

## **Freud, Horney, and the neurotic spaces of modernity**

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The word ‘civilization’ describes the whole sum of the achievements and the regulations which distinguish our lives from those of our animal ancestors and which serve two purposes – namely to protect men (sic) against nature and to adjust their mutual relations. (Freud, 1930/1989: 42)

The overall goal of my program of research in the last several years has been to psychoanalyse the specific ways in which the Western project of development and modernisation has been implemented in two European semi-peripheries: Romania and Norway. It builds on previous theoretical contributions from my four books and doctoral dissertation, on my recent empirical investigations (Simandan, 2002a-1, 2003a-1, 2004a-b) regarding the similarities in the history of development in these two countries, on archival and secondary sources, and on a range of very recent conceptual developments in social and political theory. Three specific objectives have derived from this overall goal:

1. To delineate how the discourse of development and modernisation has travelled from the cultural core of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Paris) to the margins of the continent and how it has been changed by local elites as it encountered these marginal spaces;
2. To trace how the discourse of development and modernisation has been translated into a political program for the actual material transformation of Romania and Norway;
3. To identify the practices through which the project of development and modernisation has enrolled 'nature' to constitute Romania and Norway as resource semi-peripheries of Europe.

This chapter consists of two case studies that emerged from this third objective. They signal the slow shift of perspective that has accompanied my empirical research along the years. I undertook my doctoral work at Bristol, in the glorious years when Nigel Thrift and Sarah Whatmore were revamping geographical poststructuralisms and post-marxisms with their non-representational theory. This book bears the mark of all these three perspectives, even though the extent of their metatheoretical compatibility remains a thorny question. After having left Bristol for Brock, I have enriched my theoretical weapons with the insights of psychoanalysis. My earlier contacts with psychoanalytical writings were not rewarding in any substantive way. My later contacts have been of a different kind. First of all, I had a renewed interest in this area because of the work of Judith Butler, who went back to Freud's work to use his writings on mourning and melancholia for the rethinking of the social construction of sex and gender. The second circumstance was that I read the contributions of Karen Horney (1937, 1950) before going to Freud himself.

Karen Horney was a German-born psychoanalyst who moved to the United States and became one of the most prominent theorists of psychoanalysis in North America. She was particularly influenced by Freudo-Marxists like Erich Fromm and by cultural anthropologists like Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. As a result, she distanced herself from the biologism of Freud's writing and put forward a new theory of neurosis, which focuses on the role of the broader cultural context in the genesis of neurotic personalities. To be sure, Freud himself thought about this latter aspect and enquired in his famous *Civilization and its discontents* into the possibility that some societies could become neurotic:

If the development of civilization has such a far-reaching similarity to the development of the individual and if it employs the same methods, may we not be justified in reaching the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some epochs of civilization...have become 'neurotic'? An analytic dissection of such neuroses might lead to therapeutic recommendations which could lay claim to great practical interest. (Freud, 1930/1989: 110)

He was keen to insist in his later work on the role of the super-ego. The latter represents a psychic structure partly unconscious, partly conscious, resulting from the internalisation by the individuals of cultural norms and ideals. The super-ego can be sub-divided into three components: the moral conscience, which is responsible for the sense of guilt; the ego-ideal, which generates the feeling of inferiority; and the process of self-observation, which monitors to what extent a given individual obeys the

imperatives imposed by their moral conscience and ego-ideal. The super-ego of the individual tames the wild beast<sup>1</sup> within each of us, by forcing it to refrain from the direct gratification of instincts. Freud speculated on the possibility that societies might develop a cultural super-ego, a set of shared ideals and norms about how they should behave, where they should be going, whom they should emulate. He says:

The analogy between the process of civilization and the path of individual development may be extended in an important respect. It can be asserted that the community, too, evolves a super-ego under whose influence cultural development proceeds. It would be a tempting task for anyone who has a knowledge of human civilizations to follow out this analogy in detail. (Freud, 1930/1989: 106)

In light of our research project, the cultural super-ego of Romanians and Norwegians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century could be said to consist in the sense of collective shame for being backward, the envy towards the cultural core of Europe, the desire to put the respective countries on the path of modernisation, and the ambition to transcend their marginal condition. When after the Anti-Communist Revolution of 1989, the humanist intellectuals depicted in chapter four decried the failure of the project of

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<sup>1</sup> Freud called that wild beast the Id. The Ego of the individual mediates the conflict between the outrageous desires of the Id and the excessive demands of the Super-Ego. It also mediates between the individual as a whole and the surrounding reality. This three fold inner structure of the human psyche makes Freud sceptical about the possibility of human happiness. We have within ourselves the premises of our own unhappiness.

modernisation and put the blame on either the constitutive weakness of the Romanian fiber or on the invasive communist ideology<sup>2</sup>, they were trying to avoid their own sense of guilt, their own suspicions of inadequacy. Freud reminds us about the extent to which this sense of guilt signals the progress from the primitive hoard<sup>3</sup> to proper civilization:

The sense of guilt [is] the most important problem in the development of civilization and...the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt. (Freud, 1930/1989: 97)

The irony associated with the lamentations of the intellectuals comes precisely from the fact that their sense of guilt<sup>4</sup> from having failed at the task of escaping primitivism gives the indication that primitivism had indeed been overcome, albeit not to the extent they would have liked it. And this observation sends me back to Karen Horney. Two years before her death, she published *Neurosis and human growth*.

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<sup>2</sup> Which allegedly changed normal humans into zombies.

<sup>3</sup> In *Totem and Tabu* (1912-1913), Freud argued that civilization was born when the sons of the primitive Father killed their father and eat him, to gain his power and to have access to women. They felt guilty for their deed, guilt signaled to the present day by the universal tabus on murder, cannibalism, and incest.

<sup>4</sup> To be sure, their guilt was projected into lay people, who were blamed for not having embraced the values of modernity. In psychoanalysis, projection is an archaic defense mechanism of the ego. It consists in attributing to others one's own unacceptable or unwelcome attitudes, qualities, behaviours, or desires. It plays a crucial role in paranoid delusions: delusions of grandeur, delusions of persecution, and delusions of jealousy.

*The struggle for self-realization*, which represents the culmination of her life-long project of rethinking neuroses away from Freud's biologism. Horney claims that the root of all neuroses is the feeling of *basic anxiety* the child experiences if his parents raise him/her in an inappropriate manner. Confronted with this basic anxiety, the child chooses one of the following solutions: she can move *away from people*, by becoming an introvert and aloof individual; she can move *towards people*, by always trying to please others and ignoring her own wishes; or she can move *against people*, by using others for her own goals and proving to them that they are below her level. The first solution signifies the appeal of freedom, the second solution the appeal of love, and the third solution the appeal of mastery. The distinctive feature of the neurotic is that she stubbornly and rigidly privileges only one of these solutions, thus impoverishing her life through a range of affective and experiential deprivations.

Unlike the neurotic, the normal individual has the flexibility to react to life's challenges by combining the three aforementioned pathways. Horney insists on the fact that the solution to childhood disturbances becomes the cause of adult disturbances, in a rather dialectical fashion. She also questions Freud's concept of a super-ego and his pessimistic view of human nature. Her theory of neurosis turns upside down the Freudian model. Freud argues that the newly born individual is a wild beast who cares for nothing but the immediate satisfaction of his instincts<sup>5</sup>. The most problematic

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<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, in English 'instinct' does not really capture the German concept of 'trieb'. *Trieb* refers to an energetic pulsion, which seeks satisfaction on a range of possible objects. Unlike, *trieb*, 'instinct' is too circumscribed a concept and its use by biologists is different from Freud's use of *trieb*. In his early work, Freud distinguishes the sexual drive and the self-preservation drive. In his late work, he groups these two under *Eros* (the life drive), and opposes *Eros* to the death drive (later on labelled

among them is aggression. It has massive implications for understanding the natural disposition of the human beast:

Men (sic) are not gently creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness... Their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. *Homo homini lupus*. Who, in the face of all his experience of life and of history, will have the courage to dispute this assertion? (Freud, 1930/1989: 68-69)

Civilization becomes possible to the extent that it educates the wild beast to delay the gratification of her instincts, to repress them, to suppress<sup>6</sup> them, or to sublimate them into socially acceptable activities. In a sense, the work required to forge civilization and to build modernity is the result of forcing the wild human beast to sublimate its instinctual urges into *ambition* (the sublimation of aggressiveness) and *creation* (of buildings, dams, institutions, technological artifacts, literature, etc; creation is the sublimation of sexual

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*Thanatos*). The urge to destroy and human aggressiveness in general are expressions of Thanatos. The history of any given individual and the history of humankind is the trace of the fight between Eros and Thanatos.

<sup>6</sup> The difference between repression and suppression lies in that the former is unconscious, whereas the latter is preconscious or conscious.

urges). The problem for civilization comes from the fact that the human beast prefers the direct gratification of its needs: by forcing it to gratify its needs in indirect ways, the beast will generate an attitude of hostility towards civilization:

Sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic, or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life...Sublimation is a vicissitude which has been forced upon the instincts entirely by civilization...It is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts. This 'cultural frustration'...is the cause of the hostility against which all civilizations have to struggle. (Freud, 1930/1989: 51-52)

To sum up, for Freud the individual is structurally vicious<sup>7</sup> and civilization has the mission to tame her. It is a *zero-sum game* that underwrites the process of growing-up: the price to pay for collective happiness (civilization) is individual unhappiness (forcing the individual to delay or repress direct gratification of instincts). Full individual happiness (direct gratification of all desires) would mean full collective unhappiness (the impossibility of civilization). Freud

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<sup>7</sup> One should always pay attention to the fact that Freud was cautious about not assuming some type of ethical stand. His goal was to describe human nature as it is, regardless of any prior moral considerations. He was timely in daring to point to the relativity of moral systems and to the lack of transcendent foundations for the good and the bad. His attitude towards ethics bears the influence of Nietzsche.

however broadens this opposition between the individual and civilization in order to explain why the individual is by necessity condemned to unhappiness. Indeed, even if the individual were free of civilization's constraints, she would still be unhappy because she would be at the mercy of the blind and cruel forces of nature. In the *Future of an Illusion*, Freud meaningfully exclaims:

But how ungrateful, how short-sighted after all, to strive for the abolition of civilization! What would then remain would be a state of nature, and that would be far harder to bear. It is true that nature would not demand any restrictions of instinct from us, she would let us do as we liked; but she has her own particularly effective method of restricting us. She destroys us – coldly, cruelly, relentlessly, as it seems to us, and possibly through the very things that occasioned our satisfaction. It was precisely because of these dangers with which nature threatens us that we came together and created civilization, which is also, among other things, intended to make our communal life possible. For the principal task of civilization, its actual *raison d'être*, is to defend us against nature. (Freud, 1927/1989: 18-19)

The implication of this way of portraying human existence consists in the ultimate condemnation to individual misery. The individual is caught between two zero-sum games: one between herself and civilization (conflict over how to deal with instinctuality), the other between herself and Nature (conflict over who controls whom). Her only chance to win the second game resides in her willingness to be defeated in the first game. Through entering civilization, she can hope to

be able to tame nature, by means of collective effort (science, technology, plain everyday work).

Karen Horney disagrees with this pessimistic outlook, although one might always suspect that the rational arguments against Freudian pessimism hide the non-rational wish for life to be better<sup>8</sup>. Karen Horney is one of many psychoanalysts who questions the Freudian idea that aggression has a primary nature<sup>9</sup> and is fundamental to understanding human behaviour. Instead, she defends the view that human nature is basically good and aggression has a *reactive* genesis: it is an answer to the frustration of needs. Humankind has witnessed so much aggression not because humans are inherently aggressive, but because civilization has frustrated too much the needs of the individuals. The unfulfilled demands of the child have generated basic anxiety, and aggression is just one of the several ways for expressing this basic anxiety. Horney makes the point that the different ways through which basic anxiety is dealt with are organised into particular *psychic structures*. One cannot cure an individual from her neurosis, if one does not detect the psychic structure that governs her behaviour.

Many decades of clinical experience led Horney to argue that the general practice through which the individual escapes her

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<sup>8</sup> Freud was acutely aware of the irrational stubbornness with which humans cling and need to cling to positive illusions such as life after death, divine justice, and the goodness of human nature. It is the merit of psychoanalysis to have revealed the extent to which human happiness is premised not on knowing the truth, but on fully believing in positive illusions. The very recent work by Martin Seligman on happiness and several studies in experimental psychology confirm Freud's insights about positive illusions.

<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Melanie Klein and her followers put the idea of primary human aggression at the heart of their contributions to rethinking orthodox psychoanalysis. Jacques Lacan and his followers also accept the Freudian position.

basic anxiety is the disavowal of her authentic self and the parallel construction of a substitutive self. The substitutive self is the condensation of the demands society puts on the individual, as well as of the demands the individual puts on herself. At the heart of the structure of the substitutive self lies the thirst for glory<sup>10</sup>: the drive to be great, admired, loved, memorable. Four processes support and translate into action this overall search for glory. One of them is self-idealization. It includes daydreaming about how the individual should be and redefining oneself to become that which the individual believes and hopes she should be. The second of them is perfectionism. It refers to the fact that the individual is not happy until she reaches the flawless achievement of all that she wishes for. The third component is neurotic ambition. It points to the motivational power of the substitutive self: the individual wishes so much to get rid of her authentic *inadequate* self and to become her idealized self that she becomes able to delay the gratification of all other needs and to do nothing but work towards this neurotic goal. Finally, the fourth component is vindictive triumph: by becoming her desired self and suppressing her inadequate self the individual wins with some delay the battles that she lost as a child. It is a late but sweet victory, which is always a function of social comparison.

Horney argues that the problems of the neurotic are caused by the very solutions she chooses to overcome her basic anxiety. One can never deny one's authentic self. It will always haunt the neurotic's self-idealizations, to remind her of her weaknesses and inadequacies. Horney speaks of the *central inner conflict*, to capture this relentless battle between the original self and the fake, socially-acceptable self. It is

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<sup>10</sup> One can detect here the influence of Alfred Adler's ideas about the role of inferiority complexes.

this inner battle that governs the unhappiness of the neurotic. It is a battle similar to that described by Freud between the Id and the Super-Ego. Similar but not identical. Freud's Id is vicious, Horney's 'authentic self' is not. Freud's Super-Ego is a prerequisite for the existence of civilization, Horney's 'fake, socially-desirable self' is not. Horney does not accept a zero-sum game between society and the individual. If we dared to relax the narrowness of social norms, both society and the individual would win. The win-win situation results from the generally good nature of the individuals' authentic selves. By giving up the need to construct a fake self, the individual will not be torn apart by the central inner conflict. Hence her promise to happiness. But Horney tells us that society will also benefit. Indeed, the neurotic is so caught in her neurosis, that she cannot either work well, or love well<sup>11</sup>. Authentic individuals would be able to open up to society and to give to society (or some of its members) love and the fruits of their good work.

I am inclined to suspect some positive illusions in Horney's theory. More recent developments in psychoanalysis – especially Melanie Klein's work - make it difficult to deny the primary nature of human aggression and the implied need to tame the individual by bending her according to cultural imperatives. What I think remains useful from Horney's philosophy is firstly, her five-fold model<sup>12</sup> of the fake self and the thesis of a central inner conflict, and secondly, her earlier (Horney, 1937) courageous development of the Freudian hypothesis that societies themselves can become neurotic.

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<sup>11</sup> Freud defined the capacity to work well and the capacity to love well as the two fundamental indicators of mental health and successful living.

<sup>12</sup> As a reminder the five components are the search for glory, self-idealization, perfectionism, neurotic ambition, and vindictive triumph; for an extensive description see Horney, 1950.

The thesis I want to put forward is that the process of modernisation in Norway and Romania has subjected these nations to a neurotic condition that explains most of the things I have been writing about throughout this book. This cultural neurosis becomes apparent when we read it through Horney's five-fold model of the fake self.

At the beginning there was *basic anxiety*. Young Romanian and Norwegian elites went to Paris to study and realized there just how inadequate and primitive their nations were when compared with the cultural core of Europe. They felt excluded, ashamed, inferior, marginal, rejected, inadequate. As shown in previous work, their written correspondence with one another and with their relatives remains a testimony of their ethnic *malaise*. This feeling of inadequacy was the psychological fuel that sublimated their aggression into the ambition to transform their countries into respectable modern cultures. The authentic self was to be replaced with the fake self, the self of French Modernity, itself expression of the ideals of the French Enlightenment. The process of modernisation has been for two centuries now Romania's and Norway's ways to *search for glory*. They had to become fully European. They had to give up barbarism. They had to industrialize and urbanize. They had to enlighten their people through education. They had to be proud of themselves<sup>13</sup>. They had to be better than their neighbours. Norwegian and Romanian nationalisms have been nothing but the discursive precipitation of this search for glory. It has been both *the engine* driving these two nations into the utopia of modernity and the *social glue* that has made class conflict bearable:

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<sup>13</sup> Horney nicely groups all these 'have to' under the phrase 'the tyranny of the shoulds'.

Every culture claims the right to look down on the rest...The narcissistic satisfaction provided by the cultural ideal is also among the forces which are successful in combating the hostility to culture within the cultural unit. This satisfaction can be shared in not only by the favoured classes, which enjoy the benefits of the culture, but also by the suppressed ones, since the right to despise the people outside it compensates them for the wrongs they suffer within their own unit...The identification of the suppressed classes with the class who rules and exploits them is, however, only part of a larger whole. For, on the other hand, the suppressed classes can be emotionally attached to their masters; in spite of their hostility to them they may see in them their ideals. (Freud, 1927/1989: 16-17)

Nationalism has played in the cultural neurosis of modernisation the role that *self-idealization* plays at the level of individual neurosis.

As far as *neurotic perfectionism* is concerned, one can detect it in the continuous dissatisfaction of intellectuals with what has been achieved when compared with what could have been achieved. It constitutes a long series of lamentations about missed opportunities or about how an apparent victory is a failure, because the neighbour has also won.

The level of *neurotic ambition* can be mapped by looking at the political history of these two countries: a long series of collective sacrifices and tight five-year development plans in order to achieve the promise of European respectability.

Last but not least in Horney's model of neurosis is *vindictive triumph*. The hope to be on top one day and to smile back with arrogance at those who have hitherto humiliated you.

Norway's refusal to join the EU is vindictive triumph: we are better than you, the one we have copied. President's Basescu advice to French president Jacques Chirac is vindictive triumph<sup>14</sup> as well.

Horney recognized the tremendous subjective significance of vindictive triumph, but at the same time alerted us that the expression of vindictive triumph is predicated on the successful mastery by the fake self of the central inner conflict with the authentic self. One cannot fully enjoy one's glory unless one fully hides from sight any trace of the ugly, authentic self. It haunts the fake self in various ways. In Norway it might take the form of feelings of impotence in the face of the forces of globalisation. The glorious Norwegian welfare state had its delusions of grandeur shattered by the global neoliberal revolution of the 1990s, and the last of the two case studies of this chapter looks at this painful neoliberalization in more detail. As far as Romania is concerned, the severity of its central inner conflict has been depicted in my previous work. The authentic self expresses itself in the form of generalized corruption<sup>15</sup>, which makes us not good enough for the European Union. Politicians work hard to hide that reality or even to challenge it in a more radical way. At the time when I am writing this lines – July 2005 – the main worry remains whether Romania will join the EU in 2007 or not, etc.

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<sup>14</sup> He advised him to mind his own business and to understand that Romania will privilege the axis Washington – London -Bucharest.

<sup>15</sup> I mention corruption in a descriptive sense and not with the normative implication that Romanians are corrupt, therefore bad. I maintain that corruption is a discursive weapon of neoliberalism that helps convince people of their inadequacy and of the superiority of the promise of neoliberal modernisation.

With these general psychoanalytical conjectures concerning the genealogy of marginal modernity in Norway and Romania, we are now able to move back to more empirical concerns that give substance to theoretical speculation. The first case study analyses the history of hydropower in Norway and Romania in the years when the former was a proper welfare state, and the latter a proper socialist state. Those *glorious neurotic days* are contrasted, in the second case study, with the *painful redefinitions* of the national ego imposed by the cold shower of global neoliberalism.

### **Case study 1: Glorious neurotic days: hydropower and the governmentalization of nature in Norway and Romania**

We will follow one particular manifestation of the neurotic modern world - namely the governmentalisation of nature - through an analysis of the political ecology of hydropower in two countries sharing their commitment to modernisation, but nevertheless differing to an extent from the point of view of the means for achieving this goal. Norway has been well known for its hydropower resources and for the significance these resources hold for the country's economy. It is less known how much the actual material transformation required by hydropower works has been criticised by green nongovernmental organisations and corresponding social movements. Insofar as Romania is concerned, the hydropower works undertaken during the communist period have been uncritically welcome, despite their substantial negative 'side-effects'. By discussing in parallel Norway and Romania, I strive to reframe the dominant narratives of hydropower, especially by positioning them in connection with the neurotic rationalities of marginal modernity. This endeavour is sustained by an antiessentialist political ecology

that brings together insights from Foucault, Latour, and Haraway.

I start by discussing the most often held assumption about hydropower – namely that it is a green, sustainable, and essentially beneficial direction for the development of one's country energy system, and place its saga within the broader story of the national development of communist Romania and capitalist Norway. The discursive intercourse with the narratives of development and modernisation, as well as the vindictive taming of wild nature, are hinted at in order to capture the positive scriptural economy of hydropower. I then turn to the arguments against hydropower and to the theoretical – political movements that are bringing them to the forefront, and hence consider the dislocation of local communities, the administrative abuse that has rendered possible too many silent dislocations, and the masculinist fantasies of domination, control, and regulation of nature that can be detected in the apologetic literature of hydropower and in the practices of territorial work underpinning the taming of rivers. The next step in the logic of the account outlines the metanarratives of hydropower, or, to put it more simply, those theories that move beyond a mere ethical consideration of the positive / negative sides of hydropower, to enquire how the actual material transformation of the landscape has been possible and what have been the political intricacies supported by, and supportive of, that transformation. Three such metanarratives are of concern: first and foremost, the work of Michel Foucault on power and on culture as technology of governmentality, then Bruno Latour's Actor- Network Theory, and to a lesser extent Benedict Anderson's work on the cultural construction of the nation.

***Positive narratives of hydropower: development, mastery and modernisation***

Let me give an express assurance that I have not the least intention of making judgements on the great experiment in civilization that is now in progress in the vast country that stretches between Europe and Asia. I have neither the special knowledge nor the capacity to decide on its practicability, to test the expediency of the methods employed or to measure the width of the inevitable gap between intention and execution. (Freud, 1927/1989: 10-11)

As I have shown at length in previous work, before the shift to communism, in 1947, Romania was already undergoing the process of modernization, but its intensity was well below the one to be later imposed by the communist regime. Many Romanian intellectuals, influenced by essentialist theories of ethnicity and frustrated with the slow rhythms of the processes of modernization, became ashamed with the ‘authentic self’ of Romanians and contributed through their writings to the emergence of a more glamorous ‘neurotic’ ethnic self, premised on becoming fully modern. Ceausescu dedicated a significant part of his attention to the transformation of Romania into a fully modern country, with big cities, big industries, and international economic weight. At the heart of the economic strategy of the country was the full exploitation of its natural and human resources, so as to avoid unnecessary importations and the ensuing external debt to the imperialistic forces of global capitalism. This ambition to develop oneself in one’s own terms explains why the relatively big and cheap hydropower potential had been at the very centre of mobilizing people, materials, and other non-humans in the fast-growing and totaling network of autarchic

development. To be exact, there were already some hydroelectric works in the country before the advent of the communists, but their size was small or medium, and they had a limited economic contribution.

The communist strategy of modernisation had been grounded on the *systematic* activation of ‘nature’ *for*, and *through*, development. Geologists, engineers, and economists were collaborating in well-coordinated teams to elaborate integrated strategies of growth. One such strategy had concerned the national system of energy, connecting all cities and almost all villages of the country, while concentrating many nodes in the Carpathians, where most hydropower works took place (Pop, 1996). Romanians took pride at this overall metamorphosis of their country and secretly admired their dictator, even though few of them would dare nowadays to admit it. The country as a whole was finding neurotic pleasure in what psychoanalyst Ives Hendrick (1943) called the instinct to master<sup>16</sup>. The Romanians were changing the rural and all too natural landscape of inter-war Romania into a fully modern garden, and they were good at it. The taming of rivers has been a powerful icon in this positive metanarrative of growth and development (‘Romania’s transfiguration’).

The same national feeling of backwardness has fuelled the engagement of Norway on the path of industrialisation, although this process has been undertaken under a capitalist regime. For a long while subjected to Sweden, then linked with Denmark, Norway reached independence quite late. The formation of the modern Norwegian identity (and see Gullestad, 1992, 1996) has had at its heart the exploitation

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<sup>16</sup> In contemporary psychology, the instinct to master is known as effectance motivation: taking satisfaction from being able to do things, and hence to control one’s environment.

and development (in close connection) of its huge hydropower potential, energy-intensive industries, urban life, and a political system marked by the reproduction of the welfare state. During my fieldwork undertaken in the summer of 2002 in the south of Norway, I visited several hydropower plants in the area around the industrial city of Odda, as well as several ‘spaces of constructed visibility’ (Gregory, 1998) such as museums of national history and exhibitions. I was struck by the similarity between Romania and Norway in matters pertaining to the systematic celebration of the quintessential role hydropower is believed to have held in making industrialisation, urbanisation, progress, and overall development possible. One of the leaflets received while visiting the Norwegian Museum of Hydropower and Industry contains the following text:

Welcome to the Norwegian Museum of Hydropower and Industry (NVIM)!

The industry came to Odda and Tyssedal early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Small farmer societies were changed into boiling melting pots, and people came from all over Norway, from the Nordic countries and from the rest of Europe.

Come on in and you will get to know more about the museum and this exciting history. NVIM is one of the largest museums within the theme hydropower-and industrial history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We have exhibitions and audio-visual shows in Tyssedal and Odda. Moreover, we will take you on a guided tour...

The text is representative for the class of positive narratives of hydropower, to the extent that it erases the logic of capital

underwritten in that history and attaches to history the signifier 'exciting'.

The museums of national history visited are displaying the 'hydropower momentum' as a critical threshold separating the rooms that exhibit pre-modern Norway from the rooms that exhibit modern Norway. That critical threshold conveys the beginning of the identification with the neurosis of modernity.

To give just a detail of the pride Norwegians invest<sup>17</sup> in the hydropower industry, note that the architecture of one of the first Norwegian hydropower station is very close to that of the Royal Palace in Oslo. This marking of the industrial landscape with royal signifiers betrays the subjective significance Norwegians have attached to hydropower. But the fact that the hydropower industry has become, through the architecture of dams and stations, a *type of art* is not a minor detail. Its psychoanalytical deconstruction unravels the tremendous implications of this becoming. As the father of psychoanalysis observed:

Art offers substitutive satisfactions for the oldest and still most deeply felt cultural renunciations, and for that reason it serves as nothing else does to reconcile a man (sic) to the sacrifices he has made on behalf of civilization. On the other hand, the creation of art heightens his feelings of identification, of which every cultural unit stands in so much need, by providing an occasion for sharing highly valued emotional experiences.

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<sup>17</sup> I use the word 'invest' in a psychoanalytical sense, as synonymous with cathexis. It is an economic concept referring to the allocation of psychic energy to a certain representation, or object, in order to fulfill conscious or unconscious wishes. In the case discussed, investment of pride into something might be seen as a way to overcome the unconscious fear of insignificance.

And when those creations picture the achievements of his particular culture and bring to his mind its ideals in an impressive manner, they also minister to his narcissistic satisfaction. (Freud, 1927/1989: 17)

While the official narratives of hydropower are uncontroversially positive in both Romania and Norway, there have always been lateral voices that have queered this apologetic portrayal, bringing to the public opinion other, gloomier, more situated, and more uncomfortable versions of this saga. It is to these silenced voices that I now turn.

***Negative narratives of hydropower: dislocation, abuse and masculinist fantasies***

Several Norwegian nongovernmental organisations have focused their activities on the excavation of the hidden negative effects of hydroelectric works, and hence on undoing the myth of the benign character of hydropower. In this brief space I would outline just two negative aspects: firstly, the dislocation of local communities, secondly, the reproduction of patriarchal values through the practices of ‘river taming’.

In order to tame a river for hydroelectric purposes a wide range of operations is required. Most of them involve serious alterations of the material landscape, not least because hydroelectricity production crucially depends on building dams and artificial lakes. Hence the invasion of vast surfaces by water and the need to transfer the local communities unfortunate to have lived in the area. An ethical issue arises: should local communities with all their culture and material traces be forced to relocate for the sake of patriotism? It is well known that in Ceausescu’s Romania the answer to this

question had always been positive, and that the propaganda system always described the alleged positive change in the life of the re-settled communities. It is much less known that in many of the river works undertaken by the regime, community resettlement had been possible because of the use of the repressive state apparatuses such as the 'Securitate', the 'Militia', the Communist Party, and the Army. Potential oppositional social movements had been crushed from their inception (see Dumistracel, 1995) by stigmatising their leaders as 'enemies of the people' or 'enemies of the working class' and by threatening to bring them to court for 'working against the power of the state': a very feared accusation at the time.

In Norway, the answer to the aforementioned question has been much less important insofar as most hydroelectric works took place in the almost uninhabited highlands, with no communities to be resettled. When, however the question had to be asked, the answer given by the authorities was more humane than in Romania. In almost all such cases first attention has been accorded to the protection of the individual human rights and of the collective rights of the people in the envisaged areas. In short, two ethical perspectives have been deployed: in the Romanian case the ethics of sacrifice for the national cause, in the Norwegian case, the ethics of respect for those who have dwelled and built their unique culture in the places considered for 'river taming'. But regardless of the final decisions, the very prospect of being under consideration for resettlement is producing anxiety, fear, hatred and collective traumas that irrevocably scar the cultural consciousness of the respective communities.

Secondly, the practices of ‘river taming’ reproduce patriarchal<sup>18</sup> values through a constellation of discursive associations and structuring fantasies that include, *inter alia*:

- a) The fictional separation of the man as rational self-sufficient subject of history from its object, the irrational, ahistorical, ‘feminine’ world ‘out there’ in need to be organised, controlled, regulated, rationalised;
- b) The ‘absolutising of time and space’ (Gregory, 1998) whereby the rational civilised man equates time and space with reason, and thus renders accessible to his will-power the local microcosms of situated, pre-modern communities who understand and perform space in a traditional, affective mode (Ingold, 2000, Escobar, 1999);
- c) The vehiculation within the narratives of hydropower works of masculinist virtues and signifiers such as power, heroism, courage, determination, effort, (male) team work, abstract calculation, quantification;
- d) Following up from the previous point, the discursive celebration of masculinism has served the redistribution of power and privileges within modernised societies (Romanian, Norwegian) towards male – dominated categories such as engineers, geologists, planners, and the skilled proletariat, all

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<sup>18</sup> Freud observed that the distinction masculine-feminine appears rather late in the mental assumptions of the child and is preceded first, by the distinction active-passive, and then by the distinction with penis-castrated. Thus, the dichotomy active-passive is the ontogenetic root of the subsequent allocation of value to the masculine pole and the ensuing withdrawal of value from the feminine pole. For our purposes, the slippages of emotional investment in the following chain of signifiers are of paramount importance to understand the psychoanalytical reading of ‘river taming’: active-with penis-male-civilization-reason versus passive-castrated-female-nature-emotion.

these to the detriment of the ‘feminine’ peasants, social scientists, etc;

- e) The practices of ‘river taming’ have enacted a symbolic order of violence underwritten by the imperatives of instrumental rationality, anthropocentrism, totalisation, and traumatic modernisation. The utopian engineering of the landscape has altered but not defeated the ‘Other’ of the rational modern man, and hence the current<sup>19</sup> spectacle of periodic excess (floods, technological collapse) that escapes and haunts the plans, devices, and metrics of river regulations.

***Metanarratives of hydropower: governmentality, actor-networks and the fiction of the nation***

There are two widespread human characteristics which are responsible for the fact that the regulations of civilization can only be maintained by a certain degree of coercion – namely, that men are not spontaneously fond of work and that arguments are of no avail against their passions. (Freud, 1927/1989: 9)

The title given to this case study speaks of ‘the governmentalisation of nature...’ and it does so to signify the particular brand of antiessentialist political ecology of

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<sup>19</sup> I am writing this text at a time when Romania witnesses the collapse of its hydrological illusions. The system built in the 1960s, 1970s, and the 1980s in order to prevent floods proves to be less satisfactory than previously assumed. In 2005, the country is confronted with floods at least as massive as those of the early 1970s.

hydropower I am interested in: one informed by the work of Michel Foucault. To be more specific, of major import here is his late theorisation of power, outlined in an interview given in 1984. In that interview, Foucault defines three components of power: states of domination, power games (or strategic relations), and technologies of governmentality. So far, I have presented the dominant positive narratives of hydropower associated with the *states of domination* (Foucault, 1994) in either Norway (capitalism, democracy) or Romania (communism, dictatorship), as well as the lateral negative narratives put forward by oppositional environmentalist and feminist movements that have animated the *strategic relations* or *power games* (Foucault, 1994) of 'river taming'. The missing level from Foucault's three-fold analysis of power is that of the *technologies of governmentality*, i.e. of the ways in which the hydroelectric works have served the reproduction of certain power structures, and have allowed the emergence of several distributed centres of power.

The limited scope of this case study does not permit but to suggest what could be the lines of flight for such a Foucauldian political ecology of hydropower in Norway and Romania. It strikes me as evident that the following observations touch upon some of the investigative thresholds of this ongoing theoretical project.

Until very recently, in both countries hydropower has been framed in terms of 'public utility', 'strategic infrastructure', and hence has been a privileged site for the exercise of state power. In other words, the positive narratives of hydropower have been conspicuously present in the ideological state apparatuses insofar as they have been enrolled in the construction of the legitimacy of the state, of its *raison d'être*.

By the very technological specificity of energy systems, this type of networks (including those of hydropower) requires centralisation : the bringing together of all energy providers, all energy consumers, and all distribution networks within a totalised mega-network that organises centres of calculation to coherently stitch and control its elements. To put it differently, in the ideological competition<sup>20</sup> between liberalisation – decentralisation – deregulation and supervision – centralisation – regulation, hydropower and energy more broadly have been enlisted as realms *requiring* state regulation, and hence have been used to support the expansion of state power in virtue of *technological necessity*. This is not the same with the previous observation, where at stake was *political necessity*: hydropower is a strategic resource, a matter of national security that cannot be let to the mere play of market forces.

‘River taming’ has been a technology of governmentality in the sense that it has allowed for reaching humanity’s ‘Other’ – ‘Nature’- through the production of hybrids (Latour, 1993), or, more specifically, of technology-driven ‘culturenatures’ (and see Haraway, 1991, 1997, 2000; Whatmore, 2002). To put it simply, ‘Nature’ has been brought to the domain of the political through its hybridization with technological culture: dams, artificial lakes, ground reservoirs, channels, water management systems, and debit redirection. Technology is – psychoanalytically - the male semen of civilization placed into female nature to appropriate it and to mark the *vindictive triumph* over its blind forces.

Nevertheless, this direction of thought should not occlude a background appropriation: most hydropower works in both Norway and Romania have been undertaken in the upland

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<sup>20</sup> Competition the *contingent* results of which secure the level of extension of state intervention and state structures. See the next case study.

areas, realms that would have otherwise escaped to the tight control of the central state apparatus. It is especially in these areas that oppositional forces often find refuge<sup>21</sup>, and surveilling these spaces is of strategic import for the sphere of centralised political power.

The positive narratives of hydropower works have played a major role in the invention of the modern Norwegian nation and the modern Romanian nation (Anderson, 1991), as an analysis of media and of general education school texts would clearly reveal. They have occupied a privileged position in the ‘spaces of constructed visibility’ (Gregory, 1998) where the imaginative geographies of the nation are fabricated (exhibitions, museums, textbooks, traditional and electronic media, public ceremonies). Nevertheless, and of paramount significance, these narratives have helped fabricating *the modern* fiction of the nation (Horney’s neurotic fake self), and not just an unspecified collective identity. The insistence on ‘modern’ leads further, to enquire the scriptural and imagistic connections between nation building, industrialisation, urbanisation, the technological hybridization of ‘nature’ and the social status of certain groups (engineers, skilled workers, geologists, planners, statisticians, architects) with vested interest in enhancing the project of hydropower work and reproducing its positive narratives of landscape transfiguration.

After having enquired these lines of flight, we would learn that to hear lateral narratives is not a matter of mere access to information, but, as Foucault would have told us, a ‘strategic game’ within the analytics of power.

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. the anti-communist ‘Armed Resistance’ in the Carpathians in the first decades of communism.

**Case study 2: Painful redefinitions: The neoliberal revolution in Norway's energy sector**

Human civilization, by which I mean all those respects in which human life has raised itself above its animal status and differs from the life of the beasts...presents two aspects to the observer. It includes on the one hand all the knowledge and capacity that men have acquired in order to control the forces of nature and extract its wealth for the satisfaction of human needs, and, on the other hand, all the regulations necessary in order to adjust the relations of men to one another and especially the distribution of available wealth. The two trends of civilization are not independent of each other: firstly, because the mutual relations of men are profoundly influenced by the amount of instinctual satisfaction which the existing wealth makes possible; secondly, because an individual man can himself come to function as wealth in relation to another one, in so far as the other person makes use of his capacity for work, or chooses him as a sexual object; and thirdly, moreover, because every individual is virtually an enemy of civilization, though civilization is supposed to be an object of universal human interest...civilization has to be defended against the individual. (Freud, 1927/1989: 6-7)

The neoliberal revolution of the 1990s shattered the neurotic delusions of grandeur of the Norwegian welfare state and rendered its impotence painfully visible for whomever wanted to watch. More specifically, the neoliberalisation of the Norwegian energy market in 1991 brought to the

forefront of the public debate a dilemma that might be seen as the organising tension of the dubious paradigm of sustainable development<sup>22</sup>: to what extent the goals of environmental improvement are in contradiction with the principles of efficiency that govern economic thinking? Sustainable development is an attempt to minimise this tension by figuring out policies that meet favourably both sides of the equation. The deregulation of the energy market was an opportunity for Norwegian elites and lay people to envisage the shaking conditions of possibility of such an attempt. Indeed, this economic-political maneuver took care of the economic side of the question only, leaving its environmental side out of sight.

In what follows, the externalisation of environmental issues in the discourse and policy of deregulation is excavated by means of Spivak's account of the production of theoretical and political margins and by rendering visible the structures of complicity underwriting the logic of consumerism of contemporary capitalism.

***The Norwegian electricity system: to regulate or to deregulate?***

Norway is a country worldwide – known for its massive energy resources and electricity industry, as well as for the impressive domination of the energy system by hydropower

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<sup>22</sup> The question over the possibility of true sustainable development became acute in Norway, because two major neurotic imperatives collided: the imperative to preserve the image of Norway as environmentally-responsible country and the imperative to preserve the image of Norway as economically-competitive country. *Image-preservation* is a crucial component in neurotic behaviour, as it hides the unconscious fear of being unmasked for what one really is: something vulnerable, fragile, and imperfect (Horney, 1937).

industries, uncritically taken to be more ecological than other energy sources<sup>23</sup>. It is also a country known for the long lived cohabitation between the logic of capitalism and the logic of socialism, through the compromise-formation of the welfare state (Jessop, 1997, Peck, 2000). The welfare state is a regime of social management based on the ethical prioritising of the virtues of solidarity and equality. In practice, this kind of priority underpins the economic tool of high taxation levels that allow for revenue redistribution, particularly through state expenditures in public utilities such as education, health, and transportation. Even more importantly for the context of our study is the traditional high attention paid to environmental issues in Norway, attention that the Norwegian state apparatuses have had to translate into environmental regulations often more demanding than in most other European countries (Hille, 1995).

The development and regulation of the Norwegian energy system before the deregulation of 1991 has to be understood at the intersection of a) the broader project of building the modern Norwegian nation (Gullestad, 1992, 1996), with b) the political domination of public affairs by the Labour Party, the main representative of the Left ideologies and the artisan of the Norwegian brand of the welfare state. During the decades of energy system regulation the foundational assumption concerning energy was that it represents a *strategic infrastructure*, a tool for the development of the country of too much import to be left to the rules of the market. In a country where the whole economic framework was built on the premise of the availability of very cheap and abundant energy resources, the consideration of energy affairs as a matter of public utility / strategic infrastructure has been one of the main discursive sources for the political

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<sup>23</sup> But see Simandan, 2002g.

legitimacy and definition of the state, as actor *obliged* to take care of the good functioning and growth of the energy system. This observation is at the heart of the argument developed in this case study, namely that the deregulation of the Norwegian energy market has been a symbol of the decline of the actual power of the state apparatuses, and hence a threat to the neurotic dream of vindictive triumph. The aforementioned decline needs to be aligned to the broader material effects of the ideology of neoliberalism (Lemke, 2001) that have been documented in various parts of the world (e.g. Simandan, 2002b, Dunkley, 1997, Hardt and Negri, 2000).

In short, the *regulated* system was characterised by several organisational patterns with controversial ethical, economical, technological, and environmental consequences. To begin with, the energy networks were organised into local and regional monopolies. This regime was beneficial from the point of view of making possible sustainable policies through centralised decisions concerning environmental issues and rewards for energy saving. It was less beneficial from the point of view of neoliberal economists, because it did not allow for competition, the major motivation to increasing efficiency. Monopolies, they argue, necessarily lead to complacency, inefficient resource allocation and even corruption. While their economic argument is debatable, there is no doubt that the capacity of the state to promote environmental concerns within the energy system has been jeopardized by deregulation.

Following on from here, the existence of monopolies perpetuated the weird situation of having differences in the price of energy from one regional monopoly to the other. However, from an economic geography perspective, this might be seen as a *signature of space* within the economic logic, as a normal economic differential residing in the

peculiarities of local and regional geographies. Furthermore, price differences were supported by the state at the level of economic sectors as well, and these differences were even more pronounced than the regional ones.

Thus, households and the service sector paid more per energy unit than the manufacturing industries. The neoliberals argue that this has been unethical and that 'the same price for all' policy brought about by deregulation is in a sense more 'socialist' (i.e. equalitarian). But this disingenuous argument occludes that in a country at once engaged on the path of development through industrialisation, and committed to environmental protection, the aforementioned sectoral differential in energy price was a powerful policy intervention. It was designed to stimulate industrial growth, production, and investments, and to hold to a decent level the consumption of a strategic infrastructure – electricity – within the realms of unproductive sectors such as households and services. The very state accused by neoliberals for having promoted inefficiency in energy networks, had actually favoured a wise allocation of this strategic infrastructure, rewarding investments in productive capacities and repressing energy consumption in the other domains.

The regulated system operated with a higher degree of rigidity, significant especially with regard to the low flexibility in end-user price (Arnt Johnsen, 2002). To clarify matters, insofar as the price of electricity production substantially varies across the year (in relation with the seasonal amount of rain, the melting of snow, etc.), the normal thing would be for the end-user price to vary as well, but this was not the case. The neoliberalisation of the electricity market has introduced a more elastic matching between the peaks of production and the peaks of consumption, by the mediation of a lower price, and, correspondingly, a matching between the 'valleys' of

production and the ‘valleys’ of consumption by the mediation of a higher end-user price. In the big scheme of things, any energy planner would argue that this practice brings substantial overall system efficiency and environmental sustainability, given the technological, economic, and environmental problems accompanying an annual production curve with too ample oscillations between production peaks and production valleys.

But system rigidity and the attendant system inefficiency apparently characterised the regulated energy system not only on a short-term basis<sup>24</sup>, but also on a long-term basis. This should be read in the sense that it necessarily induced low capital return and favoured excessive investment in new capacities for electricity generation, well above the actual increase in energy consumption. As a reminder, the regulated system operated within the ethical – political rationale of *having the obligation* to secure the economic and social development of the country with the required / anticipated electricity needs. Hence, an investment policy centred around minimising the risk of electricity shortage, with the associated economic inefficiency of planning too large capacity generation and thus having low rates of capital return.

The deregulation of 1991 is thought to induce long term efficiency as well, because the expansion of generation capacities follows – or so economists believe (Kneese and Sweeney, 1993) - the optimal investment order. What I suspect is that this rhetoric of long-term efficiency hides a dangerous political maneuver that feeble Norwegian economy by rendering it more vulnerable to the global context and to capitalist forces. Let me elaborate. Let us

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<sup>24</sup> As outlined above, in relation to the variation in cost of the natural production along any given year.

assume a development scenario for the next decades that consists in a higher rate of electricity consumption than the one estimated. The Norwegian system would then have to import electricity from the neighbouring countries at a higher price than the price of domestic energy production, hence inducing vulnerability in the economic system and lowering the rate of economic growth that would have been possible in a scenario with abundant domestic electricity supply.

This is significant at an international political economy level, in that the key source of the competitive advantage of Norwegian economy in the international arena (Malecki, 1997) resides first and foremost in its very cheap energy. Cheap energy permits the blossoming of heavy, energy-intensive industries, blossoming against the current among the other developed economies, which have witnessed in the last four decades a shift from Fordist to post-Fordist industries (Storper and Salais, 1997, Harrison, 1997), from energy-intensive to human-capital intensive sectors.

This economic and political vulnerability predicated upon the necessary hypothesis of ultimate recourse to importation<sup>25</sup> is accompanied by what might be called environmental inefficiency. At contingent or structural dependence on energy importation, Norway would use electricity produced in neighbouring countries such as Denmark or Sweden, where unsustainable energy sources by far outweigh hydropower and other renewables. Put it differently, instead of investing in taking into account local hydropower (costly investment, with low capital return and huge investment risks), Norway would arrive to import electricity produced in nuclear plants (Sweden) or conventional fuels plants (Denmark, Germany).

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<sup>25</sup> I.e. It takes time to build new hydropower stations; energy scarcity immediately impacts industrial investment.

***From cultural neurosis to the reality-check of global capital***

In psychoanalysis and psychiatry the distinction between neurosis and psychosis is well-established. Confronted with a harsh reality, the psychotic cannot accept it and replaces it with an illusory reality, convenient to his/her intra-psychic needs. This denial of reality corresponds to a narcissistic<sup>26</sup> withdrawal of the libido from reality onto oneself<sup>27</sup>. The psychotic is the victim of his/her delusions. Unlike the psychotic, the neurotic does accept reality, but the price paid is the repression of his/her inner wishes and dreams. We have argued that the decades of glorious modernisation that had preceded neoliberalism fuelled a collective neurotic self too proud of its achievements and too unaware of its vulnerabilities. The neoliberal revolution was a reality-check for the Norwegian neurosis and imposed a painful redefinition of the Norwegian identity.

As the beginning of this study suggested, the deregulation of the Norwegian energy market in 1991 has to be placed within the wider framework of the neoliberalisation of space (Peck, Tickell, 2002) that characterises the current global order. Neoliberalism is a particular ideology and practice sustained by those enmeshed in the ‘structures of complicity’ (Spivak, 1999) of contemporary capitalism. It is visible at the political level by three of its most socially painful manifestations - privatisation, deregulation, marketisation – and by a more difficult to grasp change in the ethical dimension of the legitimating processes of the state. In his lecture at the

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<sup>26</sup> Therefore, Freud used to refer to psychoses as narcissistic psychoneuroses.

<sup>27</sup> This withdrawal of libido is known as secondary narcissism.

*Collège de France* on neoliberal governmentality<sup>28</sup>, Foucault distinguished several brands of neoliberalism, ranging from that of the Freiburg School (Ordo-liberalism) to that of the Chicago School, with an extreme neoliberal stance in Gary Becker's theory of human capital. What impressed Foucault<sup>29</sup> was the change in the *political ontology of neoliberalism*. Thus, traditional liberals put at the heart of their ethical – political project the freedom of the individual and the need to protect this freedom from the totalitarian tendencies of the state. Unlike traditional liberalism, the core premise of the political ontology within contemporary neoliberalism is that competition, rationality, and search for increased efficiency govern or should govern social and individual life. In a sense, they are seen as the 'natural' features of humankind.

I introduced the term 'ontopolitical therapy' to name these peculiar ontological reworkings required by major ethical-political projects. Contemporary neoliberalism tells us that all organisations and more diffuse social formations should be freed from the cage of anti-liberal organisational frameworks. The latter include hereditarian rights, preservation of status quo, preference given to those with more experience, ethical concern for equality and redistribution, well being of the members of an organisation /network /social formation, etc. These dubious frameworks – the argument goes - must be reframed according to their natural order: the search for more efficiency and rationality, by means of open competition and of meritocratic (as opposed to equalitarian) ethics. To put it simplistically simple, inequalities among people are natural and those with better results in activity deserve to have more than those incapable of such results. Furthering on from this atomistic – individual level of analysis, one can inject the

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<sup>28</sup> The lecture was held in March 1979, see Lemke, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> See also Foucault, 1994.

same logic in the case of the deregulated Norwegian energy market, by applying the meritocratic criteria not directly to individuals but to economic agents participating in the energy market: those who can provide cheaper electricity and better services deserve more than those less efficient, who, at best have to catch up with the former, or, at worst have to die.

This neoliberal ideology is premised on the possibility of translating into reality a purely theoretical fiction – that of a free, transparent, atomistic, market, where everybody has unrestricted access to information and to the most efficient provider, and nobody has that much power to restrict the allocation of resources according to – and only to – the logic of maximising efficiency. That the market is not at all transparent, that some economic agents are more powerful than the others I would not pause here for further evidence: even the proponents of deregulation agree with the existence of market imperfection (sic). What I think is worth pausing for are two intertwined theoretical complicities embedded in the neoliberal argument. One concerns the erasure of environmental concerns, the other is about the fiction of individual autonomy and rational behaviour.

While in the regulated energy system as before of 1991, environmental concerns were always a matter to consider, after deregulation they have been *erased* from the agenda because the very way of defining the energy system has shifted: it is not any longer a realm for the allocation of a strategic infrastructure / public utility (energy) through the tight surveillance by state apparatuses that happen to be responsible for the environment as well, in the virtue of its similar strategic importance. Instead, it becomes a technical organisational framework that ensures the allocation of a commodity (energy) in such a way so as to maximise efficiency.

The only item on the agenda of neoliberal supporters is rendering the system more similar to that of the theoretical fiction of a free market. Environmental problems do exist, but they have nothing to do with the rather technical concerns of deregulationists. It is somebody else's responsibility to take care of them. This disingenuous delegation of responsibility for environmental problems is typical of the neoliberal practice worldwide. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has beautifully theorised the production of theoretical and political margins through the very definition – catachrestic strategies – of a portion of 'reality', by means of her concept of 'epistemic violence'. Whenever we define something, something else is left outside the boundaries of one's definition, and hence is erased from the responsibility of those governing that portion of 'reality' – may it be an energy system, a plant, or a citizen. The new regime of the Norwegian energy system is concerned with reducing the intensity of energy consumption only (e.g. by favouring energy efficient appliances), and not at all the overall consumption. The idea – materialised in a shocking advertisement<sup>30</sup> – is: if you use better appliances you can use more energy, while paying the same.

The second issue I wanted to raise refers to the fiction of individual autonomy and rationality that is held by neoliberals to be the 'real', the natural order of things. Solid elaborations in psychoanalysis, gender studies (Butler, 1997) and postcolonial theory (Spivak, 1999) have deconstructed the Cartesian understanding of the subject, revealing its incoherencies, irrational 'burden', irreducible textuality (i.e. you are what society makes of you), and individual character. For the specific focus of this case study this might help us

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<sup>30</sup> The advertisement suggested that if one uses energy efficient light bulbs, one does not need to switch them off when leaving the room, because their energy intensity is very low

understand how irrational and not efficiency-driven we are as humans, how the amount of energy we consume depends not on calculus, but on the social constructions we are enmeshed with<sup>31</sup>.

The twin insights that individuals and civilizations are driven by their unconscious and that the unconscious is very difficult to know or tame are Freud's legacy, a legacy largely neglected by other critical geographers. I hope that this chapter will seduce them to explore this path in more depth than I have been able to do here.

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<sup>31</sup> E.g. We are manipulated by advertisements to consume more, we consume energy even when we do not really need it, because it helps the construction of our identity as, say, Norwegians – and it is part of the tradition in Norway to irresponsibly waste electricity, etc.

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