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Privacy encounters in Teledialogue

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ABSTRACT

Privacy is a major concern when new technologies are introduced between public authorities and private citizens. What is meant by privacy, however, is often unclear and contested. Accordingly, this article utilises grounded theory to study privacy empirically in the research and design project Teledialogue aimed at introducing new ways for public case managers and placed children to communicate through IT. The resulting argument is that privacy can be understood as an *encounter*, that is, as something that arises between implicated actors and entails some degree of friction and negotiation. An argument which is further qualified through the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. The article opens with a review of privacy literature before continuing to present privacy as an encounter with five different foci: what technologies bring into the encounter; who is related to privacy by implication; what is entailed by the spaces of Teledialogue; how privacy relates to projected futures; and how privacy is also an encounter between authority and care. In the end, it is discussed how privacy conceptualised as an encounter is not already there surrounding people or places but rather has to be traced in the specific and situated relations between implicated actors, giving rise to different normative concerns in each case.

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Introduction

Privacy is a major concern in contemporary society and especially so when information technologies are used to mediate, monitor and analyse the interaction between private citizens and public authorities (e.g., Peckover, White, & Hall, 2008; Sorell & Draper, 2012). This is true when intelligence agencies harvest vast amounts of information from internet traffic but also when the local healthcare practitioner files test results to an electronic patient record or, as is the case in this article, when case managers in the Danish social system make video calls to children placed in foster families or at youth institutions in the Teledialogue project. However, despite the centrality of privacy, it is often unclear what privacy *is*. The meaning of privacy has changed historically; it differs from culture to culture and is often approached in ways that are remote from the practices of everyday life. Accordingly, some scholars have raised serious concerns about the usefulness of privacy as a concept (Gilliom, 2001; Lyon, 2001, 2002) while others have defended the notion and sought to further develop its analytical relevance (Rössler, 2005; Solove, 2002; Viseu,

Clement, & Aspinall, 2004). This article aligns with the latter. It develops a notion of privacy as an *encounter* from the specific empirical circumstances of the Teledialogue project which are subsequently framed in relation to Gilles Deleuze.

Teledialogue is a combined research and design project initiated by the authors aimed at strengthening the relationship between placed children and their public case managers through various forms of IT such as videoconferencing, chat and texting. As such, Teledialogue implicates that children and case managers talk more often, that they learn more about each other and, not the least, that case managers come to play a more active role in the everyday lives of placed children. However, Teledialogue also entails numerous privacy concerns. During the project, technical and legal concerns arose over the safe storage and processing of personal information in accordance with the Danish Act on Processing of Personal Data and The Consolidation Act on Social Services. Furthermore, practical questions for the case managers and placed children arose concerning where and when Teledialogue was appropriate, and how to control the sharing of information between friends, family and case managers. It thus became apparent that privacy cut across technical, legal, social and practical matters.

This article is our retrospective analysis of privacy in Teledialogue. It is our attempt to make an analytical strength out of the complexity and heterogeneity of privacy as it confronted us in Teledialogue by approaching it as what Latour (2004) calls a *matter of concern* and Deleuze (2014, pp. 64–65) a *multiplicity*. The point is simply to cast privacy as inherently heterogeneous and continuously negotiated and constructed between multiple participants of all types – legal, technical, human – rather than something already in place, encircling the individual or his or her property. As defined by Deleuze, a multiplicity is void of prior being or coherence and consists instead of multiple lines and dynamics from which it is made up:

A multiplicity has neither subject nor object – only determinations, sizes, and dimensions which cannot increase without changing its nature ... (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 14)

The task at hand is thus not one of identifying the essence of privacy but rather one of *tracing* privacy in and through the participants of Teledialogue (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006, p. vii).

Accordingly, this article conveys a grounded coding or tracing of privacy in the empirical material from Teledialogue (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The resulting categories are summarised in Table 1 and each exemplified through the analysis. In different ways, they highlight three complimentary traits of privacy in Teledialogue: (1) Privacy was not tied to individuals but always located *between* actors. (2) Privacy appeared as frictions or *negotiations* occasioned by the project – something not yet in place. And (3) privacy was not always there or, at least, in six cases, we could not find it. The concept of encounter captures these traits and casts privacy as that which (may) arise with friction when actors intersect like they did in Teledialogue. As described by Deleuze and Claire Parnet, an encounter is only something in itself by virtue of being between others, something specific to the relation which cannot be claimed by either parties.

This is it, the double capture, the wasp AND the orchid: not even something which would be in the one, or something which would be in the other, even if it had to be exchanged, be mingled, but something which is between the two, outside the two, and which flows in another direction. (Deleuze & Parnet, 2006, p. 5)

Table 1. Overview of privacy encounters in Teledialogue.

Encounter	Descriptive codes (<i>may be categorised under more than one encounter</i>)	Description	Case occurrences
Encounters with and through technology	<i>Gatekeeping; visibility; covert–overt; observing-through video; resistance</i>	Encounters occurring in and through the socio-technical mediation of Teledialogue	12
Encounters with participating others	<i>Distributed knowledge; protecting-others; keeping informed; autonomy, splitting</i>	Encounters between the numerous others who are related to the dialogues, whose privacy is also at stake and who directly or indirectly participate in the negotiation of the privacy between participants	11
Spatial encounters	<i>Included-others; transparency; covert–overt; tracking; observing-through video</i>	Negotiations about the spaces in which to conduct Teledialogue. These include concerns over the unwarranted inclusion of others, what may be revealed and the tracking of youths across places	10
Projected encounters	<i>Protecting-others; unintended consequences; participation</i>	Encounters belonging to futures projected in relation to what is relayed in and through Teledialogue	8
Encounters between authority and care	<i>Getting-intimate; professional-distance; work–life balance</i>	Encounters in the schism between care and personal relations on the one side, and professional distance and authority on the other	7
No privacy encountered		Privacy not an issue in the dialogue	6

After an initial review of privacy literature, the article continues to present the grounded coding of privacy in Teledialogue which is categorised into five interrelated privacy encounters – each in their own way illustrating how privacy is both between and negotiated.

Privacy between public authorities and private citizens

No modern society can function without the state possessing considerable knowledge about its population (Fitzpatrick, 2005, p. 178). This is particularly evident in a country like Denmark with an extensive welfare system based on a civil registration number and a long tradition for using and handling personal information in the provision of welfare services. And, as we return to later, it is also evident in Teledialogue where case managers are highly dependable on intimate knowledge of the children if they are to act on their behalf.

A few scholars have written on the surveillant relation between state welfare and personal privacy. Gilliom (2001), for instance, has done a comprehensive study on the changing policies from the point of view of American mothers dependent on welfare benefits. Maki (2011) has studied the introduction of Ontario Works, a Canadian workfare programme, which introduced new surveillance regimes and, lastly, Dee (2013) has made a similar study of the Income Management programme in Australia, which introduced BasicsCard – a technology aimed at controlling and delimiting what welfare recipients spent their money on. These studies are primarily critical of such forms of welfare surveillance and consider them invasions of privacy leading to loss of dignity and marginalisation as deviants or failed citizens. In fact, privacy in its modern conception has typically been negatively defined as ‘about to end’ under the threat of governments, media and new technologies (John & Peters, 2016).

Other scholars have argued that a strengthened relation between authorities and citizens through technology may in fact increase individual privacy and autonomy. Sorell and Draper (2012), for instance, defend the use of telecare in U.K. against the accusation that it is Orwellian. In their case, electronic sensors transmit information about vulnerable patients' location and patterns of behaviour so as to trigger a response from authorities in case of emergency (p. 36). Rather than considering this form of surveillance an invasion of privacy, the authors argue that by enabling patients to live in their own home rather than being admitted to a hospital, the surveillance is, in fact, enhancing privacy and autonomy.

Meanwhile, privacy discussions such as the above often fail to analyse what is meant by privacy or acknowledge that privacy is a slippery and contested concept. In a survey of the concept, Rössler (2005), for instance, demonstrates how the meaning of privacy is relative to historical periods, cultural/legal systems and academic discourses. She describes how privacy was not a major public concern until the beginning of computerisation in the 1950s and 1960s and how there are substantial differences in how privacy is coded into law in Germany and the U.S. Furthermore, Rössler points out that while privacy is associated with freedom in most academic disciplines, it is connected to acts of oppression in others such as feminist studies. In another survey, Solove (2002) argues that attempts to locate a common 'core' for the many things we rubric under one as privacy never really capture it all anyway. Solove (2006) thus argues that privacy, in fact, is best considered a taxonomy of family resemblances rather than uniform thing in itself.

Expanding on the definitional problems, Lyon (2001, 2002) and other scholars of surveillance have made substantial critical points about privacy as a concept for analysing and resisting surveillance. First, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between public and private as surveilled and public information flows through spaces (once) thought of as private. And second, the concept of privacy is folded into law and cannot go beyond legal discourses to challenge the wider implications of surveillance on society.

Situating privacy

Despite these definitional and analytical problems, Rössler, Solove and Lyon maintain the concept of privacy. Rössler (2005), for instance, suggests an alternative definition of privacy which is strongly connected to personal autonomy. This connection between autonomy and privacy is substantiated by Rössler's idea of control of access as the key notion for defining what is private. In contrast to classical ideas of privacy based on separation of spaces or types of information, Rössler argues that nothing belongs 'by nature' to the realm of the private. Rather, the dividing line between public and private is fundamentally constructed in relation to situated forms of control of access (Rössler, 2005, p. 9). The private sphere is thus not something that simply exists but something we continuously negotiate in everyday life.

A similar resource for approaching privacy is Viseu et al. (2004)'s study of everyday internet use in Toronto. Here too, the authors identify the described problems of privacy and suggest instead to approach privacy as situated and mediated in the everyday practices of Toronto residents. With this approach, Viseu et al. develop three different *moments* of privacy concerns: those related to the physical surroundings or location of the transaction, those related to who will be acting with the information and how, and finally, concerns about what will happen to the information once in cyberspace. Paradoxically, whereas

privacy debates are mainly focused on the latter, the Toronto residents are mostly concerned about the two former. Similar observations about the apparent asymmetry between theory and practice have been made by Gilliom (2001) and Lyon (2013, p. 140).

The ambition of this article is to approach privacy in ways that are not only situated but also symmetric to the different ‘moments’ described by Viseu et al. and more true to the practices of those involved. Similarly, while acknowledging that privacy is contested in academic discussions, we cannot ignore that privacy is continuously brought up and negotiated by our participants and informants in Teledialogue, and, as such, an important concept to maintain in academic discussions.

Teledialogue: getting case managers closer to children

Since 2013, the authors of this article have worked to design and develop a way for placed children and public case managers to come closer through videoconferences, chat and texting (see also <http://teledialog.au.dk>). Teledialogue is inspired partly by Telemedicine and -care and partly by experiences from the Danish social system where case managers find it difficult to meet their formal responsibility to monitor and surveil the welfare of placed children (Strøm & Krakauer, 2016). Similarly, placed children are frustrated that they do not know their case manager well enough, that they feel unable to contact them when they need help and that they do not feel represented or included in their own case (Aabo, Nyby, Lindberg, & Schultz, 2012).

The situation is unsatisfactory for both parties. Children are dependent on case managers, who hold formal custody over their upbringing, to help decide on a number of things in their life such as how often they should visit their biological family, where to go to school or whether or not they should remain placed at a given family or institution. And case managers, on their part, are dependent on intimate knowledge of children to make the right match between child and place of placement, to assign the right pedagogical support and training and to make timely interventions, if necessary.

On this background, the simple idea of Teledialogue is to bring case managers and placed children closer together through various forms of IT – most prominently, videoconferencing but also chat and texting. Specifically, 6 municipalities, 28 case managers and 25 children¹ aged from 10 to 17 have helped to design and develop a concept for Teledialogue through workshops, test-runs and experiments. Concurrently, we have conducted semi-structured interviews and participant observations with children, case managers, foster parents, pedagogues, IT professionals and public managers.

From this material, we identified 22 cases on which there are sufficient data for grounded analyses. First, we did a descriptive coding focused on any ‘concern or negotiation about the intended or unintended disclosure of information about either case managers or children to others’. The descriptive codes are listed in [Table 1](#) and elaborated upon in the following where they appear in italics. Subsequently, we categorised the codes into five interrelated and overlapping privacy encounters which are reflected in the headings.

Encounters with and through technology

Teledialogue brings new technologies into the relation between placed children and case managers. As will be argued in the following, these caused several displacements to the

ways in which privacy was already negotiated and implicated novel actors in the situation. For instance, videoconferencing draws in government bodies and complex legal considerations in the gatekeeping of children and case managers while, to some degree, circumventing foster parents and pedagogues. Furthermore, Teledialogue displaces what is rendered visible to the parties, how feelings and reactions are read and put on display. In the following, we explore these encounters occasioned by the introduction of technology further through empirical examples organised around the descriptive codes which appear in italics (please note that children and case managers have been thoroughly anonymised).

Gatekeeping and invisible walls

In our attempt to introduce Teledialogue, we encountered multiple forms of *gatekeeping* or control of access in Rössler's (2005) terminology. Case managers, for instance, have traditionally kept their private life hidden from children under their custody and, not the least, the children's biological family. They are most often unlisted in phone books and only tell of their private life in general terms. Consequently, to the extent that case managers consider using IT or social media – and are lawfully allowed to do so – they only do so through professional profiles separate from their private ones. Similarly, some children found it 'awkward' and 'embarrassing' if their friends are mixed with their case manager on Facebook or Snapchat in an unwarranted mixture of social worlds. As such, platforms such as Skype or Facetime – which do not display who is talking or chatting to whom nor who is on your contact list – were deemed appropriate to the project as they afforded good gatekeeping opportunities.

The majority of children in Teledialogue were indeed excited to use Skype to talk to their case managers, as they were already keen users of these technologies to maintain intimate relations to their friends and biological family across distance. Here is an illustrative excerpt from our first interview with a 10-year-old boy who had just been placed in a new foster family far away from friends and family:

So you are using Skype?

– Yes for my friends and family.

I guess it is pretty good when your friends are living in Copenhagen?

– Yes it is good when my friends are living far from here. I can talk to them even though we are not physically close.

But you also Skype with your family?

– Yes with my dad, mum, brothers and sisters.

Do you have many siblings?

– Yearh. I have three older brothers, one older sister, one younger brother and two nieces.

And you Skype with them all?

– No not my oldest brother and my big sister, but I do with my younger brother, two of my older brothers, my mum and my step dad. But not with my dad. (interview, 2015)

Skype is a good technology for placed children to maintain intimate relations across distance. However, since the boy and the other children are talking to representatives of the social services and not their friends or family, their use of Skype and Facetime is encountered by a government body called the Danish Data Protection Agency (DDPA).

The DDPA is meant to ensure adherence to the Danish Act on Processing of Personal Data and, as such, concerned about technically and legally gatekeeping who is allowed access to personal data and in which ways. In a 2012 ruling on a project similar to Teledialogue, the DDPA legally complicated the use of Skype between state and citizens to the degree that most authorities now consider the platform practically unworkable (Bredsdorff, 2012; Datatilsynet, 2012). For instance, in the interpretation of the DDPA, the municipalities are legally obliged to gatekeep exactly through which servers Skype is routing data at any given time and Skype should guarantee access to their data centres for inspection. Consequently, Skype and Facetime were dismissed from Teledialogue which came to rest instead on business software such as Microsoft Lync (now Skype for Business) and Cisco Jabber with similar functionality but less accessible for private use.

But it is not only children, case managers and the DDPA who are actively gatekeeping privacy in Teledialogue. Foster parents and pedagogues too sought to gatekeep children from talking to ‘bad friends’, from misinforming their case manager or from relaying information to others that *they* consider private. Or as were the case with some young girls, foster parents were concerned that they would unintentionally publish inappropriate and sexual content if given unrestricted access to the internet. Consequently, foster parents and pedagogues initially included themselves in the gatekeeping – some were lingering in the background during talks or even locking up the children’s tablet or laptop while others have requested debriefing sessions with the case manager.

Gatekeeping in Teledialogue is thus a practice occurring in the encounter between children, case managers, Skype, the DDPA, pedagogues and foster parents. Gatekeeping is negotiated between them, occasioned by their interrelation and, importantly, evolving as a practice with and through the project.

A related dimension of the privacy encounters in Teledialogue revolved around what is made *visible* by different forms of mediation. In some situations, for instance, videoconferencing is much too *overt* a form of communication in relation to the immediate physical surroundings. Here, the *covert* communication made possible by chat and texting is preferable – a theme explored in more detail under spatial encounters. But first, we will consider the direct and relatively undisturbed reading of faces, reactions and surroundings made possible through videoconferencing.

Due to the position of the webcam slightly off from the screen, it is close to impossible to achieve eye contact through videoconferencing. If you are looking into the webcam you are not looking at the screen and vice versa. Children and case managers are thus free to observe each other and their respective surroundings without the situation becoming awkward and, importantly, at a distance. The video sessions have thus been described as talking through ‘invisible walls’ (interview, 2015).

As one experienced case manager explained, evaluating children’s reactions and non-verbal expressions is central to case work:

Are they looking at the foster parents? Are they looking down? What is their posture and expressions in their eyes? Their tone also – I reckon we use that more than we realize because

we know most children are instructed by their parents in what they are supposed to say. (interview, 2014)

Videoconferencing transforms and, in some cases, strengthens this practice by replacing face-to-face conversations with the invisible wall of videoconferencing. In an illustrative excerpt, another case manager explains how she attentively observed a young girl through the video feed:

– She is not looking into the camera, her eyes are flickering. She is smiling but you can tell that she is thinking ‘how should I handle this, I do not want to hurt anyone’.

Is Skype creating a distance making it easier for her to talk about these things?

– It makes it easier for someone like her to open up [...] I was talking to a colleague about this, that it is much easier for them to open up because they are not forced into having eye contact. (interview, 2016)

In this case, the camera not only makes it easier for the case manager to read the girl but it also makes it easier for the girl to open up and talk about potentially hurtful subjects.

Similarly, children also observe and read their case manager. In the excerpt below, a young boy is in conflict with his case manager – who he otherwise trusts and respects – about where he should live. The boy wants to live with his biological mother, which the case manager is against, and he too is observing the case manager’s reactions at a comfortable distance.

– I could see that she was starting to get irritated, that I was still pursuing that when she had said no.

How can you see that?

– She does like this with her eyes [eyes flickering]. You know, she is not saying like ‘grrrr’ but you can see the ‘grrrr’.

[...]

– You know, in some ways it is easier to talk with her through Skype than it would have been physically [...] you have more comfort. If she gets mad, then it is more nice and easy. (interview, 2016)

The video sessions thus make feelings, reactions and backgrounds readily observable which, in turn, occasioned a number of privacy negotiations. For one, the sessions affected where and when children and case managers felt comfortable talking. Most case managers, for instance, prefer to videoconference at their office because they do not want their private life to be ‘put on display’ when calling from home. Similarly, some children choose to videoconference against a wall because they do not want case managers to see how messy things are in their room or at their parents place. And, in some cases, children would outright *resist* being filmed or, at least, distort their camera. Being present at the first conversation between a boy and his case manager, a field worker made the following illustrative jotting of this resistance:

He calls the case manager with sound but no video. The case manager says that she cannot see him. He turns on the camera. The case manager says that she still cannot see him but only

the ceiling behind him. He adjusts the camera angle. I think he is doing it on purpose. (field note, 2015)

In another case, it took a case manager half a year before she was able to gain enough trust with a young girl for her to film her face. Here, the case manager relays one of their early talks:

And then she turns on the video but she is filming into her mouth and I can see the uvula and tonsils and everything. But mostly the camera is going all over the ceiling and I am getting almost seasick because her iPad is all over. (workshop, 2015)

In the encounter between cameras, children, case managers and their respective settings, privacy thus arises as a long and often arduous negotiation over what is put on display, to whom and in which ways.

Encounters with participating others

In principle, Teledialogue is between case managers and placed children. In practice, however, information about placed children necessarily implicates many others and, similarly, is *distributed* between these others. Case managers, for instance, often state that their knowledge of children comes as much from people around the child as it does from the child itself. However, as will be the point further below, privacy is not only about the distribution of knowledge but also entails negotiations of agency and autonomy in relation to these others.

First of all, foster parents and pedagogues are concerned that the intensified dialogue between children and case managers will result in a violation of things they consider private to them. Sometimes, they express this concern to us or case managers, at other times they – as mentioned above – insist on being present when case managers talk to children or make rules about when and how the children can talk. Children may also seek to *protect others* from being implicated in what they tell about themselves. One boy, for instance, told his case manager that he had been sad during the weekend but only reluctantly revealed that it was because his father did not spend time with him as promised. As it is, children often cannot talk about themselves without also telling about others – a point we return to later.

The implication of others in privacy negotiations is also a question of agency or *autonomy*, that is who gets to act in relation to whom (see also Rössler, 2005 for this point). One boy at a secure institution, for instance, tried to empower his own position in relation to the pedagogues by becoming more intimate with his case manager. As relayed by his case manager:

He really enjoys our private time. In his world view, the pedagogues are the enemies – even though he actually kinda likes them. But he feels that they are opponents of what he wants and he knows that he needs to convince me if he wants things to change [against the will of the pedagogues]. (interview, 2015)

The point being that the boy can only become more autonomous from pedagogues if he becomes more intimate with the case manager. Of course, the pedagogues for their part are concerned that Teledialogue will undermine their work by empowering the boy in unproductive ways.

Another boy, Kevin, illustrates the relation between privacy and autonomy in greater detail. Kevin is living in a foster family. Kevin's mother supports the placement while the father is against it. Furthermore, the biological parents are divorced, in conflict and unable to agree on anything concerning Kevin. The case manager is worried about the relation between Kevin and his father. The father lobbies Kevin; tells him to tell the case manager that she should increase the visitation rights of the father. Kevin, however, is ambivalent at this prospect and his position in the family diplomacy is strenuous. The case manager is thus working to make Kevin more autonomous from his father and only pursue what he himself actually wants. However, for the case manager to increase autonomy, she paradoxically needs to circumvent and interfere in the personal or private relationship between Kevin and his father. She used videoconferencing for this end.

A few weeks into the project, we received an enthusiastic email from the case manager describing how she and Kevin had found good use of their Teledialogue sessions in relation to the father:

I just wanted to inform you that I was on Lync [video conference] with Kevin last night. He was about to have a phone conversation with his father and needed help finding out what to say to him. (email, 2014)

The father, of course, did not welcome what he considered a further intrusion of his privacy on top of the placement of his son.

For unrelated reasons, the case manager resigned soon thereafter. Kevin was devastated and did not accept his new case manager at all. She is too old, has too many wrinkles and does not joke like my old case manager, he told us. The new case manager, on her part, was worried that Kevin's father would take advantage of the situation and renew his pressure on Kevin. Accordingly, she tried to establish an intimate relation to Kevin by letting him into aspects of her private life – a rather unorthodox move for case managers.

The negotiation failed. Kevin did not care about the case managers private life and did not feel like including her in his. And he again started to promote his father's agenda to the degree that he was *splitting* the family apart, telling one thing to his mother, another thing to foster parents and yet other things to the case manager. In the words of the new case manager:

He [the father] has some requests and he tasks Kevin with these [...] But the result is that he is splitting us apart. So rather than allowing for this splitting we are arranging family consultations instead. (interview, 2015)

The position was strenuous for Kevin and the sensitive issue about how much time he should spend with whom is now resolved through family consultations instead with the attendance of both Kevin, father, mother, case manager and foster parents. And since the case manager refuses to discuss the issue outside of these consultations Kevin's relationship to his father is no longer private to them but made a public issue between the whole family.

Spatial encounters

Teledialogue is physically situated in the everyday spaces of children and case managers. Children are videoconferencing from their private rooms, from the living room of their foster parents, from an empty classroom at school – alone and in the company of others.

Similarly, while case managers are mostly situated in their office, they are occasionally forced into videoconferencing from their private homes out of practical necessity. However, by relating these spaces in novel ways, Teledialogue provokes different privacy negotiations around who else may or may not be around, what is covert and what is overt and, not the least, how the space in one is rendered transparent or palpable to the person in the other end.

The most prominent concern in this regard is who else is, or should be, included in the Teledialogue space. The case of Kate illustrates such negotiations. Kate lives with her boyfriend in their own apartment in a special programme called after protection. After many years in the social system, Kate is experienced in ‘managing’ case managers or, to be more precise, to gatekeep their access to knowledge about her private life. As she told us, ‘I am trying to keep her at some distance but it is also no problem to tell her things.’ She has, for instance, kept her romantic relationships hidden from changing case managers preventing them from interfering or pass judgements.

The above notwithstanding, Kate was really keen on participating in Teledialogue. Frustrated with the rarity of the case managers’ visits in person, she looked forward to them texting and video conferencing. She wanted the case manager to listen more, to know her better and understand her better. She wanted to include the case manager in all the little things going on in her life, working to establish trust, and then eventually gain an ally in handling larger problems. However, Kate could not simply decide for herself that the case manager was welcome in her private affairs.

The case manager described Kate’s boyfriend as extremely jealous. He did not like the case manager because she did not consider the boyfriend right for Kate. Consequently, the boyfriend tried to stop Kate talking to the case manager through Teledialogue and argued that their privacy should not be invaded. Kate therefore suggested video conferencing outside the apartment at places where the boyfriend could not interfere – like when she was waiting for the bus or sitting at a café.

Private talks with the case manager in public places was not a problem for Kate. It was, however, a problem for the case manager since it would be against her formal responsibility to protect the privacy of Kate and her boyfriend. The case manager was concerned about unwarranted *inclusion of others*, that is who else would be intentionally or unintentionally included in *overt* videoconferencing at bus stops or at cafés. Kate and her case manager thus gave up videoconferencing and resorted to *covert* texting instead.

As illustrated by Kate and her case manager, the *transparency* of their shared privacy is a major concern for both parties. Are the foster parent’s home from work, is there a pedagogue lingering in the background, a friend from school by your side and how many case managers are sharing your office? These are typical concerns voiced in the encounter between technologies, children, case managers and others. The transparency, however, is never complete. Children hide that their biological parents have left them home alone or the fact that they are playing videogames while talking. Similarly, case managers talking from their private homes are careful not to include their family in the picture.

A final and related point to be negotiated is the ability of case managers to *track down* youths. This has been attempted in two cases with children who often run away and whose case managers wanted to use Teledialogue with them while away in an attempt to identify their location as well as assess their safety and welfare.

Projected futures

A central concern for children in the social system is, of course, what will happen to them and their family if case managers, who are formally obligated to act on their knowledge, are included in their private affairs. Privacy is also encountered by projected futures.

Again, Kate is a good example. Her dialogue with the case manager is meant to project futures for her life and, not the least, her relationship with the boyfriend. As such, the dialogue not only impacts Kate's future but also on the future of others such as the boyfriend. Kate was initially ambivalent about discussing these matters with the case manager, considering them too private or too sensitive: 'I am trying to keep some distance to her [the case manager]' she told us, continuing to say that 'things concerning my family and such, I deal with that myself, she is not involved in that' (interview, 2014). There are numerous other examples of children and case managers *protecting-others* in the negotiation of privacy. Most prominently, placed children are loyal to their family and foster families, trying to protect them against the interference of the social system. As explained to us by an older boy who took years to open up to his case manager:

You talk in superficial ways because nobody should come to your house and see what is going on, because people should not know about your situation. That is just the way it is, you are protecting your parents [...] It was only after I was kicked out of home that I really talked to my case manager about the problems at home. (interview, 2015)

A related concern is the *unintended consequences* which may follow from what is relayed. In an illustrative example, a case manager had asked a young girl, who she knew really well, if her foster parents argued a lot to which the girl angrily responded: 'No! And why do you want to know that? What is it to you!?' (workshop, 2015). As the case manager argued, the girl was very fond of her foster parents and feared an answer would be consequential for them.

A final form of privacy related to projected futures is *participation* or the promotion of agendas. To some children, for instance, privacy was only at stake when and if they wanted to act with and through their case manager (again, a point related to autonomy). Otherwise – and much to the frustration of case managers who are left 'fishing' for knowledge – children can simply circumvent questions or provide superficial answers, as also explained by the boy above (workshop, 2015). Talking to us at a popular restaurant on a busy day, another boy, for instance, told us that privacy and control of information were mostly a concern if he himself had an agenda to promote to his case manager:

If my case manager wants to talk to me then it is no problem to sit here [in full public at a busy restaurant] and talk to her through a headset [through videoconferencing]. But if there are things that I want to discuss, then I know it is private stuff, and then I want to be in a room to myself. (interview, 2016)

Encounters between authority and care

A prominent concern for case managers is achieving and maintaining the right balance between being an authentic human to whom the children can relate and, on the other side, maintaining a professional distance enabling them to act and, if necessary, make unpopular decisions about the children (like removing them from their family). Often,

if case managers want children to open up, they too have to open up to children. Or, in other words, they need to be more than case managers and have something in common with children other than case work. In social work, this is often described as establishing common thirds but we have coded such negotiations as simply *getting-intimate* (Husen, 1996; Lihme, 1988).

In Teledialogue, for instance, children are keen to share pictures and stories of their pastime activities with their case managers who, on their part, are taking children out to restaurants, going for car rides or share carefully selected aspects of their private life. When asked how he felt about his case manager, for instance, the first thing one boy told us was that she once invited him out to eat – and she even ordered a glass of wine. As stated in the transcription, ‘he then laughs and says that there are probably not many placed children who gets to see their case manager drink wine’ (interview, 2014).

However, case managers are also trying to maintain some *professional distance* and to remain in character as an authority. This balance between authority and care is in many ways inherent to both social work and case work. The dilemma being that if children do not trust case managers as persons, they will not tell them how they feel or what is going on while, on the other hand, case managers are very concerned that children should not become too closely related to them as private persons. As voiced by Kevin’s case manager, she is very careful not to become the mother of her children:

– I have to be careful with the children that I have known for long [and become intimate with]. Suddenly, I can find myself becoming their mother.

And that is not the purpose?

– No, they need to become autonomous. Out into the world [...] It is a balance. (interview, 2014)

A related concern for case managers is to negotiate a *work-life balance* with children and, not the least, with their management at the social services. Teledialogue challenges the already established balance where case managers talk to children at the place of placement or at the municipal offices during normal working hours and was, as such, met with numerous reservations about when and how children could call their case managers and rules and reservations were put down. As voiced by one case manager surprised by a video call from a child while at home:

I was sitting there [in her living room] working and not ready to have a talk. And then I could feel how surprised I got because I am not ready to do that [to let children into her house]. So now I make sure to go offline when I am at home. (workshop, 2015)

In most cases, a settlement has been made where case workers either stay late at the office, only take video calls from ‘safe areas’ of their house or only accept chat and texts when with their family.

Discussion

The introduction of technologies meant to keep authorities surveillant to the health, welfare and well-being of citizens often raises debates about the implications for privacy. Similarly, the Teledialogue project carried implications for the privacy of case managers and

placed children. What is meant by privacy, however, is often unclear and contested – both in Teledialogue and in general.

In this article, we have sought to ground privacy in empirical material from Teledialogue and from this outset to conceptualise privacy as a Deleuzian encounter. First of all, the notion of an encounter implies that privacy is relational and emergent rather than a priori tied to individuals or surrounding properties. In the words of Deleuze & Parnet (2006, p. vii), it is what is between children, case managers, pedagogues, the DDPA, boyfriends and so forth that configures privacy in Teledialogue. Secondly, an encounter is by definition a thoroughly heterogeneous phenomenon irreducible to either of its constituents – legal rights, technical set-ups or human concerns – overflowing either category. As such, privacy is differently composed for Kevin and for Kate. Thirdly, an encounter creates friction and implicates empirical negotiations. It is not only through frictions that privacy becomes articulated – and thus potentially visible to us as researchers – but also that we may derive normative and political concerns immanent to the encounter (see also Deleuze, 1992, p. 163). Politically and analytically, privacy thus seems to be something that is either undermined or enhanced but rather encountered in continuously heterogeneous ways.

This take on privacy raises new questions. In Teledialogue, for instance, it does not make sense to debate whether the children or case managers have too much or too little privacy when new technologies are introduced. The relevant questions become instead how to balance the security of Skype servers with children's desire to use the platform; when and where is it appropriate to film each other and what is made visible by doing so; how to balance the privacy between Kate and her boyfriend with that between Kate and her case manager; and how to ensure that appropriate forms of autonomy emerge from privacy negotiations such as those between Kevin and his case manager and family.

While privacy as an encounter is grounded in Teledialogue, it is not grounded elsewhere. In fact, Deleuze (2014, p. 373) described such notions as groundless erewhons (nowheres, a word borrowed from Samuel Butler). Not in the sense that they come from nowhere, but in the sense that they only apply if grounded elsewhere, that the application of a theory is never one of resemblance (Deleuze & Foucault, 1980). In *What is philosophy*, the point is made clear, concepts such as encounters have to be (re)constructed or encountered themselves if the stakes are to be made clear (Guattari & Deleuze, 1994, pp. 5–7). The contribution here is thus not to identify what privacy *is* but rather to point to *how* it may become elsewhere.

Note

1. For simplicity, we use the term 'children' for anyone who is not yet of age and, consequently, is subject to the parental rights and responsibilities of others. In this paper, children thus refers to anyone below the Danish legal age of 18. In the case of placed children, their case managers hold formal custody.

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