

Project People

Anders Fogh Jensen

During the 20th century the western world went through a transformation of basic ways of dealing with time, space, activity and relations. These transformations led to a life with temporary projects and permanent feelings of passage, which we experience in our everyday life today. The resistance towards hierarchy, planning ways of production and reproduction – the factory and the family, for instance – is often associated with the so-called revolt of 68 directed against authorities. But as a matter of fact the disintegration of the system of routines and repetitions, which is occasionally referred to as 'discipline', began much earlier. In his novel *The Process* from 1925 Franz Kafka described the difficulties and frustrations of Josef K who was accused for something he didn't know what was. Josef K was faced with a system that was no longer capable of judging – and as such he was in a permanent and involuntary state of postponement. Now we can see that this blurry state of things and state of mind was only the beginning of a long dissolution of a stable system and its transformation into another system, the projective organisation of activities.

During the late sixties and seventies revolts against and challenges to the disciplinary organisation of the world took place. The disciplinary system was founded as and in institutions from 1650 to 1800. Discipline ruled the world into squares, planned every action and movement, and scaled people in hierarchies. The disciplinary system was a respond to the freedom that followed from the decline of the feudal world.

The revolt against and challenge to discipline took place in all disciplinary institutions trying to eliminate hierarchies and transcend disciplinary arrangements and orders. And it took place more or less synchronic, breaking out in the sixties and seventies. It was an antithesis to discipline within such different areas as education, production, warfare, architecture, administration, sexuality and coupling. Also in sport disciplines, the arranging of the football teams and ways of dancing underwent these changes. Discipline was good at repetition and planning, but it was challenged on its ability to change, to move fast, to adjust to customer needs and to integrate and make use of chance instead of trying to eliminate the unpredictable. For instance, new flexible ways of arranging the football team emerged with the libero and the Dutch *Totaalvoetbal* in the seventies at the same time as the dance floors witnessed a de-codification of the old couple dances.

However, the dream of the sixties and seventies did not become reality. Instead we were faced with silence, economic crisis and despair of the youth in the 80ies. The revolt and challenge of the 60'es and 70ies did not end as it was intended – it did not end as anarchy or flat organization structure. Instead of the disciplinary calculated structure from above, we got *the project* evolving from below in all kind of what we used to call institutions: School, administration, work, sexual interchange, warfare, architecture, sports, friendships and so on. And so, the partial dissolution of the old family came out as a culture of single life. The social projective structure transgresses the old institutions making plateaus of projects as interdisciplinary activities. This social structure overlying the old disciplinary structure, I call *The Project Society*.

Now the project society as a social condition of temporary projects is the condition in which one has to live today. Becoming project people is adjusting to these projective conditions, where every one is looking for the next project while the present ones are running out. The project is a 'toss forward' where no one knows the exact chances of the project becoming reality. What one knows is that every project is temporary and that it is not repeated. The condition is thus a condition of permanent transition. Organizing activities in projects calls for the necessity of a network that can facilitate the passage into the next project. It is thus required of project people to be extremely extrovert and capable of communicating confidence. It brings forward an aesthetisation of the personal relations since the impression becomes still more important and since the relations are

temporary. It is not the time for long term promises – and where long term promises occur they are often invaded by a feeling of getting stuck or of sinking after some time, as it is the case in the work field and sometimes in the marriage.

In the light of this, discipline becomes something new. It becomes the old fashioned way of living and organising activities. Discipline is surrounded with nostalgia, hopes and dreams. It is what we try to achieve but always must show that we can transgress. Becoming project people is becoming post-disciplinary people. And this implies adjusting to the condition of always becoming something else. Becoming project people is becoming passage people, or it is quite simple becoming becoming.

Anders Fogh Jensen (born 1973) is philosopher and the author of five books: *Metaforens magt (The Power of Metaphor)* 2001, *Mellem ting, Foucaults filosofi (Foucault's philosophy)* 2005, *Magtens kartografi, Foucault og Bourdieu (The Cartography of Power, Foucault and Bourdieu)* 2006, *Projektsamfundet (The Project Society)* 2009 and *Projektmennesket (Project People)*, 2009.