Play as production – production as game? Towards a critical phenomenology of productivity

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Shanghai World Expo 2010: Danish prince Henrik at traditional game



Play, production and branding

- World Expo = presenting production and producers
- Branding national production worldwide
- Branding Denmark by play and game
- On the local and national level: Branding Odense as city of play

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- 1. Branding Odense
- Is a standing Denmark by producing play and games for the world market – and another sport?
- 3. Play and identity
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- 5. And what is production?

1. Odense: To play is to live

- Odense Municipality and Advisory Board for the marketing of Odense, vision:
- To play is to live, 2009
- "To play is to live. Throughout life. Because play is joy and freedom. Play is creativity and innovation. In Odense, we want to be known as the city of play, a place where people and ideas are given every opportunity to grow"
- "City of Hans Christian Andersen"

The Odense program – in details

- From play to profit: Creating results in business is hard work... Innovation and creativity are important resources...
- Making friends to create growth ...
 urban development...
- Live life for the sake of **climate**, too...
- Life isn't always fun and games.
 Welfare...

The Odense program

- Playful children are bright children.
 Robots and LEGO...
- Play with the truth... university...
 scientists and artists meet...
- Play with shapes. Culture is play...

"To play is to live" – is all play?

And yet:

"To work is to live"?

- "To do sport is to live"?
- "To produce is to live"?

There are important **different** connotations

2. Producing play and games for the world market – Denmark

- Lego bricks, Kompan
- Toy robots, GPS games
- Computer games: Limbo
- Rasmus Klump (Bruin, Petzi)
- The Nordic trash playground
- Education of "Chaos pilots"
- International Play Park Gerlev...

Lego bricks worldwide



Computer game Limbo

- Computer game Limbo (2010) received international attention (90 awards):
- A nameless little boy moves through a black-white world and a scary expressionist atmosphere
- Artistic without points and competition



Rasmus Klump – Petzi, Pelle und Pingo – Bruin



Bo Bendixen design – a world success



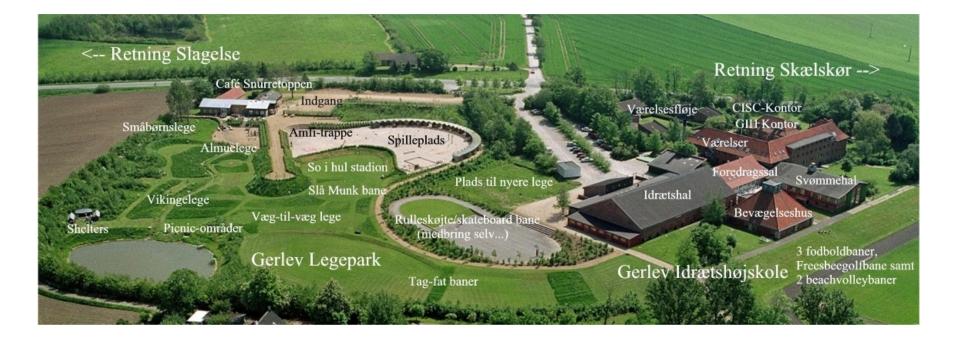
The Nordic trash playground



- Not only a matter of the market
- Civil society and pedagogical culture

Traditional games – and People's Academy

International Play Park Gerlev (1999) tries innovation in the field of traditional folk games – connected with a Folk High School







Play in culture for peace

In the Balkans and in Caucasus, Open Fun Football Schools promote playful football as way of culture of peace after traumatic civil violence



Play in the globalized "state of competition"?

- Elite sport and event culture
- Edutainment playful health campaigns
- Play in business culture: "innovation", "creativity", "communication", "cooperation", "identity building", "nonlineal selforganization", "trust", "empathy" etc. – playification

Playful Sport for all

Danish sport is not just elite sport

- Local associations as basis
- Mass summer festivals of popular sport
- Sport as personal development in Folk High Schools (People's Academies)
- Street sports, parkour, play and games culture
- Building sport facilities with innovative cultural ambition
- Network of critical sport journalism (corruption...)

Denmark as lighthouse of sport for all?

- Civil society as basis for market and state
- How should Denmark invest in the global competition – on the Olympic level, compared to Beijing, Dubai etc.?
- Or should Denmark rather promote people's Sport for all on the world level?
- But: Danish Sport for all is not just play...

3. Play and identity

Why may Denmark as "land of play" be more convincing than other nations?

- America (in spite of Disney)
- England (in spite of football)
- Germany (in spite of the Brothers Grimm)
- Sweden (in spite of Pippi Longstocking)

Maybe, any folk culture can "brand" by play...



Chinese Nuo folk dance

Lin Yutang (1895-1976) Chinese philosopher

- If I had the choice, I would prefer to be Hans Christian Andersen. In order to write the story of the Little Mermaid – or to be the Mermaid myself..."
- Lin Yutang 1944: *The Importance of Living*. First 1938.

Main contradiction in Lin Yutang's materialist philosophy of life

- Playful curiousness the tramp, the scamp, Sun Wukong, the ape king, Mary Mary quite contrary
- Contra
- Discipline and obedience the soldier

It was the age of fascism)

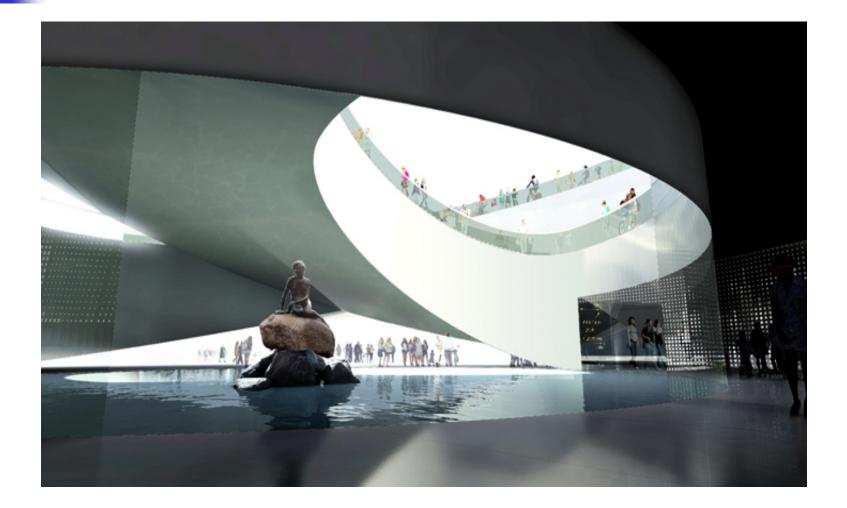
Apropos tramp: A Danish figure – Storm P



The scamp: A chinese figure – Sun Wukong



The Little Mermaid in Shanghai World Expo 2010



Play and difference

"Social groups and people in general distinguish themselves as much by their games as they do by their languages: the Scottish Caber tossing, American Baseball, English Cricket, Basque Pelote, African dugout races or the Afghan Buzkashi are practices that are as distinctive as their homes or the structure of their genetic heritage." Pierre Parlebas, 2003

And yet, open questions...

- Denmark is not Tivoli
- Danish identity is not just nisse (dwarf) culture



- Play and play culture are not the same
- How to conclude from single games to the larger cultural connection?

Play as product – critique?

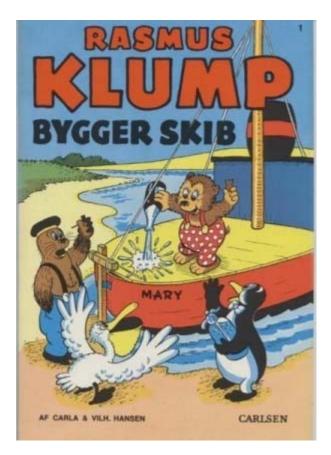
- Denmark produces plays and playthings for the world
- But: Play as product?
- Is play and playification a part of capitalist productivism and its globalisation?
- The philosophical question touches the economical and the political
- Philosophy of play has a critical point
- What is production?

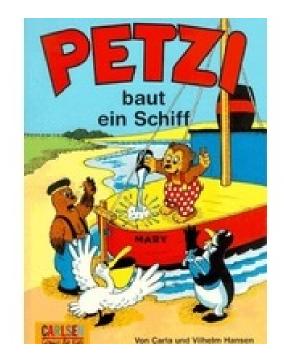
4. Social philosophical questions between play and work

Normal view: play versus work

- Result = work versus process = play
- Work in the realm of need versus play in the realm of freedom
- Rational production versus "irrational" play
- Work under control versus play as surprise
- Productive work versus unproductive play
- (Huizinga, Caillois)

But: Shipbuilding as play





A sociologicalphilosophical challenge

Is there any third?

- Play in production work in play?
- Playification of work?
- Productive play?
- Play as consumption? (entertainment industry)

And: What is production, what is productivity?

- What is reproduction?
- Does unproductive work exist?

5. What is production, what is productivity?

The quarrel of productivity in 19th century's economy: Who is productive?

- Physiocrats: the soil the farmers
- Adam Smith: industry the entrepreneurs
- Karl Marx: work the workers
- Friedrich List: are teachers not productive?

No result in economic science

- Around 1900:
- Economists decided to discontinue the quarrel
- Defining productivity by the price obtained on the market
- Productive is what has a price

And yet...

- There remains a critical point
- "Unproductive" are: monarchs, soldiers, prostitutes (1800)
- Are bankers and brokers productive? And real-estate agents?
- But prostitutes earn money on the market...

Productivity remains a powerful myth

Dominant myths:

- "Gross national product"
- "Gross social product"
- Alternatives ("Gross national happiness", Bhutan) so far without broader success
- The myth of productivity demands a critical phenomenology of productivity
- This is where play analytically becomes important

The dissociative definition of play is a part of the modern myth

Modernity

dissociated play and production

- defined play as unproductive
- defined work as not-playful
- and gave competitive sport priority as *the* ritual of industrial modernity

But...

"The opposite of play is not work.

It's depression."

Brian Sutton-Smith

Broader horizon

- The study of play is not only for the understanding of play (and children)
- but also for a deeper understanding of the relation between **sport** and play
- and for a broader and critical understanding of productivity and production

And epistemologically:

Towards a differential phenomenology

- of play
- and of production

The one play does not exist

Nor does the one production