages, in both DN and *Arbetet* become fora for internal conflicts among politicians of different echelons and expert commentators who set out to explain an event or situation⁶³⁸ – usually without making any concrete demands, articulating political oppositions, or taking up a position representing anything beyond this specific announcement of expert knowledge.

Culture is articulated as an increasingly marginalised element in society: cultural fora for debate are excluded from the national daily newspapers; the cultural sector complains of lacking financing⁶³⁹ (which may be connected to the general demands of less state- and tax funding, which leaves the cultural sector to fend for itself through an increased dependence on admission financing); and so on. A generally increased individualisation might even have made the collective appeal and identification

⁶³⁷ Gramsci, 1989, p. 119.

⁶³⁸ For instance as a professor in economy makes a satirical comment on present business deals and crisis redeeming strategies in the financial sector, see Assar Lindbeck, ‘Ett företag räcker’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 4 February 1992, section Debatt, 4.

⁶³⁹ ‘Kulturarbetare mot en borgerlig regering’, 4.

significant for ‘public intellectuals’ less appealing to the public – i.e. the ‘we’-appeal is less catchy than ‘me’. Paradoxically, the ‘individual’ which functions as both addressee, subject and appeal of many contributions is a collective, universal individual. The individual is never in singular, it is uncountable.

As the cultural opinion page disappears from DN and the culture section is separated and included as an insert from February 1990, voices are raised in warning and key actors choose to leave the paper⁶⁴⁰. In DN, particular types of arguments gain precedence at this point since the remaining opinion page (which follows the editorial page in both chronology and status) continues to publish the same type of utterances, by the type of subject positions, as previously represented on this opinion page – i.e. the cultural opinion debate and its arguments and proponents, is left out.

Experts and their specific arguments gain interpretative privilege by sheer representation in numbers, in preference over the more general universal arguments proposed and articulated from a public intellectual position. TLM and NL both articulate themselves as marginalised alternative voices to the established media. Both journals could possibly be corresponding or answering to the (increased) narrowness of DN where certain positions experience a lack of available space. Finally, a new moral surface where the serving of collective interests by the state through structural solutions at the individual’s expense is regarded as something immoral. Whereas maximisation of self-interest is morally legitimate, little room is left for a universal identification and appeal in this context.

What is worse is the lack of dialogue in the national debate. Most contributions to the debate are left uncommented and an exchange of arguments is so rare that an enduring dialogue is treated as a “series” and consequently published in the “culture and entertainment” insert. Remembering that this is a time before online interaction, a reply or comment on an opinion piece might be published weeks afterwards. In the two periodical journals however, direct debate seems to be encouraged: comments and replies to contributions often feature in the same or directly subsequent issues; group interviews are arranged; interviewees are confronted on philosophical and political issues spanning over several pages; and even co-authors debate with each other openly. In short, the articulation of public intellectual arguments, ethos, functions, and positions are pushed out of the mainstream fora, but thrive in alternative outlets.

⁶⁴⁰ Lagerlöf, ‘Farväl till Dagens Nyheter’, 2; Ruth, ‘Farväl till en kollega’, 2.

Chapter 8

Hegemony in Practice: Formations and Frontiers

Most Neoliberal theoreticians – like Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and James Buchanan – come from the USA. [...] These ideologies produce piles of arguments, during a few years' time, that is used on a regular basis by politicians within the bourgeoisie to bring about cut backs in the public sector and tax reliefs for high income earners.

At the same time, there are hardly any leading politicians in USA or Western Europe that still take the neoliberal ideology in dead earnest. The right has nothing against scrapping the welfare, but which right wing politicians believe in the neoliberal first principle of a minimal night-watchman state? A few of the old theoreticians have also openly changed their opinion. Most Famous is the Harvard professor Robert Nozick, who nowadays defends a society with strong common institutions.

Even within the Swedish Moderate Party, who unabashed propagates for increased class divisions, the neoliberal group is a marginal phenomenon. With the exception of an extreme faction within the Moderate Student League, the Freedom Front's Christian Gergils and crackpot philosopher Ingemar Nordin, Swedish neoliberalism is dead and at most reduced to an academic thought-experiment.⁶⁴¹

In 1994, TLM declares the death of neoliberalism in Sweden and turns its concerned eye to the third world. In the editorial quoted above, *Nyliberalen* is referenced via members of the editorial council and the Freedom Front. Authors who feature extensively in *Nyliberalen* in previous years are also mentioned. In examples such as this, the two journals form subject positions of their own; created as they are by debate contributors.

What happens when the meanings, definitions, values, and political frontiers in discourse are added up along with the intellectual functions and positions? All the different *elements* of discourse discussed in previous chapters are linked to other

⁶⁴¹ Editorial, 'Nyliberalism i tredje världen', *TLM*, 1994/2 (1994), 4–5.

elements, and are not inherently 'subject positions' or 'political frontiers' by any essential substance. The naming and categorising of these positioning practices/articulations/utterances is a part of my empirical analysis, but I think it is safe to say that the enunciate positioning, the drawing of political frontiers, the definition, naming and valuing of concepts and phenomena are all articulatory practices by actors within a discourse. Moreover, these elements are articulated and defined relationally to one another. Is it possible to distinguish larger formations, more aggregated than the singular, local, (con)textual subject positions? This chapter is about analysing the connections between the different types of dots (or elements of discourse) seen so far and looking at the patterns that emerge from the material. It concerns the larger, more abstract regularities created in the contingent dispersion of discourse through the articulatory practices linking phenomena together. The focus of this chapter is not just the constitution of various subject positions, but those subject positions in connection; which intellectual subject positions or functions are promoted, which are pushed out; where, when, how and which conditions made this possible? I thus turn to an aggregated level of analysis to identify formations and coalitions as regularities created though practises where different actors and groups link together disparate demands and are able to find or construct common identification.

Having advanced from analysing hegemony as processes of fixation of meaning; to hegemony as a rhetorical practice and strategy; and now, to hegemony as formation – making this the more macro-oriented chapter of the dissertation. This is where explanation of emerging patterns comes in, where I try to show the relations between a discursive coalition and the intellectual subject positions and functions, distinguished in the previous chapter. This way, hegemony becomes the series of practices that attempt to create a certain order in a universal discourse and temporarily fixate the meaning of concepts, practices, social institutions, and so on. Hegemony thus takes up the space of meaning momentarily and makes certain practices the only option available.

“Which side are you on – Mr Westerberg?”⁶⁴²: drawing political frontiers in the debate on privatisation

So far, I have described the processes of articulations and demands linking together of different elements (freedom de-regulation, individual rights, ownership, de-state-isation etc) and identities (neoliberal, right, left, common man, human beings) in the medialised discourse on privatisation. This process involves the construction of political frontiers designed to divide the socio-political field into opposed positions or camps (the people vs the state, liberals, vs social democrats, morally right vs morally wrong). The construction of these oppositions and frontiers is in turn made possible by practices

⁶⁴² Dahl, Birgitta. “Bryt upp från regeringen!” *Dagens Nyheter*, April 3, 1993, sec. Debatt.

connecting adjacent demands (equivalences) in opposition to a common inimical position (differential chain), i.e. various campaigns, parties and positions that oppose the social democratic welfare state are linked together into a broader coalition against state owned and organised businesses and services. Such efforts at drawing new political frontiers are intended to challenge the existing social democratic practice and order of the welfare state. These frontiers are temporary and subject to renegotiation.

These demands are connected to wider, adjacent demands for increased individual freedom, choice, right to ownership, self-regulation, marketisation, de-regulation, decentralisation, justice, autonomy etc, by finding points of equivalence among these diverse struggles, forming a coalition with a more general opposition to the public sector. In a coalition, demands for privatisation can take on a more universal representation in the form of, for instance, the common man oppressed by the state, individual freedom, human rights, or simply what is held to be morally 'right'.

The (Welfare) State versus the individual

A general enmity towards the state and the elements, phenomena and actors connected with it is articulated in many contributions, whether arguing for and against privatisation. This relation is represented by a range of actors in all debate fora. The state functions as a signifier for a range of other negatively described aspects of society, such as regulation, bureaucracy, power, technocracy, and the Social Democratic party, as well as the middle and upper classes. The more neoliberally oriented contributions articulate the state in an equivalent relation to negatively connoted elements such as publicly financed welfare, the 'pythonic' public sector⁶⁴³, taxation (or theft), the cultural sector, insurances, socialism and collectivism. Socialism and collectivism in turn, are treated as equivalents to fascism, racism, and Nazism⁶⁴⁴. Totalitarianism is often mentioned as a necessary part of socialism, as a sign or symptom of the latter – a line of reasoning in which totalitarian aspects of the Swedish welfare state are explained by the fact that it was created by the Social Democrats. Furthermore, the welfare state and Social Democrats are often treated as synonymous with "Sweden". But these accounts usually build on an historical narrative where the modern Swedish welfare state and the Social Democratic party are intimately connected. Because the Social Democrats played such an important part in shaping the welfare state, the party becomes a synonym or enthymeme of the state. Consequently, according to this kind of reasoning, the party and welfare system ideology must be responsible for the contemporary crisis in and of the welfare state system.

⁶⁴³ See for example Samuel Strandberg, 'Dårskap genomföra dennispaketet', *Dagens Nyheter*, 9 September 1993, section DN Debatt, 4.

⁶⁴⁴ See for instance *Nyliberalen* n. 6 in 1993 with the headline 'Nazism and communism – two forms of socialism' ("Nazism och kommunism - två former av socialism") and the included article: Norberg, 'Hitler, alla tiders störste socialist', 20–28.

The historic narrative of Sweden as an equivalent to the social democratic welfare state project and party, repeated consistently in both DN, *Arbetet*, *Nyliberalen* and TLM, proves difficult to break. In *Nyliberalen*, many utterances position “Sweden” in an oppositional role to the neoliberal outsider, or marginalised, position. At other times, the subject positions of “Sweden” or “people in Sweden” are positioned in a differential relation to negative elements such as social democracy – subsequently consequently in a chain of equivalence to *Nyliberalen*. Thus, social democracy is connected in chain of equivalence to the state and to “Sweden”. The articulations of right-wing positionings, in both *Nyliberalen*, DN and *Arbetet* fluctuates between trying to distance itself from the concept of the Swedish nation and trying to rearticulate its identity. “Sweden” used to signify the set of all citizens or a historical belonging, centred on the social democratic welfare state, but as the identity of the nation comes into question through the crisis of the welfare state, to which it is synonymous, a possibility for re-articulation emerges. This represents a beginning of a new language in politics which constructs and reconstructs several subject positions and elements of discourse. As “Sweden” stops being equal to “social democracy” and the large “welfare state”, a possibility opens up for other inscriptions of meaning put forth by various political projects. Such negotiations attempt to sever certain links within the public discourse, and assert others as natural, common sense understandings. In such attempts at persuasion, “tradition” rather than “modernity” becomes the appeal for a common identity; just as “individuals” replace “citizens”, “freedom of choice” rather than “public welfare” is demanded, under the rallying cry for “privatisation” rather than “state-isation”.

In an early issue (n.3 1989), *Nyliberalen* takes up with the xenophobic Norwegian party *Fremskrittspartiet* as part of a strategy to build a coalition among all actors who oppose the social democratic welfare state. This relation is as fascinating as it is puzzling. The fact that core neoliberal beliefs are explicitly opposed to nationalism and xenophobia makes it an unlikely marriage. Nevertheless these strange bedfellows find a common point of identification through a common enemy represented by the state in general and the social democratic welfare state in particular.⁶⁴⁵ The connection is reiterated in the third issue of 1993 in which a snippet from *Fremskrittspartiet* is republished under the headline ‘System shift’.⁶⁴⁶

An active positioning against the state is often repeated in *Nyliberalen*. Here, in an excerpt from Hayek, the author is positing himself, liberalism and democracy against conservatism, talking about the state in terms of power, evil and elites:

The chief evil is unlimited government, and nobody is qualified to wield unlimited power. The powers which modern democracy possesses would be even more intolerable

⁶⁴⁵ Several, more nationalistically inclined contributions do feature in *Nyliberalen*, some of the individual contributors who are for instance attached to the conservative right-wing party at the time later radicalise and join up with explicitly neo-Nazi organisations.

⁶⁴⁶ ‘Pressklipp’, 46. ‘Pressklipp’, *Nyliberalen*, 3, 1993, 46

in the hands of some small elite. Admittedly, it was only when power came into the hands of the majority that further limitations of the power of government was thought unnecessary. In this sense democracy and unlimited government are connected. But it is not democracy but unlimited government that is objectionable, and I do not see why the people should not learn to limit the scope of majority rule as well as that of any other form of government. At any rate, the advantages of democracy as a method of peaceful change and of political education seem to be so great compared with those of any other system that I can have no sympathy with the antidemocratic strain of conservatism. It is not who governs but what government is entitled to do that seems to me the essential problem.⁶⁴⁷

This is only one example of an often-repeated argument positing “democracy” against the modern shape of the state. Furthermore, politicians or the power elite is here not what constitutes the problem. It is the *reach* of that power that is the real concern. While many contributions to both *Nyliberalen*, TLM and the mainstream fora, appeal to the audience by way of creating a common point of dis-identification with such elites, this contribution finally disregards that simple rhetorical trope and point to the real issue at hand.

Another concept whose identity fluctuates between negative and positive connotations is the law. In general, and in *Nyliberalen* especially, the law is treated as a negative governing element, as constricting, unjust and illegitimate⁶⁴⁸ while at other times actors from the same speaking position make use of the law to defend themselves against attacks, still suspicious of government.⁶⁴⁹ On the one hand juridical laws can be seen as a representative of state power, on the other hand it can be perceived as something relatively neutral, as an independent separate institution. These two approaches to law made available in *Nyliberalen* highlights the ambiguous relation between these neoliberals and the rule of an unjust law in the hands of state, government and police. The control or bias by juridical practitioners and police becomes an issue when the individual, or more specifically, innocent neoliberal activists, members of Freedom Front, become prosecuted under laws which do not agree with neoliberal principles. Such laws are accordingly illegitimate in the eyes of the contributors to *Nyliberalen*. During the period when members and supporters of *Nyliberalen*, the Freedom Front and their night club Tritnaha are reportedly under (unlawful) prosecution, subheadings such as ‘the Neoliberal against the State’⁶⁵⁰ clarifies the political border maintenance

⁶⁴⁷ Hayek, ‘Varför jag inte är konservativ’, 44. Cf. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty. The Definitive Edition*, 525.

⁶⁴⁸ See Johan Linder, ‘Christian Gergils - En svensk rebell’, *Nyliberalen*, 1989/3 (1989), 5–10; Hinze, ‘Varför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister?’, 58–62; Sylvan, ‘därför är inte alla nyliberaler anarkister’, 9–11.

⁶⁴⁹ Mats Sylvan, ‘EXTRA! EXTRA! EXTRA! Polisoffensiv Mot TRITNAHA’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/3 (1993), 32–33.

⁶⁵⁰ Mats Sylvan, ‘JK får drag under galoscherna’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/8 (1993), 33.

where the legal system, the chancellor of justice, the lack of legal rights for individuals and the police are linked to the state – elements which all are in opposition to *Nyliberalen*.

In *Nyliberalen*, political frontiers are drawn in opposing relations primarily to the state, parliamentary politicians, the political and philosophical establishment and the power elite. All of these can, and do, act as signifiers for the Social Democratic Party. Through various chains of equivalences and difference, the positions of *Nyliberalen*, Neoliberalism, the individual, and the ‘common man’ are connected on the ‘right’ side of this political frontier – with “the Social Democrats”, “the state”, “politicians”, “the establishment”, “the power elite” on the wrong/left side.

Early on in the debate as it is represented in *TLM*, the attitude towards the state is somewhat ambiguous and from time to time more negative than positive. Market interests, together with technical and administrative solutions promoted by the technocratic attitudes of the state and public administration are argued to transform universities into knowledge factories. This line of thinking is part of a series of articles where state regulation is argued to be used to accommodate the needs of the labour market rather than civil society.⁶⁵¹ Similar arguments are recurring in the same issue, where universities are re-described as educational machinery or factories⁶⁵². Later on, more specifically from the fourth issue in 1992, the positions in relation to the state have changed. The most notable difference between the former issues and the following is changes in the editorial board. In the later issues, privatisation is also discussed more vividly in its own right, a debate fronted by two of the editorial newcomers. The state goes from being portrayed as a technocratic system of administrations, whose regulations serve only labour market and financial market interests to a guarantor for public welfare placed in opposition to the market. The market, along with privatisation now stands in opposition to the state, democracy, freedom, public welfare and the needs of the people (rather than private interests).

The “state” is thus an important element in the drawing of political frontiers. As I have shown in previous sections, regulation is posited in differential or oppositional relation to the individual, freedom of choice, liberty and privatisation, but in an equivalent relation to the state, the Social Democrats, taxation, bureaucracy and the public sector. It becomes a negative signifier in the establishment of a political frontier against the bureaucratic social democratic welfare state system. Such articulations are less common in the mainstream fora of DN and *Arbetet* than they are in the more politicised journals. As I demonstrated in chapter 7, many of the contributions to those opinion sections are spokespersons attached to the state apparatus in some way. It seems that subject

⁶⁵¹ Peter Antman and Erik Tängerstad, ‘Vems universitet?: En Intervju Med Aant Elzinga’, *Thélème*, 1989/1 (1989), 4–7; Göran Greider, ‘Politisk arena’, *Thélème*, 1989/1 (1989), 8–9.

⁶⁵² Antman and Tängerstad, ‘Vems universitet?: En Intervju Med Aant Elzinga’, 4–7; Peter Antman, ‘Den disciplinerade kunskapen’, *Thélème*, 1989/1 (1989), 10–17; Greider, ‘Politisk Arena’, 8–9; Ulrika Milles, ‘Tanken som dog’, *Thélème*, 1989/1 (1989), 18–20.

positions speaking as representatives for political parties, regardless of political beliefs, do not argue against the state itself. Such contributors may argue on the extent, organisation and administration of the state – but never to the extent as to undermine the legitimacy of their own position.

All against one: The Social Democratic Party

The critique against the social democratic welfare regime and party is widespread. One of the most significant indicators of this is the fact that the party's own representatives reproduce arguments and notions that emanate from a right-wing discourse. The antagonisms that are outspoken and discursively constructed in the debate are one-sided. A chain of equivalence link together negatively charged oppositional elements such as "the public sector", (state) "regulation", "welfare services", "taxation", "social democracy", "the state", "bureaucracy", "centralisation", "power", "technocracy" and so on - against the positive, protagonist demands on behalf of "freedom", "rights", "the people" and "the individual". Such politics effectively divide the social space into two camps and constitutes a political frontier between differently positioned social actors. This is made possible by the signifiers whose content is undetermined, in this case "privatisation", which enables actors with divergent interests and identities to unite in the face of a common enemy: The Social Democratic welfare state. It is difficult to articulate a defence of the social democratic standpoint, especially early on in the debate. While Sweden is generally recognised as being dominated by a social democratic hegemony after the Second World War, as discussed in chapter 5, this hegemony is turned on its head as a new hegemonic discourse takes shape.

One example of the internalised critique towards the Social Democratic Party comes from the president of the party's youth organisation, SSU. 'The Party has the wrong outlook on mankind'⁶⁵³ is the title of his opinion piece published in DN two days before the party congress in 1993. It fills the whole opinion section. In a finishing statement printed in bold letters, the author frames his demands as a need for the social democratic party to change their view on citizens:

The citizen must be restored as authoritative and responsibility-taking individual. But political initiatives are necessary to get there. This is what the social democratic party congress has to be about.⁶⁵⁴

Although this is a public statement, it is aimed at or addressed to the party, in an attempt to set the agenda for the coming congress. Political boundaries are drawn both against the party's internal fractions (right-wing top-fraction 'kanslihusögern'; the "grey" fraction 'gråssarna') and the bourgeoisie/right wing, which is linked to the

⁶⁵³ Thorwaldsson, Karl-Petter, 'Partiet har fel människosyn', Dagens Nyheter (13 September 1993), section DN Debatt

⁶⁵⁴ Thorwaldsson, 'Partiet har fel människosyn'.

right wingers in the party leadership ('kanslihusögern'). The author argues that the youth organisation represents a third standpoint on a 'collision course' with both the right wing-fraction and the rank-and-file social democrats. Furthermore, the writer voices 'concern over the conservative forces' advance within the party'⁶⁵⁵:

An inner line of conflict within social democracy concerns the view on human beings. The party pushed to strong society too far. Building systems became an end in itself and the proximity to power got lost in the Kafka-corridors of city halls. The citizen was incapacitated. Within S there is now the opinion that people do not want to take part, that they do not want to get things fixed, that they do not demand influence. I cannot agree on such a comfortable view of human beings. This is what SSU-president Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson writes, meaning that the youth association are on a collision course with the party.⁶⁵⁶

Even here, the argument echoes the belief presented earlier, that the reach of the social democratic welfare state was too long, that it ignored its citizens, and that the party which became state had grown autocratic. Following a section on political mistrust, the SSU president refers to the contempt of politicians among the public, possibly as a strategy to voice indirect critique, strengthen the argument and create an alliance between speaker and public. He also links the right-wing top-fraction within the social democrats to the general conservative right wing through mutual free market demands and privatisation politics:

The bourgeoisie has its answer – liberalisation and market adjustment. Solutions that were in part accepted by kanslihusögern. Power is to be given to the people through its position as a customer on a free market. The demands for privatisations of services within the public sector were born from this. We now see traces of this in both the government offices policies and perhaps primarily out in the right-wing governed municipalities. Competition becomes a goal in itself. Formulations about the proximity to decisions, democracy and citizen rights are heard more seldom.⁶⁵⁷

Liberalisation, market adjustment, competition and privatisation are linked to each other as adjacent elements of right wing politics. A particular fraction of the authors own social democratic party is depicted in connection to conservative party politics. The narrative tells us that privatisation of public services is a demand born out of the right wing's marketisation ideology where the people is defined as customers on a market and where power resides in the freedom of choice among competitive actors on a 'free market'. Local decision making, participation, democracy, and civil rights are all treated in opposition to privatisation. This stands in sharp contrast to other arguments

⁶⁵⁵ Thorwaldsson, 'Partiet har fel människosyn'.

⁶⁵⁶ Thorwaldsson, 'Partiet har fel människosyn'.

⁶⁵⁷ Thorwaldsson, 'Partiet har fel människosyn'.

where these elements are instead voiced as demands in the discourse *for* privatisation. Here, the author treats 'privatisation' as part of a particular worldview, or outlook on people, certain values and ideologies. He also attaches it to a broader, more fundamental discussion on power, class, democracy and so forth:

But empowerment is the right to together with others decide on all this. It is about spreading the power. Representative democracy has to be replaced by direct democracy. Direct authority over the welfare.

It is about self-management in the public sector.⁶⁵⁸

What we see here is an example of how privatisation may be articulated from different standpoints. There are two conflicting perspectives on how Sweden should develop and recuperate from the socio-economic and political crisis which shook the foundations of the welfare state as an ideal and model. Both propose privatisation, one flank from the left and one flank from the right.

What makes this article even more interesting is that it is quoted in *Nyliberalen*. In the section 'Citations' towards the final pages of the journal, a selection of quotes from various newspapers and other sources are re-printed on a two-page spread. Beneath the headline 'Whining', someone from the editorial staff of *Nyliberalen* has chosen a few paragraphs from the opinion piece. The capture reads: 'SSU-president Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson summarises the latest decenniums' political life in *Dagens Nyheter*'⁶⁵⁹.

In another contribution (mentioned previously in chapter 6) a professor of economics makes an outspokenly counter-hegemonic comment when criticising a report from the Lindbeck-commission. Here, the author clarifies his understanding

that the problems in Swedish economy have not originated from weaknesses in the political system but are the results of the predominant thinking in economic-political issues. That is why first of all the content of politics, not the forms of politics, should be the principal aim of our critique.⁶⁶⁰

Part of the 'social democratic "model"' was accordingly to privilege the special interests of the movement, which is why the political sector itself developed to be 'dirigible for only one party, the social democratic one', according to the author who concludes that 'other groups seemed excluded from political power.'⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁸ Thorwaldsson, 'Partiet har fel människosyn'.

⁶⁵⁹ Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, 'Gnäll', *Nyliberalen*, Citationer, 1993/6 (1993), 46.

⁶⁶⁰ Jonung, Lars, 'Ideologisk tystnad. Lindbeckkommissionen talar inte klarspråk, skriver Lars Jonung', *Dagens Nyheter*, 21 August 1993, 4

⁶⁶¹ Jonung, 'Ideologisk tystnad. Lindbeckkommissionen talar inte klarspråk, skriver Lars Jonung', 4.

The author develops his critical narrative through a ‘thought-experiment’ illustrating an alternative world, with a different political system, from the 1950s and onward. Here, the reader is posed with rhetorical questions, to reflect on whether the economy would have been any “better” with the Social Democrats still at the helm; ‘would the public expenses have been lower?’ The answer is of course no: ‘The reason being that the predominant political ideology and preferences via the political system still would have decided the economic politics’. That is, social democratic ideology would still have been decisive for economic politics: ‘political decision makings, rules of the game and institutions’⁶⁶². In this discussion, the former liberal party leader, Bertil Ohlin, is mentioned in an attempt to strengthen the argument with a historic reference to an authoritative source. Any increased power to the government, as proposed by the Lindbeck-group would have made it possible for a social democratic government to push Sweden towards an even more centralised society.

There are mentions of economists in the commission who have either been the type of economists’ partial to this ‘dominating’ ‘welfare ideology’ or even made careers in ‘the social democratic machinery of power’. Thus, political and personal interests are ascribed to these actors, making them un-neutral. The position of the Lindbeck-commission is attached to other oppositional (political) positions. Through this line of anti-social democratic arguments, the author paves the way for a more far-reaching rhetoric, comparing the Lindbeck-commission’s silence on social democratic ideology to ‘an analysis of the former Soviet’s economic problems without naming communism, Marx and Lenin’. The author questions the commissions “ideological silence” on the matter of social democracy’s role and provides two (and only two) potential answers: either the commission is trying to attract as many readers as possible, as not to ‘get on the wrong side of the largest political establishment’⁶⁶³ and risk being labelled as politicising; or the commission realises that social democratic ideology is dead and they simply have no wish to ‘kick the corpse’. Both alternatives are of course deemed wrong. The author acknowledges that the social democrats have partly switched strategies in their economic-political strategy in the past few years, but still makes a final demand for political change. Regulations, pension solutions, institutions and so on are presented as relics of an old social democratic ideology. Consequently, in this logical chain of causes and effects, any solutions from the commission cannot be realised until a liberal economic mode of thinking has been generally accepted.

The way we speak about capitalism, market, competition and monopolies is largely coloured by economic theory. Those theories can represent very different perspectives on the values, usefulness and desirability of said systems. The debate and cultural pages of DN and *Arbetet* publish a plethora of opinions in their own fora, which makes the public, mainstream debate multifaceted. The circumstances are quite opposite in TLM

⁶⁶² Jonung, ‘Ideologisk tystnad. Lindbeckkommissionen talar inte klarspråk, skriver Lars Jonung’, 4.

⁶⁶³ Jonung, ‘Ideologisk tystnad. Lindbeckkommissionen talar inte klarspråk, skriver Lars Jonung’, 4.

and *Nyliberalen*, where the perspectives made available are much narrower – not only that, they are also in direct opposition with one another. *Nyliberalen* portray themselves as being on the offensive to change the existing system, while TLM seems to play along with this initially, hoodwinked by the fast manoeuvres on the right, but by 1992 and 1993 they are desperately trying to defend the old system.

Some of the sharpest critiques against the Social Democratic are published in TLM. In early issues social democrats are treated with slight disdain as a symbol of both autocracy and establishment, and as a threat to the independent pursuit of knowledge. From 1992 onward, however, contributions are increasingly concerned with state politics and policies, whereby the party again becomes object of scrutiny and critique. In n.4 1992, for example, a contributor voices concern over political tendencies in the ministry for Municipal Affairs and Bo Holmberg, its former (1983-1988) social democratic head of department. By 1992, Holmberg, who was outspokenly opposed to privatisations, had become president of the Standing Committee on social questions.

The article is a full 12 pages of critique. The author points to the relation between state and municipalities, arguing that the ministry has sided with the right wing against “the social democratic hegemony” and labour politics. There are traces of an image of a “true” social democracy, in these pages: ‘a state democratically governed by the worker’s representatives, primarily’⁶⁶⁴. The author presents an historical account, possibly to gain legitimacy and support his own arguments and to be able to criticise the lack of social democratic ideology in the policies presented by the social democratic regimes of 1982-1991. In this case, the state is defended as welfare administrator, in contrast to the proposed de-centralisation alternatives for a civil society or market take-over of public sector services. Furthermore, the author claims to expose the ideological aspects and syndicalist ideals of the policy proposals presented by social democratic ministers, emphasising questions of social democratic values and welfare, contrasting organisational perspectives with a ‘perspective on ideas’.

Discourse coalitions in formation

While individual understandings of privatisation may be interesting, they can be reduced to the mental processes of individual participants in discourse and are therefore not sufficient to understand the total structure of a given discourse⁶⁶⁵. In this section I

⁶⁶⁴ Peter Antman, ‘När folkhemmet drömdes bort’, *Tlm.*, 1992/4 (1992), 22.

⁶⁶⁵ In my own understanding of the relation between individual perceptions and discursive definitions, I draw upon Mannheim’s explanation of the particular vs the total ideology; ‘Although this mental world as a whole could never come into existence without the experiences and productive responses of the different individuals, its inner structure is not to be found in a mere integration of these individual experiences.’ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 52.

explain not just individual contributions and their creation and occupation of subject positions, but the emergence of formations that arise through interactions among those simpler subject positions, frontiers and practices of articulation. Social, political, cultural, and economic elements of discourse form larger discursive coalitions, through interacting levels of positionings and complex, relational systems of meaning making. Much in the same way that a total conception of ideology or consciousness differs from a particular conception of the same⁶⁶⁶, so does one particular articulation, contribution or position relate to the totality of discourse. An individual contribution to the debate on privatisation does thus not include all the elements of what we might call a public discourse, but contributes only with certain fragments to the totality of discourse.

On the one hand, we have all these articulations of beliefs, arguments, positions and frontiers; on the other, we have the characteristics and composition of a structured totality which is more than the mere sum of a 'casual jumble of fragmentary experiences'⁶⁶⁷, as Mannheim would have it. In short, to analyse the individual conceptions of privatisation would constitute an analysis of meaning making, motivation and interests on a psychological level, but it could never reveal the characteristics of the discourse as a whole. As I have found a certain correspondence between a given rhetorical situation and recurring perspectives, beliefs and arguments in various contributions, it is possible to analyse the constellations of positions within the larger discursive field. This is not a network analysis of causal connections, but an attempt to characterize the composition of the privatisation discourse, based on the fragments represented in the medialised debate.⁶⁶⁸ Now, what I want to show in this section is how common theoretical frames of references help to order dispersed elements of discourse into different politico-philosophical constellations. As such, these constellations are closer to noological constructs than direct mappings of social relations in the empirical material.

In the empirical material, I have been able to discern the formation of two discourse coalitions during this time period. On the one hand, a self-declared neoliberal coalition emerges and expresses itself through a range of fora, including both mainstream and its self-instituted outlets. As a counter-pole, a loosely assembled and less clearly defined jumble of elements creates several formations on the left. Opinion and culture sections in DN and *Arbetet* allow for representation from both sides, and thus function as 'neutral' spaces and cannot be said to belong to either of the two political formations.

Nyliberalen gains ground through the years as more well-recognised people are featured in interviews and opinion pieces start to appear in the magazine. It also seems to become a subject position that is referenced to in the debate as articulations in the magazine

⁶⁶⁶ See Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*; György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (London, 1971).

⁶⁶⁷ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 52.

⁶⁶⁸ Again, see Mannheim's discussion on the different ways of analysing ideology for a similar understanding. Mannheim, *Ideology and utopia*.

refers to how it has been mentioned and referred to in the debate. The selection of contributions develops through the years from relatively narrow and internal debates to include more articulations aimed at a broader audience. Similarly, *TLM* starts out in 1989 as *Theleme* primarily discussing issues relating to students and university education, sandwiched with philosophical contemplations in essay format. By 1992 the journal has developed a much broader approach, changes its name to TLM (as an alternative to major publishing house Bonnier's literary magazine, BLM). The two journals differ when it comes to form, style and content, but also grow to become more alike over time.

Both specialised journals allow for long-running, philosophical and outspokenly political debates. They are spaces for articulation of a kind that neither DN or *Arbetet* can provide. Moreover, key contributors and editors from TLM and *Nyliberalen* appear with increasing frequency in DN, *Arbetet*, and OBS! (as well as SvD and Expressen) as authors, commentators, interviewees, and even objects of special features. Both journals are also mentioned and referred to by name, political standpoint, and ideological position in the debate as a whole (in DN, SvD, OBS! *Aftonbladet*, *GP*, and others). Both journals keep a kind of public scrapbook in the form of a clippings-section where mentions of the journal in mainstream media are republished. While this can be read as a strategy to appear as more widely read and broadly distributed, it also confirms that mainstream media actors are aware of, have read, and respond to the debate unfolding in these journals. This demonstrates that despite their ostensible marginality, these alternative outlets do perform a role, or fill a function, in public discourse during this period.⁶⁶⁹

Notably, editorial board members from both journals are published on the opinion pages and in the culture section of DN (not as much in *Arbetet*) and are given free airtime on OBS. Through the years, it becomes clear that they are recognised with a certain standing in public discourse. On the one hand, contributors and members of *Nyliberalen* are hailed as 'true liberals' in DN while others function as representatives of neoliberal ideology in OBS⁶⁷⁰. On the other hand, members of TLM feature as debaters, defenders of the social democratic welfare state, and experts on disparate topics in both DN and OBS. It is also through these "neutral" grounds that the two sides meet. Exchange of arguments take place in OBS but not necessarily as face-to-face meetings in live debates. Rather, they consist in dialogue running across separate episodes where actors from each journal comment on the other.⁶⁷¹ OBS is indeed constituted as a forum for the same kinds of subject positions that thrive in the alternative outlets, even if the subject of privatisation is rarely broached. This has to be

⁶⁶⁹ See for instance Christian Gergils, 'Ett nyliberalt manifest', *OBS! - Kulturkvarten*, 1991 <<http://ow.ly/iWdJ30grLAZ>> [accessed 6 May 2017].

⁶⁷⁰ Gergils, 'Ett nyliberalt manifest'.

⁶⁷¹ See for instance Christian Gergils and Ingemar Nordin, 'Adjö till Folkhemmet', *OBS! Kulturkvarten*, 1992 <<http://ow.ly/KAhx30grLD4>> [accessed 5 May 2015].

seen in light of a tendency for OBS to be relatively isolated from the debate on privatisation as it unfolds in print media (a fate it shares with the regional newspaper *Arbetet*).

Apart from these relayed on-air exchanges, there are very few occasions where contributors in either *Nyliberalen* or TLM engage each other directly in any form of debate or dialogue. Usually, such exchange of opinions and ideas is mediated through other actors and fora. Contributors in TLM, however, show on several occasions that they not only read and partake in the discussions around *Nyliberalen*, they also surrender to the neoliberal vernacular. In 1993, contributions in TLM have started to use the same wording used so often in *Nyliberalen* to signify the abstract ‘authorities’ or ‘powers that be’: with the Swedish term *överheten*. Despite the otherwise apparent lack of exchange between the two political journals, a so-called ‘ringing around’ to various actors, left and right, published in the 1994-1995 jubilee edition of TLM shows that the journal is on the reading list among actors relatively attached to *Nyliberalen*. Furthermore, articles and book reviews in TLM increasingly refer to authors who are also represented in *Nyliberalen*. These are part of a tendency in TLM to comment on, rather than actively engage in the debate. By contrast, *Nyliberalen* and its contributors gain attention in other media and actively engage in debate through public speaking events, such as seminars and political activism.

Another characteristic feature of TLM is their way of treating “the elite”. In one issue two editors conduct a ringing around to ‘famous people, politicians, artists, journalists’ as well as the CEO of Electrolux mentioned previously, to ask them what they associate with the word “suburb”⁶⁷². A sarcastic comment follows each quote to make sure that the reader understands that no one gives the correct answer. This is summarised by the statement: ‘Here, the Swedish elite has expressed themselves’⁶⁷³. The editors are fairly generous in terms of who belong to this “elite” which seemingly includes everything from authors, businessmen, and former diplomats to comic strip artists. What is made exceptionally clear is that it does not include the contributors themselves, despite the fact that one has published a number of books and is listed (even in the Swedish who’s who) as a cultural journalist *primarily* at DN.

Founding myths: Nyliberalen and The Freedom Front

No effort is made to present *Nyliberalen* as politically independent; on the contrary, much is made of its attachment to *Frihetsfronten* (the Freedom Front) which is both a political organisation and a private company. Although the connection is not explicitly mentioned in early issues, the frontpage of the



Figure 3 The Freedom Front
The organisation's official symbol

⁶⁷² göran Greider and Thomas Jonter, “Det finns inga svenska förorter” från Lennart Hyland till Hans Werthén’, *TLM*, 1–2, 1992, 4.

⁶⁷³ Greider and Jonter, “Det finns inga svenska förorter” från Lennart Hyland till Hans Werthén’, 4.

journal is adorned with the Freedom Front logo; an arrow pointing diagonally up to the right across a fat horizontal line (see figure 5). The information listed about the journal includes a list of editors; an indication of the person responsible for publication under press law; foreign contributors; subscription fees; and a contact address. The latter appears to be the home address of an editor in the northern part of central Stockholm; literally across the street from *Tritnaba*, the premises used as illegal club, political meeting place and editorial office of *Nyliberalen*.⁶⁷⁴ As the front-page design changes over time (see Interlude) an explicit caption is introduced informing that *Nyliberalen* is an ‘Organ for the Freedom Front’⁶⁷⁵.

Over time the journal evolves from a mere member magazine reporting on political actions and member activities to include more philosophically and journalistically ambitious contributors. The first (re)issue of *Nyliberalen* in 1989 contains the founding story of the journal under the editorial headline ‘Words and action’ covering entire first spread. It confronts the reader from the start: ‘How does one shift the helm? How does one accomplish changes? How does one go about to create a free society within a few generations?’⁶⁷⁶ The purpose of the journal is thus made clear from the outset: it is intended to discuss, plan and aid this work in pursuit of long-term change. Moreover, the phrasing deliberately plays around with the “revolution in our lifetime” slogan which for generations had been the call of left activists in Sweden. The reader is also provided with a definition of this ‘free society’; ‘free in the only honourable signification: The absence of coercion.’ In this contribution, the ‘we who produce *Nyliberalen*’ present the aim of the journal in a few concise sentences:

The goal with *Nyliberalen* is to mediate contact between people who sympathise with the kind of ideas which are brought up in the paper. To bring together people who are interested in working for a development of society where men’s right to life, freedom and property is guaranteed.⁶⁷⁷

While striving to act as mediator both in terms of social networking and dissemination of ideas, *Nyliberalen*’s editorial staff highlights their common political ground and the unifying beliefs around struggles for the rights to life, freedom and private property. The founding myth of *Nyliberalen*, then, is based on this desire (or demand) for change:

⁶⁷⁴ Henrik Bejke and others, ‘Tidningen *Nyliberalen*’, ed. by Anders Varveus, *Nyliberalen*, 1989/1 (1989), 2.

⁶⁷⁵ ‘Front Cover [The Dead Poets Society]’, *Nyliberalen*, 1990/1 (1990), 1.

⁶⁷⁶ Varveus, ‘Ord och handling’, 2.

⁶⁷⁷ Varveus, ‘Ord och handling’, 2. Yet again, the word used in *Nyliberalen* here is ‘humans’ [mänskornas], which is more inclusive than ‘men’ and connotes less on a leftist, nationalist or populist tradition as the Swedish word for ‘people’ [folk], but I find that ‘humans’ does not provide the same aesthetical and colloquial standard in English, as it does in Swedish.

Those who wish to achieve changes in attitudes, which can lead the way to a free society must become successful within two key areas: Practical solutions and communication. That is how easy and simultaneously how hard it is. The practical solutions shall offer living examples of how people can meet their requirements of for example child care, education and healthcare without public financing and production. With the aid of communication, a dialogue can grow, where these examples are placed in their proper contexts and attain their ideological significance.⁶⁷⁸

Some paragraphs in this article reoccur in later issues, just as the headline ‘words and action’ recur in the manifesto of the Freedom Front, published in an issue in 1993. Both articles state that activities must be pursued ‘professionally, commercially and with a very large amount of personal engagement’, in the exact same words. The active role of the journal is further elaborated as follows:

In this process, we at *Nyliberalen* wish to function as givers of ideas. And we also want to support the realisation of good ideas. The purpose is to show, encourage, coordinate, contribute in and independently propel projects with responsible authorities/trustees in areas with public [sector] dominance or a high public market share. All this must not replace the fundamental debate; the formulation and dissemination of the freedom ideas.⁶⁷⁹

It is clear, then, that the ambitions of *Nyliberalen* go far beyond establishing an alternative media outlet. They want to be an active political force at the center of a wider discourse coalition. This is further underlined in 1990 when the journal publishes the manifesto of the Freedom Front. Under the capitalised headline ‘FORGET THE NONSENSE’ the chief editor, who is also presented as leader of the Freedom Front, explains what the organisation stands for – or rather what it definitively does *not* stand for along with the things that it ‘shall *not* do’⁶⁸⁰. The reader is informed about the organisation of the Freedom Front and the kind of people that it caters to. Here, the author draws a line between the Freedom Front and the political parties, the ‘so called’ people’s movements and the type of organisational structure and administrative work involved in ‘traditional political labour’. That is to say, the Freedom Front does not have any administration, ‘ombudsmen’, membership, annual meetings, minutes, detailed regulation, planning of activities – or ‘other nonsense’. More traditional political organisations are portrayed in negative terms: as over-emphasising organisational trivialities, as preoccupied with internal work and intrigues, as overly centralised, and as a source of aversion.

⁶⁷⁸ Varveus, ‘Ord och handling’, 3.

⁶⁷⁹ Varveus, ‘Ord och handling’, 3.

⁶⁸⁰ Varveus, ‘Detta är frihetsfronten’, 20–21.

The Freedom Front, on the other hand, gets things done. The author emphasises that conditions for 'change' are best created by staying outside of the 'traditional political and labour union apparatus as well as the business apparatus'⁶⁸¹. This harks back to statements made the previous year, when the same author speculated 'that many have dismissed the thought of influencing the development through *traditional work in any of the political parties*'⁶⁸². This sentiment is elaborated under the subheading 'OUTSIDE INFLUENCE' where the author articulates the belief that

it is for instance not within the parties that the development of ideas takes place and it is not the government who takes the initiative to close down state enterprises. It is changes in the surrounding world and opinion that forces them on. The Freedom Front shall aid in creating this outer pressure [...]'⁶⁸³

The Freedom Front is portrayed as an *outer* force, outside of, and in contrast to parliamentary politics. It develops ideas and creates pressure and initiatives for *closing down* the public sector. Hence, the Freedom Front strives to 'fight the battle [of freedom] on all levels and within all sectors of society.' Their 'business concept' is 'to show, initiate, coordinate, take part in and pursue projects that expose the practical and moral deficiencies of the welfare state' and 'to theoretically and practically demonstrate the freedom option to the welfare state's ideas and solutions.' In contrast to other political projects and movements, the signed 'leader of the Freedom Front', also acting as editor in chief until 1993, seems to be fully aware that 'in order for the project to have an impact and effect it must have a common denominator', even if this has more to do with *how* they are pursued ('*professionally, commercially* and with a *very large amount of personal engagement*') than *what* is pursued, as the 'sales of ideas'⁶⁸⁴, just like the sales of goods and services, is seen as dependent on demand:

There must be a demand and willingness to pay for them. If there is no demand, one can never expect that those ideas be successful. What projects that then are pursued is up to each and their orientation, interest, areas of competence and will.

When it comes to what you do and how to do it in detail, the Freedom Front is not controlled centrally, you see. Than can can [sic] you however say that it is in the matter of ideas. To act under the name, that is to say, to pursue a project that you say that the Freedom Front supports, you must doubtlessly follow the idea about each human being's inviolable right to life, freedom, and property.⁶⁸⁵

⁶⁸¹ Varveus, 'Detta är frihetsfronten', 20.

⁶⁸² Varveus, 'Ord och handling', 2. Emphasis mine

⁶⁸³ Varveus, 'Detta Är Frihetsfronten', 20.

⁶⁸⁴ Varveus, 'Detta är Frihetsfronten', 21.

⁶⁸⁵ Varveus, 'Detta är Frihetsfronten', 21.

The argumentation goes on, using examples of previous projects that ‘we’ have taken part in: illegal radio broadcasting, illegal bar enterprises, supporting others who hide refugees from the ‘clutches of the state’ – all in order to actively oppose a ‘completely grotesque and offensive legislation’⁶⁸⁶. The identity construction of the Freedom Front is further developed as the author explicitly states that ‘the freedom ideas unite us’:

The Freedom Front consists of individuals who are united by an idea, or a moral perspective, if You want. The idea is that each human has an inviolable right to life, freedom and property. And that it is this idea that a society that wants to call itself civilised have to start out from and build upon. We who already now in diverse ways work within the Freedom Front and You who will engage yourself in the future, have the same goal; The civilised society.⁶⁸⁷

Effectively, the aims, ambitions and audience of the Freedom Front and its outgoing journal is outlined. A unified front is thus portrayed right from the start: these are the conditions for joining the project. As explained in chapter 6, the individual right to ownership (as well as life and freedom) is central to the beliefs – or moral – of those active in the work around *Nyliberalen*.

The article goes on to list six activity areas, emphasising that these are seen as the most pressing issues to address at the time, but also acknowledging that they may be reconsidered in order to ‘achieve large changes’. The first activity area includes ‘publication and sales of journals and books’, thereby explicitly positioning *Nyliberalen* as a key activity of the Freedom Front. Among the remaining activities a speaker agency is included with the purpose of ‘procuring freedom speakers to meetings, courses, seminars’. Again, the centrality of intellectual activities for distributing knowledge about these freedom ideas becomes apparent: cafés, bars and parties⁶⁸⁸; ‘the production and sales of radio and tv-shows’ (in a time when broadcast media was exclusively dominated by public service); ‘elementary and upper secondary education which does not follow the state regulated curriculum and is financed solely on course fees’ (a form of privatisation or developing the so called free schools presumably); ‘actions which violates offensive legislation and which exposes the pseudo-moral foundation of the

⁶⁸⁶ Varveus, ‘Detta är Frihetsfronten’, 21. Here I have translated the Swedish ”kränkande” to the English ”offensive”, which does not quite convey the full implication which can also imply abuse, insult and discrimination.

⁶⁸⁷ Varveus, ‘Detta är Frihetsfronten’, 20.

⁶⁸⁸ The Freedom Front have been known to sell liquor under the table at such events, most famously at their own club Tritnaha and the so-called ‘street bar’ at the most central pedestrian precinct in Stockholm with the explicit political purpose ‘unlike Systembolaget and its owners, to neither use coercion and nor concern oneself with stolen money’, see Mats Sylvan, ‘Praktgräl i rätten’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/3 (1993), 29.

welfare state'⁶⁸⁹ (the neoliberal concept of moral and the subsequent immoral foundation of the welfare state makes another appearance).

Among the activities reported from the Freedom Front in the following years are both parties, political actions (involving boot-legging, home brewing, pirate radio-broadcasting and so on) and seminars. The latter become more regularised through the years as the political actions characterised by civil disobedience decrease, possibly due to the increased surveillance by the police – another symbol of state oppression. Their 'less strenuous' strategies of protest include 'home-distilling, unlawful parking, paying, and working on the side, going abroad to freer societies, using private healthcare if they can afford it, etc etc'⁶⁹⁰. These more discrete forms of resistance are mostly forms of passive, civil disobedience, unlike the mobilising and recruiting processes listed above.

The journal includes several informative do-it-yourself features on things like homebrewing; philosophical-political discussions amongst contributors; critical contributions about school systems, the compulsory military service, and the restrictive immigration policies, et cetera. interviews with politicians, authors, poets, and philosophers alike; easy to read texts on/by Ayn Rand, Robert Nozick, Friedrich Hayek and others; adverts for seminars, conferences and work opportunities; and a letters-to-the-editors section with very varied contributions. In short, *Nyliberalen* is aimed at a politically minded reader, with a bit of interest in philosophy. It has a romanticised appeal to the outsider, or even the outlaw. As we have seen in examples from previous sections and chapters, *Nyliberalen* interview and publish contributions from both national and international leading neoliberal theorists. Equally, it has an appeal to students and club-kids through their outreach and socio-political activities. *Nyliberalen* is on the side of the individual, the 'common man' against the powers that be (signified by the Swedish welfare state). It is not afraid the break the law, because the law was not made for people – it was made to protect the state.

Founding myths: TLM's un-attachment and intellectual identity crisis

Thélème is published by an association of the same name. From the very first issue, the text box which lists the members of the editorial board, contact details and print, also includes a short statement to assert the un-attached position of the journal:

Thélème is an independent journal which is owned and published by the association Thélème.⁶⁹¹

At this point in time, the address of *Thélème* seems to correspond to the home postal address of the person legally responsible for the publication of the periodical - a circumstance equivalent to *Nyliberalen* during these years. This address is also located

⁶⁸⁹ Varveus, 'Detta är Frihetsfronten', 21.

⁶⁹⁰ N, 'Tystnaden börjar mullra', 3.

⁶⁹¹ Peter Antman and others, 'Thélème N. 1', *Thélème*, Editorial, 1989/1 (1989), 2.

in central Stockholm, a mere four blocks from the location of Tritnaha and *Nyliberalen*. Later on, the reader learns that *Thélème* moves into a basement beneath a printing agency, and yet further on the editorial office is in the same building as the comic enterprise *Galago* – one even has to enter through Galago's office to reach *Thélème*. This may very well explain the appearance of high quality custom-made illustrations appearing in later issues.

TLM's confused role and identity as an intellectual organ is noticeable especially in the early issues. In 1990, the editorial board has chosen to combine the third and fourth issue into an unusually thick special on intellectuals. This is published in a time of great national and international political upheaval, governmental resignations, and reorganisations. In this publication, which covers half of the issues published in the whole year, focus is on the role of the intellectual and its relation to 'the people', academia and the cultural pages of mainstream media. With reference to Marx, Weber, Habermas, Bourdieu, Adorno, Foucault and Sartre, various authors speak of the old and new conditions for the formation and professionalisation of intellectuals. Critique, knowledge, moral, knowledge production and detachment are defined as important values and characteristics of an 'intellectual'.

Although intellectuals are portrayed as the potential avant-garde of the working class, several contributions describe a distance between 'intellectuals' and the general population. The university and university education, its role, function, and form, is again debated. Philosophy and the humanities are considered the main breeding grounds for intellectuals – which according to one of the more critical contributions explains why so few women are accepted into intellectual circles (including the journal itself). Humanities as a discipline is posited against economics and there are several commonplace mentions of the subject position 'humanist' (in opposition to 'yuppies' and students of economics) to signify the authors and audience.⁶⁹² In its entirety, this debate gives the impression of an internal debate and identity crisis and whether or not the journal should function as an outlet for students, intellectuals, the culture elite; or possibly a radical leftist avant-garde.

Student activism, in Sweden as well as in East and West Germany, China, France, Spain, Italy and Russia, is discussed with the aid of theorists like Habermas, Berman, Hobsbawm and Lefebvre. "Yuppies" are positioned against the left and the "people"; "activists" and "students" against police. These things are discussed in an article in the first issue, by three authors who are never to contribute or be mentioned again in the

⁶⁹² Apart from traditional intellectuals such as Sartre, 'students' are defined as intellectuals due to their relatively free-floating position, lack of loyalty, engagement with different perspectives and with civil society through political or aesthetic production, across knowledge cultures as well as the border between the theoretical and the practical. See Antman, Peter, "Det moderna – en möjlighet vi fortfarande äger", TLM n. 3-4, 1990; pp. 69-76. Another article defines one of the founders and regular contributors to *thélème* as an intellectual, in Per Svensson, "En (svensk) intellektuell tiger? – En orättvis betraktelse över en två år gammal artikelserie" TLM n.3-4 1990, pp. 36-40.

coming four years. However, they make their contribution to the founding myth of TLM. In several issues of TLM, especially around 1990, the contributions return to the concept of utopia. For the most part, it is in the form of critique of naïve visionary utopians and utopias, but also attempts at re-defining the concept of utopia. This constant critique may be a sign as well as part of the cause of the lack of any common direction or aim among the contributors or the left as a whole at the time. In later years, the editors of TLM seem to also have realised the potential in advertising the books authored by their own editors in the journal. With all this in mind, the contributions do find a common direction over time and in 1994 a special issue is published in the shape of a small paperback called 'the blame of the right'.

In the early stages (1988 through 1991), TLM is dominated by contributions trying to establish not only the magazine's identity, but also the identity and role of the leftist intellectual in relation to academia, the labour movement, student activism, society, market et cetera. From the fourth issue in 1992, the positions and contributions in TLM have changed, and privatisation is discussed more in its own right in the later issues. The most notable difference between the former issues and the following is an internal reorganisation of the editorial board accompanied by several replacements. The following debate on privatisation is spearheaded by two of these newcomers.

Privatisation then becomes much more of a central element of discussion, a floating signifier if you will, whereas the state acts as a nodal point in relation to which other elements of discourse are defined. In the first three-four years, privatisation is discussed as at the margins of the dominating discourse on reformation of Swedish universities. It is treated as an aspect of deregulation and decentralisation, in which the university is the nodal point and the meaning of education is contested. The ideal university, as a space for critical discussions, new ideas and engagement, is portrayed as a hotbed for intellectual creative forces. Intervention from either state or business is generally regarded as something negative since it is thought to influence the direction and substance of research and education.⁶⁹³ The adaptation of university education to labour market needs and business interest is linked to technocratic ideology. Market interests, together with technical and administrative solutions promoted by the technocratic attitudes of the state and public administration, are in TLM argued to transform universities into knowledge factories. This kind of perspective on the aim and purpose of universities as knowledge factories producing courses to sell at the cultural capital market or students to accommodate the needs of the labour market is contrasted with the ideal of universities as knowledge centres aimed at research and knowledge producing broadly educated students to serve civil society rather than

⁶⁹³ See for instance Peter Antman, "Den disciplinerade kunskapen," *Thélème*, no. 1 (1989).

market interests.⁶⁹⁴ In the same issue, universities are re-described as educational machinery or factories⁶⁹⁵.

The editorial in the very first issue of TLM quotes and posits itself against an ad for in-company training, and the argument that education is a matter of profitability. This type of articulated political frontier between business and universities resonates through the succeeding contributions in TLM. In this opening statement, the editors⁶⁹⁶ contrasts their own ideal of a university as a space for “discussion, social criticism and new ideas” with the “factory for manufacturing components for business and public administration”⁶⁹⁷ - which is portrayed as the prevailing ideology. Now, these ideals coincide with the ideals and purpose of TLM:

Frescati [the humanist and social science building at Stockholm University] is the largest of all workplaces in Stockholm. Frescati brings together the intellectuals of Stockholm. Frescati is in constant movement. Yet, it is silent. Because Frescati is built so that no one will remain.

No one shall meet a likeminded and stay on in an inspiring dialogue. No one shall sit down on the grass-desert and continue the debate from the seminar. No one shall stop on the path towards the blue houses and ask themselves “What am I doing here?” Therefore, it is silent. That is what we want to change. Thélème wants to create the meeting place that Frescati has repressed. But the meeting place needs voices. It needs your voice. Pen down your contribution and post it to: THÉLÈME [c/o address]⁶⁹⁸

What is articulated here is a grievance over the perceived lack of fora for debate. TLM is situated firmly in the Frescati building at Stockholm University, although the journal is in no way formally or spatially attached to Stockholm University. Frescati is home to the social sciences, as well as the humanities – although the contributors to TLM speak from the standpoint of ‘humanities, journalism and intellect’⁶⁹⁹. The spatial metaphor of the meeting place recurs in other contributions to the founding myth of TLM. While both journals are clearly centred in and on the capital, the struggle which motivates and engages the contributors and interviewees in TLM is not as broad as *Nyliberalen*’s struggle for freedom. Instead, the struggle at hand concerns the future of the university.

⁶⁹⁴ Antman and Tängerstad, ‘Vems universitet?: En intervju med Aant Elzinga’, 4–7; Greider, ‘Politisk Arena’, 8–9.

⁶⁹⁵ Antman and Tängerstad, ‘Vems universitet?: En intervju med Aant Elzinga’, 4–7; Antman, ‘Den disciplinerade kunskapen’, 10–17; Greider, ‘Politisk arena’, 8–9; Milles, ‘Tanken som dog’, 18–20.

⁶⁹⁶ Editorial staff: Peter Antman, Calle Eriksson, Göran Greider, Andreas Ljung, Claire Mallet, Ulrika Milles, Anders Sjölander, Louise Steinberger, Ozan Sunar (layout), Erik Tängerstad (legally responsible publisher).

⁶⁹⁷ Antman and others, ‘TLM’, 1–51.

⁶⁹⁸ Antman and others, ‘TLM’, 45.

⁶⁹⁹ Sunar Ozan, ‘Varför ler ekonomen?’, *Thélème*, 1989/1 (1989), 45.

As it is “now”, the struggle is fought among oligarchic state authorities and businesses. ‘Students and other groups within civil society with limited resources’ are left outside with no possibility to exert influence. The solution diagnosed is to create alliances among postgraduate ‘research students, students and groups outside the university’⁷⁰⁰. When turning the page to the following spread, the reader is faced with the words ‘political arena’ which covers the two pages in large bold letters. A member of the editorial board comments on the ‘crisis of the humanities’:

A crisis that expresses itself in many ways: course packages that are tailor made in order to be sellable on the market of cultural capital (like the study programme in culture), the investment in study programmes instead of free studies, and on top everything else, the continued general technocratisation of people’s consciousness [...] Natural meeting places between private and public are missing – neither in trade unions, nor in the parties’ grass root meetings, or in cafés and suchlike, is there much discussion. In short: in the daily life there are few places where it is natural to talk about ideas, principles and even fewer places that in themselves reach a potentially demonstrative character. The university is, however, just such a place.⁷⁰¹

Several things are happening in this article. First, the problem (a crisis in/of the humanities) and its characteristics (technocratisation, etc) is identified, then the causes (mass-medialisation of politics) and finally its effect on the debate. The real root of the problem, however, is the lack of ‘natural places of meeting’ for discussion – and the potential arena, the university, has been depoliticised. In a chain of equivalences and adjacent elements, neoliberalism is connected to neo-moralism, French philosophy, and pessimistic philosophy as a reason behind the lack of political engagement among humanist students – who are in turn treated as ‘leftist’:

Neoliberalism, new moralism (shirt, tie, etiquette & no fuss) and either anti-utopian (The new French philosophers) or paralysation (Derrida, Baudrillard) or pessimistic nicht-mitmachen-philosophy (Adorno) have taken the life out of student activity among the humanists. But now, at the end of a rather miserable and depoliticised decennium, at what seems to be a historical ground zero for the left, things should be able to get going.⁷⁰²

And so, we return to the purpose of TLM: to create a place for meeting and discussion. This also represents a clear positioning against the politics of neoliberalism as well as the theories of postmodernism. This antagonistic relationship towards postmodernism returns in later contributions, where Baudrillard and others are more or less blamed for the failings of the political left in the late eighties. As Thélème identifies itself as an

⁷⁰⁰ Antman and Tängerstad, ‘Vems universitet?: En intervju med Aant Elzinga’, 7.

⁷⁰¹ Greider, ‘Politisk Arena’, 8–9.

⁷⁰² Greider, ‘Politisk Arena’, 9.

outlet for idea-debate and relatively free-floating intellectuals, any sort of attachment to the state or market becomes negative, at least in the first three to four years. ‘Professional knowledge production and professional researchers’ is argued to be too distanced from ‘the people’ and ‘society’⁷⁰³. The (too) close relationship or dependency between market and university education along with technocratisation is treated as a threat to “free studies” and in the end to politics and debate, where the discussion on ideas, culture and politics has been replaced by a game for representatives from bureaucratised interest groups through mass medialisation.

Natural places for meeting and discussions around ideas and principles in the zones between public and private spaces are few. ‘We the students’, must utilise the relatively free life situation of students to kick start animated separate student activities like lectures, pubs, journals, and discussions.⁷⁰⁴ Furthermore, the humanities have found themselves in crisis – which means that the whole societal superstructure is in crisis with the university at its centre. The question posed by the author is how this crisis should be utilized. Demands are put on students for engagement and politicisation to influence “from below” both the contents and funding of education on governmental grants for education. This type of funding is argued to be the only acceptable version as ‘money that comes by means of submissive pleading is nothing more than immoral sponsoring’⁷⁰⁵.

The new and old social, economic, and political conditions for students, researchers and academia are analysed thoroughly in these early issues. In 1990, student struggles are still treated as the most pressing issue. The editorial however recalls the story of how and why the journal was named *Thélème* after a convent in one of Michail Bakhtin’s texts, which in turn stems from ‘the Greek word thelema’:

[...] which can be translated as the will, the wish, or a downright desire. And our wish this journal was and is to create a place where the knowledge that is produced in the university can meet the experiences from the rest of society, where one narrow-mindedness can meet another. In this meeting, it will transpire that both the theory of knowledge most difficult to approach as well as the labour at Scania Vabis [automotive manufacturer] factory floor is practical social science.⁷⁰⁶

Again, readers are faced with the metaphorical place where university knowledge comes together with (an elusive) ‘rest’ of society. Implicit in this statement is the notion that academic knowledge is difficult to grasp – unlike the practical knowledge of a factory worker in the automobile industry. Still, the purpose of the journal is intellectual: bridging the gap between universities and workers. This article is narrated from a

⁷⁰³ Antman, ‘Den disciplinerade kunskapen’, 16.

⁷⁰⁴ Greider, ‘Politisk Arena’, 9.

⁷⁰⁵ Greider, ‘Politisk Arena’, 9.

⁷⁰⁶ Göran Greider and Erik Tängerstad, ‘Gör vad du vill’, *TLM*, 5, 1990, 5.

historical perspective and goes on to speak of utopias while highlighting the need for re-defining utopia:

The alternative that we want to try out is – utopia as a means; utopia also in the shape of the conversation about the place where we are, but perhaps not want to be. By conversing in an open way, for instance at the café 6, we will also take ourselves away from there, to the non-place. [...] While the radicals through history have allowed themselves to be corrupted by power, the post-modernists have been corrupted by powerlessness. We, however, gladly allow ourselves to be corrupted by both. [...] (Thélème's first subscriber turned out to be the University and Higher Education Authority) So we are needed, if the power is to function? That's right! Through its mere existence, Thélème is also a way of charting the flow of power; to manifest the game a new pawn needs to be introduced. [...] That is why Thélème is at once p(a)lace and non-p(a)lace! Every vital social critique is today by necessity self-criticism. [...] Thélème is like a map for the late modern landscape of power, that we cannot escape and that we do not want.⁷⁰⁷

Although this contribution starts out as very much centred around the university, it also broadens the scope and purpose by the final statement to map the landscape of power. This article is in fact especially difficult to read as a faded street map of Paris makes up the background – of course this is only aesthetically suitable when speaking for an intellectual project of critical, radical, and revolting character – in the p(a)lace called *Thélème*. What is interesting here is that the editors of *Thélème* posits the 'we' that is the journal as a third actor, between or adjacent to, utopian radicals and postmodernists. The purpose is to offer a utopian place for open discussion, but also a place for internal and external critique. There are great similarities between TLM and *Nyliberalen* at this point, but the latter takes the struggle one step further - into practice.

While there is a clear potential of an expanded audience, the homogenisation of the editorial office transforms TLM from a cultural journal that discusses university policies; to a journal with features from the factory floor; with book reviews focused all the more on Timbro's publications; caught up in debates that emanate from neoliberal circuits; more and more concerned with economic technicalities, social democratic politics and internal struggles. It turns away from its intellectual-cultural position and tries to speak for anti-intellectual workers – while at the same time clearly engaging in an internal debate regarding the social democratic party. All the while increasingly adapting to the neoliberal agenda and forced to talk about neoliberal politics, with a neoliberal vocabulary, passively taking a stand in relation to publications from Timbro or SAF; rather than formulating their own agenda. Sure, TLM mediates a critique of right wing politics and ideologies, but it fails to do so on its own terms or to provide

⁷⁰⁷ Greider and Tängerstad, 'Gör vad du vill', 5. "Café 6:an" is mentioned even in the jubilee issue from 1994 as central to the formation and future activities around the journal.

its own language to do so. Furthermore, as we shall see, it fails to articulate a united front against the political demands articulated from the right wing ideological project.

There is a certain overlap between *Nyliberalen* and TLM, as both include references to the other through second-hand sources, press clippings, or informal references. This particular piece is signed by two of the contributors to TLM, who start to figure together and regularly in TLM from the last issue of 1992 and onwards. *Nyliberalen* quotes another journal (*Fönstret*), and SvD incidentally in second hand:

"Traditionalists, brake pads, *betonghäckar*⁷⁰⁸, demand machines, professional mourners, special interests, historical relics, etc, that is how they are usually dismissed, those who protest the dismantling of the welfare state. We have ourselves been called 'happy-go-lucky neo-traditionalists' by the renewer Stig-Björn Ljunggren on the editorial of Svenska Dagbladet. /... / More and more Social Democrats are starting to sound like they were key notes on Timbro-seminar. We hear even from social democratic sources, that we are living above our means, that the citizens need to start taking responsibility, that the state cannot or should not fix everything, and so on."

Ann-Charlotte Altstadt and Conny Carl-Axel Malmqvist in ABF's cultural journal *Fönstret* no. 8-1993.⁷⁰⁹

In this articulation, several demeaning nicknames, and metaphors for proponents of the welfare state are listed. One particular 'innovator' is said to have made such comments on the editorial page of SvD. This innovator, who has ties to the social democrats, is most likely included in the statement formulation regarding 'more and more social democrats' who 'like if they were keynotes on a Timbro-seminar'. He has had his books published by Timbro, as advertised in several issues of *Nyliberalen*, who also sells the book. There is no further comment made by any editor of *Nyliberalen*, except for the initial satirical 'how awful'. The attachment to Timbro is effectively constructed as an ideal type of right wing, anti-welfare state political position. Similarly, the Timbro keynote speaker is established as a type of intellectual subject position.

TLM's appeal differs from that of *Nyliberalen*. From the start, it is closely focused on Stockholm University, and clearly aimed at its humanist students. This is a narrow appeal. While the editorial office is heterogenous in the early years, it becomes slimmed down and drastically rearranged in 1992. The 'anarchists' leave the project after an internal struggle where TLM eventually publishes a special on the police – which is not at all critical, but affirmative of this institution of force and violence. The female

⁷⁰⁸ Emphaise mine. Coined in the late 80s by trade union leader Stig Malm, literally meaning "concrete backside", "betonghäck" is used to describe a politician or trade union official who sits for too long on a post – in the sense that their behind has sunk down in the comfortable armchair of power, and they are unable to get up again unaided.

⁷⁰⁹ Ann-Charlotte Altstadt and Conny Malmqvist, 'Fönstret', *Nyliberalen*, Citationer, 1993/6 (1993), 46.

contributors are few, and tend to fall out. This is discussed in the jubilee issue of 94-95, but the editorial office does not seem to have grasped the severity of its own patriarchal tendencies.

Discourse coalitions

Many references to *other* thinkers, publications and ideology-spreading or opinion-forming events are mentioned in both DN, *Arbetet*, OBS, TLM and *Nyliberalen*. Formations, coalitions, or networks characterised by philosophical-theoretical consistency are built up by references and explicit attachments to existing positions, authorities, or philosophical nodal points. The two main fora, DN and *Arbetet*, include book, music and theatre reviews that distribute ideology, beliefs, and opinion through various fora and media. The source, character and nature of these contributions are very varied. It is difficult to speak of a formation in DN or *Arbetet*, as there is simply not enough regulation among the dispersed elements to speak of a homogenous formation in these fora. It is rather the case that various clusters find entrance to and expression in those more general fora. Even the journalists, the critics and reporters are of differing opinions, background and attachments/position in relation to the paper, in which the contribution is published. As we progress into the 1990s, one of the regular contributors to the cultural pages of DN is also an editor and long-standing participant in TLM. By 1992, one of the editorial columns in DN is assigned to the former 'CEO of SIFO [Swedish Institute for Opinion Survey] and editor in chief for SvD'⁷¹⁰. Besides featuring regularly in the second largest daily newspaper, after DN, during his times as editor in 1987-1988, this sociologist and his views are subject to scrutiny in both periodicals and OBS!

Interviews and features in both TLM and *Nyliberalen* are part of a practice of discursive formation in the making. These two also represent oppositional political projects where the internal political-theoretical interests and understandings are negotiated. In *Nyliberalen*, interviews with Nozick and Zetterberg, the reviews, and discussions on works of Rand, Friedman, Hayek, Buchanan, von Mises, Smith, O'Rourke, Rydenfelt, and so on, constitute a common philosophical foundation or nodal points to gather around. In TLM, literary criticism of Habermas, Andorno, Foucault or Sartre, mirror an equivalent process. While it is clear that TLM, possibly as a representative of the political left, have a canon of organic intellectuals to refer to, *Nyliberalen* is rather in the process of discovering, asserting, and claiming intellectuals for the movement. In TLM, find a vast range of intellectually renowned voices can be found: authors, scholars, artists and politicians, whose political alignment is neither questioned, nor in need of affirmation. Certain central thinkers are treated as the movements own intellectuals and functions as nodal points, as stable references and assertion of meaning. At the same time, especially in the early issues, the role of the intellectual in

⁷¹⁰ Hans Zetterberg, 'Tolerera olikheter, prata och skämta', *Dagens Nyheter*, 13 February 1992, 2.

relation to the social democratic movement and the working class is debated and even heavily criticised.

Nyliberalen and other neoliberal forces at the time, display a search and an ongoing process of asserting the movements own intellectuals among philosophers like Ayn Rand, Robert Nozick, Adam Smith, Sven Rydenfelt and Ingemar Nordin; Swedish poet Gunnar Ekelöf; and diverse cultural articulations from Frank Zappa to Tom Schulman's Dead Poets Society. In a long and interesting read from *Nyliberalen* (n.4, 1993), 'Sweden's three youngest writers' and 'intellectuals' are interviewed as a group, on subjects ranging from market economy, state ownership, freedom, human rights, animal rights, prostitution, tobacco, home brewing, legalisation of narcotics, racism, disarmament, state subsidies for culture – to the role of authors (that is, their own role) and radicalism among the young generation at the time.⁷¹¹ Vaclav Havel is here discussed as a symbol of the right wing changes of the 80s⁷¹² while quotes from poet Gunnar Ekelöf are constructed as neoliberal sentiments. This, and other articles, exemplify attempts at creating organic intellectuals for the neoliberal coalition, both by educating and instituting new voices, and by re-branding well-known writers and cultural articulations as 'neoliberal'.

In 1993, when the seminar activities increase, a report 'from the Front' presents the latest events and speakers on 'S:t Eriksgatan 89' – the same address as that of the editorial office and the illegal club Tritnaha.⁷¹³ The list of the speakers and party guests during the spring of '93 includes several journalists and politicians. It is clear that *Nyliberalen* distances itself from certain parties (like the Centre party), but tries to represent itself as closer to the Free Moderate Student League (FMSF). The different dual-memberships of those affiliated with *Nyliberalen* (and FMSF, e.g.) are clearly visible. In the very early issues of *Nyliberalen*, the reader is presented with reports from international conferences arranged by Libertarian International. Here, libertarians and 'advocates of free market economy, individual freedom and peace' gather for 'the

⁷¹¹ Christian Gergils, 'Tre välfärsklarvar på tranan', *Nyliberalen*, 1993/4 (1993), 24–30.

⁷¹² For a similar discussion in DN see Maciej Zaremba, 'Jag slarvade bort listan. Namnen på mina angivare glömde jag direkt, säger Vaclav Havel', *Dagens Nyheter*, 12 January 1992, section Culture.

⁷¹³ Ingvar Gundersen, 'Talarkväll på S:t Eriksgatan 89', *Nyliberalen*, Från Fronten, 1993/3 (1993), 36. Among the invited guests are: a TV-show host from one of the new commercial channels arguing for voting by phone; an editor for an erotic magazine demanding legalisation of both narcotics and prostitution; the president of the youth organization of the Centre Party in Sweden who 'without success embarks on an ideological attack on the Freedom Front'; a journalist from DN's business section; the president of FMSF who allegedly critiques the Freedom Front from an ideological 'rights liberalism' perspective, although much of the critique amounts misplaced arguments or 'semantic details in the Freedom Front's manifesto'. Out of the journalists listed, two are about as marginalised as those active in *Nyliberalen* and one, who features in the mainstream daily newspaper DN is still positioned as somewhat aligned with the interests of the Freedom Front and *Nyliberalen* as the anarchistic freedom-rhetoric goes well with the neoliberal ideology – up until the point of the consequences of 'real anarchism', as they put it.

neoliberal international⁷¹⁴. This provides the reader with the mental image that neoliberalism (and/or libertarianism – the distinctions are a bit fuzzy) is indeed an international movement on the rise.⁷¹⁵

The relationship between the editorial staff and writers in *Nyliberalen* and the right wing think tank *Timbro* is ambiguous. On the one hand, *Timbro* is described as excluding and less politically radical by the contributors in *Nyliberalen*. On the other hand, advertisements feature regularly with new book releases from *Timbro*, Ratio and City University Press. From ‘hefty arguments from Timbro and Ratio’⁷¹⁶ (including Hayek, Nozick) and a talon for ordering said books; ‘hate the state’-decals; to ‘New books from the Front’. By 1993, this list includes up to 40 titles at times. The array of available authors in ‘books from the Front’ then resembles an attendance list from a reunion at the Mont Pèlerin Society.⁷¹⁷ That *Nyliberalen* is contributing to the construction and distribution of the beliefs and ideologies represented by these neoliberal and libertarian authors, is clear.⁷¹⁸ When reading the individual articles, features and interviews, there are even more references to books published by Timbro, to seminars (as advertised or attended by contributors to *Nyliberalen*) and to articles ‘earlier published in’⁷¹⁹ publications by Timbro.

TLM has a similar, but not nearly as exclusive, relationship to publication firm *Ordfront*, which is referenced more often than other publishing houses in both articles and book reviews. Nevertheless, TLM also includes book reviews on publications from both Timbro, Ratio, and City University Press, including aforementioned Rivière. In short, while there is an overspill from the neoliberal outputs to TLM, there is little exchange of contributions in the opposite direction. Timbro, and the *Timbro-right* are often mentioned as such in DN, on both opinion pages and culture section. Some of those contributions are in turn written by members of TLM, who strongly oppose the

⁷¹⁴ Bejke, ‘Nyliberal Världskongress i Swaziland’, 14.

⁷¹⁵ Bejke, ‘Nyliberal Världskongress i Swaziland’, 14–15. Henrik Bejke, ‘Libertariansk Europakongress i Paris’, *Nyliberalen*, 1989/3 (1989), 16–17.

⁷¹⁶ These include “Den nya upplysningstiden”, by *David Graham & Peter Clarke*; “Frihetens grundvalar” by *FA Hayek*; “Anarki, stat och utopi” by *Robert Nozick*; and “Det kapitalistiska alternativet: Introduktion till neo-österisk ekonomi” by *Alexander H Shand*.

⁷¹⁷ What Should Economists Do? by James Buchanan; Capitalism and Freedom and Free to Choose by Milton Friedman; The Road to Serfdom and Capitalism and the Historians, by Friedrich Hayek; Human Action, by Ludwig von Mises; Företaget, marknaden och lagarna by Ronald Coase; Samhället är större än staten by Theodor Kallifatides, Ingemar Ståhl [MP] and Ingemar Nordin; Bönder Mat Socialism by Sven Rydenfelt (and from the Cato Institute:) Machinery of Freedom by David Friedman; Give War a Chance, by P. J. O’Rourke; Power and Market by Murray Rothbard and so on.

⁷¹⁸ For instance, in *Nyliberalen* n. 3 1993, a book by Helena Rivière, published by City University Press, which posits the private, the individual human beings, freedom and rights against the collective, the state, the municipality, the public authorities and social democracy. Råde, Karin. Review of *Homo Vålfärdstatis-syndromet analyserat*, by Helena Rivière. *Nyliberalen*, no. 3 (1993): 42–43.

⁷¹⁹ Bertil Mårtensson, ‘Livsverket’, *Nyliberalen*, 1993/6 (1993), 17. In this particular case, ‘the book can be ordered from the Freedom Front, on page 29’, and a sort of summary of facts regarding the author, his biographical and bibliographical background, merits and academic positions, follows the article.

think tanks beliefs. One thing TLM's contributions does clearly and in unison is to position themselves and the journal in opposition to the "Timbro-right", "Timbro-intellectualism", "Zetterberg" and "the right wing". As advertised in TLM (n. 1-2, 1992), central actors from the TLM editorial board have publicly participated in 'confrontation and fruitful conversation' with the director of Timbro. Hence, while Timbro might not be liked, it functions as significant point of reference in the debate, in both mainstream and alternative fora.

in TLM, adverts include books from the *City University Press* (who, as part of the SAF-sphere feature on a regular basis in *Nyliberalen*); *Ny tid* - a self-declared cultural rag, mentions more on form than content listing main contributors by name, some who has been part of the *TLM* editorial staff in the past; *Ord & Bild* and *Ny tid* which are cultural journals – although little or no information regarding these papers are given (perhaps not deemed necessary); *Zenit*, a forum for intellectual debate closer to the *New Left Review* appears; as does adverts for syndicalist *Arbetaren*; and mass media outlet *Aftonbladet's* cultural pages. Out of these examples, the one advert to mention the welfare state is the City University Press. This is also the only one claiming authority through expertise and official positions. It includes a talon for ordering books, research project information, course programme and journal volumes respectively.⁷²⁰ All adverts list the contributing authors to their books or journals. On the top of the left page *City University Press* (originally in English) market published books under the heading 'What is happening in the welfare state?' The subheading states that:

A reevaluation of the public care and nursing in Sweden is underway. The City-university's research project called "Den svenska socialstaten" [the Swedish Social State] is a contribution to this reorientation. The project's reports are published by City University Press.⁷²¹

First of all, a renegotiation/reconsideration of public care is declared to be in progress. This declaration in itself defines the current situation not as a one of mere critique or questioning, but of ongoing re-negotiations, implying that a re-orientation aided by the City University's research will soon follow. Furthermore, the statement claims authority by referring to its own research project and reports.

What does "reconsideration of the public care and nursing in Sweden" connote if not privatisation of public sector services? Internal re-organisation of work, organisational and institutional structures? Six titles are presented and available to order in one of these adverts, all using key concepts such as 'social state', 'welfare state', 'the large state' and 'general welfare politics'. These concepts are defined in relation to 'the myth of equality' or as 'magical words'⁷²². It would be clear to any politically oriented reader

⁷²⁰ City University Press, 'Vad händer i välfärdsstaten?', *TLM*, 1993/1994/17/18 (1993), 26.

⁷²¹ City University Press, 'Vad händer i välfärdsstaten?', 26.

⁷²² City University Press, 'Vad händer i välfärdsstaten?', 26.

that this represents a politically right-wing position proposing and publishing authors with an outspoken neoliberal agenda. The only advert that mentions or takes a stance in relation to the question of privatisation - or the public sector – is the right-wing City University press.

There are few examples of as efficient and outspoken coalition building in TLM, compared to *Nyliberalen*. In TLM, such connections are created mostly in relation to theorists (as seen in the section on founding myths). The attempts to create alliances between contemporary political projects and actors that are openly articulated in *Nyliberalen* are largely absent in TLM. As the years pass, TLM evolves to an even more isolated entity concerned with factory-floor reports and features from the world of the working class, areas outside of the major cities, and critical discussions on social insurances. Although several articles from these later issues are external contributions written by politicians, researchers and various spokespersons in other fora originally, and later simply re-published in TLM. Again, no real dialogue between those contributions takes place. The re-printed contributions to the debate originates from a range of sources of differing character. The authors of these articles are presented as ‘party leader of the People’s Party’, ‘president of TCO [The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees]’, ‘professor at the institute for social research’, ‘chief editor of *Aftonbladet*’, for example. Not all are introduced by title - the contribution from the less prestigious *Social Insurance* is not given any formal title or merit. They discuss the issue from different angles and propose different solutions. Even if it might aim to present a united front, or defence, it merely represents the disparate demands and positions. This may very well be an attempt at creating or showcasing a regularity in the dispersion that constitutes the debate, but if so, it fails at that. One of the articles among those originally published in other media, is written by a member of the editorial board on TLM. Even though TLM thus has had a chance to engage in the more mainstream debate but chooses to bring this ball home again, so to say. Nor is there much exchange between the articles that are re-printed here: not among the authors themselves, or between these contributions and TLM.

Nevertheless, this change of subjects, arguments, and concerns from an “intellectual” debate to a more political concern, voiced with contributions that speak for both “workers” and “politicians”, may be an attempt to break away from the culture sections and move into the political debate. Actors from TLM start to appear in the debate on privatisation in DN, in 1992, and then on the culture section (even if it is not cultural matters that are debate). By the autumn of 1993, an opinion piece signed by the entire editorial office is finally published on the opinion section in DN. The concern is no longer students, university politics or Adorno – but the Social Democratic Party, who is also the addressee of the argument. While the ‘problem’ addressed is the party’s ‘system shift’-politics which is said to rely on right-wing values, the final argument makes a clear confession to what is by now not just a common sense, but a guiding

principle in the debate: ‘We are not, as a matter of principle, opponents to either freedom of choice or rationalisation within the public sector’⁷²³.

A united front

In the part of the material represented in *Nyliberalen*, the enunciated political positions are relatively unified. Demands for freedom and rights are consistently articulated against the opposing forces of the welfare state and all that it is treated as its equivalent: bureaucracy, regulation, the public sector, the state, parliamentary politicians, ‘the establishment’, the power elite, and (other) signifiers for the Social Democratic Party. All of these ‘other’ positions are connected through various chains of equivalences and difference, just as the positions of *Nyliberalen*, Neoliberalism, the individual, and the ‘common man’ are connected on the ‘right’ side of this political frontier. The contributions in *Nyliberalen* take up a united, clear cut position in relation to privatisation from the start and throughout the time period that I have studied, while the contributions in DN, *Arbetet*, OBS or *TLM* do not. The contributions in these fora take varied and conflicting stances to privatisation. Thus, while the contributions in *Nyliberalen* speak with one voice, as a unified formation, *TLM* initially represents disparate utterances which do not form behind a common political frontier until about 1992.

Nyliberalen speaks not only as one voice, it often speaks to and on behalf of the people or “human beings”, as it literally translates. *TLM* do not speak on behalf of, or to, the people; in *TLM* one speaks about “them”, “the people” as something other than “us”, “intellectuals”, “students” and “the left”. Thus, while *Nyliberalen* presents a united political front firmly grounded in specific common ideals based on a set of moral philosophers and liberalist thinkers. *TLM* is torn in different directions from 1989 until 1992, but most notably, the focus is on the issues closest at hand: students, university education and intellectuals.

All the same, privatisation is a matter that bridges the old political divide, unifying actors left and right. Despite ideological disagreements, truth claims and accusations of false or thwarted conceptions nevertheless signify that some common criteria for validity are practised. The suspicion that one's opponent is the victim of a socialist, anarchist, bourgeois or neoliberal ideology does not necessarily entail a complete exclusion from discussion. Instead, contributions to the medialized debate are able to argue ‘on the basis of a common theoretical frame of reference’⁷²⁴. This frame of

⁷²³ Peter Antman and others, ‘S Startade Systemskiftet’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 21 September 1993, section Debate, 4.

⁷²⁴ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 51.

reference establishes privatisation as a natural, pre-existent phenomenon, that is desirable not in the least because its superiority in terms of economic efficiency.

The left wing self-identified journalists of TLM walk right in to this trap, that privatisation *already* is a universal, un-disputed demand. Regardless of its accuracy, they subscribe to this notion that left- and right-wing politicians alike are all endorsing privatisation, with the exception of a few marginalised Social Democrats (the left party is entirely ignored and effectively written out of the hegemonic formation). Any active, or passive, resistance to privatisation politics, or any economically and morally superior alternative systems are largely left out of the discussion. Thus, TLM are effectively partaking in the creation of privatisation as a universal demand – i.e. hegemonisation.⁷²⁵ In *TLM* n. 3 1993, the main argument is that the political left and right subscribe to the same (neoliberal) ideology:

Shared criticism

There are a range of shared signal words for both Moderates and Social Democrats, which they mount their common ideology on. Personal responsibility, obligation, citizen, participation, freedom of choice, etc. With the aid of these signal words they level a joint critique at the welfare state. The welfare state takes away responsibilities from the people. It ruins community spirits among people. It pacifies the individual. Today, the right wing and the renewers from S share, not only social visions, but also the problem statements.⁷²⁶

Although there are variations in strategies and end goals, many of the arguments criticisms and key concepts are the same for the social democrats and the conservatives, according to this article. While the goal for the neoliberals is said to be complete privatisation and in the end the night watch state – the left is geared towards civil society solutions, but not necessarily pure(ly) privatisation.

As the political left suffers from chronic discord, forces on the right articulate common political demands, frontiers, and inimical oppositions. Demands for freedom, human rights and democracy are articulated through the common signifier “privatisation”. A discourse coalition successfully unites various positions on the political right under a common flag to form a united front against a common enemy. The demand for privatisation serves as a common signifier for both *Nyliberalen*, Timbro, the City University, parliamentary politics, business representatives, and more. The positions on the left fail to present a united front and appear instead as merely dispersed, are not even addressing the same subject amongst themselves. This tendency

⁷²⁵ Ann-Charlotte Altstadt and Conny Carl-Axel Malmqvist, ‘När högerns dröm blev vänsterns förnyelse’, *TLM*, 1993/3 (1993), 10–22.

⁷²⁶ Altstadt and Malmqvist, ‘När högerns dröm blev vänsterns förnyelse’, 16. Again, “humans” have been edited to “people”.

is stringer during the first years of the studied time period, while the contributions in TLM become more consistent in time, this can also be explained by the editors' strict gatekeeping and exclusion of undesirable elements.

Even if a wide range of subjects and demands form a common front against the social-democratic welfare state in 1989-1991, the ongoing struggle around privatisation show tendencies towards a shift, or at least an alternative critique forming in 1992-1993. This emerging alternative challenge the then dominant neoliberal perspective and attempt to reassert the social-democratic party and model as a political force, once again. Perhaps, then, in cooperation with liberal forces. In an opinion piece from 1993, a spokesperson for the social-democratic party makes an appeal to the party leader of the Liberal People's Party, Bengt Westerberg. Speaking on behalf of 'I', 'We Social Democrats', 'we – the Swedish people', and 'we – the social institution of society', the author speaks to the party leader Westerberg. She describes her relation to Bengt Westerberg and attempts to strengthen this seemingly already existing alliance:

When it comes to those questions Bengt Westerberg and I usually discuss and defend [...] Westerberg is now furthermore alone in the circle of government parties and New Democracy. [...] In these questions there is only one like-minded and that is social democracy. It is only if we work together that we can stop thee right-wing alliance. [...] The question is now, if we, nevertheless, can form a united front [...] We – the Swedish people – have everything to gain from a us working together to stop those who wish to use the deep economic crisis as an alibi to tear down welfare and equality. [...] I confess that we Social Democrats think that work of renewal of this sort [welfare policies] is more important and more exciting than putting day care centres to companies. Here, we disagree. [...] Which side are you on – Mr Westerberg.⁷²⁷

This illustrates an attempt to break up existing chains of equivalence, and establish new ones. In this case, the author draws attention disagreements and potential lines of conflict between the People's Party, the government parties, and the short-lived populist party New Democracy. The aim is clearly to assert new links of identification and collaboration between the People's Party and the Social Democrats. In the process of appealing to this political unification, the author also expounds on a declaration of which issues the social-democratic party would attend to if they were in power, which makes this article look more like a proclamation of a political programme than an opinion piece. With an almost personal appeal, the author directs her utterance at Bengt Westerberg without once mentioning the party that he represents. Another member of the party is mentioned, however, and described as ill-tempered – perhaps another attempt to sow discord in the enemy's ranks.

⁷²⁷ Birgitta Dahl, 'Bryt upp från regeringen!', *Dagens Nyheter*, 3 April 1993, section Debatt, 4.

Summary

Among dispersal set of agents and subject positions, common political identities are created through a dis-identification or differential relation to “the state” or the “Social Democratic Party” who functions as a representative of the former. Through discursive struggles, chains of equivalence link together elements such as “the public sector”, (state) “regulation”, “welfare services”, “taxation”, “social democracy”, “the state”, “bureaucracy”, “centralisation”, “power”, “technocracy” and so on, in the public, medialised debate on privatisation. These are in turn often included under common signifiers such as of the social democratic party or the (old) social democratic welfare state. Certain political project articulates such elements in opposition to the demands for “liberty”, “rights”, “freedom of choice”, and so on. By drawing up a clear cut political line of opposition between the welfare state and the social democratic party on the one hand, “the people”, “the individual” and “freedom” on the other, these coalitions effectively divide the social space into two camps. This constitutes a political frontier between differently positioned social actors, which is made possible by the production of signifiers whose content is emptied or undetermined, like “democracy”, “freedom” or “rights”, ‘that enables actors with divergent interests and identities to unite in the face of a common enemy’⁷²⁸: The Social Democratic welfare state. The demand for privatisation takes up the representation of these empty signifiers and becomes a symbol of something much larger than the transformation of state financed enterprises.

The varying character of the different media has consequences for both what can be said to (potentially or at least partly) shape the debate. Considering the paper’s unthreatened dominating stance with daily distribution to vast numbers of subscribers at the time, *DN* can comfortably be argued to constitute a substantial part of, and function as an important actor, in the debate. *Arbetet*, *TLM* and *Nyliberalen* are not as wide spread in terms of frequency or circulation of editions as *DN*. The two specialised, political outlets, *TLM* and *Nyliberalen*, actively seek to push the debate in different directions.

On the one side, *TLM* attempts to build authority by their unattachment to other groups, organisation and interest, and a concern about university politics it initially targets fellow (humanist) students. On the other, *Nyliberalen* builds up legitimacy by acting as an agent of a higher purpose: the neoliberal ideology, political project, and utopia. They, in turn, appeal to another “us”, namely the broad and oppressed masses. The example of *Nyliberalen* illustrates how one goes about to interact with other forces and elements of discourse to created and uphold a united front.

⁷²⁸ David Howarth, ‘An Archaeology of Political Discourse? Evaluating Michel Foucault’s Explanation and Critique of Ideology’, *Political Studies*, 50/1 (2002), 131.

Nyliberalen is engaged a political project which is more than a matter of social networks, personal bonds, and connections. These are articulated attachments visible to the reader, which imply that these various actors, institutions, and subject positions are united behind the same demands. This allows for *Nyliberalen* as a singular actor to take up the representation of all these various elements and claim the representation of a much larger chain of adjacent positions against a common enemy. Borrowing terms from Laclau, I call this is a hegemonic practice. The other forces articulated as part of that formation engage in various ways to mould opinion or distribute their beliefs to a broader audience. These subject positions these actors represent are then in turn accepted as legitimate by the editorial pages in the daily newspapers. Many of the arguments proposed in *Nyliberalen* later find their way to public readers through other contributions by actors stated as part of the same political coalition, published in or referred to by others in DN, *Arbetet* or OBS.

TLM's strategy is contrary. Part of the background behind TLM's enunciated isolation, whether it be voluntary and conscious or not, is the reluctance to tell the reader about any dual memberships of their contributors. While many such connections between actors are outspoken in *Nyliberalen*, any similar affiliations are unspoken in TLM. TLM succeeds only in showing that other voices beside themselves do exist on the left. Despite the members various dual appearances in both mainstream and other alternative fora, there is little if no examples of interaction between them published in the paper. On the contrary, when other outlets and actors are mentioned or advertised in TLM, without openly articulating any common interests, personal ties, or activities, TLM appears as an isolate entity in a field of mere dispersion. Hence, TLM is *not* signified as representation of a larger ensemble of positions.

Along with the rest of the political left, TLM fail to present a unified front behind any political demand. TLM's confused role and identity as an intellectual organ is noticeable especially in the early issues. No clear-cut political frontiers against a common enemy are being articulated even among the contributors of this clearly defined group. TLM is not perceived as, referred to or able to act as one actor; instead, the various demands made appear disparate. Differences and contradictions between various fractions are exposed but undealt with. The dispersion in TLM is later partly amended by the exclusion of more anarchistic and feminist perspectives following the defection of individual contributions. A shift in character and content is notable in 1992 as the contributions to the journal become more homogenous. This is then not a result of internal debate and incorporation of critique – but a result of further division. One of the difference between TLM and *Nyliberalen* is that the contributions in *Nyliberalen* debate internally and discuss the common issues amongst themselves as well as with other neoliberal actors like think tanks, active ideologists, and politicians on common ideological ground. The political project may thus be adapted and developed accordingly, tackle and incorporate critique, and engaged with burning political issues. The contributors in TLM express themselves side by side – but not in any direct

communication with one and other. While one journal explicitly makes multiple connections, and cooperate with other actors such as think tanks, publishing houses, private universities and political, national, and international, organisations – the other try to assert legitimacy and authority through the precise opposite, a complete un-attachment to other actors.

The intellectual function, par excellence, consist in this production of those ideologies that articulate fragmented and dispersed social elements into a new project (as discussed in chapter 3, and Laclau, 1990). That is precisely what we see in *Nyliberalen*. The neoliberal ideology is created a ‘eminently practical and pragmatic’⁷²⁹ project. This does include an element of utopianism, but that utopia is a horizon further ahead: a complete night-watchman state. Through an active process and practice of coalition building, *Nyliberalen* partakes in a larger political project among social (various organisations, identities and groups), political (parties and groups), economic (business organisations), and cultural (literary, cinematic, poetic) elements of discourse. It is however difficult to say such larger formations in discourse would have been possible without the aid of such a broad and open forum like *Nyliberalen*. TLM is in a sense an example of how a narrower focus on cultural matters (initially) and a uniform political mediation or comment (not debate) does not fill the same function. There is no regularity among dispersed elements formed around or articulated through TLM. “Utopias”, is the theme of TLM no. 5, 1990. It presents about twenty articles on topics ranging from horror films to the assassination of Prime Minister Olof Palme 4 years earlier. The ones that mention utopia do so sardonically, in terms of critique, in the process of presenting the founding myth of TLM – or in commenting on the rise of the right wing.

⁷²⁹ Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, p. 196.

PART V

Rethinking Intellectuals, Hegemony, and Neoliberalism

In which I first answer the research questions in brief (chapter 9) in order to summarise the results presented in the preceding chapters. I then extend the discussion on the implications of my findings in relation to existing literature on neoliberalism, intellectuals, and hegemony (chapter 10). I end that chapter with proposing that my theoretical contributions could lead to a reinvigorated post-Marxist, or post-foundational understanding of hegemony.

Chapter 9

The Making of Common Sense

This thesis is about the making of common sense. It offers a theorisation of the ways in which the intellectual function is performed through various subject positions. With a point of departure in post-Marxist discourse theory the thesis establishes a theoretically productive relation with rhetorical political analysis. The theoretical argument is then complemented through empirical work that examines the medialised debate on privatisation in Sweden from 1988 to 1993. As a step in the theorisation process this empirical analysis mobilises elements of both post-Marxist discourse theory and rhetorical political analysis to shed new light on the intricacies of the intellectual function and the hegemonic processes in which it plays a key part. Empirical analysis, in other words, is not conducted in order to (dis)prove theoretical claims and hypotheses, but to play an active, constitutive role in the production of theory. This also implies that empirical analysis is not undertaken primarily as an end in itself, but rather because it is needed to support the theorisation process. Nevertheless, the analysis of the privatisation debate in Sweden does have value in and of itself, because of the ways in which it elucidates important discursive changes that took place in this decisive period of recent Swedish history.

By using a post-Marxist terminology, I define the intellectual function broadly as the articulation and mediation of ideology, but analyse it with the aid of conceptual devices derived from the rhetorical political approach. This allows for a better appreciation of the multiple rhetorical strategies enrolled in various performances of the intellectual function. The significance of the variegated uses and combinations of ethos, pathos, and logos as distinct forms of argumentation, along with the roles played by metaphor, commonplaces and other rhetorical devices and strategies, was discovered in the process of investigation. In the construction of a typology, I encapsulated Findings from the empirical analysis in three ideal types of subject positions through which this function is performed in the Swedish debate on privatisation: namely the expert, the spokesperson and the public intellectual. This typology is furthermore used to analyse the changing relations between these subject positions throughout the period under scrutiny.

The empirical material is also approached from the post-Marxist notion of chains of equivalence to make clear how a hegemonic struggle unfolds around the meaning of

“privatisation”. This struggle is shown to extend through a chain of other concepts such as private ownership, freedom, and the welfare state. The making of a particular common sense of privatisation, in other words, can only be understood by considering the chains of equivalence in which the concept is situated. Hegemonic struggle in this sense is a struggle for an interpretive privilege that allows certain political forces to (contingently and partially) fixate the meaning of key terms in a debate. The partially fixated meaning of privatisation that emerged from the Swedish debate relied on an understanding of private ownership as a fundamental right; a negative definition of freedom; and a notion of an extensive, autocratic, and dysfunctional welfare state. All of these had to become commonsensical to sustain the fixation and naturalisation of a particular conception of privatisation in Sweden during the early nineties. The empirical analysis shows how this happened, but it also makes clear that no specific political force was able to gain and hold interpretive privilege. Rather, meanings were continuously negotiated by debate contributors and the common-sensical conceptions that eventually emerged cannot be said to ‘belong’ utterly to any specific group. This is demonstrated with distinct clarity in the analysis that shows how neoliberal voices constructed their pro-privatisation arguments primarily on moral grounds, while the efficiency argument was pushed by their ostensible political opponents (e.g. social democrats).

The hegemonic formation thus emerging gradually in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Sweden is one in which a neoliberal discourse coalition sets the political agenda. Pro-privatisation arguments are constructed as protagonists of change and progress, while arguments in favour of collective (state) ownership are cast as defenders of the old social democratic order. Crucially, even privatisation opponents begin to accept neoliberal premises such as individual ownership rights and the inherent inferiority of state actors as compared to market actors. In this discursive landscape collectivist interpretations are left unarticulated and the privatisation debate is narrowed from a question of for-or-against to more technical questions of extent and form.

A typology of subject positions

Although privatisation was initially articulated as a floating signifier, it gradually became fixated through the process sketched above. Opinions on the desirability of the phenomenon as an objective of public policy continued to differ, but contributions increasingly converged on a common understanding of the meaning of the term. During this process, I argue that the intellectual function of mediating ideology was performed by a range of subject positions, rather than by readily identifiable actors. In my analysis, I have been able to categorise the intellectual subject positions found in the debate by establishing three over-arching ideal types: (1) the expert, (2) the

spokesperson, and (3) the public intellectual. These are analytical constructs identified through the various rhetorical practices and positions of enunciations articulated in utterances in the debate. In the hegemonic struggle of the public debate, these ideal types correspond to different forms of critical engagement and public appeal, although such aspects may have but sectoral importance. Because these ideal types are traced, not by individual actors, but through the positions taken up by enunciating subjects, there is room for transcendence and overlap between them (as discussed in chapter 7). The details of this typology are historically and contextually specific, but the logic of this categorisation can most likely be recognised in other discourses. Analysis revealed three key changes in the relations between these types as the debate unfolded. In a parallel development to the decrease of anti-privatisation arguments, there is a shift in the balance of the ideal types represented.

Firstly, the public intellectual tended to be replaced by the expert in mainstream media. Initially, public intellectuals were frequently found on both opinion pages and culture sections, but this type of position was pushed out of mainstream debate media and displaced to alternative outlets, such as cultural or political journals and other fora. The abrupt closure of the cultural opinion page in DN is just the most obvious example of this. Instead, expert arguments came to dominate the debate. While spokesperson continue to frequent the opinion pages, they do so with a mode of justification that refer to expert authorities – and engage less in mobilising appeals to the masses.

Secondly, affective appeals of patho-centric persuasion tended to give way to more informative, prosaic, and technical logo-centric contributions in the opinion pages of mainstream mass media. Spokespersons transcended into technical, expert-ways of argumentation rather than a passionate engagement for the people or party (for instance), possibly for reasons of legitimacy and acceptance. The spokesperson tended to keep its attachment to a larger represented party for authority but increasingly referred to external sources of knowledge for expertise (like reports or statistics provided by experts); whereas the expert represents or speaks on behalf of an attachment to a limited field of knowledge.

A tendency to belittle and depreciate emotionally engaging contributors was found in all examined fora. Nevertheless, patho-centric strategies of argumentation were used by public intellectuals in alternative outlets. While logocentric arguments continued to abound, the use of pathos became less common – either because contributors simply did not employ such strategies, or because gatekeepers did not regard them as a legitimate form of persuasion. Because patho-centric arguments were still used in the two political periodicals, it is safe to say that these strategies were not just suddenly abandoned by all potential contributors to the mainstream opinion pages.

Thirdly, aesthetic concerns were exceedingly pushed out of opinion pages in the daily newspapers, and even from the left-leaning politico-cultural journal TLM. This allowed for the exclusion and active dissociation of certain undesirable subject positions and

communicative practices without much ado – a description perfectly applicable to the relation between DN and the subject positions and argumentative strategies represented in the neoliberal politico-philosophical journal *Nyliberalen*.

It is difficult to determine if these tendencies are products of, or driving forces behind, policy processes. Just as practices of public argumentation are likely to influence political processes, these processes in turn are likely to play a part in the shifting forms of argumentation. This is a question for further analysis, and preferably one that examines the discourse in general (not just the question of privatisation). In the mainstream opinion pages, social democratic subject positions tend to argue *for* privatisation in technical terms of cost and efficiency. In many of these cases privatisation might have been seen as a political strategy to retain some welfare services, rather than resorting to civil society solutions, but such arguments are largely unarticulated in the examined fora. It would however explain how welfare demands since the 1990s, have been limited primarily to sectors of education, care, and health services. The arguments presented in left-leaning periodical TLM, are generally positive towards decentralisation politics and etatism. By 1992, when the centre-right coalition is in office, the journal veers toward an anti-privatisation discourse, logo-centric arguments based on experience and expertise, and refrain from propagating aesthetic and cultural concerns as much as in previous years. In a sense, they wake up to the reality of right-wing politics in office. Just as *Nyliberalen* in 1989, TLM find themselves in opposition to governing parties, and in search of a new alternative. That new alternative is old fashioned social democracy. Hence, in both TLM, in DN and in OBS, there is a sharp increase of activity among these actors.

Rather than unmasking a list of essentialist properties of persons previously recognised as intellectuals, my own work has been about following processes and practices in moments of articulation, over time and between fora, to find out what constitutes an intellectual in public discourse. The intellectual is, in short, constituted as an expert, as spokesperson or a public intellectual through performative utterances (even if these are presented as constative, assertive, descriptive, or persuasive utterances⁷³⁰) and by taking up the representation of something more than the expression of an individual thought. Just as the declared “we”, “the people” or “the individual” does not come into being as such before the moment of articulation, so is the signer invented by the signature. The signer, or enunciating subject, speaks in the name of the “we”, the “people”, the “individual”, “the common good”, “morally right”, “efficiency”, “social democracy”, “workers”, “freedom fighters”, “expertise”, and so on. Of course, to give oneself the authority, ability, and power to take on such more or less universal representation, an argument will have to resonate with relatively stable points and positions within contingent discourses. To understand what constitutes an intellectual, in a particular context, time or society, I argue that it is necessary to analyse the rhetorical practices

⁷³⁰ As discussed at length in Derrida, ‘Declarations of Independence’, 7–15.

through which such positionings are negotiated. I believe that strategies of attachment and unattachment, as well as the forms of engagement are central to the institution of various types of intellectual subject positions in this context.

The intellectual function

Part of my project was to find out what constitutes the intellectual in a time after the great ideologies, revolutions, and social movements that we usually associate with the idea of *the* intellectual⁷³¹. In an attempt to shake off old presumptions about the intellectual as we know it, which colour most research on intellectuals, I decided to investigate what or who performs an intellectual function⁷³² in a more contemporary case. Given that Gramsci, Laclau and others⁷³³ recognise practices of articulation and activities that establish unity among otherwise dispersed social elements, as well as the mediation of ideology as the intellectual function above all else, it has been a necessary part of my project to identify that function in order to trace the constitution and performances of intellectual subject positions in the debate. That is to say, to identify what constitutes an intellectual, I first had to find, trace, and analyse the performance of such an intellectual function in articulations and utterances within the debate. Following the advice of Finlayson and Martin, I have studied the rhetoric involved in such practices.

Starting from a broad as possible understanding of the intellectual as a type of function that consist of the practise of articulation: the concrete social practices through which social actors establish relations among elements (such as political beliefs, moral values, or material conditions) in a way that their identity and meaning is modified. What becomes relevant in terms of the performance of this function *in society* and political discourse is the mediation of ideology, unifying practices, or representation of demands on behalf of a political subject, for instance, and articulations that can contribute to changes in the social order⁷³⁴. But because the whole social world is made comprehensible by practices of articulation, and public political debate is based solely on such practices, I found it necessary to make distinctions among the utterances and

⁷³¹ Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*.

⁷³² To speak of a function may seem rigid at first glance, but a broad definition of this function has proven flexible to varying conditions, expressions and forms of practices. Had I focused on the *role* of the intellectual I would have been constricted by the roles played by other actors and forced to study a smaller case in order to identify all the roles played in relation to one and other, and distinguish who plays what part at what time, et cetera.

⁷³³ Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*; Desai, 'Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony', 27–64; Bieling, 'Neoliberalism and Communitarianism. Social Conditions, Discourses and Politics', 208–21; Plehwe and Walpen, 'Between Network and Complex Organisation: The Making of Neoliberal Knowledge and Hegemony', 27–50.

⁷³⁴ As discussed by Ernesto Laclau in Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, 195.

performances of the intellectual function in the debate scrutinised in this thesis. Ideology has the potential to unite otherwise dispersed and fragmented activities, practices, identities, subjects, and political demands – be they cultural, social, political, or economic. In short, the intellectual function consists in the invention of a way of speaking about things like “privatisation”, “people”, “Sweden”, for instance, to render them meaningful and comprehensible in relation to other elements of discourse; but it also comes down to the mediation of ideology, with the potential to articulate dispersed elements of discourse as unified.

The empirical analysis traces performances of this function in contributions to opinion pages in the mass media; expressions and reiterations in cultural sections; speeches and debates in broadcasted public service media; and through the creation of alternative outlets under direct control of the contributing writers. This shows how, in a time when the media landscape was relatively concentrated, the intellectual function could nevertheless be performed through various subject positions and media outlets, including individual statements, singular contributions and collective announcements. Every articulation of belief, from supposedly “neutral” statements of fact and prescriptive expert advice to theological contemplations and passionate moral expressions, is captured by “articulation” and “mediation of ideology” as definitions of an intellectual function. In this sense, it is too wide a concept. In any case, if the intellectual function is the mediation of ideology, it is not performed by any *one* subject or subject position in this area of the public debate, but by them all.

If we are to make distinctions, as I have strived to do in my own analysis, it is possible to say that the intellectual function can be performed in different ways and by different ideal types of intellectual subject positions. Furthermore, some ideal types gain more privileged positions than others as points of reference and relative stability or fixation in the debate. Certain arguments and subject positions are reiterated as nodal points in the meaning making practices of the debate. The establishment of certain subject positions as central points of reference is achieved through relational positionings in reference to the “Timbro-right”, the “establishment”, the “cultural pages”, “neoliberal offenders”, “leftist intellectuals”, and so on. This, I argue, opens up the possibility of rethinking the “intellectual” not just as a function performed by certain subject positions, but as a central point of reference – a nodal point – in a public debate. It also enables empirical analysis to achieve a more precise localisation and relational differentiation of intellectual subject positions, thereby paving the way for novel insights into the dynamics of hegemonic struggle.

Disentangling the moral and the efficiency argument

Privatisation is often treated as an administrative matter. As an empirical field of research, it has been studied as a technical question of organisation; in analyses of neoliberalism, privatisation feature as one phenomena of market radicalism, among others. From the material that I have gathered, I believe that moral values are an integral part of the neoliberal political project, in the case of Sweden at least. The reason that “we” perceive neoliberalism as an economical–efficiency project might not have as much to do with the values of neoliberal thinkers, beliefs, and ideologies – but more to do with who, and what arguments, are presented to us in public medial debate. As I have tried to illustrate, the moral argument for privatisation was presented by actors who position themselves as neoliberals. The types of value-laden arguments of right and wrong are articulated by those subject positions that I have included in the ideal type of the “public intellectual”, who, as I have explained, are pushed out of, and increasingly excluded from the mainstream debate. The economic, technical, efficiency arguments principally correspond to the subject positions of experts, who speak of more particular matters in which they can provide an expert knowledge. Those arguments and positions have been well represented in the opinion pages of Sweden’s largest daily newspaper. Hence, the arguments available to the broader public, are the technical, economic arguments. The neoliberal movements “own” organic intellectuals, internal fora and philosophers promote universal rights and moral values – but rarely feature first hand in the mainstream debate. Their arguments are however reiterated in editorials of mainstream media, and can be recognised in opinion pieces later on.

The moral argument – neoliberalist justification of privatisation

Neoliberal voices in the debate tended towards a moral justification for their support of privatisation policy. Their hegemonic practices relied on an ability to construct, reiterate, and occupy elaborate chains of equivalence that established privatisation as a project which is morally right. The neoliberal discourse coalition did so by connecting empty signifiers such as “freedom”, “democracy”, “justice”, and “ownership” with their political demands for privatisation and marketisation. These were articulated through particular demands such as the privatisation of public sector services in a way that established such particulars as universal representations of a range of more disparate demands and positions (including “deregulation”, “freedom”, “rights”, “the individual”, “morally right”, among others). Through this process of articulation – linking various elements in the discourse – concepts of ownership and power comes to be defined in private and individual terms only. Collectivist interpretations of ownership and power are not even in contention as competing conceptualisations: they are completely absent in the studied fora, as if erased from the social imaginary. To be

sure, the chains of equivalence involved here are not by nature or necessity neoliberal; they could have been articulated by other coalitions.

If, for instance, a leftist political project had successfully articulated the same signifiers through different chains of equivalences, the associated concepts could have taken on other meanings – but in order to do so the existing chains would have been broken up. In short, the meanings of “freedom”, “democracy”, “justice” and “ownership” lie not in the words themselves, but in their active articulation and linking together with other, relatively fixed elements of discourse. It is tempting to speculate on the circumstantial causes of this relative success in terms of ideological vacuums and windows of opportunity opened by the dislocation caused by the downfall of state socialism in Europe. Leftist parties (in the broad sense) were clearly experiencing an identity crisis: the 1980s were seen as a defeat and demands for redistribution and socialist ideologies were difficult to mediate; still, the privatisation debate gives no evidence of a clear connections or causality between these phenomena.

Through variegated communicative strategies and rhetorical techniques, privatisation was framed as either a moral, universal, and natural order or as a mere technical and bureaucratic issue. Significantly, these moral justifications were never seriously challenged by contributors opposed to privatisation and were thus left more or less uncontested. This allowed the underlying commonplaces of individual private ownership as the natural order of things to become common sense. I will return to the further implications of these finding on our knowledge and understanding of neoliberalism in the second half of this chapter.

The efficiency argument – a gift from the left

Neoliberalist articulations were not alone in creating the conditions for the hegemonic process that I have observed in the Swedish debate on privatisation. In fact, the left and social democrats in particular also played an important, if perhaps unwitting, role in this regard. Whereas the neoliberal discourse coalition focused on a moral line of argument, social democratic spokespersons, along with various economic experts tended to favour arguments centred around “efficiency” – even in contesting privatisation policies. Perceived oppositions between the private and the public sector; between private and government power; and between market and state were key to this line of argument.

Private sector firms were discursively constructed as efficient, rational, and diverse, while the public sector was described as inefficient, incompetent, arrogant, and bureaucratic (with few exceptions). This was supposedly so, because of a large centralised system managed by a policy elite that believes itself to know better than individual people what they need and what is good for them. Within this framing, even from a left-wing perspective, the choice is not as one might perhaps expect, between

taming private economic power through increased state power on the one hand, and tolerating extended private economic power to limit the state's reach on the other. Rather the question comes to be about the extent to which the power and reach of the state should be limited; a choice between the mere transformation of state enterprises into joint-stock or into limited-liability companies; of contracting out only certain services or of launching complete privatisations.

Whereas these kinds of argument are often regarded as neoliberal, in this case they were articulated from an unlikely broad set of subject positions – a gift served on a golden platter for the neoliberal discourse coalition. The primary proponents of privatisation policy thus extended far beyond the enunciate positions of neoliberal radicals to include expert economists, parliamentary politicians of various committees, business executives, and spokespersons for various associations. A less obvious proponent of privatisation policies and neoliberal politics are the various representatives of social democracy. For spokespersons from the social democratic sphere, a technical, administrative argument for privatisation was very useful as it did not deviate from the ideological foundation of the party. One could argue in favour of more efficient solutions to public sector problems and still be a Social Democrat. Even those who wished to partake in the social democratic discourse to *oppose* privatisation were forced to argue against such efficiency arguments with the same technical terms. Because this is a long-term study of the debate, precisely such developments of reframing arguments over time can be revealed.

In short, the efficiency arguments in the debate on privatisation emanate from the subject positions of experts and spokesperson, while public intellectuals who argue on behalf of moral values are pushed out of mainstream debate fora. This is a tendency that cuts across the left-right political divide. Both followers and outspoken antagonists of neoliberalism argue in terms of costs and efficiency.

Constructing a united front

The demand for privatisation ceases to be particular and becomes a universal demand, as it assumes the function of representation of the many disparate demands described above. Likewise, a particular neoliberal ideology assumes the representation of a whole coalition of movements, actors, demands, and positions (the people, the individual, freedom, democracy, et cetera). That is, in short, “hegemony”. By linking various subject positions and demands, the neoliberal coalition contests the ruling social democratic welfare state. Thus, what is achieved in this process is the constitution of a united front posed against rival forces as represented by the (welfare) state. The political left, by contrast, is dispersed and difficult to recognise as a formation because it lacks a clear common demand and a unifying element, for instance in the form of a shared antagonist. Rather than taking up the representation of something more than its own

identity, the fragmented left accepts and repeats the universalist claims of the neoliberals. Leftist contributions in TLM and the culture sections assume that a neoliberal ideology dominates mainstream media and public discourse.

The two alternative journals (TLM and *Nyliberalen*) position themselves as marginalised anti-establishment voices in the debate. Their active positionings are foregrounded in discussions among contributors about the tendency for gatekeepers in mainstream media to exclude certain arguments and standpoints. On rare occasions, such discussions also surface in *DN*'s culture section, but they are more frequent in TLM and *Nyliberalen*. The issue, however, is dealt with in different ways by contributors in the two alternative outlets. In *Nyliberalen*, contributors often take up the position of the underdog, the dissident, or the fugitive rebel, thereby finding a political use for their own exclusion. In contrast, contributions to TLM exhibit a gradual stylistic assimilation to the journalistic standards of the period with the result that they begin to resemble the culture sections of the mainstream media.

Neoliberal debate contributors – in *Nyliberalen* and elsewhere – pour substantial energies into arguments that seek to prove that various films, books, and public figures are in truth neoliberal or libertarian at heart, regardless of political self-identifications that suggest otherwise. Such “revelations” serve to legitimise neoliberal ideology and can be seen as attempts to further broaden the neoliberal coalition. There is no such tendency visible among leftist contributions. One possible explanation for this is that the leftist movement in Sweden already had established its own “movement intellectuals”⁷³⁵ and identity through a long-standing tradition of workers literature, protest music and other cultural-political spokespersons, and thus felt no need for such assertions of legitimacy or identity. On the contrary: differences between various fractions of the broader political left were more frequently highlighted than concealed.

Privatisation decontested

Is privatisation in itself an ideology? While it is possible to conceptualise “privatisation” as something (a thought-structure, system, or cluster) that includes opinions, statements, propositions, a conceptual apparatus, and a system of ideas that characterise a total structure – it does not represent the total structure of the mind of an epoch or group. Privatisation can rather be described as a smaller unit in a larger structure of private ownership, marketisation, economism or neoliberalism. Privatisation is both a part of a larger conceptual arrangement – but in itself, is a discourse made up of

⁷³⁵ The concept of “movement intellectuals” has been notably developed from Gramsci’s “organic intellectuals” in Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*. It roughly refers to actors taking part in a process of articulating the identity, thoughts and protests of a movement.

conceptual arrangements of previously contested concepts (freedom, justice, rights, property, and ownership). Furthermore, and in connection to the conception of ideology presented earlier in this dissertation, privatisation becomes decontested. In 1988, privatisation is a phenomenon in need of clarification, definition, and description. Promoted by various actors in mainstream and neoliberal fora in the coming years; but not even mentioned in the leftist journal TLM until 1992. By 1993, privatisation is not questioned in the mainstream debate, but rather recognised as something that is either unavoidable or for the benefit of all.

In the privatisation debate, what could have been a pluralism of meaning, modes of political thinking and strategies suppress pluralism through practices of decontestation – of making private ownership the only option available, for instance. Collective ownership (e.g. in the form of wage-earner funds) becomes an unimaginable articulation. Through decontestation of the multiple meanings of ownership, freedom, rights, moral and so on, highly specific, decontested, meanings are fixed or ascribed to ownerships (as individual, not common) freedom (as negative freedoms “from” and not positive freedoms “to”), fundamental human rights (individual ownership), moral (from an individual, ego-centred perspective). The belief systems, or ideologies, that can be distinguished in the empirical material, are dynamic in the context of the contingent public medialised discourse. While the internal organisation of what and how political spokespersons think has not been captured in my study; the ways in which they want the audience to think about political issues and the ways in which political ideas are presented in public, communicated, and made “persuasive”, have been examined in this dissertation.

The actual structuring of discourse, social orders, and political positions in the process of such decontestations has been discussed at length in the analytical chapters. At the heart of that discussion has been the political argument and the role of rhetoric in mobilising empty signifiers, political frontiers, and discursive coalitions to promote a particular political belief system. Such belief systems were articulated in styles of argumentation which had been adapted, not just to the various absent audiences, but to the form, rules, and norms of the few available fora for debate. However, while the styles of argumentation were relatively coherent among the proponents of a neoliberal or socialist belief system, variations - and coherences - in styles were all the more distinguishable between and among the ideal types of intellectuals (expert, spokesperson and public intellectual) and fora for debate. That is to say, the regularities in argumentative styles, forms of persuasion and strategies in communicating beliefs and demands varied more between, for instance, a neoliberal public intellectual and a neoliberal expert than it did between a neoliberal expert and a socialist expert. The most obvious coherence could instead be attributed to the type of enunciated position which was intimately linked with the use of rhetorical appeals to character, emotion, or reason. I found rhetoric to be transient within belief systems, as actors would switch rhetoric dependent on format (opinion piece, feature, editorial, or interview) of the articulation,

often in the same publication and issue. To analyse, understand and theorise this issue, I found the idea of enunciated subject positions useful – that is to say, that the same actor momentarily takes up the position of an editor, journalist, professor, activist, author, libertarian, student, or woman, and so on, in these various rhetorical acts.

In my work, I have come to recognise ideology as something more than the contents and substance of systems of belief. The forms of presentation and justification of ideology become co-constitutive of the ideology in question, but also of the larger discursive formation where these struggles take place. Attempts to win the consent of those not already assimilated, or won over, to the ideology in question, are visible in both the mainstream massified media and the more specialised political journals. In my study of those arguments, I have analysed the content and character of not only the demand, but also of political actions and strategies of the speaker – as they express their political thinking and communicate it to others. In these contributions, a series of reasons for thinking one sort of thing rather than another (about the individual, the collective, the market and the state, for instance) are provided. The contributors to the discourse draw upon these common points of reference when formulating responses to events, problems, and rival challenges regarding privatisation, and when they attempt to persuade others to share the same perspective.

Chapter 10

Implications for Future and Previous Research

To distribute ideas and arguments for a broader audience, it is necessary to reach out through public fora. If admission to such fora cannot be gained, one has to create one's own outlets. This is precisely what happened in the Swedish media landscape in the time before massification of media and the beginning of the internet age. In this context, publication and distribution of counter-hegemonic messages required relatively high levels of organisation. The question that future research needs to consider is how this has changed with a significantly altered media landscape associated with the ascend of the internet age. The creation of new outlets has arguably become much less demanding in terms of organisation and resources, but what are the implications of this for hegemonic practices in medialised public debate?

This last section of my conclusions attends in turn to the three focal points of the thesis: neoliberalism, intellectuals, and hegemony. I begin by mounting an argument against the economistic tendencies that plague much of the existing critical literature on the topic of neoliberalism. I then attend to the continued need for rethinking the concept of intellectuals in a performative and relational mould. Finally, I turn to the post-Marxist theory of hegemony which has been my travelling companion throughout in order to evaluate its continued relevance and to make suggestions for possible changes.

Against the economistic view of neoliberalism

Why does this dissertation focus so much on the moral side of privatisation arguments? Isn't privatisation really supposed to be a question of increased efficiency and economic values? The reason I spent so many pages on discussing what might seem like a marginalised standpoint in the debate, is because such moral arguments have been largely left out of previous analyses of neoliberal politics, policies, and beliefs. Hence, this discussion centres on some of the significant analytical contributions and theoretical developments around the concept of neoliberalism.

A problem of definition

The ghost of neoliberalism has haunted academic and public discourses for decades. Neoliberalism has been described as the dominant ideology of our time – the hegemony, even.⁷³⁶ An abundance of projects, presentations, books and articles on the origins, forms, effects and impacts of neoliberalism, have contributed in shaping a common understanding of neoliberalism – to the point where it apparently no longer needs to be defined, but can instead be used to define various aspects and phenomena of society. In scholarly analysis, neoliberalism is primarily discussed as a set of policy projects, a political current or a relatively coherent system of meanings and beliefs. Such projects, politics and discourses are usually identified by a type of thinking centred on economic markets. According to David Harvey (2005), neoliberalism is ‘in the first instance’⁷³⁷ a theory of political economic practices.

In short, analysis⁷³⁸ has exposed a twofold assertion at the heart of neoliberal thought: firstly, that market mechanisms are superior to state-planning⁷³⁹; and secondly, that central planning and state intervention greatly reduces the freedom of individuals. Together these claims have been used as legitimating grounds for privatisation politics and associated demands for limiting government and state responsibilities to the protection of individual rights; for safeguarding private property by political, military, and juridical means; and for liberalisation and deregulation of formerly regulated and government administered market relations. Centred around private property rights, free markets and free trade, neoliberal thought claims that individual entrepreneurship rather than collective organisation best develops the welfare of human beings.

Many critical accounts⁷⁴⁰ of neoliberalism fail to do justice to the extent to which the basic claims of neoliberal thought have been adopted by actors far beyond the ranks of

⁷³⁶ Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen and Gisela Neunhöffer, *Neoliberal Hegemony: A Global Critique*, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (London; New York, 2006); Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

⁷³⁷ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2.

⁷³⁸ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York, 2015); Bieling, ‘Neoliberalism and Communitarianism. Social Conditions, Discourses and Politics’, 208–21; Bohle and Neunhöffer, ‘Why Is There No Third Way? The Role of Neoliberal Ideology, Network and Think Tanks in Combating Market, Socialism and Shaping Transformation in Poland.’, 89–104; Richard Hull, ‘The Great Lie. Markets, Freedom and Knowledge’, in *Neoliberal Hegemony: A Global Critique*, ed. by Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen, and Gisela Neunhöffer, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (London; New York, 2006), 141–55; Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford, 2010).

⁷³⁹ To be precise, the claim of the superiority of market mechanisms, efficient resource allocation and competition-driven processes of capitalist development, over state-driven pathways of social and economic organisation.

⁷⁴⁰ As evident in Bieling, ‘Neoliberalism and Communitarianism. Social Conditions, Discourses and Politics’, 208–21; Bohle and Neunhöffer, ‘Why Is There No Third Way? The Role of Neoliberal Ideology, Network and Think Tanks in Combating Market, Socialism and Shaping Transformation in

self-proclaimed neoliberal economists. Such critical voices have tended to focus solely on refuting the theoretical free-market propositions of these economists (and, to a lesser degree, social and political scientists of a neoliberal bend), rather than taking aim at the more-or-less mutated forms in which neoliberal ideology has seeped into the politics of avowedly non-neoliberal actors. The Swedish case under consideration in this thesis demonstrates the potential reach of this seepage by showing how actors self-identifying as social democrat, conservative, and anarchist can all be seen to adopt elements of the neoliberal belief system. This was also noted by Harvey (2005) who observed that deregulation and privatisation policies in Sweden were not primarily realised by outspoken neoliberalists, but rather by social democrats at national, regional, and local levels of government⁷⁴¹.

Other accounts have been much more sensitive to these important processes. Dieter Plehwe et al (2006), for instance, have pointed to the paradox that although actors within the political, academic or corporate field may seem to act according to neoliberal customs or beliefs – they rarely identify themselves as neoliberals. This prompts the questions: who are the neoliberals? Attempts at providing answers have been based on scrutiny of the degree to which different actors act in accordance with either neoliberal principles of market radicalism and anti-statism, or the economic principles outlined by Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman. In any case, such approaches have attended rather one-sidedly to neoliberalism understood as a type of ideology rooted primarily in the field of economics.⁷⁴²

Jamie Peck makes an argument similar to my own when he suggests that neoliberalism ‘cannot be reduced to the high-church pronouncements of Hayek and his followers, or to the parsimonious logic of Chicago School economics’⁷⁴³ and that we must therefore study neoliberalism as a process of ongoing construction by ‘following flows, backflows, and undercurrents across and between these ideational, ideological, and institutional moments, over time and between places.’⁷⁴⁴ Having said that, however, Peck proceeds with a narrow focus on free-market projects in Freiburg, Paris, London, Chicago, and

Poland.’, 89–104; Ulrich Brand, ‘The World Wide Web of Anti-Neoliberalism. Emerging Forms of Post-Fordist Protest and the Impossibility of Global Keynesianism.’, in *Neoliberal Hegemony: A Global Critique*, ed. by Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen, and Gisela Neunhöffer, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (London; New York, 2006), 236–51; Brown, *Undoing the Demos*; Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*; Hull, ‘The Great Lie. Markets, Freedom and Knowledge’, 141–55; Mirowski and Plehwe, *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*; Plehwe and Walpen, ‘Between Network and Complex Organisation: The Making of Neoliberal Knowledge and Hegemony’, 27–50.

⁷⁴¹ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

⁷⁴² See for example Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*; Plehwe, Walpen and Neunhöffer, *Neoliberal Hegemony*.

⁷⁴³ Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, xiii.

⁷⁴⁴ Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, xiii.

Washington. This would seem, once again, to reduce neoliberalism to only one of its key tenets: market radicalism.

Morals before markets

A tendency to focus on the market radicalism of neoliberalism is also present in Harvey's account and can furthermore be traced in Michel Foucault's work on the market as the site of veridiction. The market, Foucault explains, has become a naturalised phenomenon that obeys necessary spontaneous mechanisms, which in turn permit the setting of natural, just, and true prices. According to this logic, it is in the interest of the common good of society to leave the market to function with the least possible interventions, as any attempt to modify said mechanisms risks only to impair the natural order. More than having the state guarantee the market's freedom, a neoliberal perspective would have the markets and all its freedom determine the role and function of the state.⁷⁴⁵ It is precisely such an argument which is engendered by neoliberal market radicalism.

The veridictional practice of the market, as theorised by Michel Foucault, can be identified in the privatisation debate as well. As the market becomes the site of truth, it also becomes the site of veridiction – how we determine what is true or false, even when it comes to government practices. 'This site of truth is not in the heads of economists, of course, but is the market'⁷⁴⁶, according to Foucault. As both experts and spokespersons for institutions of the state begin to install the veridiction of the market at the heart of state functions, they are able to question the state's reach, extent, and utility. Such demands for governmental frugality undermine the authority of government and state institutions. However, previous analyses of neoliberal politics, policies, and beliefs (Foucault included) have largely excluded moral arguments in favour of economic demands. What this thesis can reveal is therefore novel to previous analysis of neoliberalism and privatisation politics. As moral concerns take precedence in the internal, neoliberal discourse studied here; efficiency arguments dominate the mainstream debate and, most strikingly, the contributions opposed to privatisation policies. Despite the Swedish welfare state's prominent position on social research, it seems that, when it comes to analyses of privatisation, researchers have absorbed arguments from the Anglo-Saxon world of thought – and failed to recognise the complexity of arguments presented in the Swedish public discourse⁷⁴⁷.

With Harvey, the analysis is taken a step further. Like Foucault, he draws the conclusion that the market and capital accumulation have in a sense become the site

⁷⁴⁵ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

⁷⁴⁶ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 30.

⁷⁴⁷ See for instance Lundqvist, 'Privatisering - Varför Och Varför Inte?'; Stolt, Blomqvist and Winblad, 'Privatization of Social Services', 560–67.

for veridiction but not only in terms of what can be regarded as true or false (as Foucault argues) – but also in terms of what can be regarded as a human right or freedom. Certain conceptions of justice, rights and freedom are bundled: up with the rights necessary for capital accumulation. The absolute rights of individuals (and thus of individual firms) to private property and its profits, Harvey argues, trump any other right imaginable.⁷⁴⁸ While my work resonates with both of these analyses it also poses important challenges, particularly around the role of human rights in neoliberal ideology. Foucault argues that the claiming of rights by neoliberals is a juridical question, whereas in my analysis of the Swedish case it is clearly posed as a moral question. And while Harvey does note the ethical dimensions of neoliberal theory, he does so mostly in terms of the fact that values of market exchange are regarded as a guide for human action. Based on my own analysis, however, it seems that the basis for most claims by Swedish neoliberals are based on a purely moral argument centred around “private ownership” as a human right.

In Swedish neoliberal discourse, it is clear that the “right to private ownership” comprises the primary nodal point, as visible in various forms of contributions, in mainstream and alternative media fora, books and reports⁷⁴⁹. Private ownership is framed as a fundamental human right based on the notion that all humans have the right to the product of their labour. Most, if not all, neoliberal arguments proceed from this fundamental moral belief. As an example, the oft-repeated rhetorical trope “tax is theft” is derived directly from this moral principle, because from a neoliberal point of view it entails that taxes are seen as an attempt by the state to force the product of individual people’s labour out of their hands. Similarly, the social democratic welfare state is critiqued not on grounds of its inefficiency or the functional superiority of market mechanisms, but on moral grounds based ultimately on the assertion of human rights. The superior status of capitalist market relations is asserted as a moral superiority – as compared to collective ownership and state planning – because it is seen as the only way of guaranteeing individual autonomy, voluntariness, and rights to private ownership.

The ills of economism

The most important question that a critical analysis of neoliberalism must be confronted with is whether it ‘excludes ethico-political aspects, whether it fails to recognise the reality of a moment of hegemony, treats moral and cultural leadership as unimportant and really judges superstructural facts as “appearances”⁷⁵⁰. The object of

⁷⁴⁸ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 175–82. Compare with Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

⁷⁴⁹ As discussed in many opinion pieces, and emphasised in publications from Timbro, such as Nordin, *Privat Egendom*; Ulf Brunfelter and others, *En Ny Grundlag: Ett Förslag*, MOU : Medborgarnas Offentliga Utredningar, 0284-8767 ; 1988:1 (Stockholm, 1988).

⁷⁵⁰ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 194.

analysis that Gramsci refers to here is obviously not neoliberalism; instead, the question is put to his contemporary Marxist comrades and develops into a critique of theoretical economism: an overestimation of mechanical, economic causes and a reduction of the social, ethical, and political elements of society. This very ailment plagues many of the existing attempts to come to grips with neoliberalism that I discuss in this section. I am not attempting to argue that the economic dimension of neoliberal thought is unimportant – but I do argue that cultural aspects and activities, moral values, processual negotiations, and compromises, are too important to be omitted from the analysis of neoliberalism. The one-sided treatment of neoliberalism – as an ideology fundamentally and exclusively concerned with economic matters – that characterises large parts of the literature⁷⁵¹ is simply inadequate in order to understand a phenomenon which is much more multifaceted than that.

Foucault is among the authors who do attempt to diverge from the narrow analyses that treat neoliberalism as little more than either a reactivation of old economic theories or an attempt to expand market relations in society. But even he nonetheless continues to identify neoliberalism through a reading of neoliberal economists, such as Ludwig von Mises, Wilhelm Röpke, Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman. The version of neoliberalism available in such texts is the one where political power is modelled on the principles of a market economy.⁷⁵² Economistic demands to organise all elements of society (population, technology, education, legal systems, lands, climate, et cetera) according to the optimal conditions for a functioning market economy, is what constitutes a neoliberal programme. According to Foucault.⁷⁵³

While thinkers like Hayek, von Mises, Röpke and Friedman were undeniably neoliberal forerunners, they were also economists and their neoliberal theorising has undoubtedly been coloured by their scholarly habitus. But why this exclusive focus on neoliberal economists, when non-economist voices have been equally important in the formation and development of neoliberal ideology? What about the social, political, and philosophical thinkers that neoliberals themselves hold just as dear as they do Hayek and Friedman? A figure such as Ayn Rand, for example, is peculiarly absent from much critical analysis despite of the popular and powerful position that her ideas and texts continue to hold among radical neoliberals. In neoliberal circles, she is treated as an

⁷⁵¹ See for instance Brown, *Undoing the Demos*; Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*; Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*; Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (2009); Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Dieter Plehwe, Bernhard Walpen and Gisela Neunhöffer, 'Introduction: Reconsidering Neoliberal Hegemony', in *Neoliberal Hegemony: A Global Critique*, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (London; New York, 2006), 1–24; Plehwe and Walpen, 'Between Network and Complex Organisation: The Making of Neoliberal Knowledge and Hegemony', 27–50; Hull, 'The Great Lie. Markets, Freedom and Knowledge', 141–55; Mirowski and Plehwe, *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*; Linda Nyberg, *Market Bureaucracy: Neoliberalism, Competition, and EU State Aid Policy*, Dissertation, Political Studies, Lund University (Lund, 2017).

⁷⁵² Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 129–35.

⁷⁵³ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

important figure and authority. Source material from her texts are included in the self-proclaimed neoliberal outlet that formed part of my own analysis. Along with Rand and Nozick, a number of the movement's homegrown thinkers clearly function as important points of reference for neoliberal meaning making. This is not to deny the centrality of economic thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, James Buchanan, John Locke, Adam Smith, Ludwig von Mises, and David Hume, who are all mentioned, debated, and used as nodal points for relational positioning in the debate – but not with the same devotion as the articles on Rand (and Nozick).

My argument is that the adoption of a critical perspective on neoliberalism which is too market-centred or economistic runs the risk of seriously underestimating the moral aspects of neoliberal ideology. Analyses that focus solely on the economic aspects of neoliberalism and neglect its cultural, moral, and social aspects can never quite capture neoliberalism in its multi-levelled and multi-dimensional entirety. If we are to understand the creation of a hegemonic formation, moral dimensions must be included in the analysis. I also argue that the reduction of neoliberalism to an ideology of free market relations (including the claim of the superiority of market mechanism, competition-driven processes, and the limitation of government in said mechanisms and processes) can never fully explain or understand the neoliberal emphasis on individual rights, property rights, privatisation and liberalisation of government administrated sectors and services. For that, an analysis which considers precisely the moral base of neoliberal thought is necessary.

Furthermore, economistic reductions of the concept of neoliberalism underdetermine its ideological contents. By reducing the many facets of neoliberal ideology to an economic current of thought, it is bereaved of its numerable moral, cultural, philosophic, and social meanings which have been successfully inscribed in society. Is it possible to imagine a marketised society that is not dominated by neoliberal ideology? Could a purely capitalist, economistic, or technocratic doctrine; a classic liberal, social liberal or populist political current implement the policies required for the free operations of market, encourage competition, or claim the superiority of market mechanisms? The answer, of course, is affirmative. That is to say, the economic contents attached to the neoliberal ideology are not exclusive to the neoliberal ideology. Other systems of beliefs could, and have, taken up the very same demands. To label all economic demands based on capitalist values, increased market competition or decreased state expenditure – as neoliberal, is of course equally problematic. This results instead in the overdetermination of neoliberalism that has been ongoing in the public, critical discourse the past decade or so. As neoliberalism comes to signify all negative elements of societal development, it loses its moorings and becomes instead a floating, empty signifier.

What is unique to neoliberalism in the late twentieth century, however, is the structural connections between a fundamental belief in the superiority of the individual human

being over collectivism; an individualistic moralism; a belief in private property as a naturally given right; and a negative conception of freedom as the freedom “from” intrusions on the individual’s rights and way of life. The demand for a minimal state is thus much more than a demand to limit state intervention in the capitalist system; it is a demand to limit state intervention in the possibilities, practices, and decisions available to individual humans in their everyday lives.

The intellectual reimagined

The most important contribution of this thesis is arguably my rethinking of the intellectual function as performed through a variety of subject positions in public debate; positions which are traceable and analysable through enunciated positions and rhetorical practices in contributions to such debate. At this point I would like to clarify how this reimagined intellectual function relates to previous academic work on intellectuals. As I see it, the principal problem with existing social theories of the intellectual is to be found in their entrenchment within two camps of polar opposites: on one side, abstract totalising theories of the intellectual as a function⁷⁵⁴ or capacity⁷⁵⁵, and on the other, essentialist accounts of personification, that predetermine individual actors as intellectuals based on a given set of characteristics⁷⁵⁶. In this section, I first discuss and critique some of the most prominent recent attempts in this field and end with the possibilities introduced through the theory of the intellectual developed in my own analysis.

Functions and positions

The problem with the first group of abstract totalising theories – which has provided the point of departure for the development of my own position – is that they have offered little towards a specification of the relational process and practices implied in the suggestion that the intellectual should be seen as a function. The best example here is Ernesto Laclau (1990) who argued convincingly for the necessity of conceiving the intellectual as a function, but refrained from further theorising or empirical analysis. As

⁷⁵⁴ See Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*.

⁷⁵⁵ As in Gil Eyal and Larissa Buchholz, ‘From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2010, 117.

⁷⁵⁶ Among a long list of cultural sociologists see for example Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*; Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*; Jeffrey C. Alexander, ‘Public Intellectuals and Civil Society’, in *Intellectuals and Their Publics: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, ed. by Christian Fleck, Andreas Hess, and E. Stina Lyon (Farnham, 2009); Alexander, *The Meanings of Social Life*; Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals*; Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity, and Intellectuals* (Cambridge, 1987).

a result, his intellectual function is left in a state of ontological sovereignty autonomous from the world; the assertion that the intellectual is constituted by articulation and mediation of ideology is less than helpful in terms of distinguishing one discursive position or performance from another. It is this missing piece of theoretisation on the intellectual function that I have taken up.

Others have embarked on related projects without quite getting there. Radhika Desai (1994), for instance, also takes the intellectual function as a theoretical starting point, but then slips into a discussion of the role and functions of “the intellectuals” in relation to hegemony, ideology, and class – in a manner that suggests pre-determined relations of domination and leadership. In Desai’s analysis, certain categories of intellectuals seem destined to perform certain functions (of leadership, for instance) in times of crisis and stability respectively. As her analysis proceeds it becomes increasingly clear that what preoccupies Desai is the function of intellectuals – still understood as certain people carrying that label – rather than the intellectual function as I have sought to conceive of it.⁷⁵⁷

A post-foundationalist take on intellectuals, closer to my own, can be found in Emilia Palonen’s work (2017) on the Budapest school and practices that participate in the constitution of Europe as an intellectual space. By focusing her analysis on the self-positioning of two scholars (George Lukács and Ágnes Heller), Palonen is able to show how different types of intellectuals are constituted as subject positions (“American intellectual”, “Jewish intellectual”, “rootless intellectual”, for example). Palonen explains how the “rootless intellectual” is instituted as a stereotype (as exemplified by Pels (2000)) and how alternative, “rooted”, subject positions can be created in the creation of an author’s autobiographical ethos, for instance. Moreover, Palonen illustrates how an intellectual ethos can extend beyond the individual actor and come to represent a school of thought or position, such as the Budapest school.⁷⁵⁸ Her work, however, does not include an explicit aim to re-theorise the intellectual function, which makes it difficult to ascertain the precise theoretical implications of these empirical findings.

Once we move into the second camp mentioned in the beginning of this sub-section, the problems begin to get more serious. This group of scholars, guilty of essentialist personification, harbour the misguided belief that the intellectual can be conceived of as a particular group of individuals recognisable by certain shared traits. In relation to such studies, Gramsci’s intervention is still as relevant as ever: ‘I greatly extend the notion of intellectuals and I do not restrict myself to the current notion which refers to great intellectuals’⁷⁵⁹. I can only repeat this sentiment in reference to my own work. In contrast with this persistent misunderstanding I have argued, again with the aid of

⁷⁵⁷ Desai, ‘Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony’, 27–64.

⁷⁵⁸ Palonen, ‘Practicing “Europe”’: Georg Lukács, Ágnes Heller, and the Budapest School’.

⁷⁵⁹ Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader*, 300.

Gramsci, that every thinking creature is in a sense intellectual. From this perspective attempts to make distinction between intellectual and non-intellectual people based on criteria taken to be integral or essential to the nature of the intellectual become non-sensical and pointless. But it does not render the study of intellectuals redundant. Rather, it necessitates the move from attending to the possession of intellectual capabilities at an individual level, to a focus on the ways in which an intellectual function is constituted and intellectual positions are taken up in relation to other positions. By reconceptualising the intellectual in this way, we might contend the proclaimed death of the intellectual⁷⁶⁰. Thus, it becomes possible to recognise that the function represented by this traditional notion of the intellectual is itself subject to contextual and historical variation, and may be performed by other actors than those associated with the “great” intellectual.

Intellectual strangers and the metonymic fallacy

There have been several attempts to deal with the problem of personification, but so far none of these seem to have arrived at adequate solutions. Dick Pels (2000), for example, aims to develop an anti-essentialist approach focused on the intellectual as “the stranger”, but nevertheless ends up with an essentialist description of ‘this strange breed we call intellectuals’⁷⁶¹. In Pels’ reading of Mannheim, the standpoints of intellectuals become an existentially determined knowledge and their free-floating character mutates into an existential distinction - a property of the estranged intellectual actor. In contrast, I use Mannheim’s notion of relatively free-floating intellectuals as an articulated attachment or unattachment in the enunciated positions of contributors to public debate; i.e. a performative rather than an essential trait.

Likewise, and once more against Pels’ peculiar reading of Mannheim, the *seinsverbundenheit* of knowledge can, from a non-essentialist perspective, be read as an active positioning and representation that is articulated in relation to a particular form of being in the social (a position, experience, qualification, and so on) rather than existence as such. The marginality and estrangement of intellectuals are aspects that Pels treats as integral to the role of the intellectual; I argue in contrast that such detachments from institutions and partisan interests is precisely what constitutes “the intellectual” as a strategy, rhetoric and an active articulated positioning that takes place through performative utterances, rather than internal processes of identification and alienation.

⁷⁶⁰ As argued by Richard A. Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals*.

⁷⁶¹ Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger*, 80.

Relatedly, Pels warns against what he calls the ‘metonymic fallacy of the intellectuals’⁷⁶². When intellectuals identify with, come to represent and appropriate interests larger than their own, he argues, they risk succumbing to the ‘universal danger’⁷⁶³ of disregarding the inevitable gap between the represented subject and its spokesperson. If, for instance, the intellectual claims to represent the standpoint of the proletariat or women, then what is really represented, according to Pels, is a theory constructed from the marginal or estranged position of the intellectual: ‘intellectuals organically identify their positional interests with those of an idealized and allegedly more powerful historical subject’⁷⁶⁴. Thus, the singular individual may attempt to speak in the interest of a group, but is really only speaking for the interest of his/her own position. This, I argue, is no fallacy; it is simply the way representation works. The metonymic move from the narrow and specific to something larger, from a particular to a universal position, is what constitutes the concept of representation as such. The act of representation or spokespersonship always includes a metonymic moment. When a text, an utterance, or a signature claims to speak for something; when I give myself the power to speak for a larger whole (be it women, humanity, cats, or art) it is not a problem of an ‘inevitable hiatus between representers and represented’⁷⁶⁵, as Pels would have it, but a constitutive part of the representative instance⁷⁶⁶. More than a moment of identification I see this as a moment of representation. Like Mannheim, I see spokespersonship as a question of alignment rather than identification⁷⁶⁷. In performing an intellectual function, a speaker can take up various positions and attachments, but whether or not the speaker truly identifies with these positions is another question entirely.

The interventionist turn

Another way of addressing the problem of how to theorise intellectuals has been to avoid the issue by decentering the intellectual in favour of a focus on the intellectual *intervention*. Patrick Baert (2015), for example, does so in an attempt to construct a positioning theory with the aim of exploring the social mechanisms behind the rise of certain texts and intellectuals. By shifting focus from the individual intellectual to the intellectual intervention Baert hopes to escape some of the pseudo-psychological

⁷⁶² Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger*, x.

⁷⁶³ Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger*, 185.

⁷⁶⁴ Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger*, 191.

⁷⁶⁵ Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger*, 185.

⁷⁶⁶ For further reference on the matter of representation see for instance Derrida, ‘Declarations of Independence’, 7–15; Dario Castiglione and Mark E. Warren, ‘Rethinking Democratic Representation: Eight Theoretical Issues’, *Prepared for Delivery to ‘Rethinking Democratic Representation’ Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions University of British Columbia*, 2006; Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (1967).

⁷⁶⁷ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*, 103.

problems in the methodology surrounding the sociology of intellectuals. His attempt, however, does not solve any issues of definition, but serves to redirect our attention.

The problem is that Baert's assertion, that intellectual interventions can be defined as contributions (e.g. intellectual "products" like books, blogs, articles, etc) to the intellectual realm, is not accompanied by anything resembling a definition of this realm. We are, in other words, left without any substantial grounds for knowing if an intervention is intellectual or not. This conceptual gap comes back to haunt Baert throughout his extensive analysis. Furthermore, by depending on the function of recognition to distinguish the intellectual, Baert never manages to escape the notion of the intellectual as a privileged subject in an intra-intellectual field or realm – "a private hunting ground"⁷⁶⁸ for accomplished scholars, Nobel laureates and celebrated writers. Baert's notion of positioning becomes a question of what an actor's intervention *achieves*. This has Baert slipping and sliding into what ultimately ends up being yet another account of the career of a great intellectual, but not much else. As such his positioning theory is inadequate in terms of advancing an understanding of the intellectual function in society. While Baert's analysis shines a welcome light on previous blind spots in the sociology of intellectuals, his positioning theory is not designed with a mind to dimensions of the social or political. Any relation between the intellectual (function or position) and naturalisations of ideology, institutions of a common sense or negations around change and continuity in public discourse is left untouched.

As Stefan Collini also points out, several authors can be accused of bringing an economic perspective to the sociology of intellectuals. Richard Posner (2001) is one often mentioned but seldom cited example, for he uses an economic framework and conceives of the public intellectual as a career path on market for public intellectuals⁷⁶⁹. But a similar economic model echo in the works of Pierre Bourdieu (1988) and Patrick Baert (2015). Notions of "successful positioning", "achievement", "intellectual goods", "careers", "material prospects" and "competition" in the "intellectual field" are used by both authors and denote an economic perspective on social and cultural processes⁷⁷⁰. Such economic perspectives bear a certain resemblance to the individualistic, competition and market centred approaches that also characterise the neoliberal beliefs analysed as part of the empirical material, in this dissertation.

Others have gone one step further in the direction of interventions by attempting to do away with the intellectual altogether⁷⁷¹. This has resulted in an approach that

⁷⁶⁸ Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, 196.

⁷⁶⁹ Posner, *Public Intellectuals*.

⁷⁷⁰ Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*; Baert, *The Existentialist Moment*.

⁷⁷¹ Eyal and Buchholz argue unconvincingly for their conversion of classical sociological theory (primarily Foucault and Bourdieu) into a model where the unit of analysis is not the role or position of the intellectual, but 'the movement of intervention itself: Eyal and Buchholz, 'From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions', 120.

completely circumvents the articulating subject and erases the speaker from the speech. As a reaction against theoretically wanting studies preoccupied with the motives, thoughts, charismatic qualities and trajectories of individual intellectuals, this interventionist turn is understandable. But simply to give up on defining a sociological concept like the intellectual because some scholars employ it in misguided ways seems to me a mistake. I prefer instead to reclaim the term through the kind of retheorisation attempted in this thesis.

Performing a function in a structure of relations

Fortunately, other strategies are available in the search for a concept of intellectuals in which the actor is decentred without thereby disappearing completely from view. Stefan Collini (2006), for instance, presents a performance-oriented approach which is much closer to my own. For him intellectuals are those figures who move into a structure of relations that involves the intersecting dimensions of recognition, public outreach, public engagement, and personal reputation. Like myself, Collini argues that the relationship between the person and the role of the intellectual is one of degrees. Individuals may occupy this role more or less fully over time:

What is at issue is a pattern of behaviour in a given historical setting. If a certain figure repeatedly succeeds, on the basis of a kind of creative or scholarly activity, in using a given medium of expression to reach a genuine public to express views on a general theme, then, by definition, that figure is, in that particular context, successfully functioning as an *intellectual*.⁷⁷²

All these conditions are of course historically and contextually variable in Collini's analysis. While I sympathise with this endeavour to move away from essentialist perspectives on the intellectual, Collini does not quite arrive at the fully relational approach that I have been developing here. Nor does he follow the implications of performativity through to the constitution of intellectuals in articulatory practices. On the one hand, Collini manages to conceive of intellectuals in a way that does not make intellectual activity the exclusive privilege of a select few, but on the other hand he does not allow intellectuals to be constituted through articulation alone. This is ensured by his insistence on including individual recognition and reputation as a constitutive dimension.

The intellectual dimension is treated in part as one of construction and in part as one of recognition and reputation, inevitably linked to individual actors. Still, Collini's analysis effectively attends to the ways in which the intellectual role is constituted by historically specific cultural and social relations and how that role is performed within

⁷⁷² Collini, *Absent Minds*, 53.

such a structure of relations. However, only certain modes of articulation seem to qualify as intellectual (e.g. cultivating exceptional mental and creative capacities), although the precise content of such qualifications are subject to change and contextual variation. Another characteristic trait of his approach is that he does not consider political interventions to be necessary for someone to be said to act in an intellectual role. This means that Collini is less concerned with the relationship between intellectuals and political change; a point on which my own approach differs markedly

New possibilities

Various categories of actors and groups engage in mental labour which includes certain intellectual qualifications, creativity, access to specific fields and forming special narratives, biographies, and relational positions in social relations. While most professions today, and indeed our very survival in post-industrial, bureaucratic, and specialised societies, depend on a certain amount of qualifications of an intellectual nature (education, literacy, arithmetic abilities, and so on), our parts in society are not determined exclusively by these qualifications. On occasion, then, we all perform intellectual activities (in reading, writing, arguing, administrating, and so on) or partaking in cultural fields and intellectual realms (e.g. education, publishing or media). But this does not mean that we are all, in an analytical sense, therefore at all times exercising an intellectual function in society. Yet, many theories on intellectuals continue to handicap themselves by insisting on the notion of the intellectual as a person (an actor, agent, or individual). Invariably there comes a moment when these researchers are faced with questions about who is an intellectual and who is not – in which contexts, parts of their lives (age, every day, etc); questions which are rendered meaningless in the re-imagination of the intellectual on offer in this thesis. Furthermore, personification of the intellectual function into individual (or collective) intellectual actors prohibits us from analysing its full complexity.

My reimagination of the intellectual function opens up new possibilities for research. These are primarily tied to the detachment of the intellectual function from the individual (or collective) actor. To speak of an intellectual function (as opposed to a legislative, journalistic, or critical function, for instance) in the performative sense, as I have proposed, makes it possible for the same person to perform different functions in different contexts and situations⁷⁷³. Equally, individuals may be positioned in various

⁷⁷³ Or indeed to perform different functions even in the same context; or in different contexts perform the same function.

subject positions, not just at different moments in their lives, but simultaneously.⁷⁷⁴ This brings me to a central implication for the study of intellectuals.

The intellectual function and position is not bound or predestined to be performed by any specific actor or mode of articulation – it is bound only by context and local conditions. Who performs the intellectual function or takes up an intellectual position, and how, is an empirical question. Intellectual activity cannot be tied to the search for truth, recognition, and self-positioning in a semi-autonomous intellectual realm which on occasion spills over into the public sphere. Yet that is exactly the impression one gets from many previous attempts to theorise intellectuals through portrayal and analysis of “great intellectuals”⁷⁷⁵. The constitution of an intellectual in modern societies has to do instead, I argue, with the performance of an intellectual function which constructs a language, mediates ideology, formulates demands, and links up dispersed elements into a unified, comprehensible whole⁷⁷⁶. Now, since this function can be, and is, performed by practically any individual or collective actor; utterance or symbol, in the social world, we need to make a distinction – not between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, but among the various types of subjects that are constructed along the way to perform the intellectual function.

Three ideal types of subject positions – experts, spokespersons, and public intellectuals – were found to be available in my own empirical study. In societies, discourses or debates situated in other times and places, that function may very well have been performed by other subject positions made meaningful under those specific circumstances. As such Baert (2015) may indeed be right in suggesting that the intellectual function in post-war France was performed by ideal ‘public intellectuals’ such as Sartre, whose rise he investigated. Likewise, Gramsci and Mannheim may have

⁷⁷⁴ My absent presence here is as a narrator or a writer in relation to the reader; in relation to my students, I am a teacher; in relation to my professors, I am a student; others might categorise me as a woman; but personally, I may not self-identify as any of these things – unless these are the only positions made available and I am forced to choose.

⁷⁷⁵ For a longer discussion on these aspects see Baert, *The Existentialist Moment*. Alexander, ‘Public Intellectuals and Civil Society’, is another example of this type of analysis.

⁷⁷⁶ However, to assume that intellectuals are simple mediators of ideology (as if the act and practice of mediation does not change or effect the content, connotations and interconnections of ideas) is an unfortunate mistake of analyses of hegemony and discourse that have perhaps not delved deep enough into the sociology of intellectuals. Mediators in public discourses (in media, educational systems, social institutions, et cetera) cannot be reduced to the function of neutral mediation between an ideology and an audience; as if they were copper links leading a current of thought from a source to a direct awaiting receptor. To assume a hierarchical relation, like Bieling (2006) does, between the “great” or “conceptual” intellectuals to the intellectual mediators to the ‘bottom level’ of common sense – shaped by experiences of everyday life – is problematic. That would imply that ‘great intellectuals’ are not themselves effected by experiences in their everyday lives, and excludes the possibility of exchanges and changes in the content of the world views articulated in these ‘hierarchical’ processes. As is evident in Bieling’s conclusion: ‘it seems to be appropriate to speak of “everyday neoliberalism”, which although influenced by intellectual discourses, is rooted also in the concrete experiences and expectations of different social groups and classes.’ See Bieling, ‘Neoliberalism and Communitarianism. Social Conditions, Discourses and Politics’, 208–21.

been right to suggest that in the times and places under their consideration, the intellectual function was performed respectively by the ‘literati’, the ‘intelligentsia’, a particular stratum, the clergy, or the party. The meaning of the term ‘intellectual’, in other words, cannot be set a priori but depends on relational practices which contingently determines its identity. For this reason, it is never sufficient to simply reiterate a common-sense definition of ‘the intellectual’ if one wants to contribute to deeper understandings of the phenomena itself and the social formations in which it appears. Because my own theory of intellectuals is post-foundational and anti-essential the intellectual function and position is open for (re)articulation.

If we recall the performative perspective outlined in the theoretical chapter, I suggest that *all* utterances in a public political debate *do* something. Through the course of an argument, and even in constative utterances, we position ourselves in relation to those subject positions that are discursively available to us. In speaking, we are establishing or severing links in the chains of equivalences and differences in system that is relatively fluid, but where not all types of articulations will resonate with (all segments of) the audience. Such an extended theory of performativity recognises the constitutive aspects of utterances: in speaking we are doing activities of relational positioning; negotiations of change and continuities; establishing truths and guidelines for veridiction; contesting or supporting hegemonic practices and regimes; and above all (re)iterating and contributing to existing systems of meaning.⁷⁷⁷

Furthermore, I have argued that there is a difference between what I call the enunciated position of a speaker - taking on relatively particular (“I”) or universal (“we”) representations – and the categories of available subject positions (“neoliberal”, “social democrat”, “yuppie”, “middle class”, et cetera). This recognition makes it possible to connect the function of various types of intellectual positions to hegemonic practices. The ‘metonymic fallacy of the intellectuals’⁷⁷⁸ can then be understood as a hegemonic function of the spokesperson or public intellectual: that is, when a particular utterance or positions takes up the representation of a wider range of positions, demands or identities, and when this particular thus comes to represent something relatively universal. This leads us right back to the heart of the post-Marxist theory of hegemony according to which the hegemonic (practice, process, relation or project) signifies a metonymical move from the particular to the universal: ‘when a particular has succeeded in contingently articulating around itself a large number of differences’⁷⁷⁹ or

⁷⁷⁷ In favour of a focus on relations and positions of the whole social situation, this perspective on performativity excludes the psychological, internal process whereby individuals value, identify or ascribe characteristics to one and other: positioning is always relational, but that also means that it can never be essential; it takes place by association or disassociation with other positions. Therefore, the term “performative” here is not used as in Baert (2015; 2017).

⁷⁷⁸ Pels, *The Intellectual as Stranger*, x.

⁷⁷⁹ Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, 159.

heterogenous elements; or, for instance, when one actor's 'situation as "outsiders" becomes a symbol to other outsiders or marginals within society'⁷⁸⁰.

Towards a reinvigorated post-Marxist theory of hegemony

This roundabout return to the post-Marxist theory of hegemony brings us full circle. I would like to end by problematising some of the developments and elaborations that this theory has undergone since it was launched in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* in 1985. By drawing on my own work I would also like to sketch the outlines of possible ways of resolving these issues. If we start out from the theory developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), and fine-tuned by David Howarth (2010) and others:

In its most general formulation it consists in asserting that the holistic dimension remains, but that it does not consist in a ground but in a horizon. While in a ground, in the strong sense of the term, the ontological function of grounding derives from the ontic specificity of the entity fulfilling that function, in the case of a horizon such an automatic derivation does not obtain. The function of grounding remains an ontological unavoidable requirement, but such a function is only possible if the entity fulfilling it cancels, or at least blurs, its ontic specificity that is, if it becomes an empty signifier, in the sense that we have attributed to this term. And an empty signifier is a hegemonic one, if hegemony is conceived as a relation in which a particularity, without ceasing to be particular, assumes the representation of a universality which is utterly incommensurable with its ontic differential identity. But if this is the primary ontological terrain, if the totality is not directly derivable from any such ontic identity, but is constructed through this hegemonic 'taking over' of the grounding function, in that case relations of representation are ontologically constitutive (in the transcendental sense of the term).⁷⁸¹

The main issue with their approach is, as I see it, that the theory of hegemony is itself hegemonising. As "hegemony" comes to signify a vast range of practices, process, relations, projects and modes of governance, everything seems to be hegemonic. This notion of hegemony as a metonymic operation: when a particularity takes up the signification of a universality, so that the hegemonic identity of the particular embodies both the unachievable fullness and its own particularity, becomes difficult to pinpoint in empirical situations. Again, as discussed in the theory chapter, Laclau (2014) tells us that there can be no predetermined datum; but all objects require representation to be

⁷⁸⁰ Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, 159.

⁷⁸¹ Laclau, 'Populism: What's in a Name?', 395–96. See also Laclau, 'REPLY', 396; Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 70–71.

constituted as particular entities. Consequently, rhetorical figures that implement such representations, are ontologically endowed⁷⁸². Ontic contents are invested to represent a fullness, totality, or universality⁷⁸³. Thus, by taking on the representation of a totality, or an aggregation of heterogenous elements, the particularity gains the content of the totality, all the while somehow retaining its particularity. While the meaning of objects and practices (these particularities) depend on the contexts and limited discursive orders in which they are constituted and situated⁷⁸⁴: even if it is constituted as a universal, a particular may consequently still retain a particular dimension.

Furthermore, if we analyse the quote above more closely, another paradox becomes apparent. While Laclau argues against foundationalism, his reasoning nevertheless circles back and forth between the impossibility of ontological grounding and the function of the discursive, which constitutes precisely such a ground. Consider, for instance, Laclau's insistence that 'as a result, relations of representation are not a secondary level reflecting a primary social reality constituted elsewhere; it is, on the contrary, the primary terrain within which the social is constituted'⁷⁸⁵. This means that we return to totalising, topographical notion of hegemony. If 'discourse does not simply *express* some kind of original [...] identity; it actually *constitutes* the latter'⁷⁸⁶, do we not risk slipping into a form of relativism? While I agree that all objects require representation – that is not the same as saying that all objects are rhetorically constituted, like Laclau (2014) does.

Thus, rhetoric at the same time represents and constitutes the identities of objects and agents. Because identity is constituted through process of representation, the construction of a popular identity is dependent on representation. The empty signifier "people" can operate as a point of identification only because it represents an equivalential chain that is articulated through articulatory, or intellectual, practices. In the movement from representative speaker to the represented "individual" or "people", the empty signifier is something more than an image of a totality: it constitutes that totality. If the empty signifier is going to operate as a point of identification for all the links in the chain, it must actually represent them; the represented must be gripped by the argument and identify with the "individual" or "people". In short, and as Laclau (2005) argues, this is a double movement between representative and represented.

In practice, however, it becomes difficult to see how a particular can "represent" a totality, and at the same time constitute that totality, all the while retaining its particularity. In an empirical material (a discourse, an utterance, a speech, or a demand) the researcher is forced to determine what constitutes the particular and what constitutes the universal. Now, if only the universal dimension is represented, can we

⁷⁸² Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, 123.

⁷⁸³ Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, 121.

⁷⁸⁴ See for instance Howarth, *Poststructuralism and after: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*, 154–55.

⁷⁸⁵ Laclau, 'Populism: What's in a Name?', 48–49.

⁷⁸⁶ Laclau, 'Populism: What's in a Name?', 48.

still recognise the particular dimension of that signifier? Can we be sure that the particular we think we are analysing is not in fact a universal? Or if the universal has become a particular? Where do we, as researchers, determine where to draw the line between the particular and the universal? By weakening, blurring, and entangling concepts of hegemony, discourse, metonyms, and formations, we risk making these concepts redundant, useless and in short, empty signifiers.

Laclau and Mouffe's abstract vernacular and insistence on contingencies in conjectural and relational contexts, along with an unwillingness to provide definite, concrete, empirically and spatially grounded, definitions of datum; of what characterise or defines "hegemony", a particular "social formation" or "discourse", and so on, could be perceived as problematic. Although I can see how these theories could be deemed too universalistic for some projects, for the purpose of my own research this openness to the varieties of each, particular socio-historical context of specific empirical case and project has been an advantage. The adaptability of these theories to any empirically given discourse, regardless of historical or spatial foundations/sources, is what has allowed me to, not just work with or apply them to my empirical material – but to fill each concept with a meaningful content anchored in the empirical material.

My main argument throughout this thesis have been the need to reconsider the theory of intellectuals in relation to hegemony. This thesis demonstrated how it is possible to reimagine the intellectual as a function that can be studied from a performative perspective and analysed in terms of subject positions. I have outlined a post-structuralist/post-foundationalist approach to account for what is seen as a vital component in political struggles and social change in classical sociological theory. Equally important, if not more so, is the intellectual to Gramsci's theory of hegemony - but this has been curiously underdeveloped by the post-Marxist heirs to the Gramscian project (I am talking of course, about Laclau and Mouffe). By bringing the intellectual back in to the fold, I have been able to show how different types of intellectuals have access to different fora and argue in different ways. In contrast to existing explanations of privatisation politics and neoliberal thought, this has allowed me to identify a previously unrecognised register of moral concerns as neoliberal and recognise economistic efficiency claims as arguments that emanate, not from neoliberalism, but from "the expert".

This thesis has traced hegemonic practices in three ways. First, a hegemonic practice both constitutes and represents the chain of equivalences that links together heterogenous elements (that of course have no predetermined destiny to form a unity) in the debate, under the common signifier "privatisation". Second, it is my argument that a public intellectual serves the very same function in articulating these chains and verbalising the demands on behalf of "humanity", what is "morally right" or "the individual" – terms and represented subjects that are empty signifiers. In short, as a particular utterance takes up a universal signification, the public intellectual or

spokesperson is per definition a hegemonic practice. Third, these public intellectuals also engaged in political practices by linking together disparate demands to forge a neoliberal coalition that could contest the social democratic welfare regime. In a debate characterised by antagonisms and contingent elements that could have been articulated by rival political forces, contiguous elements are connected together so that the demands in one site of the social (the neoliberal) are extended and taken up in another (the public discourse). As a type of political relation, the neoliberal hegemony successfully constructed a political frontier that divided the social into two opposing camps; the social democratic welfare state against the individual people.

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Appendix I

Methods, Material, and Coding Manual

The material consists of utterances and arguments on the subject of privatisation, as traced in opinion pieces and culture sections in two leading daily newspapers, *Dagens Nyheter* (DN) and *Arbetet*; the national public service radio programme for public idea debate on cultural, societal, and philosophical matters (OBS!); and two politicised periodical journals: *Nyliberalen* (literally, “the neoliberal”) and *Thélème* (later strategically retitled TLM). The empirical material further includes contributions which may be referred to in these fora (other articles, books, films, reports, and so on). This is an attempt to include contributions to the debate that are of other formats and use other forms of expression than those accepted and published as opinion pieces in mainstream media.

Contributions pertaining to the topic privatisation were selected through surveys of entire papers and broadcasts, during a few monthly periods between 1988 and 1994 in DN, *Arbetet* and OBS!, as explained in chapter 4. Database sources were introduced later to complement the selection of articles: opinion pieces and features on the cultural sections related to privatisation that surface in searches in the digital database archives, for the complete six-year period, were thus included. The analysis of utterances in *Nyliberalen* and TLM is more thorough, as each issue is analysed in its entirety – with the intention to sort out any contributions pertaining to privatisation. The original idea was to simply chart and analyse the debate in TLM and *Nyliberalen* as well, but the struggles, visions, beliefs, obstacles, and opportunities presented by these young media outlets proved a rich material.

Selection process

This project started with a pilot study of newspaper articles in Swedish printed mass media (1988-1995) to survey the character and content of the debate in a time of crisis that crippled Sweden at the start of the nineteen nineties. The digital service for the Nordic news archive, *The Media Archive*, which includes articles from 300 Swedish newspapers and journals served as a source for all this. This, as well as retrospective analyses of the medial debate and climate of the late eighties and early nineties helped me locate the central fora for debate and identify the political matters discussed and narrow down the time-period.⁷⁸⁷

Many questions were under debate, but some (like the EU-membership) had already been analysed thoroughly⁷⁸⁸ and other debates were too general or lacked any outspoken oppositions (few contributions to a debate argue *for* xenophobia or unemployment, for instance). What stood out was the debate on privatisation – which was publicly discussed, polarised, and highly debated at the time. By reviewing studies and data sets from opinion studies in this time period, I gained further insights into the public opinion (and hopefullt the debate climate) on privatisation. This means that data and tables in this dissertation have been partially made available by *Svensk Samhällsvetenskaplig Datatjänst* (SSD). The material in the SOM-surveys of 1988, 1990, and 1992, was originally collected by a research project at the Department of Political Sciences and the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, at Gothenburg University, led by Sören Holmberg and Lennart Weibull. Neither the SSD nor the primary researchers have any responsibility for the analyses and interpretations that are presented in this dissertation.

The following figure from one of the SOM-institute's reports, illustrates the sharp shifts in the public opinion, which naturally raises the question if something is happening in the public, medialised debate on privatisation at the time.

⁷⁸⁷ Boréus, 'The Shift to the Right', 257–86; Boréus, *Högerväg: Nyliberalismen Och Kampen Om Språket I Svensk Debatt 1969-1989*; Svallfors, *Välfärdsstaten I Pressen: En Analys Av Svensk Tidningsrapportering Om Välfärdsolitik 1969-1993*; Svallfors, 'The End of Class Politics?', 53–74; Petersson and Carlberg, *Makten Över Tanken*; Hadenius and Weibull, *Massmedier, Demokrati Och Makt I Sverige [Elektronisk Resurs]*.

⁷⁸⁸ See for instance Erik Axelsson's analysis of the use of historical narratives in the public debate in Sweden and Norway in relation to membership in the European Union 1990-1994: Erik Axelsson, *Historien I Politiken: Historieanvändning I Norsk Och Svensk EU-Debatt 1990-1994*, Studia Historica Upsaliensia, 0081-6531 ; 226 (Uppsala, 2006).

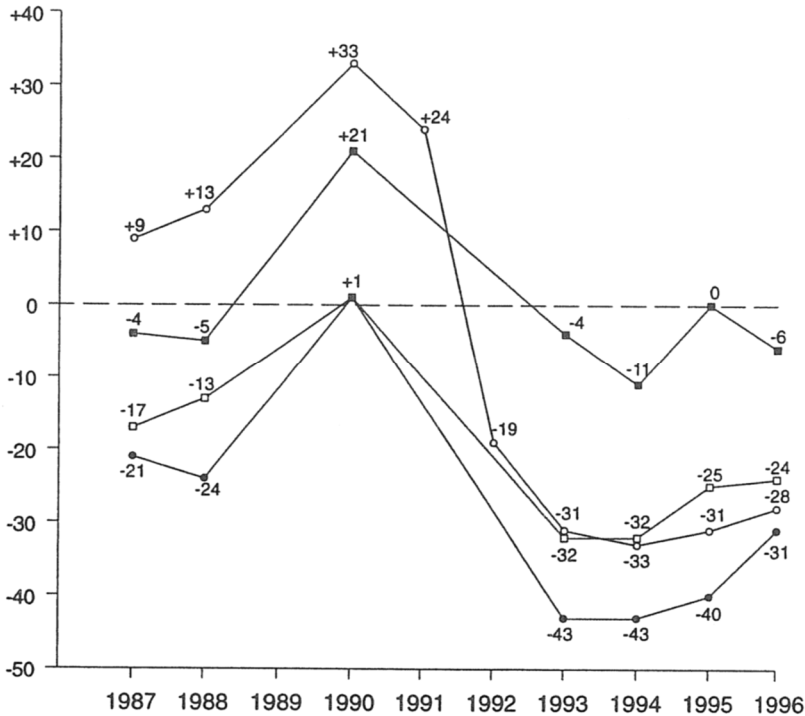


Figure 4 The Public Opinion on Privatisation

The Swedish population's attitude to proposals for privatisation of the public sector, 1987-1996.

Source: Lennart Nilsson, 'Offentlig Sektor Och Privatisering 1986-1996', in *Ett Missnöjt Folk?: SOM-Undersökningen 1996*, ed. by Sören Holmberg and Lennart Weibull (Göteborg, 1997), 111.

- Transfer public business such as Telia/The Telecommunications agency to private hands
- Increase the number of private schools
- Pursue/conduct more of the health care in private management
- Allow more private companies to provide elderly care

Demands *for* privatisation are on the other hand fairly frequent and undisputed on the editorial pages (which lacks a two-sided dialogue with the rest of the papers), especially in DN. The opinion sections on the mainstream national news are, during this time period, preoccupied with discussing the latest scandals regarding “sightings” of foreign submarines in Swedish waters; the still unsolved murder of the Swedish Prime minister Olof Palme in 1986; how state ventures and authorities (like telecommunications) should, can or cannot be managed on reduced resources according to responsible politicians, CEOs or local managers; developing countries; the EU (then EG); dialogues between national and regional/local politicians; or economists explaining that the road to growth and out of the fiscal crisis goes through internationalisation and global markets, for example.

In the comparison of the concepts used to describe instances and phenomena related to privatisation and state-isation, there is a clear increase in the selected time period. Below is a diagram from DN, which illustrates the percentage of articles (mentioning the concepts) per year, with “privatise” in grey, “privatisation” in black, “deregulation” in red, “decentralise” in dotted red and “state-ise” in dotted black.

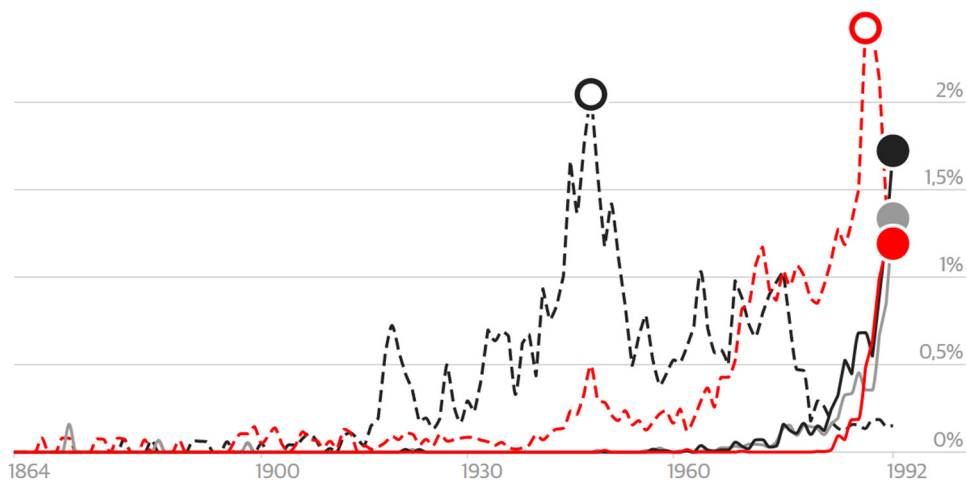


Figure 4 Increased Occurrences of "privatisation" in DN

The Occurrences of "privatise", "privatisation", "deregulation", "decentralise" and "state-ise" in DN, 1864-1992.

"Privatise" in grey, "privatisation" in black, "deregulation" in red, "decentralise" in dotted red and "state-ise" in dotted black.

Source: DN.se

While “decentralise” reaches its maximum of 2,4 % occurrences in 1988, the other privatisation-related demands climax in 1992: “privatise” (1,3%), “privatisation” (1,7%) and “deregulation” (1,2%). As you can see, demands to “state-ise” peak in 1948 (2%). As this graph is computer generated, I cannot tell you the nature of the content of those articles, and unfortunately, it does not expand into 1993. However, as I have collected all articles on the opinion and culture section in DN, relating to privatisation at least, throughout 1993, I can tell you that the figures for 1992 and 1993 are relatively similar.

I considered including retrospective accounts of the actors involved in the debate at the time. Through interviews I could have examined the discourse from the perspective of the individual actors and would have been able to analyse their self-identification and retrospective accounts of other actors as “intellectuals”. However, I was afraid that perspective would collide with the attempt to distinguish discursive shifts, struggles, positions, et cetera from the point of discourse. Retrospective, individual accounts and reflections on intellectual labour could add an extra dimension to an account of performances of an intellectual function, but are less relevant for a post-foundationalist

project focused on formations of the intellectual function. The purpose of this project is after all to examine discourse: the discursively expressed forces, formations, and positions in a local, historical and contextualised rhetorical situation. In sociology, interviews are often used as source for first-hand information and triangulation, but would false step to the purpose of this project.⁷⁸⁹

Attaining and processing the empirical material

I began to survey digitalised articles from DN and *Arbetet* in the National Media Archive database. Unfortunately, not all articles have been digitalised: especially older articles and items on the culture sections are missing from this database. Furthermore, the digitalised articles could not give me the complete picture which would have been presented to a reader of the paper at the time. The digital archive contains articles in full text, but not entire pages or spreads. The text is the same as in the printed paper, but the immediate context and surrounding articles, cartoons or pictures are left out. As a discourse analyst, I find it necessary to consider the framing of statements and articulations surrounding an argument. Since the reader would be faced with various messages that may complement each other and form a composite – or perhaps complex, image, it is important to account for those aspects in research too. Hence, much of the empirical material I have gathered were instead on analogue rolls of microfilm. It should also be mentioned however, that towards the end of my work, DN launched their own digital archive and I was able to re-collect the previously micro-film studied articles in digital formats. DN's online archive includes both digitalised articles as well as scanned originals. In the case of TLM and *Nyliberalen*, the original paper publications have been analysed. OBS! has, as mentioned in chapter 4, not been as easily attainable, and therefore I have systematically analysed a selection of episodes chronologically and transcribed selected parts.

To facilitate the coding process, I scanned; photo-copied whole issues and articles; or transcribed parts of the contributions that pertained to the subject of privatisation. This means that I read through every page or listened through entire episodes, in search for anything that could be linked to privatisation (or even intellectuals, as I had initial plans to include contemporary discussions and definitions of “the intellectual”). This means that, the entire material sourced from OBS has not been transcribed and coded - only the parts pertinent to the subject of privatisation have been fully processed.

⁷⁸⁹ I was faced with the argument to use interviews as a way of assuring that the conclusions from the historical analysis was valid. In doing so, I would however question the legitimacy of the discourse analysis in the process. Furthermore, if the interview material would lead to different conclusions – would it prove the historical analysis wrong or would it confirm the subjectivity and limitations of actors' situated knowledge?

I began by surveying articles in DN in the autumn of 1988 and 1993. At the same time, I listened to OBS-episodes from the spring and autumn of 1988, and the turn of the year in 1990-1991 as well as 1993-1994 in hope of finding some sort of retrospective account of the debates of the past year. Later, I turned my attention to *Arbetet*, and eventually moved on to focus on the two journals. I studied all issues of *Nyliberalen* and TLM systematically and in their entirety to sort out and determine which articles/articulations would be relevant. I soon found that *Nyliberalen* seemed to be an important contribution to the larger debate, as contributions, beliefs and subject positions articulated within *Nyliberalen* were not just reiterated elsewhere in the debate – but seemed to hold a position of reference for others to position themselves in relation to. It was easy to follow the development of arguments around the question of privatisation in *Nyliberalen*, and its references to a wider range of philosophical, cultural, and political contributions to the debate, often prior to the same arguments and commonplaces would surface in the mass media. This worked as a condensed way of following the development of arguments around the question of privatisation, as well as political standpoints and the drawing of frontiers in relation to other positions, the formation of intellectual subject positions within and through the journal, how the actual standpoints of political movements and actors were articulated in the debate, and so on. TLM seemed to be more marginalised in terms of arguments (but not in terms of contributors), and caught on to the privatisation debate much later.

This process was anything but a linear collection of data to be processed, treated, and analysed in chronological order. I went back and forth between the different sources, and back and forth in and between the different stages of analysis in a *vacillating* process: from an opinion piece in *Arbetet* in 1988, to an advert in *Nyliberalen* in 1989; from a feature in TLM in 1992, to the culture section in *DN* 1993, and so on. Once I had established a particular element as a nodal point of the discourse in one source, I would backtrack to see if it surfaced in other sources as well. In the case of *Nyliberalen* and TLM, where I collected the most voluminous material, I digitalised the coded material as to make it easier to handle. I kept notes on and partial transcriptions of articles and radio episodes. I also made a digital spreadsheet to overview the contributions.

In these various sources, I followed the contestations and definitions of the phenomena known today as privatisation. The analysis of the material began in the selection process. In order to attain my empirical material, I needed to scrutinise the selected fora and sort out the contributions that seemed relevant. Instead of dividing the research process into separate stages of data gathering, process and analysis, I tried to select a time period to survey and select, source by source. Furthermore, the material needed to be systematised somehow to represent the discourse in which all the individual elements featured. These two problems resulted in an extensive coding of the individual contributions and mapping of the positions and elements of the discourse at different times, in different fora and articulations.

By coding I refer to a categorisation process wherein the data is systematically and thematically ordered in search for patterns and answers to the research questions. My coding process is more thematic than line-by-line, and sometimes one line may include two or three themes. Because much of the material was in print or photocopy, I chose to code the empirical material by hand and I have not used any special software. Consequently, as the selection of highlighters were limited, one colour-code could refer to more than one code. Instead of following any singular method for coding, I mixed and matched between, if we follow Saldaña's categorisation, grammatical methods of attribute coding (of the utterance or contribution as such) and simultaneous coding; elemental methods for descriptive coding (concerning the concept of privatisation); affective methods for emotions coding (for the pathos-arguments), values coding (for the definition of privatisation) and versus coding (for the politics of equivalence and difference as well as the drawing of political frontiers); and literature and language methods for narrative coding (for historical or nationalistic narratives, or the purpose, character, and so on, of the speaker).⁷⁹⁰

Each utterance that pertained to notions of privatisation has been coded, using themes and concepts from the methodological and theoretical framework, to source out conceptual shifts, strategies and practices, positions of enunciation and the performances of the intellectual function, etc. For example, mentions of the contested node "privatisation" or what turned out to be neighbouring concepts; like "de-regulation", "de-monopolisation" and so on were coded in blue. Subsequently, the different ways to speak of privatisation were regrouped into the categories "clearance and sell offs", "(de)regulation and (de)centralisation", "capitalism, market and competition", "state monopoly", "rights", "socialisation/state-isation", "civil society", "the welfare state", "morally right", "technical arguments", "the individual", "the people", "administration", "The Social Democrats" and so on. This allowed me to identify and trace the chains of equivalence, i.e. what adjacent elements and nodal points "privatisation" is linked to fixate its meaning – all forming parts of an opposition against elements such as "the welfare state" or "social democracy". The coding helped me move between abstract levels of social change, to a more detailed dimension of contested concepts in specific statements, and how those statements in turn were structured; what arguments, legitimisations, metaphors et cetera that were used. The end result look something like this:

⁷⁹⁰ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif., 2009).

Om planering
Här börjar ha riktiga kommentar
 Nu börjar det bli tydligt vad uttrycket "föra över resurser från den offentliga sektorn till den privata" handlar om. I femton års tid har uttrycket åtföljts av drömmen om återindustrialisering: den offentliga sektorn har anklagats för att tränga ut den "produktiva" industrin. Men inte har industrin växt – den har fortsatt krympa, som den ska i en mogen ekonomi.

Historiskt
 Ändå förs det just nu över resurser i en omfattning som aldrig tidigare. Den sjunkna kronan – i praktiken en devalvering på 30 procent – ackompanjeras av en kraftfull åtstramning av den offentliga sektorn. För första gången i modern tid massavskedas offentligt anställda.

Eller bara spegling
Carin/Åke
 Visst ska vi vara glada över att kronan till slut släpptes fri. Men vi ska för den skull inte bete oss som de tre aporna. Medveten devalvering har ett uttalat syfte, nämligen just att överföra resurser från den inhemska skyddade sektorn till den konkurrensutsatta (industri)sektorn. Spontan, dvs. omedveten devalvering (depreciering) leder till samma sak.

Uppmärksamhet
 Men om sektorn inte behöver mer resurser eller fler anställda, vad händer då? Jo, vi får arbetslöshet och ökade löneklyftor. Ökade resurser betyder nämligen också ökade vinster och så småningom högre löner.

Uppmärksamhet
 Överföring av resurser innebär alltså att en liten högproduktiv elit får allt större del av den samhälleliga kakan. En liten elit, som förutom att ha haft turen att hamna just där man hamnat är beroende av en "lågproduktiv" omgivning av vård och omsorg. Hur ska deras rikedom sedan spridas till det övriga samhället, till alla befolkningslager som bär upp Sverige?

Figure 5 Excerpt from the empirical material. TLM, n 17-18, 1993-1994, p. 4

As the process evolved, patterns started to emerge, initial categories were divided, merged, supplemented, or crossed out in new versions based on that original grammar. As I went back and forth between the empirical material and the theoretical framework, I could develop a more reliable coding scheme. The original codes were reorganised and reconfigured – the analysis became more nuanced and less detailed as I started to identify major themes, rules, and relations.

Coding manual explained

This coding manual has been designed with this specific empirical material and research questions in mind. My main sources of methodological inspiration have been the rhetorical approaches⁷⁹¹ and Aletta Norval's instructions on post-structuralist discourse analysis⁷⁹².

General reference information: Name of author/speaker, presented as (official title, vocation, political alignment etc.), title of article, feature or contribution, date, source, section and page number.

Situation: To make sense of an argument in a debate we would for instance need to understand the situation and in which context the statement is made. In analysing the text we must ask ourselves; "what do you need to know about the context to make sense of it?" This includes the contextual framing of the text in relation to other news features, for instance; references to other statements, publications or actors; implicit meanings, and so forth.

Genre: Which argumentative genre does the text belong to? What sort of utterance is it? Is it a speech, an argumentative text, an informative piece, an aesthetical contribution? This includes the type or form of contribution such as opinion pieces, part of series on opinion pages of culture sections, letters to the editor, news features, reviews, clippings, columns, interviews, live debates, and so on.

Frame: We would also need to look at the framing of the text: adjacent articles or other types of contributions; how it is introduced; in which section is it published; foreword; afterword; pictures, for instance.

Enunciate position and appeal: *To and on behalf of whom* are statements made?

- Speaking from/as: inhabited subject positions (e.g. the critic, the lawyer, the movement intellectual, the educated); marginal, middle, under, horizontal or vertical positioning.
- Speaking on behalf of: representative of a position, actor, belief, organisation, institution etc. A "we" or an "I"?
- Speaking to: the situated audience; to whom is the speaker directing his/her argument?

⁷⁹¹ Gottweis, 'Rhetoric in Policy Making: Between Logos, Ethos, and Pathos', 237–50; Finlayson, 'From Beliefs to Arguments', 545–63.

⁷⁹² Aletta Norval, 'Doing Discourse Analysis: Politics, Subjectivity & Policy: From Demands to the Articulation of Political Frontiers' (University of Essex, Colchester, 2013).

Attachment: Is the speaker aligning their own position with other positions, actors, or interests?

Ethos: character and authority of a speaker (e.g. assertions of expertise, formal qualifications, or experience of the speaker; appeals for identification with a speaker; justifications through honesty, authority, truth claims, etc.; personifications or embodiments of ideologies or symbols such as freedom fighters, rebels, etc.)

Pathos: Emotional appeal and engagement. Arguments in an affective register, emotional tones, passionate engagement.

Logos/enthymemes: What are the logics of the argument? Quasi-logical forms of argument, premises that are included or excluded, statements that are implicit to the argument? What premises are constructed or validated to make the audience conclude which deductions follow logically. Involves commonly accepted premises that “we” already “know” to be true, or show how “things” really are.

Conventions and commonplaces: Which conventions, pre-conceptions and commonplaces are implicit in the contribution? What assumptions are made? What relations are taken for granted in the line of argument?

Metaphors: How are metaphors used? Analogies, evaluative redescriptions, figures.

Re-definitions: How are concepts re-defined? Which associations, alignments, substitutions and euphemism or metaphors are used?

Critique and Ideology: How is critique and ideology expressed? Is a coherent system of beliefs expressed or referenced? On what basis is a critique framed?

What **demands** are made and how are they framed?

Political frontiers: Where and how are political frontiers drawn? What use is made of the politics of **difference and equivalence**?

Subject positions: What subject positions are constructed in the course of the argument? (Individuals, organisations, regime, resistance, oppressor)

References: cultural, political, historical, scholarly, et cetera. Includes both other contributions, statements, symbols, figures, actors and publications - figures of authority or intellectual leadership.

Narrative: What use is made of narratives? E.g. Historical, hero, Swedish, individual, collective, storytelling, factual or humorous narratives.

Nodal points: How is continuity and change negotiated and what are they key nodal points organising this negotiation?

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How can the apparently far-fetched utopian beliefs of a few marginalised ideologists become the frame of reference for all public discourse in a short period of time? Certain ideas come to dominate an entire debate, time, or society and become an accepted truth through processes of naturalisation. Different active practices and processes contribute in making particular perspectives gain interpretive privileges: arguments resonate, concepts stick, and ideologies become common sense. Ideas and meanings are disseminated, inscribed, and institu-

tionalised in the social world with far-reaching consequences. The question is how. How does one go about setting the agenda that shapes the debate?

This dissertation is a contribution to the theoretical development concerning hegemony and the intellectual function. To make sense of meaning-making struggles, dominance, and interpretative privilege in the debate, the notion of “intellectuals” is reconceptualised through a critique of conventional perspectives and an empirically grounded analysis. The analysis is focused on utterances in the medialised debate on privatisation in Sweden during the crisis years of 1988 to 1993, and conducted with inspiration from post-Marxist discourse theory and rhetorical political analysis. By examining the processes, practices, and strategies involved, the study shows how a hegemonic struggle unfolds around the meaning of “privatisation”.

