Powerful Dichotomies
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Inclusion and Exclusion
in the Information Society

to E2D

Contents

Chapter 1
Benadir

Vimmerbyplan 25, Rinkeby: We stand at the entrance to *Benadir's Cultural and Sport Association's* main premises. It is quarter past four in the afternoon on a beautiful spring day. The sun shines down on the group of people that have gathered outside *Benadir* to participate in the award ceremony.

Rinkeby is a district of the City of Stockholm that has become the Swedish icon for integration difficulties, due mainly to the high percentage of the population with an immigrant background. *Benadir* is a local Somali association. Its goal is to maintain contact, through sport and culture, among Somalis that fled the war inflicted country and are today spread across Europe. Since its beginnings in 1997, the association has been working with the youth, organising international soccer tournaments, Somali cultural events, and study circles for the association's women. The association's voluntary work with children and youngsters had, at the time of the ceremony, already been rewarded with *Rinkeby-priset* ("The Rinkeby prize").

Among those present at the award ceremony I identify some faces that have, what appear to me, noticeable Somali features. Other faces look, to me, typically Swedish. They belong to repre-

sentatives for the companies and political authorities organising the award: Stokab (owner of the optical fibre network connecting Stockholm), Tele2 (private telecom operator), Svenska Bostäder (public real estate company in whose premises Benadir has its main offices), the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH)[1] and the City of Stockholm. There are also some faces from other regions of the world. These people are visiting Stockholm for a few days to participate in a UN meeting that is being organised by KTH and the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) in order to discuss issues related to the Internet and democracy.

The actual award ceremony is somewhat delayed. It should have started at four o'clock, but the former mayor of Stockholm, has not yet arrived. As a departing gift he received a two-year Internet connection from Stokab. Gifts to a mayor cannot be personal since they could then be considered a bribe. He has therefore decided to give the Internet connection to a non-profit association that has excelled in its work. After a contest organised by the former mayor, Benadir won the connection.

It is half past five when the former mayor finally arrives in Rinkeby. He was stuck in a traffic jam for over an hour. He combs his hair while everybody takes their place along both sides of the alley leading to Benadir's premises. A man with a trumpet in his hand steps forward and begins to play ceremoniously. The representative for Stokab reads aloud a short speech in English while another man on his left side translates it into Swedish.

"On behalf of the former and present boards of Stokab, I greet you all welcome to this little ceremony. The former chairmen [name], [name], and [name] send their best regards to you all.

They and all of us employed at Stokab are very glad that you Mr. [name], former Mayor of Stockholm, have done so much for Stockholm to become an IT capital of Europe.

We hope that all mayors to come will understand equally well what Information Technology can do for democracy, progress and welfare.

When you left your political life, it was easy for me and the former head of Stokab, [name], to decide what gift to give you. Give the man a piece of the biggest independent black-fibre network in the world, we said.

You yourself decided that the fibre would be best used by Benadir. Perhaps you can tell us how you came to this decision. Benadir is represented here by [name]."

A placard with the inscription that Benadir has won the prize is attached to the facade. There are four screws, one for each corner. One representative for each of the four main actors in the ceremony screw in, as a symbolic gesture, a screw: Benadir who won the Internet connection, KTH, and Tele2 who made it technically possible, and one of the foreign guests who, in that way, represents the wider world to which IT grants access. The former mayor of Stockholm then expresses his gratitude:

"When I got my farewell present from Stokab, we decided to give it to those who have a tougher start in life. ICT and Information Technology is, should be I think, helpful for them to get connected quicker.

These are two areas, Rinkeby and Tensta, which have been problem areas, and many people still think they are. Yet, much work has been done over the past ten years and they are not

[2] The established business model for broadband networks builds on the customer signing an exclusive contract with one single operator or service provider. The operator provides Internet access (and often technical support) to the customer. The KTH professor and his research group have developed a model that makes access to the broadband network operator neutral. This means that the network infrastructure is owned by a company (in this case, Stokab) who provides access to end-users, while services are provided by separate companies. In this way, operator neutral networks foster competition among service operators. Roberto Battiti, Renato Lo Cigno, Fredrik Orava & Björn Pehrson, 2003. See also Tuomas Karhula, Jouni Ikonen and Matti Juutilainen, 2006.

so problematic areas any more. Only two kilometres away, at the other side of the Järva Field, we find Kista, an interesting IT cluster. We have to watch out that these two areas don't stay separate but that they both get connected and both take advantage of ICT and IT. That the north and south of the Järva Field get closer socially, technologically, work, education and those things..."

Next speaker is a professor from KTH. KTH's contribution has been to develop an operator-neutral model for broadband networks.[2] The words of the KTH professor share the tone of the two previous speeches – praise for information technology and to everything that is being done at the other side of the Järva Field.

> "When the IT University in Kista across the Järva Field was formed as a joint venture between KTH and Stockholm University, we committed to interaction with the local community. We started to work with Stokab, user communities and user agents, like Svenska Bostäder, and with operators like Tele2, Song Net works, Utfors, Lidnet and others, to extend our operator neutral campus network over the city and to study the impact of network access on individuals and organisations. So Benadir is an interesting case study for us and we hope that our anthropologist, here Ester Barinaga, will make friends with you [name of the representative for Benadir] and the Benadir members and will be able to report about your progress."

We have not yet learned why Benadir won the Internet connection. According to the former mayor, he gave the Internet connection to Benadir because the association somehow represents "those who have a tougher start in life." It seems, therefore, that the award was not won due to Benadir's achievements. In fact, we never get to hear about Benadir's accomplishments. Nor, do we get to hear a representative from Benadir. Instead, the Internet connection is donated by the mayor to the associa-

tion on the grounds of Benardir's members and constituency in their role and position as underprivileged. The interpretation that this framing makes it less an award and more an act of charity from a compassionate mayor is not far away. The mayor stands out as active and generous; Benadir and it members stand out as passive and receiving.

The former mayor means that Internet technology can facilitate people of an immigrant background to integrate into society by "connecting them quicker" (sic). Stokab's representative shares that view when he emphasises, "what information technology can do for democracy, progress and welfare." Yet, does the difficulty lie in the lack of technology?

When the speeches are over, the representatieve of Benadir invites all attendees for traditional Somali food and Coca-Cola. Everybody hurries into Benadir's offices, fetches a Coke, grabs some snacks and, a mere ten minutes later, gets on the bus that is to take them to Stockholm's city hall. Remaining behind are food leftovers and the members of the Somali association.

Not a single ceremony attendee approached them or asked who they were or what they had done. Nobody remarked on the beautiful Somali handcrafts hanging from the walls or their work with the youths.

Chapter 2
Power – A Brief Introduction

I t can be said that the study presented in this book origi-
nates, somehow, from the *belief* that information technolo-
gies are a force towards increased democratic participation
and more egalitarian societies. There is particular emphasis
on the "belief" aspect. Many books have been written, many
conferences organised, and many discussions held dealing with
the extent to which our contemporary society is shaped by its
technologies. Pan-European policies and smaller scale regional
projects consign to the new technologies the path to healthier
and more integrated societies. Many, such as the representative
for the telecom operator in the small award ceremony in the
previous chapter, believe it is important to "understand well
what information technology can do for democracy, progress
and welfare." Such a conviction is not merely an interested as-
surance coming from those gaining economic advantage from
the expansion of new techno-logy; that is, big corporations and
smaller private companies. Politicians and public authorities
seem equally hopeful. For example, the former mayor of Stock-
holm hopes that the Internet connection will be "a remedy for
a tougher start in life." Telling of how entrenched this belief has
become, is how the problem of varying individual life opportu-

[1] For some examples, see Thomas L. Friedman, 2005 and 2000.

nities seems to have been reformulated in recent years, as a problem of different access to technology[1] – a problem of poor telecom infrastructure, low computer availability, scanty Internet connectivity, or a lack of technological knowledge. A term often chosen to describe this difference between the economically strong and the economically weak is the "Digital Divide," pointing towards a technological diagnosis of social inequality. The prescription, accordingly, "to get connected quicker" goes through the extension of information technologies to the have-nots.

This belief is found att the core of a wider system of thought often framed as "The Information Society". A belief that science and technology development, parallel often to a capitalist and democratic system of government, will ultimately lead to better-run societies (see chapters one and four).

It was when I first undertook the study presented in this book, that I realised the might of the belief in the capacity of information technologies to effect economic and social change. As "KTH's anthropologist" with a PhD in business administration from the Stockholm School of Economics, I have had the opportunity to witness the system of thought in action and been able to study the micro- practices governing regional development projects. I turned my surprise at the strength of this belief into my driving force and the effects and consequences of the belief in the information society into the subject of my investigations.

However, in a fundamental way this book is not primarily about the information society. Neither is it about the belief in the information society. This book is essentially about power. It studies the exercise of power through the belief in the information society, as well as through the texts and social practices in

place in the name of that belief. Power is examined by studying the discourse on the information society. More particularly, the discourse on the information society will be the entry door to watch the government of conduct in a high-tech region.

Power

The notion of power has undergone a series of re-conceptualisations during the last forty years, going from individualist to increasingly relational approaches to power. The various conceptualisations have been referred to as the first, second, third, and fourth faces of power.[2]

The first face of power focuses on the capacity of the powerful to coerce the powerless into doing something that she would not otherwise do.[3] Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz argued that power is not only a matter of coercing someone into doing something one does not want to do, but also a matter of preventing someone from doing something she wants to do.[4] This second face of power introduced into the analysis the study of decisions that were not made.

The first two faces are characterised by a conflicting relationship between agents with well-understood and self-defined interests. Steve Lukes argued, however, that such a notion ignores that power can be exercised on an agent who voluntarily complies with the demands of the powerful, for the exercise of power may manipulate the very desires and wants of the powerless.[5] The *willingness* of the powerless party shows that there is no need for a conflict of interests to exist. Yet, Lukes argued that this does not mean that the powerless do not act contrarily to their objective, real interests. Accordingly, to study power one needs to consider whether the dominated agent acts in accordance to, or contrary to, her real interests.

[2] "Face" is used in the sense of aspect of power. Peter Digeser, 1992.
[3] For an example, see Robert Dahl, 1957.
[4] Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, 1962.
[5] Steven Lukes, 1974.

[6] In "The Subject and Power" Foucault recognises that "the systems of differentiation" are one of five points for the analysis of power relations. Michel Foucault, 1982.
[7] This refers to Clarissa Rile Hayward, 2000.
[8] The two main texts in which Foucault evaluates and substantiates his model of power relations are *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977* and *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, An Introduction.*
[9] Michel Foucault, 1982.

Moving from the first to the third face of power extends the analysis of power from a focus on actions to the constitution of desires and beliefs that violate objective interests. The fourth face takes this movement one step further. For Foucault, the subject as well as the values and norms underlying everyday social practices are the effects of diffuse, all-encompassing relations of power.

Whereas the first three faces of power share an individualistic approach to power where someone exercises power on someone else at the expense of the interests of the latter, in the hands of Foucault, power takes a relational form. In this view, power lies in unequal (social, economic, cultural) relations and is *exercised* and made legitimate through systems of differentiation that nobody owns, yet limit and shape the actors' field of action[6] – as much for those situated on the powerful side of the boundary as for those placed on the powerless side. Power thus begins with interpersonal interactions, relations or ties – even if of antagonism – between at least two persons. It is in this sense that it is possible to say that power is de-faced,[7] for it is not something someone owns. Rather, power has to do with the *relational constraints* within which individual *action* takes place.[8]

If an essentialist power does not exist, if power only exists in action and in relation, the question of "what is power?" transforms into "what is the exercise of power?" The exercise of power is the "way in which certain actions may structure the field of other possible actions, […] a mode of action upon actions."[9] Two elements thus become indispensable for the articulation of power relations. One, that "the other," the one over whom power is exercised, is carefully identified and recognised as a person who acts. Two, that in the presence of a relationship of power, a whole field of actions, reactions,

results and potential inventions may open up.[10]

That is, power is possible only when an individual or group acts upon, and frames the possibilities of action of other people. This acting does not determine the reaction of the other – that would be behavioural determinism – but governs her actions so that they become oriented towards or against that first framing action.

To be more precise, and to emphasise the relational approach of this book, the study presented here focuses not so much on (the essence of) power as on power differentials; that is, focus is on collective, categorical, unequal power relations where symbolic boundaries constrain individuals' field of action. A relational perspective implies leaving the individual level of analysis and looking at the structure of power differentials. Such an approach does not deny the importance of individuals, but rather places individual processes within the broader social context. Individuals are relevant insofar as "they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. Individuals are not only power's inert or consenting target; they are always the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application."[11] Correspondingly, power does not lie in the agency of conscious, responsible, sentient individuals, but in the organisation of social relations. As a result, individual attitudes, prejudices and mistaken beliefs are downplayed to the benefit of convenience, contingent opportunities, or fashion. This is provoking to many for "it locates efficacious social action in the contract rather than the signers, in the plot rather than the players, in the conversation rather than the speaker."[12]

Consequently, power is all-pervasive as boundaries structure most social relations and reach deeply into individuals'

[10] *Ibid*, p. 789.

[11] Michel Foucault, 1980, p. 98.

[12] Charles Tilly, 1998, p. 38. For a more detailed criticism of individualist approaches and a further elaboration of a relational perspective to the study of power inequality, see Charles Tilly, 1998, chapter 1.

¹³ Michel Foucault, 1980, p. 39.

very sense of who they are. We often relate to each other in terms of dichotomies originating in one or another boundary – mother/daughter, boss/employee, teacher/student, local/immigrant to name just a few. The relation across the elements of the pairs is one of opposition where each side acquires its meaning in contrast to the other side. These boundaries are so ingrained into social interaction that they have become cultural artefacts – symbols and institutions shared by most speakers and hence no longer visible. Foucault uses the term "capillary" to stress that "power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives."¹³ Power relations draw on these "naturalised," taken-for-granted, social boundaries resulting in the simultaneous constitution of identities, of the terms of the relation, and of the interaction itself.

By way of example, let me return to the award ceremony. The former mayor of Stockholm distinguishes in his thanksgiving speech two geographical areas, "the north and the south of the Järva Field." He characterises the north as "an interesting IT cluster", and the south as a traditional "problem area". The north is connected, the south has yet to be connected; the north is knowledgeable and competent, the south inhabited by people with a problematic start of their life; the north occupies a secure position in the labour market, the south is unemployed. The north is well equipped to help the south "to get closer socially." The tech-savvy and the technology unschooled; the strong and the weak; the givers and the receivers; the established and the outsiders. The Swedish mayor and the Somali immigrant.

All these categorical pairs are both the expression and the source of social, economic and power differentials. The bound-

aries constituting the various pairs contribute to constrain, by the effects of the word and the discursive practices around them, the actors' set of possible actions. The pomposity of the trumpet, the elevation of the former mayor to an almost regional hero who has recognised the potential of information technologies, the compassion towards the "have-nots" latent in the-mayor's words, the silence drawn over Benadir's endeavours (which are, as it were, unrelated to technology), the presence of the global guests to whom technology gives access to, the praise of the work carried out by IT companies and researchers in Kista; all these are possible only once the field of action has been structured according to the technological boundary that values "the techie" and scorns "the non-techie". The boundary governs the actions and reactions of the actors involved in the earlier award ceremony. It categorises individuals, marking their individuality and governing their conduct.

A final characteristic of relational power is that it is multi-faceted. A relational approach to power does not focus exclusively on its repressing or enabling characteristics. Power is both repressive and productive – repressive of alternative modes of being, acting and organising, yet productive of categorical social relations and constitutive of the subject. Take, for instance, the discourse on the information society: the belief in science- and technology-based development both represses other models of economic and social development and (re)produces science cities and high-tech experts as the solution. Accordingly, the categorical boundary that distinguishes between techy and non-techy structures the discourse on the information society and plays a major role in re-producing relations of domination between classes and, as we will see, ethnicities.[14]

Conceived this way, the study of power is the study of the

[14] The argument has been made elsewhere that the technological boundary also contributes to reproduce female subordination and a variety of studies have shown how technology relations work to the disadvantage of women. For some examples see Lena Sommestad, 1992; Cynthia Cockburn, 1985; Cythia Cockburn and Susan Ormrod, 1993.

[15] Michel Foucault, 1982, p. 789.
[16] *Ibid*, p. 790.
[17] Foucault departs from the more traditional use of the notion of government as the management of states or political structures. Instead, with government he refers to the way in which the conduct of individuals and groups is directed, he alludes to the myriad of practices and concepts delineated to act upon the possibilities of action of children, communities, families, or the sick and shapes them as agents. Michel Foucault, 1982, p. 789. Inspired by Foucault's conceptualisation of government, a new field of research has emerged focusing on "governmentality": the study of the formation of theories, strategies and technologies for 'the government of conduct.' For some examples of this emerging field, see Nikolas Rose, 1999. Mitchell Dean, 1999.

management of economic, technological, social and cultural relations. If the exercise of power "is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions",[15] if it consists in the shaping of action and agents by a set of actions, or in governing "the conduct of individuals or of groups",[16] then the study of power should imply studying what actions and agents are being governed, what techniques are being used for their governance, and what system of thought underlies a particular mode of governance.[17]

Organisation of the book

In order to develop the theoretical argument of the book I have chosen to introduce the relational concepts in a step-wise manner as I employ them in the analysis of the empirical material. Although all concepts are closely related and a part of necessary disposition to understand the multi-faceted character of power, each chapter develops one concept at a time and elaborates on one aspect of that multi-facetious power. Chapter ten wraps-up and connects all relational concepts, offering a complete view of the phenomenon under scrutiny. As a result, the chapters can be read and discussed separately, even though, when read in sequential order, the reader has the opportunity to grow his or her understanding incrementally with the perspective.

A perspective will be imployed which, as you may have already figured out from this introductory chapter, is inspired by Foucault's ideas on power. However, it should be noted, I am no Foucault scholar. There are many scholars that make their careers on expert knowledge of his work. That is not my ambition nor claim. My view of the intellectual world of ideas is somehow more pragmatic, believing that ideas and theories should be used in so far as they help one develop one's own

argument, a sort of box filled with tools that can help you to get an answer to your question. Being orthodox about an author's ideas may in the longer run constrain more than facilitate reaching a deep understanding of the phenomenon of one's interest. Hence, throughout the book, I use the work of Foucault as well as of other intellectuals such as Charles Tilly, Erving Goffman or Judith Butler as toolboxes to examine power relations in a high-tech region.

The phenomenon studied here could be described in simpler terms. The focus is set on the *connection* between one particular *rationality for regional development* and the *social fabric* of the region that is under development. With "rationality for regional development" I allude to the logic that guides political and economic efforts to convert Kista into a high-tech region of international standards and, in doing so, aims at bridging the socio-economic differences that characterise the suburb. With "social fabric of the region" I refer to the groups co-existing in the region and the relations among them. Looking at the "connection" between these two topics implies acknowledging the impact of political and economic rationalities on the power relations that permeate a given region.

Longer and shorter chapters succeed each other, where the shorter chapters function as interludes – brief descriptions that serve to contextualise within the Kista case the more general features of the argument that are developed in the longer chapters. Accordingly, chapter three traces the origins and elicits the main tenets of a regional development rationality that is based in science and technology. A technology-centred boundary structures thought and determines decisions about the future of the region. This rationality or system of thought is often labelled "the information society". Chapter four, in turn, sets the

rationality of the information society within the Swedish context.

The next step of the argument is to describe the region that is being so developed. Located north of Stockholm, Kista is a suburb where over two thirds of its population have an immigrant background. This implies that socio-economic differences in the suburb acquire a distinctive ethnic dimension, and that social relations are organised along the ethnic boundary. Whereas chapter five focuses on the socio-economic context of the region to be studied, chapter six presents the vision for the future of that region.

Chapters three and five lay down two central pieces in our puzzle: technological boundary and ethnic boundary. Chapters four and six contextualise them in the Kista region. The next three chapters, chapters seven to nine, show how these two boundaries become entangled in complex ways.

In chapter seven, we see the extent to which descriptions of the Kista region along the technological boundary lack in neutrality. The boundary gives rise to the dichotomy techy/non-techy. The structure of this categorical pair is crucial and similar to that defined by the ethnic boundary – Swede/immigrant – in that the relation between the elements of the pair is both oppositional and hierarchical. As a consequence, categories across the pairs come to merge and, as chapter eight shows, meaning is transfused into each other.

Chapter nine adds some complexity to the association between the technological and ethnic boundaries. It shows how the ethnic other resists subjection to ethnicity by embracing the technological boundary.

The analytical chapters show the rationalities and bound-aries structuring power relations in a high-tech region in the making. Chapter ten takes a step back in order to elicit the vari-ous techniques at work in the structuring of such relations.

In a few sentences, the core idea put forward in the book is that power relations most often take a binary form: the es-tablished and the outsiders. The relation between the elements of the binary hinges on the boundary that defines and divides them. This book focuses on a specific phase of power relations: the substitution of the boundary articulating extant power re-lations for another boundary. The study shows the process by which the new boundary comes to be associated with the pre-vious one, modifying yet not eliminating it. In this sense, the book is a study on the inertia of power relations.

The final chapter of the book is an attempt to sketch a strat-egy for the development of a new vocabulary and a new imagi-nary, in the hope that these may overcome inertia.