AARHUS UNIVERSITY

Coversheet

This is the accepted manuscript (post-print version) of the article.
Contentwise, the accepted manuscript version is identical to the final published version, but there may be differences in typography and layout.

How to cite this publication
Please cite the final published version:

Publication metadata

"Green with envy:" affects and gut feelings as an affirmative, immanent, and trans-corporeal critique of new motivational data visualizations

By Dorthe Staunæs dost@edu.au.dk

Abstract

In recent educational reforms, policy papers present students' desire and motivation for learning as decisive issues. The documents indicate that motivation has become a crucial issue for governmental intervention and results in a number of motivational technologies. Envy, once perceived as a mortal sin, is shown as integral of the ambiguous affective economy following the wake of the motivational technologies used to translated the Danish school reform of 2014 into everyday class rooms. Grasping and following the invidious complex as performative effects of the intra-action of policy, motivational technologies, and student bodies is a way of researching the implementation of a reform beyond the already designed tales of the reform. The point of formulating envy as an affirmative critique is not to debunk visual devices or motivational technologies. Rather, it is to provide a more complex understanding of, and the possible consequences of, certain ways of reforming learning and motivation, and to show how affects and gut feelings are both a motivating force and a disruptive one, that can generate an immanent and hopeful critique.

"As it moves, it morphs"

In recent educational reforms introduced in the Scandinavian welfare states, policy papers present school students' desire and motivation for learning as the decisive issue. This tendency is clear in the 2014 Danish School Reform Act, which covers public and compulsory education (in the folkeskole or state school system) for 6- to 16-year-old students, encompassing pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary education. In the 2014 Reform Act it is explicit that the road to improved well-being and to more learning is "to enhance learners' desire to learn more."[1] The Act states that schools should manage and modulate students' motivation to go to school and to study. The document is a prime and quintessential example of an exuberant mass of policy papers indicating that a new understanding of motivation is under development and has now become crucial. One might also say that these documents demonstrate that motivation, which used to be a personal matter, has become a crucial issue for governmental intervention. As it moves, it morphs, said Robert Cowen (Cowen 2009), professor in comparative education,

---

[1] Agreement between the government (the Danish Social Democrats, the Danish Social-Liberal Party and the Danish Socialist People's Party), the Liberal Party of Denmark and the Danish People's Party regarding academic improvements in the Folkeskole, 2013:1.

of educational reforms. In this article, I consider what happens – and what morphs – at the level of student subjectivities when the stated intention of an educational reform to achieve "more learning" through "more motivation" is translated from the level of policy into policy-informed technologies that are enacted in school students' everyday lives. The focus of the analysis that I present in this article is the motivational technologies that have been employed to translate the 2014 school reform into practice. Specifically, I will shed light on the structure of feeling that underlies, yet is integral to, these motivators. By this I mean the ways in which students sense and are touched by the affective atmosphere established by these technologies and the ways in which this structure of feeling becomes manifested through the students' own hand-crafted visualizations of their progress (or lack of it) in comparison and competition with that of their peers. I will analyze and discuss how affects, or more precisely – a affective climate of envy – emerges as an effect as well as a prerequisite, perhaps even a decisive driving force, of the new motivational technologies enacted by the 2014 reform. My contention is that, rather than just a privately felt emotion, envy is an integral specificity of the new, post-2014 motivational technologies.

My hypothesis is that envy, once perceived as a mortal sin, has in the wake of the school reform taken its place as a part of an ambiguous affective economy in the Danish governmental attitude to education. This is scrutinized through a differentiated analytics. Envy can be felt as a gut feeling, a stabbing pain in the stomach, sensed as a mood in the classroom, and emerging as an atmosphere in and of trans-corporeal intra-actions between the reform policies, technologies used in the classroom, and human bodies. Envy emerges in the school system in the context of a threaded and historically affective complex of admiration, as well as contempt and resentment – an embodied sensational trigger that makes students *want* to do what they (according to policy) *must* do: be motivated to learn more. Grasping and following the phenomenology of envy as performative effects of the entanglements of policy, motivational technologies, and the students' bodies is an alternative way to research the implementation of a reform, one that goes beyond the already-designed tales of the reform proponents and the already-established criticism formulated by its strong opponents. Finally, grappling with envious moods may also evoke an affective critique of the school reform program, because feelings of envy are an indicator of inequality in a system that is failing to fulfill its own objective – to ensure that all students reach their full potential.

While some analyses of shame as a prerequisite for and performative effect of new forms of neoliberal governance have been conducted (Bjerg and Staunæs 2011, Staunæs and Pors 2015,

Brøgger and Staunæs 2016, Sedgwick 2003, Probyn 2005), less attention has been paid to the examination of envy. Perhaps the theme of envy is so ugly that it feels indecent – not just to *be* envious, but even to point to it. For Levinas, shame is the inverse of intentionality and thus of the very conditions for ethics. To explore envy is not entirely to dismiss the power of shame and of its ethical and political potential (Sedgwick 1995, Probyn 2005), but to circle in another, related affective complex that works alongside shame. Perhaps I dare to designate envy as an affective complex that may have the innovative potential for "critique beyond criticism" and for an affirmative ethics of care (see, for instance, (MacLure 2015, Foucault 1997, Raffnsøe 2015, Manning 2016, Barad 2007). I have chosen to focus on envy partly because of its unspeakability, but also because an affirmative and trans-corporeal critique seems immanent in precisely this issue. To look for envy is to analyze the affective life of the Danish educational reform. It is to attend to the differentiated "capacities to affect and be affected" (Anderson 2016). To paraphrase Ben Anderson, who writes on greed (ibid.), and who actually paraphrases Brian Massumi (Massumi 2002), who writes on confidence – envy is infrastructural to a reformed school in late capitalism, neoliberalism, and what has been conceptualized as the competition state (Cerny 1997).

Let me begin by fleshing out the Danish school reform policy context of the visualizations. I will discuss below, and by describing how the issue of motivation has become the companion of learning-centered ambitions. I will then outline the theoretical vocabulary. Subsequently, I will analyze a video that showcases how a visual arrangement can touch and move students. Finally, I will argue that envy is in fact an affirmative, trans-corporal critique. The video that I will discuss is part of a wider empirical archive that was produced for an ongoing project on experimental leadership practices, conducted with Malou Juelskjær. The empirical archive consists of our teaching materials, audio recordings of our own teaching and discussions with master's students, and a number of master's theses written by master's students and by school principals who participated in the project. In addition, we conducted interviews with ten school principals, a superintendent, and an educational manager, all of whom were enrolled in a customized master class for school principals. The video analyzed in this article did not originate as part of the project, but was downloaded from the internet (https://baggesenskolen.slagelse.dk/om-skolen/visible-learning-synlig-laering). It was applied

as a trigger for student reflections upon the performative effects of new leadership practices that are based on data visualizations (see also(Juelskjær and Staunæs 2016a).[2]

From deadly sin to decisive force

Hieronymus Bosch's tablet of the *Seven Mortal Sins and the Four Last Things* in the Prado Museum, Madrid, provides an excellent illustration of envy as a place to start. However, "this 'beginning,' like all beginnings, is always already threaded through with anticipation of where it is going but will never simply reach and of a past that has yet to come" (Barad 2010) (p. 244). Despite having been purchased in the mid-sixteenth century by King Philip II of Spain rather than hanging on a classroom wall in contemporary Denmark, this work of art is very educative and can be expected to affect its viewers in a certain sense. There is a moral tale involved: a perceived anatomy of the affective and ambiguous complex of envy is portrayed. The Bosch painting (dated c. 1475) illustrates pre-Protestant Christian moral teaching about the sinfulness of humankind and about the medieval theme of the Last Judgment before entering Paradise or Hell. The tablet of the seven deadly sins is painted as a wheel of Fortune, with Christ, his wounds on display, set at the center of the circle above the legend "Cave Cave Deus Videt" – or, in English, "Beware, beware, God is watching." Around the center, the seven deadly sins are illustrated: Wrath, Pride, Lust, Sloth, Gluttony, Greed, and Envy. The four corners of the picture illustrate the Four Last Things: Death, the Last Judgment, Paradise, and the Punishment of Hell. Envy (Latin: invidia) is placed on the wheel between Wrath and Greed. I will return to this position in my discussion of the video below. The representation of Envy is a generic scene of a tax collector withholding a bone from two dogs. The dogs may illustrate the Flemish saying, "Two dogs and only one bone, no agreement" (Struthers 1996); however, it is also interesting that there are two bones lying on the floor and thus more than enough for both dogs. Why the focus on the third bone? The tax collector stands between a young flirting couple and a woman, perhaps his wife. While the flirting young woman has her eye on the heavy purse at the young man's waist, the older couple are looking enviously at a wealthy unaccompanied gentleman holding a falcon. A fourth, seemingly black, man – perhaps the servant of the wealthy white man– is leaving, carrying a heavy sack while looking enviously at the man with the falcon. Leaving the wheel and letting our eyes drift to the corner of the

---

[2] A preliminary analysis of the case was presented at ECER 2016 by the author together with PhD student Kia Wied (Staunæs and Wied 2016)

picture and the Punishment of Hell, we may notice that the figure of Invidia is being attacked by wild dogs (ibid.).

Walking into a school classroom in contemporary Denmark, we encounter visual landscapes quite different from that portrayed in the Bosch painting. I am not referring to well-arranged illustrations of animals, depictions of biblical allegories and moral precepts, or the representations of universal knowledge or truth, and neither am I visualizing the children's own images heralded by the pedagogy of Reggio Emilia, or rules set out by the students themselves on "How to behave toward one another," for example stipulating that "it is forbidden to spit on other children." All this visual material is still present on classroom walls in the wake of the Danish school reform of 2014. But what has been added and now occupies a prominent position is a poster that calls for self-assessment. Questions like "Where am I going?" "Where am I?" "What will it take to get me further?" are posed in speech balloons, or rather, in thought bubbles. Side by side with these posters, hand-painted data visualizations marked in red, yellow, and green indicate the progress made by individual students. The data visualizations render the student's current position visible and, in diagrams that enable comparison with other students, they also render visible where the students are heading.

The visualizations embed the intention of showing student progress, and thereby also embed the hope that students can be motivated to learn more by showing their advancements if they can monitor their own progress and their comparative position in a measurement and ranking system. In a number of schools, concepts such as Visible Learning (Hattie 2009), True North, and Rubrics have been implemented in order to clearly indicate learner performance. Tests, data walls, and scorecards visualize – and allow comparison of – results. It all appears very rational. Nevertheless, I claim that an evocative or suggestive level is equally important for the workings of these technologies: a level at which affects, feelings, moods, and atmospheres are mobilized in order to create and modulate the impetus to commit oneself to and take part in continuous learning and education. At times it is not just an intrinsic desire to learn that drives us when we study our performance score – particularly when we compare our score to the performance of others, or compete with them more or less openly. If we want to learn – or perhaps more precisely, when we try to make what we have learned explicit – we may be motivated by, or driven by, a number of different feelings, some of which are not only created by, but also constitute a prerequisite for the described technologies of self-management and motivation employed by educational establishments. Furthermore, I contend that it is not always the feelings recognized as positive (engagement and pleasure) that are drawn upon.

Often, it is rather what we experience as negative moods and uncomfortable feelings such as shame (Sedgwick 2003), and what are perceived as ugly feelings such as envy (Ngai 2005), that are in play (Bjerg and Staunæs 2011).

Motivation, visualizations, and GERM

In the Danish School Reform Act of 2014,[3] enhancing learning is a matter of the utmost importance. As formulated in the reform text, the folkeskole "must challenge all students to reach their fullest potential," and the folkeskole "must minimize the impact of students' social background on their academic achievement." In other words, the reform aims to enhance academic performance, social equity, and student well-being at the same time as placing educational quality and, in particular, student-learning outcomes at the center of policy discourse, in line with curricular reforms in other countries. The reform thereby reflects a new standard for educational governance, following the competency-based qualification frameworks for higher education and lifelong learning framed by the Bologna Process and EU education policy that were introduced in Denmark and other European countries around the year 2000. The 2014 school reform implements level one of the European Qualifications Framework in compulsory education (the folkeskole) (Brøgger et al. 2016). At the national level, as well as at the municipal and school levels, the governmental learning agenda has been accompanied by new forms of testing and a greater emphasis on documentation and data. The repercussions of this for governance are significant (ibid.). The reform also resonates with self-governance and technologies of the self. When the governmental strategies related to school are refashioned from input to outcome governance, it renders not only the local institution, but also the individual student and his or her learning progress visible. How much has the individual student learned, and how far have they moved on a specific scale?

However, as indicated above, it seems that academic achievement is not the sole objective of the reform. Social equity and student well-being are also key elements. I will draw attention to a governance aspect of what may be termed an affective dimension: namely, the issue of reforming student motivation. In accordance with what has been termed GERM or the Global Educational Reform Movement (Sahlberg 2011, Sellar and Lingard 2013), together with the plea to improve learning outcomes, educational leadership in Denmark seems to have taken up an affective agenda by targeting the constitutive and affective "moment before" learning takes place. Accordingly, implementing reforms is not only a matter of revising organizational

---

[3] Ibid: 1.

diagrams, structures, and objectives; it also means reforming subjectivities, mindsets, feelings, affective states of mind, and beings. In the Danish school reform, issues such as how to enhance the "desire for learning" and how to improve the "motivational atmosphere" seem to emerge as targets and products of ways of reforming educational subjectivities. Within this setting, motivation is no longer staged only as a *didactic* issue; it becomes a crucial matter of concern for *governance*, at the national as well as the local level. In other words, educational policy and management become highly acquainted with social psychological processes (Juelskjær et al. 2011).

In the very same reform text, student motivation is presented as the core condition for fulfilling the *political* objective of enhanced learning and transgressing social backgrounds. This goal is formulated as to "give students knowledge and skills that prepare them for further education and give them the desire to learn more." This passage indicates how motivational work, previously framed as merely a pedagogical issue concerning student motivation for learning and performance (Eccles and Midgley 1989, Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece 2010 (1996)), has become not just an issue or counter position (Carr 2016), but a *regulative* practice targeting all students.

The reform was issued at the national level. This has led to the formulation of national goals, legislation on public schools, and the introduction of standardized national tests. Municipalities and schools are charged with implementing these national policies. They have the freedom to adapt the political objectives to teaching and evaluation practices in line with their preferred pedagogical and didactic approach. As they translate the reform agenda and objectives into practice, many schools turn to concepts of visualizing learning. Currently, data visualization is used as a visible documentation of student learning and progress. Across the Nordic countries, various forms of visualization techniques – informed, for instance, by the concept of Visible Learning (Hattie 2009) or by more locally designed concepts such as True North and Rubrics – have been enacted to enhance learning and performance among students. Learning progression (or regression) is thus rendered visible. It becomes possible to watch and follow one's own learning progression/regression in comparison to those of others.

Envy as a differentiated capacity of "to affect and be affected"

The moral lesson of the Bosch composition seems obvious. The picture tells us that human beings are inherently sinful, and that envy is a possible affective state of mind and being. Envy is a state between Wrath and Greed, between anger and wanting. It is a state of begrudging

somebody something in matters of love, money, labor, or positions and distributions that are social, gendered, and racialized. The tableau of mortal sins is a kind of visible teaching. By picturing Christ as God's vicarious eye and by writing the words "Beware," the tablet instructs the viewer, "Restrain thy envy!" God is watching us, and we will be judged and duly punished at the end of the day. The composition directly addresses the envious mind of everyday settings in a prescriptive manner. There is a higher judge, there is an end after all, and there are good and bad performances. The picture speaks truth to the viewer, who is interpellated as the receiver of a pessimistic and apocalyptic knowledge of the Almighty.

While moral precepts, like the Almighty, tend to be absent from contemporary learning spaces, the new data visualizations that have been adopted since 2014 prompt learners to manage themselves and to move spontaneously. The printed posters are examples of motivational technologies, enacted as an orchestration of how the physical milieu aims to constitute learning and how affective intensities are infrastructural. Leading through (learning) outcomes is followed by motivational technologies that represent a rationalistic framework – which, however, manipulates through suggestive dynamics and tools. Motivational technologies are thus an affective specification of what are known as the technologies of the self (Foucault 1988). This can be described more precisely by using the Foucauldian-informed neologism, *environmentality* (Massumi 2010). This implies an orchestration of the physical milieu, as well as of the social atmosphere, with the purpose of indirectly vitalizing the capacities of human perception, cognition, and affectivity. Environmentality, we have argued, is a specific form of governance that manages intensities rather than identities, which does so through modulations of the environment and by facilitating possible fusions, openings, and connections that enable students to continuously transgress and develop (Bjerg and Staunæs 2017, Juelskjær and Staunæs 2016b).

Following Karen Barad's notion of intra-action as a notion that recognizes that distinct entities, agencies, and events do not precede, but rather emerge from/through their intra-action, and that energy and intensity may be byproducts of this process, I ask how these metrics and visualizations co-constitute and differentiate affects as sensations, feelings, moods, and atmospheres. If the premise is that affective intensities are *performative effects* (Barad 2003, Butler 1990) of trans-corporeal intra-actions – or if they are performative, *energetic* effects of intra-actions, a vibrant matter (Bennett 2010) – how would affectivity be sensed when intra-actions involve these new forms of visual tablets, requesting self-evaluation and self-exposure? As it moves, it morphs, we recall. The policy elements are indeed morphing. In intra-actions,

they create something new. Intra-actions constitute a radical reworking of the traditional notion of causality (Barad 2010: 267), such that distinct agencies are distinct only in a relational rather than an absolute sense; that is, agencies are distinct only in relation to their mutual entanglements and do not exist as individual elements.

Bearing in mind the vocabulary of environmentality and affective intensities as performative effects of intra-actions, I ask whether the reform mantra of progress and "learning more" can become entangled with student bodies in ways that evoke "capacities of affecting and being affected" (Massumi 2002, Deleuze and Guattari 1987, Spinoza 1677/2001) – not only as cognitive capacities, but also those of bellies and gut feelings ((Wilson 2015). Could envious moods emerge in the trans-corporeal (Alamio 2010) intra-action of policy-initiated visualizations and student bodies? Let us subject these wonderings to yet another diffractive reading, through examining a showcasing video.

Being moved and motivated through intra-actions with visualizations

There are several examples in contemporary Danish classrooms of visual devices that attempt to translate the learning objective of the school reform. Numerous examples are displayed on the internet, as demonstration videos or inspirational material for educators. The following exemplary video was retrieved from the internet. It is similar to many other posters and visuals, even if there are local differences in concepts and materials. The video consists of small episodes showing teacher and student efforts to render student learning and progress visible and comparable. The comparisons are conducted both between the different students and between individual student performance both before and after a learning process. The film clip shows three secondary school students in white, female bodies sitting around a table topped with sheets of paper. On these worksheets, there are template drawings of a barometer. The three students are introducing two different, but coherent, practices in making learning and learning progression visible. They are drawing on the barometer template to exemplify a normal part of their school activities. They talk enthusiastically about the self-assessment process in which each one fills out their own new template when they begin a new topic. With a felt-tip pen, they mark and color in how far they personally think they are from achieving the learning goals of this particular topic, how much they already know about the topic, and finally, the progress they hope and expect to make. Red is used to benchmark their starting point and thereby their initial level of knowledge. Green is used to benchmark the goal in terms of the level of knowledge they are striving to reach. Yellow is used to indicate ongoing progress. At

the end of each lesson, each student fills out yet another template where s/he marks her/his learning progress.

The video shows a shared *barometer of learning and learning progress* hanging on the classroom wall. This is a template for the class as a whole. Each student is supposed to stick a red pushpin into the barometer poster to indicate a point of departure, as well as a green pin indicating "the expected and hoped for" goal. Summing up, the benchmarking is conducted first individually, hand-drawn in red, green, and yellow; then, performance is measured and monitored in an accumulated barometer of paper and similarly colored pins. While the barometer of hand-drawn colors "measures" learning and progress for individual students, the barometer of colored pushpins comprises a showroom in which learning processes and progressions are compared and ranked between students. These visual devices are customized standards, focused less on the final performance than on drawing attention to the possibilities for progress and the possibility of achieving an ever-shifting goal.

Hand-crafted motivation

"When we start a new topic, we always begin by filling out an 'evidence sheet', as the call it in the video. It almost always starts out as red," a student says, while showing us how she has colored in a piece of "evidence-paper" with a red pen by hand. These exemplary visualizations simulate the scheme of evidence-based and scientific knowledge; however, the drawings and pushpins are by no means universally representative. We do not know exactly what a colored pin or its placement means when the student sticks it in the drawing. We may have a vague idea, but it could mean nearly anything. Rather than thinking in terms of representations, I will think of drawings barometers, felt-tip pens, and colored pushpins as performative, primarily activating the sense of touch: "We each have our own barometer. In the beginning, we mark where we are and how much we know," another student explains in the video. Focusing on the aesthetic, sensual, and bodily dimensions, we learn that the student's hand is of vital importance. In the video, the three students show how they handle the scale on the barometer and the pushpins in order to demonstrate their learning progress. Improving learning is a hand-crafted process, in which student hands fill out templates and move pins. The feeling of "learning more" is vitalized through literally managing individual progress by hand. As the reader may know, the word *manage* is derived from the Latin word *manus*, meaning hand. First, the sense of touch is activated through this management of pins and progress by hand. Secondly, the intra-action activates the sense of sight by making color differences a part of the assessment. The purpose of the three-colored self-exposure is to

equip the student with a realistic yet optimistic self-assessment, which again is expected to invoke reflections upon how to further and improve learning.

Conflating bodies

In my empirical material, an interview with an educational manager working with the use of visualization reveals an interesting conflation of the colors of the motivational technology and the experiencing of oneself. She says:

"Right now, there's this really, really sweet video where there's a little girl standing there explaining that she's green [...] But then she's asked about some stuff and, among other things, she says: "Yes, but I can see that when I become blue, then I can do this and this and this [...] if I can't figure this out then I can just go over and ask Signe and Ester [her classmates, DS]"

The interviewer asks:

So she has a perception of being able to turn into different colors?
EM: Yes, she most certainly does have that perception! [...] And that supports the whole view of learning which is, like, associated with it being okay to be at the stage you're at. What we talk about is what's needed for you to become better.

Your performance is okay, but please keep on moving. This episode tells the story of students thinking about themselves in terms of changing colors and conflating selves. Through sight and hand, the standardized yet customized barometers and data pin become a radical exteriority, entering and forming the students' self-experience. The color becomes a kind of Foucauldian doubling figure, in which students externalize themselves and their learning (progress) and are thereby able to think/feel upon themselves. The color is allowed to act as an incarnation, or a material manifestation, of the student in a performance landscape of other avatars. This externalization makes it possible to experience the color in a causal form in present time that may impact future potentialities. Careful listening to the students in the video reveals this very interesting, but strange sentence: "If I move the pin, I have learned." It is as if moving the pin with your (own) hand is the cause of learning. As if moving the pin produces learning. The words are framed as if moving the pinand showing progress is in itself to make progress. Moving the pins makes learning happen, the student says. In this sense, the pins do

not just store the experiences of learning; they radically create "learning" – and you as a student:

> It is individual, so if you look around in the classroom, others are doing it in a very different way and their green, yellow, and red marks are very different from yours. Toward the end of a given phase, we fill out a new 'evidence-paper;' and here, of course, the idea is that you should be able to demonstrate how you have made progress.

These visuals are not just supposed to show evidence of student learning. They are supposed to work by invoking further motivational desire for progress. Or, to borrow a phrase from Bosch's table, greed for more. Another student states:

> We also have a class barometer, where you can read the level of the whole class. We each have a red, a yellow, and a green pin. We begin by placing our red pin to indicate where we are, and green pin, where we would like to go; and then the yellow pin illustrates how we improve. After a week, I may feel I have learned a lot; then I move my pin this much; and then I have moved this much closer toward my goal.

Another student in the video says:

> It is all about showing. It is a big thing if you are able to get up during a break and move your pin. It shows that you have learned something. Now it is there for the entire class to see. Your classmates are able to see that you have made visible progress.

The hand-crafted movement of the pin indicates that the student is progressing – or precisely the opposite, that students are <u>not</u> making progress. As the student puts it: "It is all about showing." It is all about ensuring that the yellow pin quickly and steadily changes color and turns green, and to make the change possible for everybody else to see. It is about moving your hand and your pin, managing or leading yourself to become more, to get more (learning), and to become worthy of attention and admiration. Visuals staged as data walls and scorecards make exposure and transparency possible. They simultaneously constitute a space for sharing

knowledge and norms and also a space for comparing results, for ordering and ranking. And perhaps this is where envy rears its head – through impulses of attraction, between greed and admiration. As the Bosch picture indicates, without admiration, there is no envy.

Envy is the other side of becoming.

The English writer Virginia Woolf wrote in a letter to her friend, the composer Ethyl Smythe, about her discovery of the work of a fellow writer: "I'm almost floored by the extreme dexterity, insight, and beauty of Colette. How does she do it? I'm green with envy."[4] Green with envy – an ancient and familiar feeling that we all know. Especially if we compare ourselves with something or somebody we admire, something we wish for, or something we find ourselves wanting in comparison with. This is a feeling we notice when our stomach churns. Envy is an ambiguous psycho/social/somatic complex. Though visually stimulated, it touches us through a complex interplay of the senses. It may be a gut feeling, felt as indeterminate sensations – perhaps a knot in the stomach. Shakespeare describes the physiognomies of jealousy and envy – in his *Henry VI*, envy is the "pale" and black "lean-faced Envy in her loathsome ease," and in *Othello*, jealousy is "the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on." Green symbolized envy long before Shakespeare, but it can also be the color of emotional immaturity and inexperience, just as it may be the color of sickness and nausea. The greenness of sickness is depicted not just as skin deep, but also located in the stomach and entire body, which "burns inwardly with furious rage, without betraying the slightest flicker of it in the face" (Walton 2004: 172). Envy is an ambiguous feeling of simultaneously being attracted and repulsed (Ngai 2005): an emotion that both brings together and renders asunder. Other feelings associated with this complex emotion include enthusiasm and devotion, but also wrath. Envy is a contradiction in terms – a wrathful devotion (Walton 2004: 172). As the Bosch composition of the seven mortal sins illustrates, envy was once a deadly sin: something to be really ashamed of. Contemporary enactments of data visuals indicate that envy may no longer be a mortal sin, but rather a modern feeling, an affective condition of contemporary times. In the twenty-first century classroom, the invidious mood is produced by visual technologies, by pins that move, by colors that call for self-assessment and that are repeatedly, several times a week, made visible to all the other students. In Bosch's *Seven Mortal Sins and the Four Last Things*, the moral lesson about envy and the imaginaries of judgment are explicit. The prescriptions work by instructing and disciplining, by giving

---

[4] Quoted from the editorial to a special issue on envy in *WSQ*: *Women's Studies Quarterly* (Katz and Miller 2006).

advice and providing a recipe for living a good life. Power speaks to the subject. Reading the visualization work diffractively through Bosch, we notice how, in this classroom setting, envy has become an affective condition. The data visualizations filled out by the students silence the infinite moral laws, but lay open the judgments of one's own mind. The applied technologies educate through a visual landscape of standardized, yet customized and self-made, quasi-scientific graphs and schemes that offer the hope of progress and of realizing one's potential. These apparent differences in visualizations make me wonder about the affective economy and the ostensible invisibility of "ugly affects." It seems reasonable to suggest that envy could be an performative effect of the new motivational technologies that center on self-assessment and visualization, and, further, that (the production of) envy has morphed from being a mortal sin to an inarticulate condition for and a decisive drive in neoliberal forms of government and educational institutions. While these motivational devices are consciously spoken into existence as carrying positively valued and passionate feelings like enthusiasm, and while negative affects like shame and guilt are abandoned and cleaned out, it seems reasonable to suggest that negative, sometimes even ugly feelings such as shame are not just an epiphenomenon, but infrastructural to this mode of governance (Bjerg and Staunæs 2011, Brøgger and Staunæs 2016).

Envy as a force emphasized by policy

Do these visual technologies differ from awarding grades? Are they clearly distinct from the era when the teacher sat the most skilled students at the front of the classroom and the least at the back? Yes, they are. The most significant difference is that the visualizations as motivational technologies are not just a didactic devices They are "overwritten" and entangled with educational management and monitoring, which again is a significant part of an overarching, branched chain of governance and reform policy. This is a serious attempt to transmit and translate a coherent goal-oriented policy, and issues of control and measurement are further explicated when tables ranking student performance and progression capture the school principal's gaze when s/he conducts the weekly classroom walkabout that has become a popular practice of post-reform managerial presence (Staunæs and Juelskjær 2016). Another decisive difference and change is that the technology presupposes a multisensory motivational activity, performed by students who enter and enroll of their own volition. It presupposes motivation, one might say: a motivation felt as sensual and tactile engagement in and through the trans-corporeal intra-actions so keenly animated and invoked by the visualizations on the school walls asking: "Where am I heading? Where am I? What is the next step?" These trans-

corporeal entanglements involve and occur through fingers and hands that manage and move pins; through hesitance and rumination: "Where am I/where is the pin? Where am I/where is the pin heading? What does it take?" And through eyes that notice and discern, compare and evaluate movements and progress: "How far am I? Is it good enough? Is my potential greater?"

Trans-corporeal entanglement happens through attunement. As indicated by Blackman (Blackman 2012), rather than a mere process of automatic imitation, attunement is a process of moving with and through affectivity. Attunement is a kind of energetic exchange, circulation, and transmission among both human and non-human bodies, an exchange that touches and reshapes the bodies involved (Raffnsøe and Staunæs 2014, Staunæs and Raffnsøe 2017 submitted). The attunement felt by the students with pins always takes place in and through sensational *and* discursive comparison with and monitoring of the other students' bodies and their (self-)assessing glances, eyeing a constantly moving yellow pin. This reminds me of the cultural critique embedded in Homi Bhabha's theory of "the mimicry of man" and Bhabha's famous quote on the cultural ideal of whiteness: "Almost but not the same, almost but not quite white" (Bhabha 1994). Reformulating Bhabha's observations in relation to the constantly moving pins and articulating this sense of not being quite right, an imaginary thought bubble might state: "I am almost, but not quite green. I am almost, but not quite yet enviable. I have almost, but not entirely attained the ideal or goal." Further following Bhabha, I wonder: Who can ever reach the ideal? Who will fail and who will become enviable? Furthermore, I might ask: Do these processes of attuning to and more or less accurately mimicking the ideal work along racial and gendered lines? Maybe, but I do not have the material to draw a firm conclusion. This is a matter for further research. However, if we stretch the point a little: who can become entirely green? Entirely enviable? Green is an ideal. At the end of the day, to be entirely green is simply not possible. More specifically, it is not possible in a learning context that requires students always to be ready to move their end goal and be "motivated for learning more" – where you are never entirely "there." You must be willing to expand and stretch; to develop, but also to be motivated to keep on moving. As the student in the video says: "If you look around the classroom, others are doing it in a very different way and their green, yellow, and red marks are totally different from yours." A thought bubble suspended over this student could say: "Where are the others going? Where are they? What is their next step?" Looking at barometers and comparing your performance with that of others may touch and move you in new, perhaps competitive directions. As Teresa Brennan (Brennan 2004) p. 109) writes: There

can be no envy or humiliation without comparison. Does this mean that comparison always carries the potential for envy and humiliation?

Envy can be a motivating force: it can provide a positive incentive. But it can also carry negative effects. Research distinguishes between benign and malign envy. The envy that is benign can lead the individual to admire something or someone, can heighten the awareness of one's own ambitions and wishes, and perhaps spur positive change through a will to do something. Malign envy, on the other hand, can lead to anger, contempt, and resentment: to feelings that, rather than facilitating constructive action, can turn into *Schadenfreude* and rancor, an inclination to, and a pleasure, in hurting other people. It can lead to gossip, bullying, sabotage (Wrenn 2015, Smith 2013). Maybe affective frictions of these kinds are embedded in the enactment of visualizations, and maybe this way of making social comparison facilitates students in becoming "inspired by hope but motivated by envy" (Nabi and Keblushek 2014).

Comparison certainly entails the possibility of competitiveness. According to Sianne Ngai, the author of *Ugly Feelings* (Ngai 2005), competitiveness is perceived as atmospheric and contagious (because it wants to be shared and circulated), while envy is believed to be something private and silent (Ngai 2006). Competitiveness connotes the positive and neutral, a feeling of pleasure, while envy connotes being ill, ignominious, and unable to enjoy:

> Indeed, one suspects that competitiveness wouldn't really be competitiveness if it weren't projected toward others, whereas dread and avoidance of public exposure seem internal to the experience of envy (Ngai: 110).

While it is a common discourse to talk enthusiastically about competitiveness and rivalry in almost celebratory terms, the possibility of envy is often privatized (Ngai 2006): it feels embarrassing and shameful to feel envy, and even to admit the possibility of such an ugly feeling. The possibility of being hit by the invidious mood may be strongly sensed by some bodies – for instance, student bodies, which are already pretty good at attuning to the normativities of school (even though those same bodies may simultaneously feel a sense of dis-identification with the very same normativities). Although some bodies are more attentive to the complex of envy, envy is not just a private matter: it is a sensory perception of the shadow side of the contemporary educational discourse. Therefore, the affective complex surrounding

envy needs to be addressed as more than merely a private matter. As I have argued, envy, just like motivation, is always already entangled with matters of governance.

Conclusion: envy as critique

The motivational technologies introduced in order to translate the Danish educational reform of 2014 have performative effects. They produce more than intended. However, even when the product is malign envy (resulting in contempt and resentment), this performative effect may contain important information: that inequality exists, and that it is felt (Caze 2001). Envy can be perceived as a crack in the machinery, a queering of the existing order. Feeling envy is a reminder that no organization has the capacity to enhance all its constituent parts. In that sense, the production of envy does not solely signify students' "lack" (as this story might be read through the lens of, for instance, a much-applied Kleinian approach to envy (Diaz 2006, Klein 1975)). Rather, envy is a disturbance of the prevailing order, and may even unsettle that order. Envy can be perceived as a sensuous dis-identification with the hegemony of a certain situation (Diaz 2006) p. 210). Envy is a simultaneous attraction and repulsion, and thereby an immanent desire to destroy the ideal. The inappropriate student – the student hit by invidious feeling – problematizes the ideal and the hegemony. As such, with Diaz, I contest the claim that envy entails the addition of other ways of being and understanding. Envy implies hope and optimism for something different: the possible emergence of new trajectories and a less unilateral desire (ibid: 212–213), a less one-dimensional motivation. Reading the class barometer and its invidious perceptions through this conceptualization of envy makes it possible to think of envy as a way of incorporating oneself in a whole in which one could not otherwise be a part. But envy does not point to a lack. It is an affective figuration pointing to something other than, and more than, the measure and scales of the barometer.

We may thus think of the envy produced by visualizations as an affirmative, immanent, and trans-corporeal critique. It is affirmative in the sense that it confirms the tendencies of what already is. It is critical in the sense that it simultaneously, and with hope, indicates that things could be different. It is immanent in the sense that it is a critique not posed from the outside, but very literally from the belly of the reform. Finally, it is trans-corporeal, in the sense that it emerges as an affective surplus in the mutual intra-action of technologies and bodies. Thinking along these lines, envy is not an ugly feeling that we need to privatize and expel from school – as did Margaret Thatcher with the concept of "the politics of envy" in 1980s Britain, while simultaneously bashing those who pointed to inequality (Ahier and Beck 2003), and as neoliberals are doing in Scandinavia today. Envy is a gut feeling, emerging in the moving and

morphing intra-action of reform policy, translation attempts, motivational technologies, and student bodies. It does not point to a lack in or of individuals. Rather, it draws attention to inequality in school and to a failed regulative practice based on the purpose of equal opportunities and promising that all students can reach the politically defined targets. This gut feeling in itself is a critique. A critique is not just something that we as researchers deploy or something possessed by a subject. A critique may be immanent in the field researched and may manifest itself, for instance, as a pain in the stomach – not put forward by the subject, but as an effect of the trans-corporeal entanglement. When agency, consciousness and affects are not a prerogative for human subjects, another kind of critique than that offered by the period of Enlightenment must be developed, Maggie MacLure argues (MacLure 2015). This particular (reform) envy informs us, and not only about invidious or enviable students. It criticizes a school not capable of doing what is just, but producing envy on demand. As Wren argues, envy seems to be specifically invoked in contexts of hyper-individualism and competition and in contexts where one finds the "myth of equality of opportunity, where all individuals, regardless of beginnings or background, are responsible for their own success or failure" (Wrenn 2015: 507). Envy is a complex of simultaneous feelings of admiration, anger, and resentment. It is not a private matter, but integral to governance. Rather than moralizing about envy, one may learn from these gut feelings and their immanent critical message.

How do we make ourselves responsive to this affective critique? It is harder once envy becomes privatized, because privatized envy is often followed by shame. Envy entails admitting the feeling of one's own inferiority. This may cause us to take refuge in rationalization (Wrenn 2015) rather than curious listening, or it may fuel an affective register of anger, hostility, and accusations that the envied are undeserving. The point of formulating envy as an affirmative critique is not to debunk visual devices or motivational technologies. Rather, it is to provide a more complex understanding of certain ways of reforming learning and motivation and their possible consequences, and to show how affects and gut feelings are both a motivating force and a disruptive one that can generate an immanent and hopeful critique.

References

Ahier, J. & J. Beck. 2003. "Education and the Politics of Envy." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 51 (4):320-343.

Alamio, S. 2010. *Bodily Natures. Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Anderson, B. 2016. *Encountering Affect. Capacitites, Apparatus, Conditions*. London & New York: Routledge.

Barad, K.. 2003. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs* 28 (3):801-931. doi: doi:10.1086/345321.

Barad, K. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Barad, K. 2010. "Quantum entanglements and Hauntological Relations. ." *Derrida Today* 3 (2):240-268. doi: DOI:10.366/E1754850010000813.

Bennett, J. 2010. *Vibrant Matters. A political ecoloy of things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Bhabha, Homi. 1994. "The mimicry of man." In *The Location of Culture*, edited by Homi Bhabha. London & New York: Routledge. (p. 85-92)

Bjerg, H. & D. Staunæs. 2011. "Self-management by shame. Uniting governmentality studies and the affective turn." *Ephmera* 11 (2):138-166.

Bjerg, H. & D. Staunæs. 2017. "Governing the intermediary spaces. Reforming school and subjectivities through liminal motivational technologies. ." In *Critical analyses of educational reform in an era of transnational governance. ,* edited by Thomas Popekewitz; Elisabeth Hultquist; Sverker Lindblad. London: Springer.

Blackman, L. 2012. *Immaterial Bodies. Affect, Embodiment, Mediation*. London: Sage.

Brennan, T. 2004. *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca and London: Cornelle Univeristy Press.

Brøgger, K, Levy-Pizmony, O. Staunæs, D. & G. Steiner-Khamsi. 2016. "Borrowers, Coalition Builders and Other Policy Actors: A Network Analysis of School Reform." Working Paper. Danish Institute of Education, Aarhus University and TC Columbia University.

Brøgger, K. & D. Staunæs. 2016. "Standards and (self)implosion. How the circulation of affects accelerates the spread of standards and intensifies the embodiment of colliding, temporal ontologies." *Theory & Psychology* 26 (2):223-242.

Butler, J. 1990. "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity." In. New York: Routledge.

Carr, S.. 2016. *Motivation, Educational Policy and Achievement*. London & New York: Routledge.

Caze, M. La. 2001. "Envy and resentment." *Philosophical Explorations* 4 (1):31-45. doi: DOI: 10.1080/13869790108523341.

Cerny, P. G. 1997. "Paradoxes of the Competition State: The Dynamics of Political Globalization." *Government and opposition. An International Journal of Comparative Politics* 32 (2):251-274.

Cowen, R. 2009. "The transfer, translation and transformation of educational processes: And ther shape-shifting?" *Comparative Education* 45 (3):315-327.

Deleuze, G. & F. Guattari. 1987. *A Thousands Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. .

Diaz, R. G. 2006. "Melancholic maladies: Paranoid ethics, reparative envy, and asian american critique." *Women & Performance: A journal of feminist theory* 16 (2):201-219. doi: 10.1080/07470770060070444477.

Eccles, J.S., & C. Midgley. 1989. "Stage-environment fit: Developmentally appropriate classrooms for young adolescents." In *Research on motivation in education*, edited by C. Ames and R. Ames, 139-186. San Diego CA: Academic Press.

Foucault, M. 1988. "Technologies of the Self." In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, editedby L. Martin, H. Gutman, & P. H. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (pp. 16-49). London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M. 1997. ""What is Critique?"." In *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Questions and TwentiethCentury Answers* edited by James Schmidt, 23-61. California: University of California Press.

Hattie, J. 2009. *Visible learning: A synthesis if iver 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge.

Juelskjær, M, Knudsen, H., Pors, J. & D. Staunæs. 2011. *Uddannelsesledelse. At lede det potentielle.* (Educational leadership. Leading the potentials) Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Juelskjær, M. & D. Staunæs. 2016a. "Designing leadership chairs: Experiments with affirmative critique of leadership and environmentality " *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology* 7 (2):35-51.

Juelskjær, M. & D. Staunæs. 2016b. "Orchestrating intensities and rhythms: How post-psychologies are assisting new educational standards and reforming subjectivities." *Theory & Pscyhology* 26 (2):182-201.

Katz, C., & N. Miller. 2006. "Editors' Note." *WSQ: Women's Studies Quaterly* 34 (3 & 4):9-11.

Klein, M. 1975. *Envy and gratitude and other works 1946-1963*. New York: The Free Press.

MacLure, M. 2015. "The 'new materialisms': a thorn in the flesh of critical qualitative inquiry?" In *Critical Qualitative Inquiry*, edited by G. Canella, MS Perez and P. Pasque. California: Left Coast Press.

Manning, E. (2016). *The minor gesture*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. 2002. *Parables for the virtual. Movement, affect, sensation.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. 2010. "The Future birth of the affective fact: The political ontology of threat." In *The affect theory reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg/G. J. Seigworth, 52-70. Durham: Duke University Press.

Nabi, R. L., & L. Keblushek. 2014. "Inspired by Hope, Motivated by Envy: Comparing the Effects of Discrete Emotions in the Process of Social Comparison to Media Figures." *Media Psychology* (17):208-234.

Ngai, S. 2005. *Ugly feelings*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press.

Ngai, S. 2006. "Competitivness: From Sula to Tyra." *WSQ: Women's Studies Quaterly* 34 (3&4):107-139.

Probyn, E.. 2005. *Blush: Faces of Shame*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Raffnsøe, S. 2015. What is critique? The Critical State of Critique in the Age of Criticism. edited by Politic & Philosopy Departement of Managemen and Copenhagen Business School. http://openarchive.cbs.dk/bitstream/handle/10398/9138/WP1_2015_SR.pdf?sequence=1.

Raffnsøe, S. & D. Staunæs. 2014. "Learning to stay ahead of time : moving leadership experiences experimentally." *Management and Organizational History* 9 (2):184-201.

Sahlberg, P. 2011. "The Fourth Way of Finland." *Journal of Educational Change* (12):173-185.

Schunk, D. H., P. R. Pintrich, & J. L. Meece. 2010 (1996). *Motivation in Education. Theory, Research and Applications*. 3 ed, *Pearson Education International*. New Jersey: Pearson Merill Prentice Hall.

Sedgwick, E. K. 1995. *Shame and its sisters*. Durham & New York: Duke University Press.

Sedgwick, E.K. 2003. "Paranoid Reading and Reperative Reading, or You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You." In *Touching Feeling. Affect. Pedagogy. Performativity*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Sellar, S. & R. Lingard. 2013. "The OECD and global governance in education." *Journal of Education Policy* 28 (5):710-725.

Smith, R. 2013. *The Joy of Pain. Schadenfreude and the Dark Side of Human Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spinoza, B. 1677/2001. *Ethics (part III)*. London: Wordsworth Editions.

Staunæs, D. & M. Juelskjær. 2016. "The Principal is Present. Producing Psy-ontologies through Post/Psychologies." In *Psy- disciplines in Education*, edited by Eva Bendix Petersen and ZSuzsa Millei. New York & London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Staunæs, D., & J. Pors. 2015. "Thinking educational policy and management through (frictional) concepts of affects." In *Education Policy and Contemporary Theory. Implications for research*, edited by Kalervo N. Gulson, Matthew Clark and Eva Bendix Petersen. London & New York: Routledge.

Staunæs, D., & Raffnsøe, S. (2018). Affective Pedagogies, Equine-assisted Experiments and Posthuman Leadership. *Body & Society, 25*(1), 57-89. doi:10.1177/1357034X18817352

Walton, S. (2004). *A Natural History of Human Emotions*. London: Atlantic Books.

Struthers, S.A. 1996. "The Seven Deadly Sins of Hieronymus Bosch." *http://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu.art/art/15*.

Wilson, E. 2015. *Gut Feminism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Wrenn, M. V. 2015. "Envy in Neoliberalism: Revisiting Veblen's Emulation and Invidious Distinction." *Journal of Economic Issues* 49 (2):503-510.