MedieKultur | Journal of media and communication research | ISSN 1901-9726

Article – Theme section

When we shine, we shine together

A carnivalesque reading of affective solidarity among Danish fat-accepting Instagrammers

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MedieKultur 2021, 72, 28-44

Published by SMID | Society of Media researchers In Denmark | www.smid.dk

The online version of this text can be found open access at www.mediekultur.dk

Abstract

Taking its point of departure in a photoshoot organized by Danish fat activists, this article explores the relationship between activism, social media, and affect. Through a carnivalesque lens (Bahktin, 1984a), the article illustrates how the Fat Photoshoot as a joyful and festive celebration of fat embodiment challenges prevailing social body norms and understandings of the fat body in society. By including the social media aftermath of the event, the article argues that the Fat Photoshoot's normative upending of fatphobic culture is extended in time and space. By sharing, liking, and re-posting photos from the photoshoot in the following days and months, the article demonstrates how participants re-invoke an affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012) fostered by the event. Through affective flows on social media, personal experience is placed within a collective and consequently political landscape (Papacharissi, 2015), allowing fat activists to not only envision but also make claims for an alternative future for fat bodies.

Keywords

Social Media, Fatness, Affect, Activism, Instagram, Bakhtin

A Fat Photoshoot

On July 14, 2020, 11 fat people (nine women, one man, and one non-binary person[1]) met for a photoshoot at Moesgård beach, a beach/forest area located in the eastern part of Jutland, Denmark. Some of the participants had never met before, but only interacted or followed each other on Instagram and other social media sites. Others knew each other well and had become friends over the years because of their engagement in the Danish fat-acceptance community. The participants somewhat nervously undressed down to their underwear. Together, they put on make-up, fixed their hair, and applied glitter to their bodies, before walking in a group down to the beach. Here, in the forest surrounded by tall trees, the fat people posed in front of a camera. Behind the camera was a young, fat, female photographer, also in her underwear, documenting the day and directing the photoshoot. Among the photos were full body shots of the group together, in smaller groups as well as the participants individually. Other kinds of photos include close-ups of the participants' faces/upper bodies in groups of two or three, or individually. After the event, the photographer shared the photos with the participants, who all, in the days that followed the event,[2] posted the photos on their individual Instagram profiles. The photos were accompanied by texts of appreciation, excitement, and a call for change in attitudes towards fat bodies.

Introduction

In their everyday lives, most of the participants at the Fat Photoshoot would try to avoid "making a spectacle" (Russo, 1994) out of their bodies, fearing the consequences in the shape of public harassment, expressions of discomfort, or even disgust (Hartley, 2001, p. 64). As Charlotte Cooper reminds us, in the case of the fat body, challenging the social order of the world requires little else but insisting on taking part in it (Cooper, 2016). However, at the Fat Photoshoot, something seemed to occur which at least momentarily suspended normal understandings and ways of being in the world as a fat person. As we will demonstrate in this article, a festive celebration of the fat body characterised the event, and a sense of community arose among the participants. Furthermore, as the photoshoot – in the shape of photos and posts – was re-invoked in the virtual sphere of Instagram, new affective dimensions and representations of the event followed. Traversing physical and virtual spaces, we argue that the Fat Photoshoot proves an exemplary case for understanding how new modes of activism and political engagement are tied to affective flows of solidarity. We therefore ask: How can we understand the Fat Photoshoot as an event and a catalyst for a certain affective and political engagement? And furthermore, what can this teach us about the relationship between activism, social media, and affect?

To answer these questions, we will analyse the Fat Photoshoot and its representation on Instagram through a carnivalesque lens (Bakhtin, 1984b). We argue that the Fat Photoshoot constituted a space for activist subversion of social and cultural body norms, which

draws strength from the festive elements of the carnivalesque. Furthermore, we show how the carnivalesque chronotope (time-space) of the Fat Photoshoot bleeds into everyday life via social media, consequently extending the potential for political engagement. According to Kaitlynn Mendes (2015), the function, terrain and nature of social movements have shifted over the last 20 years – a shift which "revolves around the growing importance of new media technologies, the internet and social networking sites to build, organize, network, choreograph physical assembly and collective identities" (Mendes, 2015, p. 39). Mendes contends that these new movements are less formally hierarchical, making it difficult to identify leaders and structures. While collective identity has always, in one way or the other, been integral to the formation and engagement of social movements, we will, in this article, argue that what particularly characterises a movement such as the Danish fat activist movement is the role of affect as co-constitutive of the collective. By sharing photos from the event on social media in the months following the event, we show how our fat-accepting informants continuously re-invoke an affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012) fostered during the event. According to Tim Highfield, the primary function of social media in activism is the information-sharing and coordinating functions of the media platforms (Highfield, 2016, p. 107). And, while these functions are certainly present in the case of Danish fat activists, inspired by Zizi Papacharissi (2015), we furthermore argue that Instagram as a platform provides a venue for the everyday practices of affective political engagement.

Situating fat

Fat activism – an (online) social movement

As a social movement, fat activism is generally described as having emerged in the US in the late 1960s, alongside other social justice movements of the time. And the roots in social justice struggles are strong to this day (Farrell, 2011, p. 140; 2020, p. 30). In the Danish context, fat activism emerged in the mid 2000s, when the activist group De Tykkes Befrielsesfront (the fat liberation front) launched their website and wrote an op-ed in a national newspaper on No Diet Day, May 6th, 2006 (Hansen, 2010, p. 10; Fed Front, 2019). The group was inspired by having encountered an international field of fat activists online, which led them to come together in a mutual support group, which developed into a more politically oriented organization (Hansen, 2010, p. 10; Fed Front, 2019). Their early activist work coincided with the widespread cultural and political panic around the so-called "obesity epidemic" in the 2000s, and the activist group was met with condemnation and outright harassment (Hansen, 2010, p. 11; 2019, pp. 16-19). While De Tykkes Befrielsesfront continue their work, new groups have started to work alongside them. On February 1st, 2017, the online activist collective Fed Front (Fat Front) launched a website and a Facebook page (Fed Front, 2017; Hagen & Storgaard Brok, 2017). By then, the work of De Tykkes Befrielsesfront and individual fat activists, in conjunction with international

body-positive cultural trends, fostered a more receptive media environment than in the 2000s. Over the past five years, several media outlets have covered Fed Front and fat activists with less hostility (see, e.g., Hoxer & Nielsen, 2020; Juul, 2017; Kamil, 2018).

Alongside these developments and inspired by international trends, a growing number of women have turned to Instagram as a social media platform for sharing photos of their fat bodies. Some of these women identify as fat activists, whereas others refer to themselves as body positive or body activists.[3] Often, photos posted on Instagram are accompanied by reflections on living in a fat body in a society that condemns fatness. Referring to Lev Manovich (2017), Elisa Serafinelli states: "[Instagram] enriches users' imageries with the narrative and engaging capacity of photography that […] seems to be setting the new standards of the ordinary" (2018, p. 16). In other words, as a visual medium, Instagram holds the potential to confront existing normativities, making it a particularly apt medium for activism and political engagement. Despite these new representations of fat bodies in mainstream and social media, it is worth mentioning that present day fat activists still operate in a culture and political climate that is fundamentally negatively disposed towards fat people, as well as in an era of social media, where harassment and trolling are commonplace. It is in this cultural, political, and virtual context that we examine the fat activists who gathered at Moesgård on July 14th, 2020.

Queering fat bodies

The cultural denigration of fat bodies can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, who understood fatness as a pathology stemming from bodily imbalance (Gilman, 2010). This view was strengthened throughout the Middle Ages where Christian ethics instituted fasting and abstinence as core principles in a spiritual life and accordingly associated fatness with gluttony and moral corruption (Lupton, 2018, p. 48). As such, fatphobic sentiments can be found throughout European and Western cultural history, in art, political discourse, religion, and popular culture (e.g., Braziel & LeBesco, 2001; Farrell, 2011; Levy-Navarro, 2020).

The Western cultural inscription of fat bodies can be paralleled to the ways in which queer bodies are culturally inscribed (LeBesco, 2004, p. 88; Farrell, 2011, p. 152). Both – fat and queer – are furthermore culturally connected with death and decay (Edelman, 2004; White, 2012; LaMarre et al., 2020, pp. 68.70), as well as with notions of insatiability and decadence (LeBesco, 2001). It is therefore not surprising that fat activism has a kinship to queer activism, just like fat scholarship is influenced by queer and feminist thinking (ibid.), which for scholars such as Kathleen LeBesco, "demonstrates the possibilities of organizing around conflicted identities" (2001, p. 80).

In this article, we view fat activism as existing at the margins of that which Judith Butler calls social recognizability (1997, p. 20). We claim that in order to understand the social struggles involved in fat activism, we must take into consideration the marginal social position that fat people inhabit. While negative attitudes towards fat people are

directed at both self-identified men and women, the social and cultural expectations of thinness are especially directed towards people who identify as women (Bordo, 2003, pp. 15.18; Murray, 2008, pp. 2-3). The early Western feminist movements were at odds with fatness, both in the sense that fatness was used to ridicule and stereotype suffragettes, and in the sense that the suffragettes themselves reviled fatness as a sign of inertia, mental impairment, and domesticity (Farrell, 2011, pp. 83-95; Forth, 2019, pp. 268.270). In the feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s, tensions between mainstream feminism and fat feminists persisted (Farrell, 2011, p. 147). Nevertheless, many of the early fat activists that came out of the feminist movement were informed by feminist thought and did find fat-accepting feminist spaces (Farrell, 2011, p. 144-145).

The marginal position of fat feminists can, according to Kathleen LeBesco (who quotes Judith Butler in her argument), be a place of resistance:

> "All social systems are vulnerable at their margins, and […] all margins are accordingly considered dangerous," fat people can tap into the resources of abjection in the margin in order to strengthen their claim to the kinds of entitlement felt only by those bodies deemed natural. (LeBesco, 2001, p. 75)

Social activism from the margins is a precarious position, according to Butler, because it "involves risking intelligibility, posing a problem of cultural translation and living in a critical relation to the norms of the intelligible" (2013, p. 67). With this in mind, we will explore the Danish fat activists of our study as embodying a struggle against social body norms. This struggle places them simultaneously in a position of possibility, with the potential for shifting and challenging social norms, and in a position of precarity, from which the loss of social intelligibility is a real and present threat. In this situation, engendering a sense of community that can encompass the recognition of difference and freedom will, according to Butler, be a way to inhabit such a position (ibid.).

The fat female body as a carnivalesque figure in Western culture

In order to understand the radical potential of the Fat Photoshoot, we turn to Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of medieval carnivals, via his reading of works by François Rabelais (Bakhtin, 1984b; 2001). For Bakhtin, the carnival "possesses a mighty life-creating and transforming power, an indestructible vitality" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 107). The transformative power of the carnival lies in Bakhtin's formulation of the chronotope. The chronotope was originally formulated as literary analytics, which sought to depict the "world sense",[4] norms, and traditions of a literary genre (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 106). However, in the tradition of Bakhtinian analytics, we apply the chronotope to a social event which is delimited in time and space. In this tradition, the chronotope represents a particular relation between time-space, cultural norms, and world sense (e.g., Valverde, 2014; Marková & Novaes, 2020). As a chronotope, the carnivalesque is thus a time and space "out of time", where new social forms and order can be envisioned. The carnival is "flowing according to its

own special carnival laws and finding room in itself for an unlimited number of radical shifts and metamorphoses" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 176). The radical potential of the carnival chronotope lies in the elevation of that which is ordinarily deemed grotesque – such as the fat female body – and placing it at the center of joyful celebration.

Bakhtin depicts the integral function of the *grotesque body* to the carnivalesque in terms of an upturning of the sacred medieval world order via bodily displays of the "lower strata" of the body, which becomes symbolic of the lower strata of society. Carnival mockery of authority thus took the form of "mimicking of the three main acts in life of the grotesque body: sexual intercourse, death throes [...], and the act of birth" (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 353). By drawing the sacred "down to earth", the carnivalesque "buries" the social order, only to resurrect it in a renewed form (Bakhtin, 2001, p. 45). The carnivalesque chronotope constitutes an ambivalent and multi-directional time-space (Bakhtin, 2001, p. 51) where the suspension of norms and conventions creates the possibility for multiple new cultural expressions and ways of being to be enacted and experienced (Dentith, 1995, p. 76-77).

In the seminal fat studies collection Bodies out of Bounds (Braziel & LeBesco, 2001), Angela Stukator cites Kathleen Rowe in arguing that fat women fall outside the normative confines of femininity because "unruliness reverberates whenever bodies, especially women's bodies, are considered excessive – too fat, too mouthy, too old, too dirty, too pregnant, too sexual (or not sexual enough) for the norms of gender representation" (Stukator, 2001, p. 199). Drawing on Bakhtin, Stukator argues that the feminine and the grotesque are integral to the carnival, because the grotesque body becomes a "symbolic representation of a utopian social collectivity" (2001, p. 201-202). We apply a carnivalesque reading to Fat Photoshoot because it captures the normative breach, which already resides in the fat female body:

> Carnival is fundamentally defined by its rejection of homogeneity. The carnivalesque abolishes hierarchies, prohibitions, and regulations in favor of a view of the world from below, a view that privileges the marginal and the excluded over that which is considered sacred and authoritative. […] Carnival culture can be appropriate to sustain marginality or it can be used to subvert and challenge the dominant official culture and its representations. (Stukator, 2001, p. 201)

We suggest seeing the Fat Photoshoot as a carnivalesque chronotope in which fat women turned the conventional views of the fat female body (as abject and grotesque (Lupton, 2018, p. 47)) upside down in a festive celebration of bodily enjoyment.

Methods – digital ethnography and ethnographic interviews

Our empirical material originates from the event of the Fat Photoshoot. Photos and posts relating to the event, interviews, and the subsequent sharing of photos on Instagram form

the empirical foundation of this article. The ethnographic data from the Fat Photoshoot was gathered as part of a 6-month period of ethnographic fieldwork among Danish fat-accepting Instagrammers. The fieldwork was carried out by Heiselberg as part of the research project FAT (Feminist Activism in Transition), setting out to explore 1) how ideas about fat acceptance and fat activism were articulated through the social medium of Instagram, and 2) how a community surrounding fat acceptance was constituted and reconfigured in a virtual/physical setting.

The fieldwork consisted of a combination of ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and digital ethnography. Following the guiding principles of digital ethnography (Pink, 2016), Heiselberg systematically observed images, texts, comments, and videos shared on fat activists' public (and occasionally private) Instagram profiles from June–December 2020. This includes photos and posts from the Fat Photoshoot. However, as emphasized by Sarah Pink (Pink et al., 2016) and Christine Hine (2017), virtual sociality is embedded in local and physical contexts, demanding ethnographic attention to the intertwinement of virtual and physical experience. For the same reason, a combination of both digital and traditional ethnographic methods has been applied in this study. Alongside the digital ethnographic material observed, Heiselberg has conducted interviews with 10 fat-accepting informants, combining the ethnographic semi-structured interview (Madden, 2010, p. 72) with methods of informal conversation and participant observation (O'Reilly, 2009). Four key informants participated in an online focus group interview during the final stage of fieldwork, discussing the Fat Photoshoot.

Although the number of Instagram profiles celebrating fat acceptance is growing and inspired by a larger international community, as well as intersecting with other feminist movements, this study is interested in Danish fat activists on Instagram. It is furthermore worth mentioning that having personal experiences with fat embodiment situates us as insiders in the field of research (Halstead, 2001). This position has implications. First, being fat was valuable in terms of establishing trust and providing access to informants in a field where people are often sceptical towards researchers.[5] Secondly, critical perspectives are often conflated with arguments from within the fat activist community, especially those activists drawing on academic arguments from the field of fat studies. Our position demanded transparency in researcher/informant relationships as well as constant reflection on our knowledge production.

Analysis

In the following analysis, we depict how the Fat Photoshoot at Moesgård in key aspects functioned as a carnivalesque time-space (chronotope) (Bakhtin, 1984b, 2001). As a fat-positive celebration of the participants' bodies – a delimited time-space in which fat was deemed beautiful, attractive, and worthy – the fat photoshoot provided a space for a cultural critique of prevailing cultural body norms. In the second part of the analysis, we

will furthermore examine the fat activists' use of social media as a tool for extending the carnivalesque chronotope, thereby affording a space for "affective solidarity" (Hemmings, 2012) and "political potential" (Papacharissi, 2015).

The Fat Photoshoot: A carnivalesque chronotope

The Fat Photoshoot brought together 11 fat people for a glamorous celebration of the fat body. The beauty of the fat "flesh", pride, and the celebratory spirit of the fat women shone through the photos from the event. This celebration flew in the face of conventional beauty norms of the female body, in which thinness is celebrated (Murray, 2008, p. 137).

According to one of the organizers of the event, breaking with social norms and "documenting this norm-breaking" was the purpose of the event. Some of the women explained how they had felt anxious in the days leading up to the photoshoot. Not knowing what to expect or how to feel about themselves, exposed and almost naked in front of a camera among people, many of whom they had never met in person before, made them apprehensive. However, as described by one of the participants, Trine, who had somewhat hesitantly signed up for the day, the photoshoot turned out to be a positive and even empowering experience:

> That particular feeling of walking down Moesgård beach where people were walking and [would be like] "wow what a bunch of fat people walking there". It was fun because… and that is the question, right: are people actually looking at you or is it something you imagine, but I think I got the feeling that people were in fact a little puzzled to see such a big group of fat people [laughs]. But it was incredibly empowering, because when you know these [other fat] people's attitudes then you just know that they won't take any bullshit, you know [laughs]. We knew we had each other's back in this. That felt very safe.

Trine describes the feeling of flaunting her fat body in public as "fun". She laughs as she explains how their undressed fat bodies attracted people's attention as they walked down the shoreline of Moesgård beach. In the company of other fat people, Trine enjoyed the breach of societal norms. It felt safe and fun. For Trine, the delimitation between the event and ordinary life is drawn by the act of fat people congregating in a group – being empowered by the collective act of flaunting their bodies (Lee, 2014). The affective reaction to her normative breach (her joy and laughter) follows her into her everyday life and is revived during the interview. Traces of the fat-celebrating chronotope of the photoshoot has stayed with her as a bodily affective experience, which can be called back onto being, in the context of a fat-positive interaction – such as the interview situation.

The following quote from an Instagram post by a participant, Lisa, illustrates how the Fat Photoshoot was experienced as a setting in which, contrary to the everyday lives of the participants, the fat body was allowed to take up space:

> Standing in your underwear in a forest with other fat bodies was a very liberating experience. Everyone felt safe amongst each other – even when very few people had met each other before.
> Perhaps it was safe because we knew that no one would judge each other- that it was safe being among people who look like yourself.
> We could see ourselves in each other.
> As a teenager and a young woman, I so needed other fat bodies to see myself in – without hearing how fat bodies could trash talk themselves.
> Last Sunday I was also standing in a forest, because I hope to be a mirror for young people today. A mirror that shows them that it is ok to live a life like every other body.
> That fat bodies can be undressed in pictures, can go to the beach. Can wear short sleeves and have bare legs in the summer.
> The hate, which I am sometimes met with, fades in light of the difference I can make for others. Dammit, I would have loved seeing other fat bodies, as in this picture, when I was a teenager, and my body became fat.
> The conversation about why we become fat, about what is healthy, calories etc. is important in this context. It is important that there is space for EVERYONE in equality.
> We are all equally worthy of living a life without hiding away.
> Thank you for this community. This was really a day that I will never forget. Because I believe that our pictures will make a difference in the societal narrative about fat bodies.
> We are breaking with the expected.
> We are taking our space

When Lisa describes how she hopes that the photos from the Fat Photoshoot will inspire other fat people to take photos of their bodies, go to the beach, or wear summer clothes, she speaks to a certain set of cultural norms suggesting that fat people should, in fact, hide their bodies. Particularly in the Western part of the world, research shows that fat people will draw attention away from their bodies by covering up, wearing neutral colours, etc., to avoid discrimination in public (Gailey, 2014, pp. 12-19). Thus, by doing the exact opposite of this, Lisa as well as the other participants in the Fat Photoshoot momentarily suspend normative ideals about what fat bodies "ought to do". They experienced an alternative chronotope, in which the fat body was celebrated through joy and playfulness.

In the Fat Photoshoot, the carnival transcends time and becomes "a second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance" (Bakhtin, as cited in Dentith, 1995, p. 76). When the participants in the Fat Photoshoot return to their everyday lives, which are governed by fat-phobic social norms, they carry with them the embodied experience of having lived differently, if only for a time. In that sense, it uses play "both to deconstruct a 'real' world and to reconstruct a 'possible' world at the same time" (Jung, 1998, p. 105). The carnival facilitates an alternative experience of the world – a brief time where the utopian future becomes an experience – and becomes a utopian future "laboratory", where collective dreaming can take place. The following quote from one of the participant's Instagram posts illustrates how

the photoshoot offers an alternative understanding of the world; an understanding where fatphobia is no longer the only imaginable social reality:

> A few weeks back I had the absolute pleasure of spending the day with these wonderful fat people for a photo shoot. I haven't been myself lately or had the energy to share much on social media during my exams, but I'm slowly feeling myself come back again so of course I want to share these wonderful pictures and people. It makes me happy and gives me energy to spend time with other fat people. To laugh, cry, share stories and experiences. Creating moments and instant connections with those, who up until now have mostly been strangers on the internet. That's kind of magical. Plus, we look really good!

In the quote above, Maja describes sharing feelings and experiences with other fat people as "magical" and as something which gives her energy. For Maja, conversations with fellow fat-accepting people primarily took place online or via social media. Being physically together allowed for an embodied experience of being in the world unapologetically as fat.

In Rabalais' medieval carnivals, a central point is that the norms and hierarchies of society return to "normal" after the carnival. However, following Bakhtin, people will carry with them a new world sense, an idea of a possible world, while their *de facto* social position in society remains unchanged. This is also true for the participants of the Fat Photoshoot, who returned to an everyday life in which their bodies are condemned and discriminated against. Nonetheless, we argue that by re-invoking the photoshoot on Instagram in the days and months following the event, the participants do more than carry with them a new world sense. We suggest that by expanding the time-space of the carnival, the participants transform a "utopian real" into a potential future. This, we argue, constitutes the radical potential of the Fat Photoshoot and its social media aftermath.

Affective potentiality and solidarity on Instagram

In the months that followed the Fat Photoshoot, the participants shared photos from the event on their individual Instagram profiles. Some posted one or two photos immediately after the photoshoot, while others continued to post group photos from the event in the months that followed. Although the name suggests instantaneous sharing of photos online, the practices of photo sharing from the Fat Photoshoot indicate that the fat activists, on the contrary, use "precise strategies on when and how" to upload their photos with the purpose of engaging viewers and followers, as pointed to by Serafinelli (2018, p. 57). Following the argument presented above, we argue that an accumulation of feelings of community and solidarity were re-invoked when images were shared on Instagram. We argue that the affective flows running through these posts generate what Clare Hemmings (2012) calls "affective solidarity".

In her search for understanding how individual experiences are propelled into collective feminist action, Hemmings argues that feminist politics of transformation draw upon

a range of affects. Rage, frustration, misery, passion, and a desire for connection are all affects generated as individuals experience a dissonance between "the experience of ourselves over time and the experience of possibilities and limits to how we may act or be" (Hemmings, 2012, p. 149). It is those affects that move and push feminist politics forward. Hemmings' insistence on affects as central for political transformation resonates with Kathleen Stewart's definition of affects and their "potentiality":

> Their significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible. The question they beg is not what they might mean in an order of representations, or whether they are good or bad in an overarching scheme of things, but where they might go and what potential modes of knowing, relating and attending to things that are already somehow present in them in a state of potentiality and resonance. (Stewart, 2007, p. 3)

In tune with the embodied experience of the carnivalesque chronotope, the intense affects, depicted by the participants of the Fat Photoshoot, has the potential to bring new "modes of knowing and relating to the world" into their lives. We see this in posts shared on Instagram after the photoshoot. In the following post by Marie Louise, who at the time was rather new to the fat-acceptance community, she expresses feelings of appreciation and admiration:

> It has taken me a few days to figure out how to put these photos into words. It has to do with the fact that I am not as experienced within this world as many of the cool people in the photo. But nevertheless, I am fucking proud to hopefully take part in providing a nuanced picture of what bodies look like, and that wrong bodies do not exist. There is so much badassness and courage in this photo. Because we are all aware of the fact that society doesn't always think that we should exist. So thanks to those of you who had the courage to be with me in a forest in Århus, and for letting me be part of it.

In addition to expressing gratitude for being part of the event and a community of other courageous fat women, Marie Louise's post does something representative of the posts from the event: She describes a wish for this experience to spread beyond the event itself via the images – and a hope for this to have profound societal effects. With a tone of indignation, Marie Louise claims that "wrong bodies do not exist" and hopes to provide a "nuanced picture of what bodies look like", all the while placing these claims in an emotive language of deep personal belonging and longing.

The emotions expressed in Marie Louise's post are echoed in the following post by Trine. There is praise for the people in the picture and an underlining of the effect which the photo, hopefully, will have in society. However, Trine depicts both ambivalence about her love for "the fat body" and a sense of anger at the ways in which fat bodies are shamed in society:

> What could possibly be a better way to start your weekend than with these ten lovely people (eleven including her behind the camera) with real backrolls and soft bellies, reminding you that all of you are absolutely and completely okay just the way you are? Just asking
> All bodies are good bodies. And all owners of a body are entitled to have issues with that body. Of course. And I understand where those issues come from – because the ideal picture that we know is so narrow that 97 % [of us] look at it and feel left out. But we could all benefit from talking, in a nuanced way, about what happens when a swaying back on a slender body brings about a soft, little fold – and that [fold] gets shamed. Because who is that critique *also* at the expense of? I know that other people's relationships with their bodies rarely have anything to do with my body – but the things we say about our bodies are part of a larger picture which deserves to be painted over (and that's when we can begin to talk about how it is *also* about fat bodies). For all of our sakes ❤ And at last, I just want to remind you that: you are allowed to stop following profiles that make your stomach ache. Always. Fill your feed with things that bring you smiles, reflections and better thoughts about yourself. You deserve that […]

In the photo, Trine and nine others are standing, scattered next to each other in the forest, posing with their bodies turned to one side, looking into the camera. The photo is posted on Instagram a week after the Moesgård photoshoot and is the third out of five photos posted by Trine from the event. Much like the post above, this post starts with a positive comment about the women in the picture by referring to them as "lovely people" with "soft bellies", reminding everyone that they are entitled to have and appreciate their bodies. This notwithstanding, Trine simultaneously opens up for feelings of ambivalence regarding the experience of living in fat bodies. She points to the problem of existing body ideals resulting in very few people feeling comfortable in their own skin. She addresses this as a general issue, but one that especially affects fat people, who are shamed because of their body size. Having experienced the carnivalesque fat celebration of the Fat Photoshoot, Trine now becomes ever more aware of the oppressive body norms of society at large, and of the effects of these norms on fat people's existence. The dissonance between the chronotope of the Fat Photoshoot and that of her everyday life comes into sharp relief in this post. The emotions that run through the post are ambivalent. There is love for the community, and joy associated with the event; however, in her everyday life, she still experiences the deep shame and the difficulty of overcoming body shame. This shame is shifted from the individual fat person onto the collective social narrative of fatphobia. This shift of blame creates an affective script, in which love and gratitude are associated with the fat-positive community – in this case, the participants in the Fat Photoshoot – while blame and shame are placed in the larger culture of fat (and body) shaming.

According to Hemmings, affective solidarity arises from an experience of dissonance between how one thinks of oneself in relation to others and society, and how one is valued, recognized, judged, and treated (Hemmings, 2012, p. 150). As illustrated by Trine and Marie Louise's quotes above, fatphobia causes feelings of injustice, pain, and anger, because such attitudes speak to a dissonance in their subjective bodily experiences as fat

people. When turning this dissonance into action by participating in a Fat Photoshoot and later by posting the photos on Instagram, the participants point to this dissonance as a shared and collective experience. Or in the words of Hemmings, they "move from individual experience to collective feminist capacity" (p. 150).

Following Hemmings' point that feminist politics emerge from a "desire for connection" through feelings of recognition, love, and gratitude as well as outrage, frustration, and anger, we understand the affects running through the posts from the photoshoot as constituting an affective solidarity between members of the fat activist community. It is this affective solidarity, we argue, that enables the transformational potential of the Fat Photoshoot to move from an idea of a new "world sense", in Bahktin's terms, to an actual claim for a new social order. The transformative potential of the photoshoot is extended in both time and scope, as likes, positive comments, and re-postings allow the participants to recall the fat celebrating chronotope of the photoshoot.

Political potential and possible fat futures

Throughout this article, we have shown how the private (personal) experience of bodily shame in the public eye was subverted during the Fat Photoshoot, and how the subsequent social media practices of the participants illustrated a case of affective solidarity whereby individual shame was redirected onto fatphobic society. As a final analytical point, we will further argue that Instagram provided a particularly fruitful platform for cultivating political commitment. In her study of the use of hashtags and memes on Twitter, Zizi Papacharissi (2015) argues that social media platforms have paved the way for new affective modes of political engagement. Drawing on Raymond Williams, Papacharissi terms social media "soft structures of feeling" (2015, pp. 116-117), providing alternative shapes and forms for public expressions and feelings. "Soft structures of feeling" are essentially different from the logics and rationales of conventional political debate (ibid.), because they invite people to express themselves in manners that speak to personal feelings and emotions. Thus, Papacharissi argues, social media have become a place where people can "re-rethink the personal as political, and the political as that which is personally felt" (2015, p. 117). Furthermore, the affective mechanisms at play when social media content (hashtags, images, stories, posts) are shared among people with a common interest, amplify the intensity by which an issue is experienced, consequently fostering a collective sense of urgency. This urgency is especially evident in the following extract of a post by Henriette, in which she criticizes the Danish Cancer Society's and Danish Health Authority's approach to fat people:

> WHO recently published a report illustrating the health-related consequences of stigmatization of fat people and it is, mildly spoken, not positive news. And yet, the Danish Cancer Society (and the Danish Health Authority for that matter) continue down the same road which they have been walking on for decades now. We will not overcome stigmatization

> by changing our language, however, rhetoric is an important part of the battle and in that sense, it doesn't help still using the stigmatizing word "obesity".
> It is called fat!
> I am fat
> I won't be shrunk.

The photo accompanying the above text portrays Henriette and Marie Louise in the forest of Moesgård, laughing and posing in their underwear. When Henriette uses this photo from the Fat Photoshoot to point to the problematic rhetoric of Danish health authorities, and when emphasizing that she will not be "shrunk", she places her personal experience within a collective, and consequently political, landscape. Papacharissi argues that "the act of making a private thought public bears the potential of a political act" (2015, p. 112). In the case of the Fat Photoshoot, the political potential of the event begins as a performance in which societal norms are subverted and, in the Bakhtinian vocabulary, a new world sense is imagined. However, it is through the affective space of social media that the political potential of the Fat Photoshoot continues to circulate and generate visions for alternative fat futures.

Conclusion

The online community, through which affects associated with the Fat Photoshoot chronotope flow, is reminiscent of the early experiences of "fat awareness" spread via the early Internet in the 1990s (e.g., Farrell, 2011, pp. 163-165; Hansen, 2019). It is therefore not our contention that the shifting of shame onto society or affect as a driver of social media communality are new phenomena. It is likewise worth taking into consideration that affective solidarity in the context of social media takes on a form which is simultaneously potent and brittle, because it garners strength from, but also relies on, the media platforms, their affordances, and the attention economy of our mediatized social world (Couldry & Hepp, 2019, p. 35; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019, p. 151).

With these constraints in mind, we will, however, argue that through stretching out the carnivalesque chronotope of the Fat Photoshoot via their everyday social media practices, the participants created a space for making "the personal political" and for subverting the body norms of fatphobic culture. By activating both the normative upending of fatphobic culture by extending the carnivalesque time-space of the Fat Photoshoot and by re-enacting the affective solidarity of the collective experience of the photoshoot chronotope, the privately experienced emotions of shame are shifted onto societal fatphobia rather than the individual fat person. It is our contention that it is exactly the interconnectedness of the physical experience and the online affective community that, in this case, created the basis for political engagement through social media.

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Notes

1 Recognizing fat is a gendered issue (Fikkan & Rothblum, 2011), and since the vast majority of the participants in the photoshoot identified as women, this article will specifically focus on the female experience of being fat and part of the fat-accepting community.

2 Some of the participants have later removed some or all of their photos from the Fat Photoshoot from their Instagram profiles due to a disagreement about copyrights and other controversies within the Danish fat-acceptance movement. However, this does not preclude an analysis of the photoshoot and the subsequent sharing of photos on Instagram as a case of affective solidarity and political potential. If anything, the choice to first share and later remove the photos speaks to the affective states of being evoked by the photoshoot – at one point in time manifesting solidarity and at another symbolizing disruption and distance.

3 The self-identification of the people, who we describe as fat activists in this article, will vary between body positive, body neutral, fat accepting, fat positive, fat activist, etc., over time and in different contexts. In this article, we use the term "fat activists", drawing on Charlotte Cooper's definition of fat activism as a wide variety of practices and forms of resistance (Cooper, 2016, p. 4).

4 Bakhtin proposes using the concept "world sense" rather than "world view" (1984a, p. 107).

5 Most research on fat is situated within the medical field and is preoccupied with finding reasons for and solutions to the so-called "obesity epidemic" (Stefánsdóttir, 2020). People within the fat activist community typically find this type of research stigmatizing and would therefore be skeptical towards any researcher approaching them with the purpose of studying fatness.

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