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Major Publications:

Högborg, B (2007) *Planering som social process. Om delaktighet och barnets bästa*. Lund: Studentlitteratur (Planning as Social Process. About Participation and the Best Interest of the Child)

Högborg, B (2004) *ICF som socialt försvar mot existentiell ångest* i Gustavsson, A (red) *Delaktighetens språk*. Lund: Studentlitteratur (ICF as Social Defence against Existential Anxiety in Gustavsson A, /ed/ *Languages of Participation*)

Högborg, B (2005) *Handledning – snuttefilt eller kunskapsbildning?* i Larsson, M & Lindén J: *Handledning – gestalt med variationer*. Lund: Studentlitteratur (Supervision – security blanket or knowledge formation in Larsson M & Lindén J /ed/: *Supervision – figure with variations*)

Högborg, B (2009) *The taming of a shrew – gender in the postindustrial society*. Submitted to Socio-analysis

Rethinking childhood – the quest for participation and its implications for group dynamics

During the last decades of the 20th century a new technological paradigm has been established, based on information/communication technologies and genetic engineering. Its manifestations are often conceptualized in terms of globalization and individualization. Global systems and structures force us to reconsider the social contract between the citizen and the state. Individualization is often seen as a result of the extensive liberation project of 20th century; a project that has changed both public and private life. The last group to be acknowledged in this liberation process is children.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention for the Right of the Child (CRC). CRC is an international convention setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. Article 12 is considered as the most innovative and radical part of the CRC. It states the child's right to be heard and this is often summarized as "participation".

Now, the notion of participation is central in the whole complex of human rights. Participation is also central in recent conceptualizations of democracy, such as deliberative democracy. Here we find hopes attached to the rationality of the deliberation process. The child's right to participation should be seen in this light. There are hopes invested in children's participation; hopes that their participation will serve the deepening of democracy and contribute to the establishment of peace and security in the world. Participation is also seen as enhancing the education of the individual child. In this sense it is hoped that child participation will produce well educated and committed citizens for future societies. In spite of these hopes and in spite of the high consensus about the principles of CRC, its enforcement is indeed slow. One explanation is that CRC challenges our notions of childhood. Transforming CRC into norms of daily life means that we have to rethink our conceptions of childhood and as a consequence of adulthood as well. In this paper I will take children's participation in their daily life as a point of departure. From the perspective of childhood sociology I will explore the institutionalized childhood of today and its implication for our understanding of social processes in society and in organizations. Studies of children's peer groups and children's experiences in institutional settings provides new dimensions to our understanding of group dynamics. The child's right to be heard and taken seriously comprises a normative challenge of authority as we know it; a challenge that most likely will emerge in future organizations and constructions of leadership.