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Participation and power

In participatory research and action research

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PARTICIPATION AND POWER

IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND ACTION RESEARCH

Marianne Kristiansen &
Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen (Eds.)

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EDITORIAL

An invitation to participate
in ongoing dialogues on action research
and participatory research

Marianne Kristiansen and Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen

Dear reader,

We would like to welcome you to a series of dialogues within the framework of action research (AR) and participatory research (PR), which will be focused on the relationship between participation and power. The basic question in this anthology is 'What are the possibilities and barriers to participation conceptualised as various degrees of codetermination in organisations and in research processes?'

The anthology is part of a follow-up on an initiative taken in 2010 by Professor Werner Fricke, editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Action Research* for many years. His vision was to create an academy of AR and PR.

Symposium on action and participatory research, Porto Alegre, Brazil, June 20th-22nd 2011.
The initiative resulted in a symposium, organised by Danilo Streck. He is a professor at the Graduate School of Education at the Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos), Brazil, and the new editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Action Research*. Researchers and students from Latin America and Europe participated.

In an internal working paper to the symposium, Fricke stated the following possible purposes for an Academy of Action Research (AAR):

· Sharpen the focus on practical development cases as the point of departure for all discourses on action research in order to avoid/ transcend the vast seas of deliberate "theoretical discourses" (Gustavsen)
· Comparative discussion of different socio – political contexts influencing the development of AR [Action Research]: Latin American, US American; European; Australian (?)

· Where are and what are the milieus supportive to action research?
· Which are the questions/social issues action research is dealing with in the different world regions? Beyond the general questions such as democracy, participation, democratic dialogue.
· Different historical/actual contexts of what Freire called "culture of silence"; different forms (performances)?
· AR contributions to macro issues (social movements; strengthening the peripheries against the centres; ecology; economic suppression (?)
· Emphasis on diffusion as the road to generality, pointing at the limitations of single cases as a platform for reflections on action research (Gustavsen).

At the symposium, we decided to continue as an international network of researchers and students from Latin America and Europe, with ongoing dialogues at conferences, in proceedings, and in the *International Journal of Action Research.*

The contributions from the conference are published in a Portuguese anthology: Streck, D., Sobottka, E. A. and Eggert, E. (Eds.) (2014). *Conhecer e transformar: pesquisa-acao e pesquisa participante em dialogo international.* Curitiba: Editora CRV (www.editoracrv.com.br/?f=produto_detalhes&pid=4063).

Below is a survey of the chapters:

· Michel Thiollent: *Pesquisa-ação e pesquisa participante: uma visão de conjunto*
· Werner Fricke: *Perspectivas sociopolíticas selecionadas sobre as tradições de pesquisa-ação na Europa Ocidental, especialmente na Escandinávia*
· Carlos Rodrigues Brandão: *Educação popular e pesquisa participante: um falar algumas lembranças, alguns silêncios e algumas sugestões*
· Alfonso Torres Carrillo: *Vigencia y perspectivas de la investigación participativa*
· Emil A. Sobottka: *Pesquisar políticas de participacao*
· Maria Ozanira da Silva e Silva: *A abordagem participativa enquanto proposta metodológica para desenvolvimento da pesquisa avaliativa: uma experiência em construção*
· Mariana de Castro Moreira: *Projetos sociais e participação: histórias, memórias e construção de conhecimentos*
· Marianne Kristiansen & Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen: *Participação como desdobramento de poder na pesquisa-ação dialogica em organizações: reflexões sobre interesses de conhecimento conflitantes e praticabilidade*
· Werner Fricke: *Qualificações inovadoras e participação democrática: relatório e reflexões sobre um projeto de pesquisa-ação*

· Marcos Bidart-Novaes & Janette Brunstein: *Aquecendo, encenando e compartilhando: integrando o sociodrama e a investigação cooperativa nos estudos organizacionais*

· Elza Maria Fonseca Falkembach: *Sistematização em processo: o caso da Enfoc/Contag, uma escola sindical*

· Maria Amélia Santoro Franco, Daisy Cunha, Lúcio Parrela & José Luiz Fazzi: *A pesquisa-ação na prática pedagógica: balizando princípios metodológicos*

· Maurício Dwek: *Do trabalho e do trabalho em comum para Conhecer*

· Wivian Weller & Catarina Malheiros da Silva: *A pesquisa-ação como estratégia para a formação crítica do engenheiro − Método documentário e pesquisa participante: algumas interfaces*

· Gerhard Riemann: *Etnografias autorreflexivas da prática e sua relevância para a socialização profissional no serviço social*

· Luis Rodríguez Gabarrón: *Etnopsicoanálisis participativista: una reconstrucción paradigmática De Cartagena a Porto Alegre: notas e reflexões sobre possibilidades de um quixotismo participante.*

Conference on Participation and Power, Copenhagen, Denmark, June 5th – 7th 2013.

At the symposium, it was decided that we – Marianne and Jørgen – were to organise a conference at Aalborg University/Copenhagen, Denmark. It took place in June 2013, with the title *Participation and Power* (www.participation-power.aau.dk).

As an introduction to the conference, we edited a special issue of the *International Journal of Action Research* (2013, 9(1)) with the following articles written in English:

· Claudia Nick and Paul Fuchs-Frohnhofen: *The power of communication: Experiences on giving up the distance of researcher and researched in a project concerning the value and appreciation of nursing*

· Helle Merete Nordentoft and Birgitte Ravn Olesen: *Walking the talk? A micro-sociological approach to the co-production of knowledge and power in Action Research*

· Marianne Kristiansen: *The dynamics between organizational change processes and facilitating dissensus in context inquiring dialogues*

· Emil Sobottka: *Participation and recognition in social research.*

At the conference, the following keynotes were presented and discussed:

· Danilo Streck: Knowledge, Power and Participation: *Research Notes on Participatory Budgeting in South Brazil*

· Danny Burns, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK: *Participation versus Power? Trade-offs on the route to social change*
· Birgitte Ravn Olesen, Department of Communication, Business and Information Technologies, Roskilde University, DK: *Whose power? Whose knowledge? Tensions in collaborative production of knowledge.*

At the conference, it was decided that we were also to publish the conference proceedings. This book is the conference proceedings with the following contributions, focusing on the relationship between participation and power:

Chapter 1

Questions of power in participatory projects
– Participation in organisations and in research

The basic purpose of our initial chapter is to situate power questions in the centre of PR and AR projects.

Participation in organisations means the degree of participation, i.e., the codetermination and control that it is possible to obtain in the organisations where the PR or AR projects take place. The definition raises the questions of who has the power to change the organisational power balances, and in which degree is it desirable for whom to change them through the projects.

Participation in research describes the degree of codetermination that is possible for the partners to obtain in relation to the researchers in the research process, which also lead to questions of who has the power to decide the purposes of the projects, who decides the design, who evaluates, and who present the results in which contexts?

Chapter 2

Education and solidarity economy
– An analysis of participation and power relations

The chapter, written by Telmo Adams, Fernanda Carvalho Ferreira, Joana Frank and Marina da Rocha, has its point of departure in the project 'Popular education and solidarity economy: mediations between ethical-political and technical-productive education'. The ethical-political dimension encompasses the relations and principles of solidarity economy, whereas the technical-productive dimension refers to management of production, administration, finances, and commercialisation.

As written in the abstract, the project 'aims at systematizing the Brazilian

experience of the Centre of Education in Solidarity Economy (CFES/sul – Centro de Formação em Economia Solidária da Região Sul) in the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul'. The chapter characterises the main methodological steps of the program developed and followed by a participatory research process, with references to Fals Borda, Brandão, Streck, Demo, and Franco, focusing on the analysis of relations between participation and power.

Chapter 3

Knowledge, participation, and power in participatory budgeting
– Contributions to a pedagogy of power

Chapter 3, Danilo R. Streck's keynote, is based on studies of participatory budgeting in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. It argues that participation facilitates the democratisation of power relations crucial to knowledge democracy. Participatory budgeting started as an arena for people participating in regional and state affairs in the late 1980s, after the military dictatorship ended. The chapter focuses on the concept of 'pedagogy of power', indicating 'that knowing and participating are always political actions'. Its purpose is to change priorities for the benefit of the majority of the population and to learn about power mechanisms simultaneously.

The study is based on a participatory methodology, implying a dialogue between the relevant parties.

Chapter 4

From change agent to sustainable scaffolding?

Chapter 4 presents a case of implementing information and communication technology (ICT) in educational institutions in rural Bangladesh. It is written by Md. Saifuddin Khalid and Tom Nyvang, who are both associated with the eLearning Lab, Department of Communication and Psychology, Aalborg University, Denmark. The chapter describes several barriers of implementing ICT. By applying an ethnographic AR approach, it shows that implementing ICT in schools in rural Bangladesh is a complex and unpredictable process, which is influenced by knowledge, infrastructure, existing school practices, etc.

Chapter 5

Action research and empowerment in Denmark
– Experiences from three different contexts
Chapter 5, by John Andersen, Annette Bilfeldt, and Michael Søgaard Jør-

gensen, describes three AR projects from Denmark. The first deals with a public nursing home that was trying to establish an alternative to mainstream new public management, by focusing on the needs of the staff as well as the social needs of the elder residents. The second project took place in a marginalised urban area, where people were trying to develop a community centre with many activities, such as 'uniting library services, health promotion, and counselling service (job, education, and citizenship rights) for ethnic minorities'. The action researchers worked to facilitate empowerment for residents as well as for welfare workers, which implied changing the welfare workers into facilitators of the empowerment process of the residents. The third AR project dealt with sustainable solutions within housing that is beneficial for residents, constructors, and the environment. The project cooperated with the municipality, the Danish Building Research Institute, and Eco-labelling Denmark (a national centre for urban ecology, architects, constructors, building craftsmen, etc.), with The Green House, a local Agenda 21 centre, as facilitator.

Chapter 6

Collaborative knowledge production
– Ideals and practices in a neoliberal era

Chapter 6, Birgitte Ravn Olesen's keynote, is a self-critical review of two of her AR projects. One took place fifteen years ago in the Danish welfare sector and was about improving the quality of care for children in families with many different problems. The other took place six years ago in a Danish psychiatric ward dealing with 'psycho-education for schizophrenic patients and their relatives'. Here patients and relatives were considered as partners in developing new ways of communicating within the field.

These projects, as well as new ones in pedagogical, social, and health welfare institutions, aim at social change, hence implying changes of practical issues in the field.

The focus is on the changing conditions of such projects within the neoliberal era, which today has become even more influential, and which raises the question of whether these conditions exclude the possibility of collaborative knowledge production. One of the main findings of the collaborative process in the first project was that these conditions made it impossible for social and health care workers to do their jobs properly, because the conditions marginalised the children in these families systematically. One of the main findings of the second project was that the quality of the relations between the participants is crucial for the results of the AR process. Relationship building is time consuming, and time is a limited resource in the neoliberal era.

Chapter 7

Anti-groups and action research

Chapter 7, by Susanne Broeng and Søren Frimann, deals with bad social and emotional relations that have developed amongst organisational employees in a Danish health care centre for a long period. The authors worked as action researchers in the organisation, where, together with management and employees, they tried to change and develop the organisation. The article adopts a psychodynamic approach and understands the relational patterns of the health care centre by means of the psychodynamic concepts of anti-group and negative capabilities. The chapter illustrates how these concepts offer paths to change, and it describes some dilemmas dealing with power when working as external consultants and action researchers.

Chapter 8

Theorising plurivocal dialogue
– Implications for organizations and leadership

Chapter 8, by Ann Starbæk Bager, explores a Bakhtinian perspective on dialogicality for participatory research processes in the field of organisational and leadership studies. The article combines Bakhtin's perspective with notions from Foucauldian governmentality and organisational discourse studies. These three perspectives are elaborated to critically reflect on a case study that the author helped initiate. This study was a participatory research-based leadership forum involving professional leaders, researchers, and postgraduate students. Initially, it was inspired by Scandinavian AR dialogue approaches. The article adopts a dissensus perspective and argues that dialogicality demands enactment of dialogic participation as open-ended meaning-making processes that hold in balance unity (centripetal forces) *and* diversity (centrifugal forces). It understands participants as subjects in processes accommodating diverse and often opposing voices that produce vision surpluses through the systematic and ongoing accommodation of otherness. The chapter claims that dialogicality allows action researchers to consider the messiness and tensions immanent in organisational interaction and the co-authoring of knowledge.

Chapter 9

Differences as a potential vehicle of organizational development?
– Co-researching-on-action

Chapter 9, written by Lone Grøndahl Dalgaard, Lone Varn Johannsen, Marianne Kristiansen, and Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen, describes the early phase

of an organisational AR project at the Faculty Office of Engineering, Science/Medicine at Aalborg University, Denmark. By focusing on a simple case of electing ten internal facilitators, *firstly*, the article describes tensions amongst area managers, employees, and action researchers, regarding the questions of who decides who will act as facilitators. *Secondly*, the article inquires into, if, and eventually how, a dialogic dissensus approach can handle these tensions in context-sensitive ways, allowing differences to act as a vehicle of change. This takes place through a combination of dissensus and power, where all participants are seen as enacting power. *Thirdly*, it presents an example of co-researching-on-action by four different authors: an area manager, an employee, and two action researchers. Empirically, the article is based on audiotaped meetings, e-mails, and a shared conference presentation. Theoretically, it is a contribution to a dissensus-based understanding of participation and power.

Invitation: Conference in Colombia, 2015

At the conference in Copenhagen, we agreed to continue the dialogues at a conference in Colombia in 2015, to be organised by Professor Alfonso Torres Carrillo. We hope newcomers will join our network.

You will find an invitation to participate in the conference in the *International Journal of Action Research*, 2015(1).

We look forward to welcoming you to the conference in Colombia in 2015.

Best regards,

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QUESTIONS OF POWER IN PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS

Participation in organisations and in research

Marianne Kristiansen and Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen

Abstract

This chapter introduces the anthology and discusses different ways of understanding the relation between participation and power in organisations and in research. In this anthology research encompass participatory research and action research.

The intention is to show that there are many and contradictory understandings of participation within organisations as well as within research. What counts as participation in a particular organisation or research process is a question of power. The chapter illustrates three implications:

Firstly that participation seems loaded with different interests, tensions, and conflicts.

Secondly that it seems critical to get power questions back into the centre of the inquiry processes of participation in organisations and in research.

Thirdly that it cannot be taken for granted that partners and researchers have shared interests, only.

Keywords: Participation, power, research, organisation

Purpose

This chapter is an introduction to the anthology and a discussion of different contributions to understanding the relation between participation and power. The main idea of the chapter and the anthology is that differences between the various understandings of participation and power might contribute to making us more reflective about basic assumptions, contexts, and possibilities in participatory research (PR) and action research (AR).

A basic assumption of this chapter is that PR and AR share a democratic endeavour of co-creating solutions to their partners' day-to-day challenges, co-creating learning as well as improving theoretical comprehension through this cooperation.

On the other hand, some differences will not be addressed. That goes for the differences between PR and AR (Reason & Bradbury, 2008) as well as the historical connections between them as, e.g. Tandon's (2011) point of view that AR seems to have facilitated the emergence of PR. These differences and connections might be on the agenda at the next conference in Bogota, Colombia in 2015? Here, we have decided to continue the cooperation between action researchers and participatory researchers that was initiated at the conference in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2011 on PR and AR and continued at the conference in Copenhagen, Denmark on participation and power in 2013 (www.participation-power.aau.dk).[1]

Participation as various degrees of co-determination

In this chapter, *participation* is not considered identical to *taking part* (Wenger, 1998). *Participation* is conceptualised as *certain forms of partaking characterised by various degrees of co-determination in movements, organisations, and (research) processes*. As such, *participation* indicates different power balances and tensions between different interests and voices heading at some kind of co-determination. Hence, we understand *participation* as *enactment of power, changing dynamically during processes and from context to context* (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2011, 2012).

The chapter is based on an analytical distinction between two contexts of participation: participation in organisations and participation in research. The first one refers to the fluctuating tensions between different partners – managers and employees or others – in the organisations, where the research takes place, and it deals with questions of who (co-)determines what in the organisational settings. The second one refers to tensions be-

1 We would like to thank Werner Fricke, former editor-in-chief of *International Journal of Action Research* for very valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article.

tween these partners and the researchers and seeks to answer questions of who determines what in the research process.

We have chosen to focus on the concept participation in organisations because the majority of the chapters describe research processes in different kinds of organisations. It would be more to the point to characterise Streck's and Adams et al.'s chapters (2 and 3) on participatory budgeting as participatory governance. However, the anthology has but a restricted focus on the specific challenges of participatory governance (Bager, chap. 8; Gaventa, 2011), and only one of the chapters focuses on the specific challenges facing participatory development projects in third world countries (Khalid & Nyvang, chap. 4; Cornwall, 2011). Based primarily in organisational projects, we address challenges that seem to be shared across the different sectors of participatory work.

Participation in research refers to different conceptualisations of the other and the relation between the other and the researcher. It describes different understandings of knowledge, knowledge production and power, and varying degrees of co-determination for the other and the researcher in the research process.

Saxena (2011) warns against so-called participatory projects driven according to the principle 'I manage, you participate' (p. 31). There is a danger that participation will deteriorate into a neoliberal legitimating device. Similarly, Leal (2011) writes about participation in development projects in third world countries:

> For participation to become part of the dominant [neoliberal] development practice, it first had to be modified, sanitized, and depoliticized. Once purged of all the threatening elements, participation could be re-engineered as an instrument that could play a role within the status quo, rather than one that defied it. Co-optation of the concept depended, in large measure, on the omission of class and larger social contradictions (p. 75f).

In contrast to this, Saxena defines participation this way: 'The essence of participation is exercising voice and choice and developing the human, organizational and management capacity to solve problems as they arise in order to sustain the improvement' (p. 31).

We share the points of view presented by Saxena and Leal and we understand participation as a means to create 'learning, empowerment, and a vibrant organization' (Saxena, 2011, p. 33). We add improved theoretical understanding as a purpose of participation, too, for the projects in this anthology.

In this chapter, participants are everyone who, directly or indirectly, take

part in a project with some claim of co-determination. Amongst participants, we distinguish between (university) researchers and the others/partners. This distinction is not without problems. PR (Brandão, 2005), participatory AR (Fals-Borda, 2001), and liberating education (Freire, 1970) have had a huge impact in Latin America, as you can see in some of the chapters in this anthology (Streck, chap. 3; Adams et al. chap. 2). Here, *participation* refers to *a situation where the (university) researcher takes part in the development- and emancipatory processes of the others as, e.g. a participating intellectual* (Sobottka, 2013) *or as an agent in the service of practitioners* (Brandão, 2005). Something similar goes for many development projects in third world countries, where (university) researchers take part in the practitioners' process, as, for example, in *Participatory Rural Appraisal* (PRA) (Chambers, 1995, 1997; Cornwall & Pratt, 2003). In contrast, the term *participant* seems to designate the others in European AR (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). This does not imply that the others take part in the researcher's project, although this might sometimes be the case.

Practice research is conceptualised as a new understanding of AR (Eikeland, 2012). It is among others characterised by partners researching their own practice and asking university teachers for help. Practice research is a large, expanding field, which we have decided not to include in this chapter, because the chapters of this book do not include examples of practice research.

By characterising everyone as a participant, we want to include many of the different conceptualisations of participants mentioned in this book. This does not imply that everyone is equal in actual practice, but rather that everyone should have a say due to his or her knowledge and interests.

Participation in organisations
– Tensions between organisational participants

In principle, participation in organisations can be understood on a continuum from no influence to complete co-determination or even control (Wilkinson, Gollan, Marchington, & Lewin, 2010). Participation can be about the degree of co-determination of Danish schizophrenic patients in relation to employees in psychiatric wards (chap. 6); about a Brazilian solidarity economic movement in relation to government officials in participatory budgeting (chap. 2 and 3); about employees in relation to managers in a Danish health care centre (chap. 7); about dilemmas between the interests of weak residents as opposed to nurses' obligations and interests in Danish elder care (chap. 5); about teachers and students in relation to management in an information and communication technology (ICT) project

in rural Bangladesh (chap. 4); about a collaborative leadership forum in Denmark (chap. 8); or about employees in relation to area managers and a steering committee in a Danish public institution (chap. 9). In different ways, the chapters of the book address these questions: Is it possible to contribute to creating possibilities where everybody obtains the degree of co-determination or participation they might wish, and if so how?

Birgitte Ravn Olesen's chapter 'Collaborative knowledge production Ideals and practices in a neoliberal era' presents a project on 'psycho-education for schizophrenic patients and their relatives' from a Danish psychiatric ward. Earlier, patients and relatives did not have any influence on the contents of psycho-education. It was considered a professional matter to be handled by doctors, nurses, and psychologists, only. Psycho-education could be characterised as information transfer from the more knowledgeable professional staff to the less knowledgeable patients and relatives. However, the professionals wanted to change this because many patients and relatives did not take part in the education, and so the professional staff asked the action researchers if they could help. A crucial issue of the research project was that the action researchers asked patients and relatives about their ideas. In this way, these earlier non-influential groups obtained a higher degree of co-determination on future psycho-education.

A similar tendency can be seen in one of the AR projects described by John Andersen, Annette Bilfeldt, and Michael Søgaard Jørgensen in the chapter 'Action research and empowerment in Denmark – Experiences from three different contexts'. The project was titled 'Quality in eldercare seen from an employee's point of view'. One of its purposes was to inquire into if it was possible to get more time for caring and a better living room for the residents. Usually, the staff of nurses and the residents did not take part in this type of inquiry and decision-making, but through the AR project, they got a say. An important problem became the so-called blind actions where somebody's interests have been ignored, e.g. by the action researchers. Accordingly, the action researchers systematically asked: 'Is this proposal democratic when compared with the needs of *all* residents?' The following questions became critical at a network conference with relevant stakeholders: Was it possible to avoid excluding the needs of the weakest part (the dementia residents)? How can you deal with this question when, simultaneously, the staffs are faced with a dilemma between the physical and social needs of the elder people and spending cuts in the public sector?

The chapters by Telmo Adams, Fernanda Carvalho Ferreira, Joana Frank and Marina da Rocha, 'Education and solidarity economy: an analysis of participation and power relations', and by Danilo R. Streck, 'Knowledge, participation and power in participatory budgeting: Contributions

to a pedagogy of power', start from the period after the Brazilian military dictatorship. During the dictatorship, the majority of the population had no influence on regional or state budgets. The purpose of the participatory projects was to support the population in gaining influence on the preparation of budgets by means of participatory budgeting. At the beginning, this procedure was promoted by the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores), where the solidarity economic movement, supported by the researchers, negotiated with regional and state representatives about the contents of budgets.

As described by Danilo Streck, participatory budgeting is embedded with tensions between bottom up and top-down initiatives as (e.g. between NGO's social movements, community organisations, local leaders, and state and municipal officers/representatives), because the state has the final responsibility for budgets. Streck comprehends participatory budgeting as similar to the understanding of participation within organisational AR, as practiced by the Work Research Institute (WRI) in Oslo, Norway. Here, participants qualify the foundation of decisions through their dialogues, a process we think is similar to conducting consultations and hearings. Afterwards, these decisions are made in the legal decision-making bodies responsible for the budget.

Streck conceptualises power 'along the lines of the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2003, p. 266) as a component of social relationships regulated by an unequal exchange and which, therefore, produces tensions, conflicts, negotiations and new possibilities of living together.' This understanding differs from a Foucauldian inspired claim that power is omnipresent. Participatory processes like participatory budgeting focus on hierarchy/inequality in order to facilitate emancipation.

Tensions dealing with budgets between the solidarity economic movement and the federal government representatives are addressed, too, in the chapter by Telmo Adams, Fernanda Carvalho Ferreira, Joana Frank, and Marina da Rocha. It focuses on different aspects of the relation between participation and power. Firstly, *persuasion/manipulation*, which we interpret as a kind of pseudo-participation. It indicates a manager or a government official trying to argue in favour of a predefined goal and a predesigned process thus acting contrary to a participatory endeavour; secondly, *consultation/referendum* indicate a hearing process where management/federal government has the monopoly of decision-making afterwards; and thirdly, *self-management/democratic deliberation*, where power is distributed differently among the participants. Thus based on these distinctions, we think Streck's article can be understood as an example of consultation/referendum, which is the form of participation that is possible in a given context.

In our own chapter 'Differences as a potential vehicle of development Co-researching-in-action', we worked together with a Danish public knowledge institution with a long tradition of self-managing teams. Five years ago during our last cooperation, it had a flat structure with a faculty director, a vice chairperson, and about 70 employees. Today, it has doubled in size and has a new layer of area managers between top management and the employees. This has created a new decision-making framework: newly arrived employees are more used to asking management before making decisions; older employees are more likely to making their own decisions before informing management. Thus, there are various tensions among employees who think they are to ask management before making decisions and employees who think they can make their own decision and afterwards inform management. These tensions surfaced at a meeting in the steering group. It consists of fiery souls, HR employees, and some area managers. This group can make its own decisions except when dealing with personnel and economic questions. After the meeting, an employee wrote: 'The area managers have accepted our plan and started to implement it.' This made us write 'This sounds good and it raises a question about self-managing teams and management. Should area managers confirm the plan or just be informed about it after the steering group had decided it? Let us talk about this on our next meeting.'

Across differences, the Brazilian PR projects by Streck and Adams, Ferreira, Frank, and da Rocha, and the Danish AR projects by Andersen, Bilfeldt, and Søgaard Jørgensen; by Ravn Olesen; and by Dalgaard, Johannsen, Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen seem to contribute to a shift in the mentioned continuum towards more co-determination or democratisation. A shift created by partners and researchers. Andersen, Bilfeldt, and Søgaard Jørgensen warn against 'a simplistic opposition of "mere" citizen-ruled bottom-up-strategies and "mere" management controlled top-down strategies'. Instead, they talk in favour of a 'bottom-linked' innovation strategy. Gaventa (2011) speaks in favour of something similar within participatory local government when quoting the Commonwealth Foundation (1999), saying it is both about '*participatory democracy* and *responsive government*' (Gaventa, 2011, p. 255).

We think that the degree of co-determination or participation must be examined and clarified in ongoing dialogues between partners and researchers to reach desired degrees of co-determination within a particular context, if this is at all possible. Ultimately, we think this entails questions of power. Who has the power to decide what is possible and advisable in an organisation? It is not enough that everybody has a voice. They should also have a real choice (Cornwall, 2011). In the above-mentioned project, a critical e-mail from us was discussed at a steering group meeting while a

similar critical e-mail from an employee was met with silence until it was discussed on our initiative. This happened in an organisation with a long-standing tradition of self-managing teams.

Different meanings of employee participation

Self-managing teams can be seen as an example of a kind of participation in organisations normally described as employee participation or employee involvement. The concept has had different meanings in different countries and periods. Wilkinson et al. (2010) give an outline of the concept in this way:

> On the one hand, it could relate to trade union representation through joint consultative committees and collective bargaining, to worker cooperatives or to legislation designed to provide channels for employee representatives to engage in some form of joint decision making with employers. On the other hand, and at a different level, it could encompass myriad mechanisms that employers introduce in order to provide information to their staff or to offer them the chance to engage in joint problem-solving groups or use their skills/discretion at work via job enrichments programmes. (p. 4)

The authors distinguish between two ways of understanding participation in organisations as respectively democracy and a managerial tool. The latter is described, too, as 'direct communication' and 'upward problem solving' (p. 4) (i.e., as face-to-face conversations between managers and employees who are involved in bottom up problem solving). When understood in this way, participation seems to be reduced to instrumental participation, where apparently, in advance, management decides how much influence employees are going to have.

A far more radical understanding is advocated by Fricke (2013) with his distinction between *democratic participation* and *instrumentalised participation*. *Democratic participation is a normative concept referring to democratic dialogue* (Gustavsen, 1992; Pålshaugen, 2002). *Instrumentalised participation means dependent autonomy for efficiency* (Peters, 2011).

Nielsen (2004) presents a different distinction between participation and involvement. *Participation* means *a bottom up movement towards increasing co-determination and democracy. Involvement* is defined as *a managerial tool where employees are involved in decision-making within an area already defined by management, because this may create the most efficient way when seen from a management perspective.*

As Fricke and Nielsen, we understand involvement as instrumentalised participation, a managerial tool for improved efficiency. We differ from

Fricke's understanding of the utopian potential in democratic participation. Democratic participation understood as more than or different from co-determination is not in line with what we have experienced as organisational consultants or action researchers (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2011, 2012). Or, to put it otherwise, we do not see the utopian potential in organisational action research if this means heading at a goal over and above co-determination in organisational contexts. Moreover, principally, we think organisational power issues eliminate the possibilities of democratic dialogues in organisational contexts, as we have argued elsewhere (Bloch-Poulsen, 2010). This implies large scale organisational action research projects, too (Gustavsen, 1992). Due to partly the same reasons, we differ from Nielsen (2004), too. Thus, when referring to organisational contexts, we do not talk about co-determination and democracy, but of democracy as co-determination.

In line with Fricke (2011) and Nielsen (2004), we think *instrumentalised participation* means that participation has been reduced to involvement. Lucio (2010) gives three reasons for placing participation understood as involvement on the agenda:

> … participation … is seen as an essential ingredient of the way organizations may harness employee creativity and commitment for the cause of economic success … Second, participation facilitates a sense of belonging amongst workers. It responds to a sense of justice in that one is addressed less as an employee and more as part of an organization, as a stakeholder … Third, the role of participation is critical in terms of legitimacy … Participation allows management to be seen as justified and reasonable in its actions. (p. 105f)

Instrumentalised participation means that the concept of participation is turned upside down, so to speak. In European history around the First World War, it denoted a radically democratic, autonomous movement where anarco-syndicalist and socialist groups tried to create workers' and soldiers' councils as bottom up attempts of structuring organisations and society (Crusius, Schiefelbein, & Wilke, 1978; Materna, 1978). Chosen representatives in organisational and societal councils could be replaced at any time if they did not act in accordance with the demands of workers and the people. Today, instrumentalised participation describes a tendency of making top-down decisions by organisational managers or public regional or government officials. Simultaneously, political and social, i.e., democratic aspects seem to have been eliminated from the concept of participation. Lucio (2010) expresses it this way in relations to human resource management (HMR):

What has emerged in the past twenty or so years is a view of participation in contemporary approaches to HRM that is concerned with the extent to which they undermine the autonomy of independent voice mechanisms. Participation is being remoulded managerially to undermine autonomous and independent representative mechanisms and to tie them closer to the needs and agendas of capitalist organizations … the new modes of participation create spaces for involvement which are fragmented and disconnected from broader social and macro-oriented agendas. (p. 119)

Differing from Lucio's understanding of democratic aspects, we think democracy within organisations refers to co-determination as a value in itself implying improved worklife, co-produced problemsolving, and learning. As such, we always find ourselves moving on the edge between participation (improved worklife) and involvement (improved efficiency) as dialogic, organisational action researchers.

Involvement or instrumentalised participation does not only take place 'outside' employees. Several authors point towards internalising as a means of increased self-exploitation (Bovbjerg, 2001; Buch, Andersen, & Sørensen, 2009; Sennett, 1999). In a study of self-managing teams, Barker (1999) describes the tension between involvement and increased self-exploitation in this way: 'They were controlled, but in control' (p. 137), and defines it as concertive control. Peters (2011) characterises this dilemma as dependent autonomy. The following example from a team member in a Danish public organisation illustrates this concept:

I apologize I have to leave on time for the third time this week.

Lucio (2010) writes, too, that today emancipation can be seen as a veiled attempt of self-mutilation:

A new functionalism prevails which reconfigures the dream of emancipation, and hence mutates it into a parody where the individual involves themselves in their own self-mutilation. (p. 123)

Thus, we think it is crucial to continue asking this question: Are our so-called participatory projects anything but involvement?

Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation
Contradictory tendencies are manifest, too, in relation to participation outside organisations in civil society. Already, in 1969, Arnstein (2011) presented a 'ladder of participation' within citizen participation; it was sim-

plified on purpose, but it still seems relevant also when discussing participation in organisations.

Arnstein's ladder is graded, based on a criterion of influence on results. Here *power* or *influence* is understood as *possession*:

> … citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future (p. 3) … 'nobodies' in several arenas are trying to become 'somebodies' with enough power to make target institutions responsive to their views, aspirations, and needs. (p. 5)

The ladder is divided into three main sections: Nonparticipation, tokenism, and citizen power. Nonparticipation contains two steps: manipulation, corresponding to Adam et al.'s concepts of persuasion/manipulation, and therapy. The latter refers to a kind of nonparticipation, where poverty, for example, is treated as a psychological problem. Thus, the concept of therapy provides psychological answers to societal problems. Tokenism has three steps describing various degrees of 'window-dressing' participation (p. 9). The lower step is 'informing'; the next is 'consultation', corresponding to consultation/referendum in the chapter by Adams et al. The third step, 'placation', describes how partners can participate in planning, but not in making decisions. 'Another example is the Model Cities advisory and planning committees. They allow citizens to advise or plan ad infinitum, but retain for power-holders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice' (p. 10).

The last section, 'citizen power', has three steps, too. The lower step is 'partnership', 'where they agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities' (p. 13). The next step is 'delegated power', where citizens achieve 'dominant decision-making authority over a particular program' (p. 15). The highest form of participation is called 'citizen control', describing '… that degree of power (or control) which guarantees that participants or residents can govern a program or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which "outsiders" may change them' (p. 16).

We think Dagnino (2011) understands Brazilian experiences with participatory, local governance as a struggle between two very different concepts of citizenship: the participatory project, where the inhabitants are seen as active citizens (as opposed to passive receivers of civil rights), and the neoliberal project, where citizens are reduced to market attachments as producers or consumers of products and services:

The perverse nature of the confluence between the participatory and the neoliberal projects lies in the fact that both not only require a vibrant and proactive civil society, but also share several core notions, such as citizenship, participation and civil society, albeit used with very different meanings. The common vocabulary and shared institutional mechanisms obscure fundamental distinctions and divergences. (p. 419)

We think, too, there is a crucial difference between participation referring to increased co-determination as a goal in itself or to individualised costumers related in instrumental ways to the state, even though this difference is often obscured as mentioned above. Knudsen (2007), a Danish political science researcher, describes it in the following way:

The participant democratic ideal was – amongst others – inspired by the polis of antiquity. Here, participation was not a means, but an end in itself for a small group of men participating in town government democracy/polis democracy. Participation was the social nucleus of life. The Greek people were rather fellow citizens than individuals. Today, traffic goes in a completely different direction. From fellow citizen to individuals to situids [a human type who is more fluid and changeable]. Voters are about to become customers of democracy with fluctuating preferences choosing between the coaches of the social competitive state. (p. 46) [our translation]

We think it is possible to ask these implicit questions to all the chapters of this book, including our own: Do the ideas of participation correspond with participation as a goal and/or as a means (Nelson & Wright, 2001), with an individual and/or a social project, where on Arnstein's ladder can we place our projects when looking at actual project practice? Do power positions change during a project and how? To what an extent are we co-opted by mainstream or neoliberal repressive tolerance, which seem to empty critical concepts of their political and social radicalism (Marcuse, 1965)?

Participation in research
– Tensions between researchers and partners

As mentioned, the concept of participation in organisations describes tensions between the organisational partners in their day-to-day practice. Participation in research means the degree of co-determination organisational partners/the others can enact in relation to researchers and vice versa.

In principle, this relation can be described by a dynamic continuum. At

one end, the others are informants in the researchers' project. At the opposite end, they are practice researchers. This continuum would transcend a widely used distinction between research *on* and research *with* (Heron & Reason, 2008), because practice research means that organisational partners are researchers in their own practice and in this position invites university researchers to cooperate in practice research.

Usually, organisational partners have different and often contradictory interests, which raise important questions; for example: Who contacts who in order to initiate a kind of cooperation and who decides the purpose of the process whether it is PR or AR? In what follows, we focus only on invited participation' as opposed to 'participation as collective action' (Barnes, 2011).

As mentioned, Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation is based on a criterion of power or influence on the result. Below, we present a survey of non-participation and participation in research. It is based on a criterion of the researchers' and the organisational partners' influencing purposes, results, design, evaluation, and presentation of results. The survey exhibits a continuum from research *on* to research *with*. It presents different ways of understanding partners, the relation between them and the researchers, knowledge, knowledge production, and power. It is founded in philosophy of science and communication theory.

The survey does not reflect that the relations between researchers and partners are dynamic, that both parties position themselves and are being positioned differently in the process, or that often this process is tensional. Neither does it address differences between espoused theories and theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1996). The survey is a deliberately simplified heuristic intending to facilitate the understanding of dynamic relational processes in messy contexts.

Between informant and practice researcher

The above-mentioned continuum between research 'on' and research 'with' can be presented in this way:

> • *Informant* or *respondent* is a methodological term normally used outside AR (e.g. within positivism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics). It refers to a relation between the other and the researcher in which the other is seen as supplier of data and information, whereas the researcher collects, analyses, and interprets these. This relationship is based on a modernist philosophy of science as well as in a traditional understanding of communication as a transfer process where an active researcher can extract knowledge (data and information) from a passive informant/sender. From a power perspective, the researcher is

positioned as a subject with power to define and interpret the other as a more or less passive communication object. As such, we are surprised when the term shows up in AR because we do not think an informant can be conceptualised as a co-producer of knowledge within this understanding (McKenna & Main, 2013).

· *Alienated* is a term used to describe the other. Within critical theory, the term means that the other will need an emancipation-facilitating researcher in order to transcend their unacknowledged positioning of themselves (i.e., the subject as an object) (Freire, 1970). Broadly speaking, the other is understood as a human in need of education/emancipation and the researchers as humans knowing better. From a power perspective, researchers are positioned as uppers. Knowledge becomes a question of dissemination, of presenting already established theories by means of which the other is positioned as lower or as less knowledgeable. In this way, critical theory is paradoxical: the theory works in favour of the emancipation of the subject thereby monopolising truth (i.e., turning subjects into objects) (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1969; Adorno et al., 1972; Habermas, 1968).

· *Co-researcher* is a term that characterise the other within action science, too (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985). Action science refers to the researcher as a 'doctor' and an 'instructor', whereas the others are characterised as 'patients' doing 'fancy footwork' (Argyris, 1990). Thus, we are sceptical when action science uses the term co-researcher about the other. Below, we bring an example from Argyris et al. (1985) where the other is a group of students. Amongst them is a student, George:

> In response to the instructor's critique, George mobilized several lines of defense, each one deflecting his responsibility for the actions and outcomes that the instructor had described. Yet each time George brought forth a new line of defense, the instructor rendered his new position unacceptable by George's own standards. (1985, p. 128)

The researcher is described as the 'instructor' who is to construct an alignment between the co-researcher/George's espoused theory and his theory-in-use. As an instructor, the researcher discusses with the participants and convinces them about their unacceptable mindset. In the quotation, it seems as if the researcher has the power to define and diagnose the other, George, as a person defending himself. We are surprised that the researchers do not question their own basic assumptions, check their interpretations with George, or present alternative

perspectives (e.g. appreciating George as a person with different points of view).

   We think this example is more in line with the concepts of persuasion/manipulation than with self-management/democratic deliberation as described by Adams et al. in chap. 2.

· *Regression* is a psychodynamic concept. It might indicate that a researcher, consultant, or therapist is necessary, e.g. to balance a team's work group dimension, understood as rational and subject oriented, and its basic assumption dimension governed by irrational and unconscious needs (Bion, 2006). Seen from a power perspective, the researcher or consultant is endowed with the power to define and interpret what is considered valid knowledge according to pre-established psychodynamic theory. Critical theory and psychodynamic theory seem to share a basic assumption of researchers knowing better and thus being able to educate/emancipate the other. We would like to ask a fundamental question in relation to both theories: are they compatible with participation in research or do they represent different kinds of research 'on'? This question also includes our own contributions because we have had a long education as psychodynamic therapists and have been brought up with critical theory, so to speak.
· *Involved* signifies partners (e.g. employees) where others (managers and/or researchers) have decided the purpose of a project in advance. Involvement means that employees take part, after management have decided the purpose of a process and made an agreement with action researchers (Kildedal & Laursen, 2012). In this way, AR might deteriorate into an offer that employees cannot refuse. Empowerment is reduced to a travesty, i.e. to influence on means to implement management decisions. We understand this as an instrumental approach to AR in line with what Adams et al. (chap. 2) characterised as persuasion/manipulation. In an organisational context, involvement can be considered an example of instrumental participation as described by White (2011), based on studies of development projects in third world countries: 'Participation in this case is instrumental, rather than valued in itself. Its function is as a means to achieve cost effectiveness' (p. 60). We think involvement presents a challenge when co-operating with organisational partners, because they often seem to have instrumental and pragmatic agendas.
· *Practitioner* is a widespread term within AR (Bradbury Huang, 2010). Some researchers have problematised this concept (Gunnarsson, 2006, 2007), because the relation between researcher-practitioner might indicate a knowledge hierarchy pointing at 'co'-pro-

ducing knowledge in ways where one party knows better and not only something different. Seen from a power perspective, the relation might become asymmetrical.

· *Co-learner* is also a concept used within action science (Argyris et al., 1985), indicating that the goal of the other is not only to solve a practical problem but also to learn as part of the problem-solving process.

· *Co-constructor* is a term grounded in social constructivist and social constructionist methodology, where data are not seen as entities given in advance but as something that is co-produced in the social relations between researchers and partners (Bryman, 2008; Caroll, Iedema, & Kerridge, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005). The concept conceptualises the other as an active co-producer of knowledge as opposed to a traditional understanding of communication where the other is seen as a passive recipient (Phillips, 2011). As such, it also breaks with a modernist understanding of knowledge and knowledge production. This approach inquires into how, in practice, the other and the researcher contribute to the production of knowledge through context sensitive analyses of interviews, participant observation, etc. (Lilleås, 2012; Phillips, Kristiansen, Vehviläinen, & Gunnarsson, 2012).

· *Co-operative inquirer* describes the idea that both parties play a part in a shared development process, co-creating goals, means, and results (Heron & Reason, 2001, 2008). The term signifies a crucial point of view that the others and the researchers contribute with different types of knowledge (e.g. experiential, practical, and theoretical knowledge).

· *Professional* is the word we have chosen to describe our partners and ourselves in dialogic, organisational AR. The purpose is to emphasise that we understand AR as an example of cross-disciplinary project co-operation between different professionals situated outside and inside the university who might co-produce purposes and results, co-design the process, co-evaluate, and co-present results. In this cooperation, all parties have power and influence on the interpretation of the process. Consequently, we understand participation as enactment of power. In practice, the process is very complex with many possible interpretations and truths.

· *Practice researcher* might signify a practitioner doing research in his own practice. With the spreading of knowledge society, a growing number of employees have an academic background, and this approach may become the future version of AR, according to Eikeland (2012). This point of view presupposes that university candidates are educated as researchers.

Summing up, we understand the terms *informant*, *respondent*, *alienated*, *co-researcher*, and *regredient* as examples of research *on*. Here, the other becomes an object of researcher interpretations and of education/emancipation due to application of theories accepted in advance. When seen from a communication theory perspective, the other is reduced to a (more or less) passive recipient. When viewed from a power perspective, the relation becomes asymmetrical or sometimes instrumental.

We understand the terms *involved*, *practitioner*, *co-learner*, and *co-constructor* as examples of transitory dimensions where the other is conceptualised with different degrees of activity when co-producing knowledge. Dependent on approach, the relation between the other and the researchers can become both symmetrical and asymmetrical.

We think the terms *co-operative inquirer* and *professional* are examples of research *with*. This does not necessarily imply that research is enacted symmetrically. It means we try to make power transparent (e.g. by showing how all parties enact power).

Stricly speaking, we consider the last three concepts (i.e., the transitory forms, research *with*, and practice research) as examples of participation in research with various degrees of co-determination for the parties, whereas *informant, respondent, alienated, co-researcher, regredient, involved, practitioner, co-learner* and *co-constructor* are not.

Aspects of participation in research in this book

In this paragraph, we present different aspects from this book that contribute to an elaborated understanding of participation in research.

Participatory designs and power relations

In Birgitte Ravn Olesen's chapter (chapt. 6), participation is linked to research *with* people rather than *on* or *for* them. *Participation* is understood as a 'democratic relationship in which both sides exercise power and shared control over decision-making and interpretation. Everybody is conceived as active participants, stakeholders, partners, co-researchers, co-learners or co-producers of knowledge as opposed to research subjects, target groups, consumers, clients or voters' (Phillips, 2011).

It is her point of view that regularly, power relations between researchers and the other participants have been neglected in AR methodology because it is often based on critical theory, where power is connected with political-economic possession. She speaks in favour of de-romanticising these power relations, as there are no power-free spaces in her poststructuralist epistemology. Participatory designs are, per se, power relations. It is not an easy process to understand, as she says: 'I wrote little but learned

a lot about how difficult it is to give up ideal notions of what is going on in favor of critical analysis of actual practices' in AR processes.

In Ann Starbæk Bager's theoretical chapter, participation and power are viewed, too, from a postmodern perspective.

Pedagogical self-management and resistance

Adams et al. (chapt. 2) also concentrate on the tensions between educators/researchers and the other participants (workers from cooperatives, as well as representatives from the solidarity economic movement and public administrators). Sometimes, the proposals of the educators for pedagogical self-management caused surprise and even rejection by workers. Workers were used to receiving knowledge from educators endowed with power, and they defined true knowledge as being transferred as opposed to being the result of participating in collective knowledge-producing processes.

The authors understand this tension as reflecting the colonial history of Brazil, characterised by a culture of silence or a culture of subservience and domination, where power is a relation or a way people position each other in a hierarchy.

Participation has two connotations: the researcher and educator takes part in the development process of the population and collaboratively, they identify the problems of the population and construct solutions, trying to overcome oppressive power relations as experienced by the population. Participation means that they all take part in initiating decision-making, planning, and evaluation of activities, etc.

This form of PR or collective knowledge production is developed as part of popular education in Brazil, which has liberating intentions addressing oppressive power relations in democratic ways. The researchers train the educators, systematise their experiences, and disseminate methodologies of popular education and pedagogical self-management.

Co-determined or associated research?

In chapter 3, Streck understands participatory methodology as a dialogue between different sectors drawing up the budget. In the presented case, the researchers acted mainly as observers. They did a questionnaire and discussed the objectives of the participatory budgeting process with state and regional coordinators, which resulted in seminars on topics pointed out by the researchers.

This understanding raises a question in PR about the relationship between researchers and partners. Do they co-produce objectives and co-design the process as is sometimes attempted in AR and/or do the

researchers act in the service of the participants, or is it the other way round that the researchers determine the purpose of the research? Streck writes, 'It would be misleading to say that this is a co-determined project (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2011). It might be more appropriate to use the concept of associated research, where, based on common assumptions, specific objectives are designed through a dialogue.' It is not clear to us whether our questions reflect our insufficient understanding of the Brazilian context including the possibilities and potentials of participatory bydgeting?

Participatory concepts?

In our understanding, the chapter 'Anti-groups and action research' (chapt. 7) presents a dilemma between the participation of employees in an organisational change project and the application of psychodynamic concepts such as 'anti-group' and 'negative capabilities'. Broeng and Frimann reflect on how to avoid diagnosing when working with psychodynamic concepts (e.g. anti-group).

We would like to question the use of grand theories, such as psychoanalysis, in participatory projects. If action researchers work collaboratively and include partners in participatory projects, is it then possible to use theories that seem to imply that the analyst/the researcher has the ultimate interpretative power? As trained psychodynamic therapists, we think there is a principal dichotomy between democracy/participation and grand theories, which endow researchers/analysts with the ultimate defining power.

Questions dealing with the power of interpretation do not only apply to theories like psychoanalysis, but also to critical theory and to all participatory projects. Who has the power to interpret what happens in a project? Who writes about a project? Whose voices are included in the stories told about projects, etc.?

Co-authoring?

The chapter 'Differences as a potential vehicle of development – Co-researching-on-action' (chapt. 9) is a co-authoring attempt made by a manager, an employee, and the two of us as action researchers. We have written articles before with people from organisations with whom we cooperated, such as pupils, managers, or employees. We always did the draft. In this situation, the draft was followed by a long, shared writing, and editing process. In this way, the chapter contains knowledge that we would not have been able to produce ourselves. We never wondered, for example, if employees working in a management office represented management. We considered them as employees, simply. In addition, we were not aware that

according to some of them, employees did not participate in writing the application for funding in ways they were used to. We knew that organisations are very complex with different interests between management and employees, between teams, employees, managers, between them and us as action researchers, etc. Nevertheless, it was not until the co-authoring process that we realised that the probability of a unison interpretation of a shared decision was very close to zero. When interpretations dealing with something as simple as choosing and distributing facilitators resulted in so many different and contradictory versions, it seems fair to conclude that disagreement, tensions, and conflicts are unavoidable in organisations. Dissensus seems to be an ontological characterisation of organisations. Moreover, we worked with one organisation, only. In this way, we hope the chapter will be read as part of the endeavour to de-romanticise concepts such as dialogue, dissensus, and participation in research (Phillips, 2011; Phillips et al., 2012).

Conclusions and perspectives

We hope to have shown that there are many and contradictory understandings of participation within organisations as well as within research. What counts as participation in a particular situation is a question of power, a finding that points at three conclusions: Firstly, participation seems loaded with different interests, tensions, and conflicts. Secondly, it seems critical to get power questions back into the centre of the inquiry processes of participation in organisations and in research.

Organisational power questions deal with economic possession as well as with positioning in different hierarchies (Harrits, 2014, p. 98). We think it is necessary to consider what degree of co-determination or participation is it possible to create in a particular organisational project setting?

Research power questions deal with the relation between researchers and partners, and with questions of which status will be attributed to whom and how will they position themselves and each other in these social relations (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harrits, 2014). Moreover, how is it possible to change relations aiming at increased co-determination?

Power is not only an external question in these projects located in societal and organisational relations as Marxian inspired, critical theory seems to suggest (Habermas, 1968). Within project contexts, power is also about different interests and tensions between researchers and partners, continuously positioning themselves and each other. As such, we think it is important to work towards making power transparent by including questions of power and by meta-communicating about them. Mouffe (1993) expresses it in this way:

Instead of trying to erase the traces of power and exclusion, democratic politics requires that they be brought to the fore, making them visible so that they can enter the terrain of contestation' (1993, p.149).

Thirdly, it cannot be taken for granted that partners and researcher have shared interests, only. A critical question becomes: Which degree of influence and control characterises a given concept of participation in practice? Moreover, how are partners positioned in relation to themselves and to researchers? By focusing on differences and tensions, we hope a dialogical-dissensus approach can contribute to an increased focus on internal power questions in research in AR and PR projects in multiple contexts.

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EDUCATION AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

– An analysis of participation and power relations

Telmo Adams, Fernanda Carvalho Ferreira, Joana Frank and Marina da Rocha

Abstract

This article deals with one of the aspects analyzed in the study on "Popular education and solidarity economy: mediations between ethical-political and technical-productive education".[1] It aims at systematizing the Brazilian experience of the Center of Education in Solidarity Economy (CFES/sul – Centro de Formação em Economia Solidária da Região Sul) in the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. The intention is to characterize the main methodological steps of the program developed and followed by a participatory research process, with references to Fals Borda, Brandão and Streck, Demo and Franco, focusing on the analysis of relations between participation and power. The theoretical references were based on Paulo Freire, Pierre Bourdieu, Cláudio Nascimento, Ioli Swirth, Lais Fraga, Henrique Novaes, Flávia Werle and others. Problematization and analysis occurred in two spheres: in the context of the typologies of participation and practices of power, i.e., the relations of persuasion/manipulation, consultation/referendum and self-management/democratic deliberation. There were considered: a) in the definition of the policy of education in solidarity economy, understood as an economic and social organization based on cooperation, within the relations between the movement of solidarity economy and representatives of the federal government; b) in the educational activities of CFES/sul – the power relations between educators and participants (workers, educators from organizations of the solidarity economy movement and supporting entities and

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public administrators). Thanks to the support of the pedagogical proposal defined previously by the solidarity economy movement, the self-management perspective continued to preponderate despite obstacles.

Keywords: Education, solidarity economy, participation and power, self-management

List of abbreviations

Center of Education in Solidarity Economy – Southern Brazil (CFES/sul – Centro de Formação em Economia Solidária/Sul)

National Department of Solidarity Economy (SENAES – Secretaria Nacional de Economia Solidária)

Solidarity Economy (ECOSOL – Economia Solidária)

Brazilian Forum of Solidarity Economy (FBES – Fórum Brasileiro de Economia Solidária)

Solidarity Economic Enterprises (EES – Empreendimentos Econômicos Solidários)

CNPq – Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico

Introduction

Participation and power relations occur in certain social-historical contexts involving multiple variables. In order to understand these relations in Brazil and Latin America, we must consider the marks of the colonial heritages that molded a culture of silence, an *ethos*[2] of subservience present mainly in the impoverished population. Economic and political factors are outstanding among the ensemble of causes that generate economic inequalities, dominance and cultural dependences that extend to the individual and social way of existence. Outstanding here is the intrinsic relationship between "space and totality", in which "social education" is presented as part of the mode of production that "depends on the quantitative and qualitative distribution of the infrastructures and other attributes of space" (Santos 2008, p. 32). From this perspective, the social space of several centuries of colonialism imprinted profoundly rooted ways of being on the mental, social and institutional structures. This is coloniality (Quijano, 2005; Mignolo, 2010) as an inheritance of the colonialism which, after the independence of the Latin-American and Caribbean countries was perpetuated in the form of a matrix of centralizing vertical relations that generated subserviences and dominations.

Under such circumstances, one can understand the centuries-old political exclusion of most of the Brazilian people, whose "history is full of muted voices and lives sacrificed in the name of faith, order, progress, and, more recently, governability, sustainability or competitiveness" (Streck & Adams, 2006, p. 96). The forms of participation and power relations reflect these conditions incorporated in people and in groups, specifically, in the case of this study, educators and partners in solidarity economy enterprises.

The present study was performed with the participants of the activities carried out by the Center of Education in Solidarity Economy – Southern Brazil (CFES/sul) during 2011 and 2012. CFES/sul was established by the National Department of Solidarity Economy (SENAES) together with four other centers in the other regions of the country (North, Northeast, Southeast and Center-West) to train educators, systematize educational experiences, recreate self-management methodologies and organize a national network of educators.

The educational method proposed by CFES/sul assumes the principles

2 *Ethos* is equivalent to the customs, experiences, knowledges and worldviews of each subject who carries the marks of the life constructed in the dialectical relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, being characterized as a matrix of the cultural mode, with implicit wisdom, from which results a way of understanding, of being and acting in the world (Adams, 2010).

of popular education emphasizing the participatory process of the student, enhancing the activity of work as a pedagogical mediation for learning. The participants were male and female workers of cooperatives, representatives of support and development entities, and some representatives of governments that we call public administrators. The pedagogical political project emphasizes the educational potential of associated work in the solidarity economy, underlining local experience with a strategic potential to become generalized in society (Wirth et al., 2011).

Our participation began as facilitators/mediators in some activities and as observers in others, considering our option for ongoing participatory research. At the same time, we thematized theoretical issues to understand how, in that environment, relations occurred between participation and power.

The research method was based on Fals Borda (1982, 2009) who developed the investigation-participatory action intending to contribute to the co-identification of problems by the population involved, performing critical analysis and collectively constructing the solutions for the identified problems. The participatory research developed in the context of popular education in Brazil has its mark in the liberating dimension that emancipates from oppressive power relations and stimulates a participatory process with democratic radicalness (Freire, 1976, 1981, 1994; Brandão, 2003, 2006; Brandão & Streck, 2006; Demo, 2008; Franco, 2005).

According to Franco (2005), likewise, critical action-research develops the researcher's initial work with the group, valuing the cognitive construction of experience and aiming at the emancipation of the subjects and overcoming conditions considered oppressive by the group. This view is in accordance with participatory research.

> "Action-research considers the voice of the subject, their perspective, their meaning, but not only for recording and later interpretation by the researchers: the subject's voice will be part of the fabric of the methodology of investigation [...] That is why there is emphasis on the formative character of this modality of research, since the subject should be conscious of the transformations that occur in themselves and in the process. This is also the reason why this methodology has an emancipatory character ...". (Franco, 2005, p. 486)

There is, thus, an identity between action-research and participatory research, insofar as both produce politically committed and emancipatory knowledge without renouncing methodical strictness (Demo, 2008). With this argument the pedagogical strategy of the participatory methodology of research is reaffirmed, because the latter focuses on the collective con-

struction of knowledge, stimulating an educational process through the interaction of all parties involved.

Initially this article describes and analyzes aspects of the participatory dynamics and the power relations in the process of defining the policy of education in solidarity economy, specifically the relations between the movement of solidarity economy[3] and representatives of the federal government. In the second part, the focus is on the analysis of power relations among the members of the Methodological Committee[4] by observing their meetings. It also analyzes the relations between the coordinators and the participants (workers, educators from organizations of the solidarity economy movement and entities that provide support and public administrators) which occur in the educational activities of CFES/Sul. Finally there is the conclusion with general considerations regarding the analysis and some outstanding points that we identify as significant.

The Brazilian solidarity economy movement and the achievement of a public policy of education

As a reaction to mass unemployment in the 1980s, the social movements and workers' unions considered that it was not enough to fight against the neoliberal market model that is being implemented in Brazil (Singer, 2000). In this context many initiatives to generate work and income appeared supported by non-governmental organizations, religious entities and workers' unions (Adams, 2010). During the 1990s, the process of articulating these solidarity enterprises and supporting entities resulted in the solidarity economy (ECOSOL) movement. Its articulation and proposal were strengthened in 2001, during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The First National Plenary on Solidarity Economy held in 2002 defined proposals of public policies for ECOSOL as a contribution to the government program of the then presidential candidate, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The participatory process of both sectors in the country obtained what it could within the power relations established between the movement and public administrators: not a ministry as it wished, but a National Department for Solidarity Economy, an agency of the Ministry of Labor and Jobs.

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3 By solidarity economy we refer to local, regional and national organizations which base their production in cooperative forms of work.
4 The Methodological Committee is composed by the team responsible for the Program on behalf of the executing institution (three persons: an executive coordinator, a pedagogical coordinator and an administrative manager), people from the universities that are partners in the project, from NGOs and from the solidarity economy movement.

Then, with more than 800 participants from 18 Brazilian states, the Third National Plenary (2003) created the Brazilian Forum of Solidarity Economy (FBES – Fórum Brasileiro de Economia Solidária), an organization which represented the different players/subjects of the Solidarity Economy in the country. The purpose of the latter is to articulate and mobilize the ECOSOL movement around a Charter of Principles and an agenda of struggles approved in this plenary. Each state began to likewise organize its state forum of the ECOSOL, formed by representatives of solidarity enterprises, supporting entities and public administrators. Based on this representative organ, policies of education were directed at a) performing educational actions aimed at workers in the solidarity popular economy; b) articulating and developing the networks of educators/trainers; c) expanding public funding to research and technology to improve production.

As a result of the struggle of various actors of the solidarity economy in Brazil, the Centers for Solidarity Economy Training were implemented in the beginning of 2009, in five large regions of the country (North, Northeast, Southeast, Center-East and South, in 2010) and a National Center (Brasilia). Their purpose was to articulate the whole, as a project of public policy pertaining to the National Department for Solidarity Economy (SENAES). The intention was to develop educators/trainers, systematize educational experiences and disseminate methodologies for popular education experiment with pedagogical self-management and organization of a national network of educators. In other words, the activities developed by the CFESs were to contribute to train educators who would be able to work in solidarity enterprises and thus strengthen the movement as a whole to ensure integral training (technical and political) appropriate to the organizational characteristics of the solidarity economy enterprises.

These were the tasks of CFES/sul: to implement training of educators/trainers, to systematize educational experiences and disseminate methodologies of popular education and pedagogical self-management offering general education (ethical-political dimension) and appropriate technical assistance (technical-productive dimension) to the solidarity economy businesses and practices.

The FBES coordinated the elaboration of educational proposals for the solidarity economy in a dialogue with the SENAES, whose public administrators were mostly previously militants and supporters of the movement. This basically made it easier to approach and formulate consensus around the proposals. However, conflict appeared in the power relation to the internal government structures, specifically the Ministry of Labor and Jobs, which limited ECOSOL to being an appendix of the national policy of jobs and professional training.

Thus, the challenges of the policy of education in solidarity economy are expressed in the context of the current structural organization of the Brazilian State. The evaluation of the ongoing participatory process considers that there have been significant achievements during the Lula Administration, but that they have not been enough to take the solidarity economy out of a marginal position in relation to the hegemonic economy. And the expectation of advancing in the construction of a more consistent policy resulted in feelings of moving backwards as regards the concept and political project of ECOSOL. Although the participation of the different players in the movement was significant, it did not strengthen the power that would affect the definition of policies for the solidarity economy in the current Brazilian context. This aspect may even be verified in the very small budget laid aside for the development of educational actions throughout Brazil. This possibly has to do with the logic of bureaucracy in the Brazilian State, where everything is seen from the mercantile viewpoint and therefore it does not assign due value to solidarity socioeconomic organizations, since they are insignificant in the national GDP. How can more than two million workers involved in ECOSOL in Brazil be insignificant? There is, thus, a visible mismatch: on the one hand the pragmatic perspective that is typical of the government logic in the context of the domain of neoliberal policies; and, on the other, the participatory political proposal of a procedural organization defended by the ECOSOL movement. This likewise means that the authoritarian hierarchical structures inhibit empowerment of the subjects and the strengthening of the organization in the space of the solidarity economy, that theoretically claim to be participatory and democratic.

The CEFS is not a conventional school but a public policy program for education which is enabled by Agreements with the Brazilian State. Among the main issues to be worked on, according to the term of reference, were a few guiding thematic axes: history and perspectives of emancipatory work in directions of societal transformation; constitution and organization of ECOSOL; management of Solidarity Economic Enterprises (EES Empreendimentos Econômicos Solidários); processes of cooperation and just and solidary trade; legal framework of Solidarity Economy; public policies, citizen participation and social control, sustainable local and territorial development; other topics according to the demand of the EES. The teachers invited were people who were generally trained, not only to understand the contents, but above all for their experience in participatory/dialogical methodology, different from the traditional method of transmission of already established knowledge.

The regional activities (gathering people from the three Brazilian states) occurred at a house specially constructed as a venue for full time events.

The state activities were held in places that were easy to access in each State. And the local workshops for people from the EES took place in the different regions of the respective States, especially where the organization of the Solidarity Economy was more consolidated.

Participation and power in the activities of CEFS/Sul

Project management was coordinated by an institution that was legally responsible for financial administration and executive management of the project activities. In order to take the participatory process into account, the Project foresaw a Managing Council[5] responsible for tracing the general guidelines to take over co-responsibility for the measures necessary to achieve the objectives, meeting regularly every third month. In accordance with the Managing Council there was the Methodological Committee whose members were a few people from the partner institutions whose task was to define the methodological measures for the activities at all levels.

And, on the part of the executing University (Unisinos – Postgraduate Program of Social Sciences), we proposed participatory research[6] which was performed during the two years, integrated as a pedagogical strategy to enable the collective production of knowledge, insofar as it provides mutual learning among all those who work with it. Both the activities and the research method cover central aspects of participation, such as: feeling part of the decision-making, of planning, of the development of activities and of systematization as an evaluative reflection on the process performed. We tried to combine the valuing of knowledges that the participants already had, with the input of new knowledge through the contribution of more experienced, invited educators, or also participants who are members of ECOSOL businesses. At Methodological Committee meetings we organized moments to communicate preliminary results. These were always opportunities to add new aspects that began to integrate the continuity of our work in issues such as: the inconsistencies between the discourse on participation and self-management in daily work practice. Many persons begin to use a participatory discourse as if they were practicing self-management, when in reality they are only reproducing an idealization of something which does not yet occur in their practice.

5 The Managing Council is composed by the executing institution, representatives of universities and organizations of civil society committed to the project, a representation of the state Forums of solidarity economy and of other public policy programs such as Brasil Local and Fundos Solidários.
6 Coordinated by Telmo Adams, the research was supported directly by two scientific scholars and, for analysis, it had the collaboration of the broader research group, mentioned in the footnote on the first page of this article.

At the same time the members of the Committee expressed the importance of the contribution of the research team to systematization and theoretical reflection, an aspect that was foreseen in the objectives of CEFS/Sul. For example, at one occasion the issue of integral and technical education was discussed having as reference preliminary research findings. Based on the problematizations originated from research, there was carried out a reflection to better understand the necessity of not separating the technical and ethical dimensions, as well as to identify the knowledges which are necessary to qualify the production and the understanding of the project of cooperation inspired by the principles of cooperativism.

The educational practice taken up by CFES/sul proposed to begin with the same principles of popular education: taking into account the reality of the "student", valuing the work space as an environment for learning and adding appropriate technical-scientific knowledge to the strategic project of solidarity economy in Brazil, attuned with the social economy in other countries. The methodological proposal of self-management of pedagogy stood out, conceiving education as a dialogic act, problematizing, mediating, constructing collective knowledge and with a character that transforms social and individual reality, The main activities consisted of three to five-day courses, with two or more stages, besides the training performed in the work environments (pedagogy of self-management). The objective was to enhance work as an educational principle emphasizing participation, co-responsibility and autonomy of the participants. It had to do with learning from the experience, reflecting on the daily life practice, as much in the form of organization as in attitudes regarding management and production within the cooperative. The idea was to help participants to realize how daily work and participatory processes create conditions for learning.

This objective however, was difficult to implement because there were no enterprises prepared to receive the diversity of participants in their work space. Among the alleged reasons was the idea that the experience had not been sufficiently developed to serve as an educational reference; or it was alleged that there was too much work, possibly fearing the interference of people who would get in the way of productive work.

The perspective was to stimulate an emancipatory educational practice to strengthen theoretical understanding based on the practices of self-management even to learn from the difficulties faced in this process. Theoretically self-management presupposes power relations guided by a common project, with active, egalitarian and democratic participation of all participants, where the value of participation as a pedagogical component is anchored: in its connection with equality and identity in a given human group; in the relationship between participation and efficiency aiming to

achieve common goals; as a practice of involvement that leads to the feeling of belonging and self-value, contributing to educate autonomous subjects with an ethos of democratic leadership (Streck & Adams, 2006).

In this respect, the coordinators developed group dynamics for each participant to speak of his/her way of exercising leadership in the institution. At the end of the exercise, each group spoke to all about the elements which characterize a democratic leadership, and the ones that were not participatory. At the end the whole group was challenged to discuss the relationship between everyday practice and the desired democratic society.

For this it also proposes to appreciate and promote the use of the resources of culture and knowledges of the members of cooperatives or of the community in which they are inserted. It also seeks to work with the diversities of languages and transversality of topics, ensuring that the workers themselves may also be educators who can articulate scientific knowledge and empirical wisdom.

The educational activities performed – with male and female workers of solidarity enterprises, representatives of supporting or development entities and public administrators – were prepared by the executive team of CFES after the possibilities were discussed in the methodological committee. In this committee, as in the Managing Council, the participants were representatives of partner universities, of non-governmental organizations, and of the ECOSOL movement. The point of departure was as foreseen by the basic project approved by the already mentioned government agency, which imposed a few limits on the way the activities were carried out.

However, to be consistent with the associated work in the cooperatives and workers' associations, the executive team, with the support of the methodological team, sought to guarantee the self-management proposal, by indicating a basic path for the five-day courses and other training events. For this it proposed a collective dynamics of inductive and procedural construction where each participant was invited to talk about his daily work, about the positive aspects and difficulties, as well about the understanding of their role and their power within the co-op and the way they exercised this power. An analysis of the "traditional factory" culture was developed, where people got used to perform orders and prescribed tasks without participating effectively in the planning, thus assuming a passive attitude. The project of self-management requires precisely changing this attitude so that all members of the cooperative participate as much in planning as in the responsibility for its execution.

Nascimento (2011) underlines that "The self-management experiments mobilize the workers for a concrete task and, thus, in the process and inductively they acquire self-management training" (p. 117). With this un-

derstanding it is assumed that acting democratically, one of the central elements in the self-management process, cannot be learned theoretically. Therefore Freire's insistence (1976), which is still valid: "If there is knowledge that is only incorporated to man experimentally, existentially, this is democratic knowledge" (p. 92). The same can be said about knowledge of self-management. Identified also as a practice of popular education in the economic space, where action and context are dialectically related, it does not dichotomize action and reflection. Popular education can be understood as the dialogue of knowledge that builds knowledge and broadens the universe of meaning of the subjects involved. In this sense, in one of the phases of the seminars generative themes were discussed (Freire, 1981) based on their experience. In little groups, organized according to the similar format, participants practiced talking, listening, sharing and learning together.

Solidarity economy, in some countries called social economy, is a space that favors popular education, emphasizing the practice of self-management, through its democratic and participatory organization, with a transforming intention. It is a methodical and gradual work of education amidst the organization of solidarity enterprises as popular cooperatives, associations of producers and consumers, groups to provide different services (services in education, food, arts and crafts, factories recovered by workers, etc.).

Possibilities and limits of participation and power at CFES/Sul

However, in the CFES, the methodological practice of popular education involved several problems and contradictions in its development. Despite a reasonable number of persons who followed the discussion and elaboration of the CFES/Sul Project, most of those enrolled in the courses had not participated previously in the process. Therefore the proposal for pedagogical self-management caused surprise and even rejection. According to testimonies collected, there was a clear "initial fear", as observed by a representative[7] of a solidarity economy enterprise:

> "There was an initial shock at the expectation of receiving content versus the proposal for a collective construction of knowledge (self-management of pedagogy). Because one has been used to this culture, with the teacher standing in the front and we here, just waiting to receive knowledge. When one saw the CFES, people were frightened, because it is

7 Katiucia da Silva Gonçalves is a member of a business called *Misturando Arte* (Mixing Art) from Porto Alegre. She has participated in the CFES activities since the beginning and still works as an educator.

completely different. But as we got to know the proposal, and valued our knowledges, I think that we got into it and felt the effect."

There was a lot of resistance, together with a feeling of insecurity. The participants expected a pre-defined program with teachers to do the teaching. The way the self-managed methodology was being practiced meant loss of time for some people. In one of the evaluations, which were regularly performed, provoked by the executive team of CFES/Sul, somebody said that definitions and referrals were being made without planning, and that the self-managing method does not mean improvisation. To avoid such interpretations, it was suggested that the activities were prepared a longer time in advance, so that all participants could become attuned to the intended goals.

Some participants in this regional course, who with us analyzed this position of rejecting the self-managing method, witness that those people, on developing training work in their region, did it in the traditional form by transmitting contents, reproducing the relationships in which the educator has the power of knowledge and prevents the collective construction of knowledges. This is what we can see in the following testimony:

"(…) I perceive that it is very difficult, even for the educators, to perceive and experience the pedagogy of self-management., (…) because, usually, when these educators start doing training work, they bring with them a readymade plan. They do not succeed to let the enterprise itself work on their issues (…) Ultimately they almost impose a methodology, not knowing how to conduct this self-management process precisely because they are insecure (Adalberto Sabino)."[8]

From the testimony of this educator, we can ask ourselves whether the training performed by CFES/Sul is sufficient for the participants to incorporate a new methodological work ethos.

Another aspect refers to the conditions of participation of the subjects that have to do with their history, quality of their life experience and education (including schooling) with their argumentative capacity, their emotional, psychological maturity and freedom to take up independent positions. This depends on each individual and social group's world view, which is constructed from the position they occupy in the social space. These individual and social conditions exert a direct influence on the type

8 Interview given by Adalberto Sabino, an educator from the west of the state of Paraná, on July 11, 2012. He was present at the National Seminar on Public Policies for Solidarity Economy, promoted by the CFES in Porto Alegre.

of participation and on power relations. As shown in the example by Tatiana, a member of the executive team:

> "I think that it is a set of factors. It is the personal accumulation of knowledge, of community work, since I remember some people, independently of level of schooling, who came with a great accumulation of experience from the movement of women peasants, of base communities."

If the previous experience was not in line with the principles of democratic participation, the result will quite likely be the concentration of the power of decision in the hands of small groups, because the other participants do not have the resources and skills to balance that form of power (Weyh, 2011).

In the context of inheritances of coloniality, which are expressed by relations of subservience and domination, or even in a culture of silence, we understand power as a relation, as an "intrinsic ranking of a human being towards another" (Guareschi, 2008, p. 141-142) which can be complementarity or domination. Thus the exercise of power implies social relations where human groups stay as they are or change through interactions and not simply due to individual attitudes. These power relations are asymmetrical when someone has the capacity to determine the behavior of others, depending on factors of participation, such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and resources (Schugurensky, 2005). Outstanding among these aspects is the personal ability to manage and convert resources available to them based on interests and motivations. In this sense, observing the processes of CFES/Sul activities, we understand that participation revolves around three types of relations, manipulation/persuasion, consultation/referendum, and self-management/deliberation

Relations of manipulation/persuasion
Initially we give the name of *manipulation/persuasion* to the type of relationships determined by the directive posture of the managers of the promoting institution, when the latter attempts to obtain support for the pre-defined contents and mode of approach. It performs an argumentative intervention to convince the participants that there is no possibility of influencing or modifying the option presented and that is to be implemented.

Analysis considers these relations to be present among the participants during courses and meetings. The first class consisted of a number of leaders whom we called educators, based on their long experience and reasonable capacity to understand and argue on the topics involved. They had

over five years of participation in ECOSOL. However, in the following activities, whether they were courses or workshops, there was a clear rotation of people. The criterion of choice had become the disposition to remain in the group, in the three stages. With this criterion many beginners became part of the course. This change in the participants' profile made it more difficult to further experiment with the participatory approach of pedagogy due to the diversified levels of experience and comprehension of solidarity economy.

The pedagogical coordinator, a member of the executive team of CEFS/Sul, had the task of presenting the methodological proposal. The work was introduced by rendering explicit the objectives and proposal of the participatory path to be taken. After agreement or silence from the participants, during the initial stage of activities, self-managed teams were organized around the following themes: creativity, memory, care, evaluation and coordinators.

In some self-managed teams, the attitude of persuasion was not visible. However, in the coordination team this type of relationship was evidenced, especially when a more experienced leader, on raising some disagreement, generated tensions and difficulties in finding the most appropriate and consensual solution. Since, however, there was an agreement involving the projected solution, based on the rules created for the agreement with the federal government, the self-management practice was subordinated to planning. "At the CFES the activities were already defined, the activities, with their public, number of hours, and even the type of content that was indicated (…) (José Inácio Konzen)". Beyond the self-managed coordination team, power relations, in the context of the regional five-day course – were established among the members of the executive team responsible for executing the Project on behalf of the executing institution and the other participants: solidarity enterprise leaders, educators of supporting institutions and members of public administrations that work with solidarity economy.

Relations of consultation/referendum
The second type of relationship, consultation/referendum, is characterized by an informative dialogue, creating a possibility of hearing the participants' interests or needs, and may lead the responsible institution (executive team) to perform adjustments or changes in the content and in the way it is developed. The needs expressed by the participants must be heard to include them in the goals and working method, without, however giving up the power of decision, which is the responsibility of the institution that is part of the agreement. This level of participation may take into account a presence of representatives of the social group in committees with

power of decision, exerting some influence on the decisions or only confirming those taken in other instances. In some cases, participants suggested changing the content and the methodology, which was submitted for the group s approval; in other circumstances suggestions to modify the planned activity could not be accepted due to the prescribed norms in the term of agreement signed with the governmental agency. Some changes would have represented the impossibility of using the resources allocated in the budget. The simple change of the place for the activities was one of the suggestions which could not be practiced, for example. As one did not know exactly where the persons came from, it would be reasonable to be flexible regarding the place of the activities. But in order to be able to pay for the expenses with public funding, the payments had to be made exactly as foreseen in the initial plan, according to the project.

Clearly, considering the joint work done by the self-managing teams, the most difficult task was under the responsibility of the coordination. Members of this team were someone from the executive team of the CFES and from the Methodological Committee, besides representatives of the participants who offered to contribute. Despite the moments of dialogue, in which the participants could express their opinion there were no significant changes in the ways of dealing with the activities. Some member of the enterprise who was part of the coordination, in many cases acted as a mere executor of some task in conducting the meeting. The fact that all participants were members of a self-managed team created an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual appreciation of what each of them proposed for all.

Relations of self-management/democratic deliberation

Finally, another type of participation is characterized by practicing *self-management/democratic deliberation*. Here power is distributed among the participants and representative members of all organizations that are part of the program and the team that implements the project. Decision making occurs collectively by consensus or, in certain cases, by vote that is argued.

During the courses the self-management teams were free to plan the way they found most convenient, aiming at strengthening the self-management participation. Thus, sometimes an atmosphere was observed with predominance of participation and collective experimentation. It normally occurred after the second or third stage of the regional course when participants were already more familiarized with each other, and felt appreciated for their active participation in the construction of knowledge. However, at the same time, some contradictions and conflicts revealed the power of the symbolic capital of the executive institution, supported by

the relationship with the federal government and political capital of the managers whose position was not challenged by the other members. Based on Bourdieu (1989), political capital is defined as capacity/ability to influence political decisions (Schugurensky, 2005; Weyh, 2011; Werle, 2003).

According to Werle (2003), the unequal conditions among the subjects involved result from a range of disparities that have repercussions on power relations. According to the author,

> "The cultural disparities among individuals may be a major factor in favoring certain groups that exert power over the others due to their ability to formulate topics and manipulate alternatives" (Werle, 2003, p. 79).

The ability to manage personal resources in a complex context of relationships occurs through the mediation of language which is always intentional, thus not neutral; this language is used by subjects to express their thoughts (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 129). And it is in the process of argumentation that the cultural differences, the disparities in the education level, the diversity in the type of accumulated experiences by participants may generate conflicting relations or clash of interests.

As resources that interfere at the level of ability, technical tools should also be mentioned, such as the internet that can potentiate information used in arguments in favor or against a given proposal that is at stake. While some participants, especially representatives of supporting institutions, were connected – and, therefore, had a range of information at their disposal – others remained as listeners saying what they had to say only during subgroup moments, because they were "dispossessed of material and cultural instruments needed for active participation ..." (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 164).

The fact is that the lower ability of argumentation, the greater the difficulty for arousing a participatory process and of power shared in a self-managed way; especially when these are people marked by the heritages of domination or by oppression, used to follow prescriptions. As Freire (1981) sees it, one of the basic elements in the dominance relationship is the prescription.

> "Thence, the alienating meaning of the prescriptions that transform the recipient consciousness into what we saw called "host" consciousness of the oppressing consciousness. [...] The oppressed who introject the "shadow " of the oppressors and follow their agendas, fear freedom, insofar as this implies the expulsion of this shadow, and would require them to "fill" the "void" left by expulsion, with other "content" – that of their

autonomy. That is their responsibility, without which they would not be free". (p. 35)

The absence of autonomy to mobilize resources when participating in decisions generally requires a long re-education process for people, mediated by emancipatory public policies that offer objective opportunities, such as work, education and the conquest of other fundamental human rights.

Summing up, in the process of participant observation it was possible to understand that the participation and power of individuals is directly proportional to the possession and use of material and cultural instruments, together with the capacity for presenting arguments. On the other hand the presence of symbolic capital that acts as a political force in the decision-making process is decisive. In many cases, certain participants agreed with the arguments of those who had better "instruments". In this way, they delegated their participation by abstention or "disposessment", thus favoring the dominance of the professionals who were more experienced in this field, especially due to the appropriate knowledge mobilized in favor of the argumentation advocated.

Conclusion

As to the participation and power relations in the process of constructing a public policy of education in solidarity economy, the CFES represents what could be obtained as a result of negotiation with the federal government, by means of the responsible agency, the National Department for Solidarity Economy of the Ministry of Work and Jobs – SENAES/ MTE.

Concerning the activities of CFES /Sul, we emphasize the heterogeneity of factors that influence the quality of participation. Even if human beings have an ontological will to participate (Boff, 1999), they are socialized in a sociocultural context that conditions their being, their thinking and their action, in this social space in which they live. In other words, the ethos of the participants, in a very varied form, composes the quality of the political capital, which complicates the challenges of the practice of self-management, as can be seen during the course of the CFES/Sul activities.

The three types of participation and power relations described in this text were the parameters of our analysis. With a complex look we seek to not forget the multiple influences on social relations. For example, some participants from the institutions belong to families with medium income, while other persons from popular co-ops come from extremely poor families and did not have access to school. Factors such as these have a direct

influence on the quality of participation in the discussion and decision making process.

However it should be emphasized that, despite this limit, the proposal of a participatory pedagogy was taken into account in the project. The difficulty appeared, explicitly or in a veiled manner, among the participants in the courses who did not take part in the discussion and elaboration of the project and, therefore, did not know it and presented distinct expectations and experiences. As a result, they found it difficult to integrate the proposal for a participatory methodology from the perspective of self-management. An educator[9] of the methodological committee analyzed that there were always divisions in the group, between those who had academic expectations – for instance, to work with articles, authors and further theoretical topics – while another part of the group, in tune with the project that was being carried out, advocated always taking a consistent posture between the principles of participation, according to what one sought to experience in the work space of solidarity economy: the practice of self-management.

A tension that characterized the training program as a whole was the difficulty in establishing a mediation between the ethical-political dimensions (the relations, principles and solidarity economy project) and the technical-productive one (management of the production, administration, finances and commercialization). The focus of the content was more greatly emphasized in the first dimension, advocated predominantly by the supporting institutions, to the detriment of the second, with a strong presence in the expectations of the solidarity economy enterprises. The evaluation of a an educator[10] considered that, because of the transforming political sense that one wishes to achieve with solidarity economy and considering how difficult it is to modify the pre-defined objectives, the technical-productive demands presented by the participants in the enterprises could not be taken into account. But he understands that such demands must be served later on, because they are genuine and necessary.

In CFES/sul activities we found the three relationships of persuasion/manipulation, consultation/referendum and self-management/democratic deliberation in varying degree. The consultation/referendum relationships and, in some cases, manipulation and persuasion practices are linked to

9 Isabel Lima, a participant in the Methodological Committee of CFES/Sul, representing the collective of educators (male and female) of Rio Grande do Sul, Interview given on July 27, 2012.
10 Testimony by Fernando Zamban, member of the Methodological Committee, representative of the institutions that support the solidarity economy, for the State of Santa Catarina. Interview given on June 28, 2012.

the commitment taken on by the institution that is legally responsible for carrying out the project. Thanks to the support of the pedagogical proposal constructed previously by the solidarity economy movement, the self-management perspective enabled a process of changes of mindset and hearts, achieving results that were multiplied in the local spaces, especially in enterprises, municipal and regional forums on solidarity economy. Despite emphasizing the ethical-political dimension that covered human relations and intercommunication, testimonies of participants in enterprises acknowledge that the CFES gave them more security to work and act as educators. The experience of self-managed work enabled a more independent understanding and posture, giving people the courage to perform educational processes with other enterprises, as well as at solidarity economy forums.[11] "For me, everything was new... but now I already know how to contribute to others", said an educator, associated with an enterprise in the western region of Paraná.

Concluding, we present an educator's testimony about a participant from Blumenau, state of Santa Catarina:

"I always remember Ms Laide, from Blumenau. A fantastic lady, who, despite all limits, is infinitely wise. I remember that on my first contact with her, she was still frightened at what was happening, she thanked for the opportunity to participate. At our last meetings she was already solving conflicts in the systematization team. It became clear to me that the CFES process contributed to Ms Laides' methodology of action, not only in the formative aspect, but the personal one, too."

Taking the CFES/sul course gave Ms Laide the opportunity to overcome certain cultural disparities, appropriate and construct knowledge articulated with the wisdom she already possessed, besides learning skills to speak up in order to take a more independent position toward the group that initially inhibited her. Thus, several testimonies show the validity of the self-managed education process proposed. Initially it frightened them, but afterwards the participants appreciated the inductive dynamics of education mediated by participation.

On the other hand, it is still necessary to hear the demands of the solidarity enterprises that, besides education in the ethical-political dimension must have their needs met as related to the technical-productive dimension. The challenge is to avoid the dichotomy and potentiate the dynamic mediation between these two intrinsic dimensions of a self-managed education.

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11 Testimony by Sueli da Silva, a black woman, member of a solidarity enterprise and representative of the Forum of Solidarity Economy of São Leopoldo (source: video "Formação de educadoras e educadores em economia solidária – CFES/sul-RS").

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KNOWLEDGE, PARTICIPATION AND POWER IN PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Contributions to a pedagogy of power[12]

Danilo R. Streck

Abstract

The article revisits the relationship between knowledge, participation and power, based on studies on participatory budgeting in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The central argument is that participation in the definition of projects and priorities for one's region or municipality provides learning opportunities that lead to the democratization of power relations, which in turn are a basic feature of knowledge democracy. The study is based on a participatory methodology which has in the dialogue with the different sectors involved in drawing up the budget its major principle. Among the marks of a pedagogy of power, the article points out possibilities of a collective reading of reality by citizens as well as the importance of the local space for the deconstruction and reconstruction of power positions and relations.

Keywords: participatory budget, power, participation, pedagogy of power, participatory research

Introduction

What could be said about each of the three key concepts of the title – or about the articulation among them – that would add something to the many pages already written on the topic and to the everyday disputes that are waged based on each of them in all spheres of life? Nobody today doubts that there are types of knowledge that legitimize different forms of power, ranging from democratic to authoritarian governments, from a science committed to the preservation and promotion of life to a science at the service of easy profits. There are types of knowledge of resistance, of insurgency and of oppression. Participation too can have very different meanings, ranging from manipulation to a joint, dialogue-based and critical involvement in projects and ideals. (Streck, 2013; Fricke, 2013).

The assumption in this paper is that these three dimensions of life in society are intrinsically interlinked, with multidirectional arrows. In the abstract, the topic may lead to endless – and may be fruitless – discussions. In this exercise I do not intend to begin with particular theories, but rather to pay attention to what emerges in a social practice that may have lost a bit of its charm and ideological-political appeal, but that is still located in the vanguard of innovative democratic experiences. I am referring to participatory budgeting that had one of its pioneering experience in Brazil, in Porto Alegre, beginning in 1989. This was a period of enthusiasm following the enactment of the new Brazilian Constitution (1988), which created a space for the people's participation and for demands of civil society after two decades of military dictatorship. On the international level, 1989 is also the year when the Berlin Wall fell and the time when the so-called *Washington consensus* was affirmed as the neoliberal political-economic project that was to mark the new globalization. Society was moving between clashes that are still part of the political and social scene in the present.

The subtitle indicates the place from where I reflect and the direction of the discussion. When I say that I reflect from the perspective of the field of education, I would like to express my awareness that a point of view starting from philosophy, political science or sociology would produce another text. At the same time, I reaffirm the importance of what Orlando Fals Borda (2010a) calls disciplinary convergences. These convergences, in turn, may also represent disciplinary transgressions in view of a new rigorousness, as argued by Paulo Freire (1996, p. 28). This is not a rigorousness that adheres to closed theoretical canons or to the repetition of practices, but takes on the risk of thinking about practice.

By directing the topic to what I call pedagogy of power, I wish to highlight that knowing and participating are always political actions, i.e., they

are part of the weave of the force relations where the life of the individual and of society is decided upon. The fact that I privilege this concept of the triad also has to do with the finding that although the great majority of the nation-states define themselves as democratic, the social demonstrations and protests that explode on every continent are an expression of the distance that exists between what is formally proposed and the possible citizenship practice.

In the first part of the text I present elements for the reader to understand the study's empirical context and methodology. The participatory budget is today a widely disseminated political-administrative practice, especially in municipal administrations, and it is no longer an exclusive hallmark of the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*), as it was in the beginning. The subject of this study is the experience with participatory budgeting made in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, i.e., on an expanded geographic and population scale. Following, there is a brief methodological contextualization in which I present the epistemological perspective that guides the study and some of the strategies used in collecting and analyzing the data.

Among the different topics that have been raised by the study, in this reflection I will look more carefully at the possibilities of deconstructing power positions and relations in participatory budgeting. However, participation and power are also present in the very process of production of knowledge, and therefore space is dedicated to situating the research project as a participant in this movement of deconstruction and reconstruction of power.

The text converges to what I call pedagogy of power. If one wishes power to stop being an objective for which one educates in the sense of providing advantages – or gaining more power – in an increasingly competitive market, but a mobilizing force for social justice, then it is necessary to transform power also into a topic of pedagogy. On referring to a pedagogy of power, I do not necessarily think or only think about classrooms, but about all social processes with an educational intention, including social research.

An experiment in participatory democracy

Brazilian law establishes the general parameters to draw up the public budget at all levels of the federation. The process consists of three stages, all of them based on bills of law that are the exclusive purview of the executive power: the pluriannual plan, drawn up by the executive power at the beginning of their term and submitted to the approval of the Legislative Assembly; the law of budget guidelines, likewise sent by the executive

to the legislative power, establishing the rules and general lines of the annual planning; and the annual budget, which undergoes the same process of approval and must be rendered compatible with the pluriannual plan and the law of budget guidelines.

This information is relevant to understand why the implementation of different modalities of public budgets depends, within a relatively open legal framework, on the project of government and the political will of the elected executive power. In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, which is the context of reference of this paper, several alternatives of popular participation were used over time, revealing breaks and continuities. The beginning can be found in 1994, when the Regional Councils for Development (*Conselhos Regionais de Desenvolvimento* [COREDES]) were founded in the state. Now there are 28 of them, whose role is to favor an integrated planning of municipalities according to the cultural characteristics and economic potentials in the region (Siedenberg, 2008). This level of social and political organization has since then been a major reference for strategic planning in the state and is an institutional base for citizen participation. It can both support and place obstacles against policies of the elected state government.

In 1998 a consultation with the people about priorities in resource allocation was started. It was a simple mechanism based on casting the vote for specific projects, possibly more inspired by the fear of an imminent victory of the party coalition led by the Workers' Party, which has as one of its banners the participatory budget, than by a political conviction. Indeed, with the victory of the Popular Front led by the Workers' Party, in 1999 the state participatory budget was implemented based on the principles of the Porto Alegre experience (Horn, 1994). It was a daring and pioneering experience because, at a state level, for a population of over 10 million inhabitants, it implanted a system for the direct participation of citizens in the allocation of part of the public funds and – what is perhaps even more important – in an open discussion of expenditures and revenues of the state (Marques, 1999). The state, as in all cases of participatory budgeting, played a decisive role in facilitating the process which necessarily operates within the tension between top down and bottom up protagonism due to the state's final responsibility over the budget.

At the time there was a heated debate about the illegality of the process, started by the state House of Representatives which felt that its space was being invaded by the people. And this is literally how it was: there were public assemblies where the state representatives were prevented from speaking and even urged to leave the room. It was a sign that citizens were claiming this space as theirs, also evidencing the lack of satisfaction at the way power was delegated through the periodical election of representa-

tives. The proof of the weakness of this system is that few voters remember for whom they voted at the last elections for the legislative power at all levels of public administration.

In the two following administrations, participation in budget issues was basically limited to a consultation that consisted of voting on projects that had been previously defined (Sobottka, Saavedra & Rosa, 2005). There were no longer meetings with hundreds of people discussing and presenting their proposals, sometimes rather dramatically. It should be highlighted, however, that even if the participation was in fact restricted, there was the discourse that it was an improvement. Could this be the evidence that, as claimed by some authors (Guimarães, 2004), a new political culture was being created and, at least formally, opening spaces to participate? I think it is too early to answer this question.

The current government, once again led by the Workers' Party, has since 2011 proposed a set of modalities of participation in the "State System of Popular and Citizen Participation".[13] It is chaired by a management committee with equal representation of members of government and of civil society. Among the main agencies that compose the system are the State Council for Development (*Conselho de Desenvolvimento do Estado* [CDES]), with representatives of various sectors of society, the Regional Councils for Development (COREDES) and a government agency called Digital Office (*Gabinete Digital*).

The participatory budget is integrated into this system as a central element. An important innovation was holding regional plenaries to discuss priorities to prepare the Pluriannual Plan which serves as a "framework" for the annual budgets and, more recently, the inclusion of the priorities voted at the municipal assemblies and the state level hearings into the budget law that guides the elaboration of the next annual budget.

The annual budgets are prepared according to the following stages: regional public hearings at which the participants select up to 10 among the 15 thematic areas that will serve as a base to present "demands" at the public assemblies which will be held in each municipality. These 15 areas are defined in the Pluriannual Plan and guide the drafting of the budget for the next four-year period. This means that if a region chooses health as a priority area, the projects in this area may carry greater weight when the delegates of the municipalities (one delegate for every 30 voters) meet again to define the items that will be part of the ballot on which the voters will mark their priorities. After the vote, which may be either in ballot boxes distributed around the municipality or by internet, the delegates

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13 See www.participa.rs.gov.br

consolidate the proposal to be sent to the office responsible for elaborating the budget. Since the amounts for projects of the participatory budget are already pre-defined by region and since they must fit the previously established guidelines, this procedure ensures their inclusion in the proposal for the state budget that will finally be voted by the state parliament.

The participatory budget's history began in the popular struggles and initially one of its banners was the "inversion of priorities" (Horn, 1994, p. 113), i.e. benefiting the majority of the population who are generally excluded from bourgeois representative democracy. This revolutionary character in the context of Brazilian history was the reason for many disputes whose balance represents an accumulation for the possibility of "democratizing democracy". In a homonymous book, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2003) gathers experiences from various regions of the world which sought to increase democracy through popular participation. These are experiments of participatory democracy that indicate possibilities of building other forms of organization of society, maybe the emergence of a new social contract (Streck, 2003; 2010).

Methodological approach

Most studies using qualitative methodologies are located in smaller spheres, often warning the readers that they do not intend to generalize. Even so, it appears inevitable that a research project, using any methodology, is part of a community of dialogue about a given topic, so that elements of comparison and the discovery of confluences and divergences among studies are inherent to research practice. Action research and participatory research, for their part, also have a tradition of large scale studies (Fricke, 2011; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006; Fals Borda, 1979).

A study on the participatory budget in a state that has a geographic size and a population larger than those of many countries can be seen as a participatory research experiment on an expanded scale. Its purpose is to analyze the participatory budget as a political-pedagogical process in which, so it is presumed, one can identify signs pointing to alternatives to the globalized development model that shows symptoms of exhaustion in all regions of the world. Maybe in fact we are not only facing a financial crisis and a crisis of political representation, but a civilization crisis that, in terms of research, requires understanding the micro and macro levels in social relations as a unit.

In Latin America this means to turn our attention to the potentials of resistance, organization and transformation found in the people. Without romanticizing this people as an abstract entity, I would like to recall the observation by Orland Fals Borda (2010b, p. 216) about the direction in

which we look when we think about an alternative for development: "The Euro-Americans, obviously, progressed and enriched themselves with scientific-technical development, much at the expense of us in the Third World. But it was also at the expense of their soul and of the social values, as in the Mephistophelian contract." The imbalanced and dehumanizing forms sometimes taken by progress might be corrected by experiences that still breathe on in the so-called backward societies, as in the case of the "living well" (*vivir bien*) or "good living" (*buen vivir*)" (*Suma qamaña*) of the peoples from the Andes (Huanacuni Mamani, 2010).

Participatory budgeting is an important place to understand society on the move and the directions of this movement. Since research is not politically neutral, the researcher must ask themselves about the actions they wish to potentiate with their work. According to Zemelman (2006, p. 112), "One must detect the realities that can be potentiated, but these realities are not necessarily prescribed in a theoretical corpus; rather, they will depend on what do I want to know for, which is an axiological or ideological 'for what'." Besides, the participatory budget is also the place where knowledge, power and participation are explicit elements of the process.

Throughout the research project we participated in a number of activities, mainly as observers. We placed ourselves intentionally in an initial position of listening, aware that many people involved in the process have long experience as public managers or as citizens involved in their communities. Thus we participated in training seminars, in the government school, in regional public hearings and in municipal assemblies. We also collected information through a questionnaire in which we sought the quantification of data on the profile of the participants, the entities they represent, as well as their expectations and frustrations at the process. Significant moments of the study were the meetings with state and regional coordinators with whom we discussed the objectives, the emerging results and the directions taken by the process. As a continuation, seminars are being held in selected regions to discuss with the communities the topics that emerged in our readings.

The topic selected for the following reflection originated in this process. Around the way in which power expresses itself, many of the tensions and challenges in participatory budgeting can be spelled out. They are being made explicit and proposed as an agenda for new reflections that, in turn, are being inserted into the process. We do not know, however, how they will be absorbed and re-elaborated by the various groups that participate in the discussion and elaboration of the budget.

The reconstruction of power, or: the reconfiguration of power relations

The budget is a privileged place to feel (not necessarily to understand) power, since it is the hard core of public planning. Without the allocation of resources, even the best projects will only be intentions. In other words, the budget is the point of departure for executing works and implementing public policies, whose final result also depends on other factors, such as the actual availability of the resources, the efficiency and political will of the managers and the possibility of social control. All stages, from the conception of a project until its execution and later its use, are an expression of the exercise of power.

I see power, along the lines of sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2000, p. 266), as a component of social relationships regulated by an unequal exchange, and which therefore produces tensions, conflicts, negotiations and new possibilities of living together. This means, on the one hand, to recognize with Foucault the capillarity of power in all social relations, considering that equality cannot be seen a state but as a permanent search. Power, as we learned from Foucault (1979, p. 8), does not have only a repressive function, as it permeates all relations as a force that produces things, knowledge and discourses. On the other hand, if we say that power is everywhere, like a dispersed force, we run the risk of not situating it anywhere. The position of Santos (1979, p. 265) on this issue appears reasonable to me. He argues that "if there is no principle for the establishment of structure and hierarchy, there is no strategic framework for emancipation". Without this structuring one risks an inconsistent activism or passivity in face of what will seem to be a tangle of power.

This principle of structuring is based on what the same author calls six structural spaces, each of them reproducing specific forms of power: domestic space, where power expresses itself through patriarchy; production space, which is characterized by the power to exploit labor and nature; market space, where commodity fetishism prevails; community space, where power manifests itself in unequal differentiation; citizenship space, in which the state dominates and is the space of hegemony; and world space, in which power expresses itself in an unequal exchange.

In all these spaces, counterpowers or resistance powers are also generated. These counterpowers, opposing the regulating logic, present themselves as places for emancipation. In participatory budgeting the spaces where dispute occurs are above all the community and citizenship. There is a possibility of recognizing and legitimizing new public actors who express the needs of their groups and their communities, and there is the establishment of a dynamic of interaction with the public power that can lead both to alliances and to confrontation.

Based on data collected in a region of the state during the 1999-2002 period, one can see that in the process of participatory budgeting there are conditions that favor the emergence of new leaders (Herbert, 2008). By demystifying authority, one also breaks with the traditional logic that determines who must be the leader in that place or region. According to Herbert, "the unveiling of authority and of reality take place simultaneously" (p. 278). Other people take the floor, other needs emerge and there are other subjects and forms of interlocution. The conclusions of another study (Weyh, 2011) corroborate the claim that participatory budgeting can be a practice that renews leadership and contributes to bring fresh air into politics as an organizing force of society.

In the excerpt below, a teacher incisively confronts government officials and authorities because they do not know local reality or do not take it into account:

> People (!), just to confirm what Diego said here, the reason for the distance from what happens in our town. First: it is badly disseminated, not everyone has access to the newspaper at school, at the school it has been three months since we last have seen it. Second; most of those who are here get up early, to go catch a bus to Porto Alegre, Esteio. They go to work in other places because here there are no jobs for them. So they leave the dormitory town and then they come to school, go home, lie down and sleep. (Inajara, Nova Santa Rita).

At the same time, this teacher seeks a way to politicize everyday life and social relations. After saying that she works three shifts a day, getting up at 6 a.m. and then going to sleep at midnight, she says that this effort represents what she considers a gain, not necessarily in terms of approving a project, but of building a collective consciousness:

> And third, this is how I think: one can never disbelieve politics, one must never be ashamed of saying: I want it like this and I think in this way. The voter's registration card is the most powerful weapon we have, regardless of a political party, of who is going to run for election or not. One must never lose motivation, one must still believe in people, because as soon as one does not believe in others, one does not even have to live, because one lives a life through dreams, goals, and one goes after them. (Inajara, Nova Santa Rita).

This "power from bottom up" confronts the "powers from above". It is a power of insurgency that mobilizes the constituted powers, if not to action, at least to listening. We can see this in a passage of the speech by a

president of one Regional Council for Development. After thanking all for coming, he points out the presence of coordinators of the state participatory budget, highlighting the difficulty of their task:

> It is not, for them [the coordinators], an easy role to play, having to explain things in all the regions. People think that things happen from one month to the next, or from one year to the next, but they have the pedagogical patience that one must have in terms of government, in terms of Regional Council for Development, in terms of the municipal administration. (Delmar Steffen, president of the Regional Council for Development of the Paranhana Valley).

The two quotations represent different places for the articulation of power. In the case of the teacher the tone is initially one of indignation regarding the distance of public power, but she wisely transforms the complaint into a political issue. The discourse of the university president, who is president of the Regional Council for Development, in turn, emphasizes the pedagogical aspect of the process, highlighting the role of the participation and awareness building of the people in this process, and also defending the public power that must give people explanations and for this it needs pedagogical patience.

The system of participation itself, with a large variety of "small boxes", makes it difficult for citizens to get in the discussions of the larger issues of society. There is the Digital Office, where personal utterances are generally posted. There is also the Council for Economic Development, which, by its nature, gathers a small number of representatives of society. There are the Regional Councils for Development and the Municipal Councils for Economic and Social Development, which do not necessarily act through the participatory budget. Thus it is a reality that on the one hand centralizes and on the other fragments. The combination of cosmic (of centralization) and "chaosmic" (of intermediate levels) factors accounts for the opacity of power relations in society (Santos, 2000, p. 228), which makes it very difficult to have efficacy in resistance struggles.

The participatory budget is, even so, the place to recognize the power of different groups and entities that coexist in a community. A quick look at the list of participants shows that most of them are at the meetings as some kind of representative. The positive side is the prior articulation around the needs felt by the organized sectors of society (clubs, NGOs, schools, hospitals and others). The challenges arise when public agencies (municipal departments, the police, the fire department and others) dispute the same scarce resources, rendering the process rather endogenous and thus eventually becoming a factor of community demobilization.

Research, knowledge and power

> Those two, the boy and the girl over there, are from Unisinos,[14] which is doing a research work that is going to write the history of popular participation in our state, ranging from the participatory budget to the other processes. They are performing a survey, they are going to leave it here, a questionnaire for each one … to be able to tell the story of this process which is a very rich one in our state. We are in a pioneer state, a state that has a history in the participation process … (Pedro Schneider, Regional Coordinator of the Sinos Valley).

In this introduction of the two students, members of the research group who were present at the meeting, the regional coordinator revealed the expectation created in the region concerning the research project. Although it is emphasized that research is a shared process of searching and producing knowledge, it would be misleading to say that this is a codetermined project (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2011). It might be more appropriate to use the concept of associated research, where, based on common assumptions, specific objectives are designed through a dialogue.

What basically promotes the convergence of interests is the political intention of furthering or radicalizing democracy. There is a tacit acknowledgment by all groups involved that a democracy cannot do without the participation of citizens. Participation is considered a value, even if many flaws are recognized in its practice.

However, there is also a difference in objectives. The coordinator expresses what may be an expectation of the leaders: telling the story of popular participation in the state and beyond the regional and national borders. The agents responsible for the process know very well how the history of public management was erased due to party issues. As this is a university based research project, the research group is interested (also) in academic results, expressed in a jargon that is not of much interest to the participants in popular assemblies. In both cases, however, the collective reflectivity is expanded, which – and here I agree with Eikeland (2007, p. 53) – is the basic criterion of action research and participatory research: "Hard core action research is not intervention but collective self-reflection."

The distinction established by Øyvind Pålshaugen (2006) between theoretical discourse and practical discourse is relevant to render this collective reflectivity operational, since the subjects involved in the research project

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14 Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos) is situated in the Porto Alegre metropolitan area, in South Brazil.

not only have different fields of action, but move in their own linguistic fields. According to him, the possibility of understanding is based on the researcher's capacity to participate in the practical discourse. In his words, "the power of knowledge is dependent on the researchers' ability to participate in practical discourses based on the power of the better arguments, and this ability is in turn dependent on a sensible power of judgement" (p. 291). In other words, it is not only a matter of discursive strategy, but of ethical sensitivity to evaluate the discourses.

How can one understand research in these power games? On the one hand the power of research becomes mixed in the disputes of power among the protagonists of the process: state and municipal officers, local leaders, community organizations, social movements and NGOs. There is no research that can call itself neutral, although the data and the results it produces may be appropriated in several ways by different groups. For instance, the people in favor of an expanded popular participation may understand the data on the difficulty in participating as a flaw to be corrected, while the adversaries may interpret the same data as a sign of the failure of this form of participation, or else as a sign of the unfeasibility of popular participation in larger geographical contexts. The researcher does not have this power of control over their product.

In the case of the participatory budget, one can remain in the official sphere and confirm the political-pedagogical intention of the leaders. One can also seek to hear the voices silenced in a supposedly democratic process. An example of this is the fact that the time intended for the speech by the coordinator and the state officials and that given to the participants is very disproportionate. It is very difficult for a common citizen to stand up in an assembly, sometimes go up to the podium and, before a panel of authorities, present their demand in a short three minutes. The role of research, in this case, is to help insert the voice of these citizens in a dignified manner into a process of which research has now become part. There is a "directivity" (Freire, 1996) which is based on an ethical attitude that does not necessarily coincide – or only coincides partially – with the positions of the participants in the process. Action and participatory research requires us to develop what Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen (2010) identify as "dissensus sensibility", which includes questioning one's own assumptions.

In this sense, research cannot be understood simplistically as an instrument of one of the parties involved in the dispute, as being denuded of its own potency. The researcher's involvement in the collective reflectivity also involves interference in the process through their choices, just as the choices of the other subjects and groups interfere in the research project that the researcher coordinates. In the language of Bourdieu (1997, p. 52), the researcher has a certain kind of "capital" that allows them to be

present as an "outside" agent. An example of this is when, at a research meeting, a secretary of education of a municipality said that the presence of the researcher helped them get a better view of the problem, to ask better questions. With this statement he indicated the importance of research in the process but marked a position according to which the community itself was the protagonist. They did not expect recommendations and answers, only ways of asking the questions which would best lead to the solution of their problems.

The research on participatory budgeting also reveals the need to transcend the classical disciplinary parameters. This is a tradition of action research and participatory research. Suffice it to remember the often cited article by Kurt Lewin (1946) where he argues that a narrowly disciplinary view is incapable of covering the complexity of the social phenomena. The result, in the coming decades, could be an amalgam of the various disciplines into a single one or lead to forms of cooperation. At the Tavistock Institute, interdisciplinarity (Trist, 1989) was a characteristic of his research and training work. Orlando Fals Borda (2010a) preferred to talk about disciplinary convergences, including in his research rather unorthodox areas such as music and popular folklore.

Notes for a pedagogy of power

The participatory budget can be seen as a pedagogical process which goes beyond collecting demands that then may become part of the public budget. It is a learning context insofar as the participants can promote reflexivity not only about their reality, but also on the process of construction of knowledge about it. As I have argued throughout this paper, it is a special place to learn about power and of how power is or can be used. As conclusion, let us look more attentively at what may be requirements for a pedagogy of power.

In the following dialogue between a student and the regional coordinator of participation one can see the pedagogical intention of the participatory budget spelled out explicitly:

> *Student*: It is time for exams and to deliver papers, and we cannot stay around here wasting time.

> *State government representative*: You are not wasting time, you are gaining time, you are gaining learning. We are discussing democracy and citizenship here, besides I think that what you are doing here is not a waste of time. I know that it is exam time, but it is a process. (Excerpts from the municipal assembly in Nova Santa Rita).

Next we see what was said by two students who ignored the coordinator's answer and continued to complain that the information does not reach the city periphery:

> Information occurs only here downtown, in neighborhoods like Sanga Funda and Berto Cirio there is no information, because sound-equipped cars... that sort of thing. I live in Sanga Funda and never heard about it, never heard, only got to know about it today through our teacher, Sandro.

The government representative then gave in and acknowledged the need for change in the way information is made public: "We are going to work at this to correct it for next year. The state government will have to expand this [communication]." In this informal exchange of words between a government official and students at a school one glimpses the possibility of a pedagogy of power that is intrinsically interconnected with a pedagogy of participation.

The first requirement of a pedagogy of power is the training and equipping of citizens to read the world. When Paulo Freire says that reading the world precedes reading the word, he signals a political intention in the sense that power can inhibit or potentiate the "being more" and enable the emergence of the "untested feasibilities". Knowing the forces that make up society is a pedagogical task of participatory research. In the participatory budget we have many examples of how one furthers the knowledge of local, regional and national reality; one learns to deal with different perspectives on community issues and to construct negotiated proposals. Agricultural production is then seen as connected with care for water and rivers, with roads to reach the markets, and with the potential for regional development and policies.

This reading, in turn, is always associated with the pronouncement of the world, just as research itself can be seen as a form of saying one's word about the world (Streck, 2006), a word that, in the Freirean sense, is "word-in-action". From this it can be inferred that knowledge cannot be dissociated from practice. The classical knowing to transform is reinterpreted in the sense of getting to know by transforming, or getting to know in transformation. Participants in participatory budgeting are citizens committed to solve the problems in their communities and regions, and find in the assemblies a place to say their own word about these problems.

Another requirement of a pedagogy of power is to recognize in the local space a privileged place of education. The research project on the participatory budget revealed the difficulty of communicating through the classical mass media, such as the radio, newspaper or sound truck. Either the

newspaper does not arrive, or people are at the factories, stores or schools, and the message does not reach them. At the same time one sees the important role of the personal invitation. The research project ratifies what José Luis Rebellato (s.d., p. 98) found in Uruguay: "The issue of how *to reach the non-organized neighbor* becomes outstandingly relevant and may be an essential key to the development of a radical democracy." We still need to find out what role the digital media is having in these personal invitations. (Malone, 2012).

To this we add the challenge of situating local topics in a global perspective. Insofar as the spaces of participation are reduced to presenting demands and to voting priorities, this passage cannot happen. Not even the huge public debt is problematized. It is presented as an apparently insoluble problem and is simply transferred to the subsequent government. What Øyvind Pålshaugen (2002, p. 165) claims for companies goes for public administration: "As I have repeatedly underlined, to participate in the discussions on the enterprise as a whole is not identical with participating in making decisions on the whole. However, in the discourse on how to influence decisions concerning the important questions of the future of an enterprise, the tendency to over-focus on the bodies of decision-making, and who participates there have led to a kind of underestimating of the role of discussions." It is the researcher's educative role to provoke discussions that frame the issues within a larger socio-political context. The research group has invited members from the communities to discuss preliminary findings of the research process which are presented as tensions, for example, the tension between participation as a principle and participation as a mere administrative or electoral strategy, or the tension between local priorities and regional needs and possibilities. It also happens that researchers are invited by regional coordinators to discuss their findings.

A pedagogy of power will be both a premise for the constitution of democracy and for its radicalization. It could have as its horizon democratic participation as the "wisdom of the many" ["die Weisheit der Vielen"] (Roth, 2011). And wisdom, as we know, involves envisioning knowledge and power recreated by a logic that is deeply rooted in the individual and collective experience. But here, if we wished, we would already be beginning another discussion.

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FROM CHANGE AGENT TO SUSTAINABLE SCAFFOLDING?

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Abstract

Educational institutions in rural Bangladesh face multiple problems and barriers when implementing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning. The paper reports on an ethnographic action research project set up in rural Bangladesh to induce change in a specific institution and to inform research and practice about the complexity and difficulty of development with ICT. The authors set out to study how a researcher and change agent, by means of a participatory process, can show the complexity of the development process and induce change by building local knowledge in the same process.

It is concluded that the change process in the institution has begun with the action research project but also that it is probably too early to say for sure whether the change is sustainable. The change process has also shown that change is complex and influenced by knowledge, infrastructure, existing school practices, and a lot more. With respect to doing action research in rural Bangladesh, it is concluded that an action-oriented approach is promising. The action research approach gave the authors access to study an enactment of problems in relation to the implementation of ICT that could not have been foreseen solely based on a traditional ethnographic study.

Keywords: educational technology, formal learning environment, ICT4D, diffusion of innovations, barriers, smart classroom, integration, adoption

1. Introduction

This paper reports on a research project that explores, analyzes, and deals with barriers to the integration and adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) in relation to the educational contexts of secondary educational institutions in rural Bangladesh. The project is part of a cluster of research projects with similar aims to deal with challenges facing education in developing countries. The cluster of projects is hosted by Aalborg University and the research center e-learning lab – the Center for User Driven Innovation, learning and design. We also want to mention that the research was carried out by researchers with rather different backgrounds: one who grew up in the capital of Bangladesh and just recently relocated to Denmark to continue his research and one who grew up in Denmark and primarily conducted research in Denmark until three years ago.

We do, however, share a common interest in ICT as a driver and tool for the development of education – especially in developing countries. Moreover, we share a keen interest in understanding and facilitating processes that develop educational institutions with ICT. In this paper, we report from the part of the overall project that deals with the involvement of the school community in the development process. We do so because existing research on ICT for the development of educational institutions tends to restrict itself to the observation of existing practices (e.g., Ertmer et al., 2012; Ertmer, 1999; Hew & Brush, 2006; Khan, Hasan & Clement, 2012). Action research has been applied sparingly (Chepken, Mugwanya, Blake & Marsden, 2012). From a change perspective, however, observation has little to offer. We thus want to study how a researcher and change agent, by means of a participatory process, can construct and distribute knowledge together with local stakeholders so that the local stakeholders ultimately can take charge of continued development.

The purpose of the paper is twofold. First, we want to inform our own research community on the use of ICT for development (at Aalborg University and at other research institutions) about our progress in facilitating sustainable change. Second, we want to inform practitioners from development agencies or similar organizations that aim to facilitate development using ICT in educational institutions in developing countries. The common purpose is to show that development using ICT is very complex and difficult and that stakeholder participation is needed for the full complexity to surface and to sustain change.

Participation and power are key concepts in our research, and in understanding them, we draw on the Scandinavian tradition of the participatory design of ICT. Dating back to the 1970s, computer scientists started work-

ing with trade unions to develop a new methodological toolbox for the development of computer systems (now ICT). The close interaction between workers and scientists/developers had two reasons (Ehn, 1993, p. 1) democracy, as workers took part in shaping the future of the workplace and 2) skill and quality, as workers brought skills to the process that eventually led to higher-quality products. These different reasons for collaboration also carried different interpretations of participation and power. In the democracy-oriented approach, participation meant participation in a political process of negotiation and sometimes a struggle between trade unions and workers on one side and owners and management of the other. The methodological toolbox gave workers a voice in the negation of the computerization of the workplace. It empowered the workers to co-decide on specific issues and to co-determine the overall goals for computerization and democracy in the workplace. The powerful unions forced management and owners to listen. Participation, however, also meant participation in knowledge creation within the unions and worker communities. Knowledge creation also contributed to the empowerment of workers.

In the skill- and quality-oriented approach, participation means taking part in projects, being listened to, and to a lesser extent, shaping one's own future. The focus is still on communication and learning, but now it involves designers and users working together rather than workers and owners negotiating. This is illustrated by newer publications such as Kanstrup and Bertelsen's (2011) book on user innovation management. The powers in play are less obvious, and the empowerment is less significant in much of today's research on participatory design, but it is still about the relevant voices being heard. In that respect, we can also still talk about the empowerment of users or user representatives.

When we want to inform practitioners who deal with ICT in educational institutions in developing countries, we aim to help them to find ways to improve education through stakeholder participation and stakeholder empowerment. The aim is to make their voices heard and to facilitate participation in which the participants co-identify problems and opportunities. The assumption is that development rooted in the needs of local stakeholders and local conditions will be more sustainable. As the paper will show, however, the process is rather messy, and the ideal stakeholder participation and empowerment is difficult if not impossible to achieve in real life. The institutions we deal with are far from ready to succeed with ICT, so heavy involvement from the outside is needed for anything to change.

The paper is organized as follows: first, a review is conducted on barriers to the integration and adoption of ICT in relation to the formal learning environment of Bangladesh and its rural areas. Second, the context of the research project is presented. Third, a description of the ethnographic ac-

tion research (EAR) methodology and methods is provided. Fourth, blended with the EAR process, a chronological description of the facilitation process is presented, integrating an analysis of the barriers that can be addressed and those that continue to present problems. Finally, to summarize the process of facilitation, ethnographic action research is warranted as a preferable diffusion facilitation alternative.

The principal researcher with the Bangladeshi background conducted the action research in Bangladesh, whereas both authors took part in the preparations, the literature review, the analysis of data, and the writing of the paper.
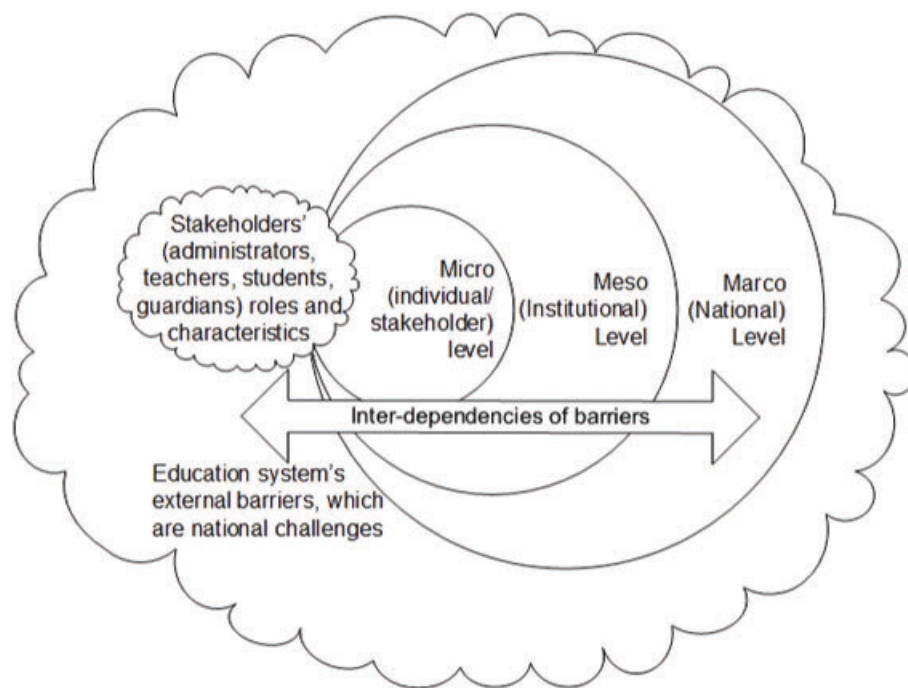
2. Barriers to the Integration and Adoption of ICT in Education

Much research has demonstrated the benefits of educational technology on attitudes on instruction, attitudes toward subject matter, and student achievement (Lowther, Ross & Morrison, 2003; Wenglinsky, 2006). To gain such benefits, barriers to integrating and adopting information and communication technology (ICT) in relation to learning environments have been researched for over three decades (Cilesiz, 2008; Ertmer et al., 2012; Ertmer, 1999; Hew & Brush, 2006), particularly the formal context of secondary education classrooms.

This section presents a review of the barriers to ICT integration and adoption in the field of educational technology, especially in the context of rural Bangladeshi schools. The review prepares us for the fieldwork by informing us about prior research, but aiming to make the voices of local stakeholders heard, we are aware that prior research (often case studies) may point to different problems than a participatory approach.

To review the barriers, the point of departure is taken from a framework of barriers (see Figure 1) developed by Khalid and Nyvang (2013). The framework establishes the fact that the barriers are situated based on the policies, procedures, and practices of the education systems' national-level organizations, the educational institutions, the individual stakeholders, and the external environment.

Hew and Brush (2006) and Rogers (2000) classified the barriers into broad categories as follows: (a) resources, (b) knowledge and skills, (c) institutions, (d) attitudes and beliefs, (e) assessment, (f) subject culture, and (g) funding. The participatory research of Khalid and Nyvang (2013) demonstrated that the causes of each of the barriers within each category are usually at play in relation to multiple others; a particular barrier can depend on multiple levels of the education system's adoption decision, as well as factors external to the institutions and education system. Across all

Figure 1. Framework of Barriers to Educational Technology Integration and Adoption. Source: Khalid & Nyvang, 2013

levels of the education system, there is a lack of resources such as funding, ownership of technology, access to technology, time, technical support, and teachers and trainers, as well as a low quality of resources (An & Reigeluth, 2011; Khan et al., 2012; Wachira & Keengwe, 2010). The lack of knowledge and skills may relate to technology, technology-supported pedagogy, or technology-related classroom management (An & Reigeluth, 2011; Khan et al., 2012; Wachira & Keengwe, 2010). Some of the institution-level barriers are the lack of leadership and decision support, the classroom environment and design, the collaboration culture among teachers, institute-wide instructional vision, the school time-tabling structure, planning, and ICT policy and procedures (Tondeur, van Keer, van Braak, & Valcke, 2008; Wachira & Keengwe, 2010; Ward & Parr, 2011; Means, 2010). Attitudes and beliefs are individual-level resistances to change regarding teaching, learning, and technology (Ertmer et al., 2012; Pierce & Ball, 2009; Tondeur et al., 2008; Wachira & Keengwe, 2010). Barriers can be caused by both the levels of the education system and external forces, involving pressure to meet higher standards, to obtain high scores

on state tests, and to cover vast material requirements, as well as the non-conformance of technology integration with the external requirements of traditional exams (Ertmer et al., 2012; Wachira & Keengwe, 2010). External barriers include a lack of electricity, networks, and communication infrastructure; gender roles and differences; differences between the mother tongue and the language of the ICT interface; low English proficiency; workload in terms of domestic chores; low average educational attainment; political unrest; and corruption (Khan et al., 2012; Sharma, 2003).

The Bangladeshi context of educational technology integration and adoption in classrooms, particularly in rural areas, is prone to greater incidences of certain barriers (Abdullah-Al-Mamun, 2012; Khalid & Nyvang, 2013; Khan et al., 2012). For instance, only 47% of the power supply comes from the national grid, 37.73% of which goes to rural areas (BPDB, 2009), where 71% of the population lives (The World Bank, 2014) and more than 80% of the secondary educational institutions are situated (BANBEIS, 2010). Only 55.41% of the villages (of 68,038) are electrified (REB, 2012). Moreover, the inability to purchase technologies, a lack of maintenance facilities, a lack of teacher training, fear of handling the expensive ICT equipment, poor transport communication systems, the poor English language skills of both teachers and students, and the inability to operate computers all pose problems (Khalid & Nyvang, 2013). All types of secondary educational institutions in Bangladesh lack the basic minimum requirements for quality education. The issues are include a lack of lesson plans, the inability to complete the syllabus over the class duration, teachers with insufficient skills in delivering learning content, the inability to retain student attention in class, low attendance, an insufficient number of teachers, a high student-teacher ratio, challenges in visualizing mathematics and science lessons, and decreasing interest in science subjects (Banks, 2009). Therefore, the facilitation of the integration and adoption of ICT in schools in Bangladesh involves great complexity and requires a deep understanding of the context. The article discussed whether this can be achieved via the participation of both the researcher/agent and the schools' stakeholders.

3. Local Context

The land area of Denmark (43,094 sq km) is less than one-third that of Bangladesh. In contrast, the population of Bangladesh (142.3 million) is more than 25 times greater than the population of Denmark (5.3 million) (CIA, 2012). About 71% of the inhabitants in Bangladesh live in rural areas (The World Bank, 2014). The current Human Development Index

(HDI), a composite measure of health, education, and income, ranks Bangladesh 146 out of 187 countries. Per capita income (GNI) in 2009–10 was 751USD. The literacy rate (7+) is 59.6% among males (2009) and 53.8% among females (2009) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The adult literacy rate (15+) among males is 62.6% (2009) and 54.3% among females (2009). Judged from these numbers alone, Bangladesh in general and rural areas in particular face severe challenges, but we have restricted our focus to education.

Bangladesh has three different education stems, i.e., general, madrassa (Islamic), and technical and vocational institutions. To be accredited by the education board, technical and vocational institutes are required to have at least one computer lab and a computer teacher. Until 2011, only the technical vocational curriculum had a compulsory subject on computers from ninth grade to twelfth. In addition, for the populous rural Bangladesh, the technical and vocational institutions are a prospective system for human resource development, poverty alleviation, rural development, and "education for all" achievement (Basu & Majumdar, 2009).

The present study was conducted at the Tofail Ali Technical School and College, a rural private technical and vocational institution (with 325 students and 17 teachers), where in 2009 the principal researcher facilitated voluntary ICT training and was well acquainted with the founder and the management committee. Therefore, the selection was convenient in terms of reducing uncertainties in relation to the time required to establish relationships in a foreign country. In December of 2010, Tofail Ali Technical School and College authorities approved the principal researcher's request to take on the role of researcher and facilitator of ICT adoption at the institution. Then, as part of the facilitation process, the authors ensured funding for the Tofail Ali Technical School and College to partner with a national pilot project of Bangladesh that mobilized resources and training (CLP, 2012). The principal researcher was accepted as a consultant for the pilot project of the implementer Non-government Organization (NGO), named the Development Research Network (D.Net), for a period of three months. The principal researcher performed the role of "change agent" (Rogers, 1995), which refers to a person given the responsibility for facilitating change in the organization. The principal researcher gained an insider's viewpoint (Chambers, 1994a, 1994b) of the Tofail Ali Technical School and College and D.Net, meaning that he worked inside the organizations together with (other) internal stakeholders. We will return to these matters directly when writing about the iterations of the project.

In the process of transforming ICT practices in the classroom settings of the Tofail Ali Technical School and College, the principal researcher conducted two live-in field studies: from August of 2011 to January of

2012 and from August 20, 2012 to September 29, 2012. Data were collected during these field studies. In addition, as part of the continuous facilitation of the Tofail Ali Technical School and College, significant numbers of discussions and conversations occurred via mobile phone, email, messenger tools, and online chat.

4. Methodology and Methods

This study was founded on a transformative research paradigm that advocates participatory research, action research, mixed methods, and live-in field ethnographic experiences for bi-directional communication and sustainable change among both the researchers and the participants (Creswell, 2003; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Mertens, 2007, 2010a; Mertens, 2010b). To achieve this, this study applies the methodology of ethnographic action research (Hartmann, Fischer & Haymaker, 2009; Tacchi, Foth & Hearn, 2009; Tacchi, Slater & Hearn, 2003; Tacchi, Foth & Hearn, 2007). We chose EAR to avoid adopting a top-down approach to the research and change process in the school, but EAR is very much promoted as being top-down by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Ethnographic action research is, however, a rather loose framework for action research, so what matters most is how we choose to apply it in practice.

The ethnographic action research methodology combines two approaches: ethnography and action research. "Ethnography is a research approach that has traditionally been used to understand different cultures. Action research is used to bring about new activities through new understandings of situations" (Tacchi et al., 2003, p. 1). Thus, "ethnography and participatory techniques are used to guide the research process and action research to link the research back in to the initiative through the development and planning of new activities" (Tacchi et al., 2009, p. 35). The empirical experiences from this research resulted in an adapted process for the ethnographic action research methodology, which was described by Tacchi et al. (2009, 2003; 2004). The adapted cyclical process in Figure 2 depicts the ethnographic action research phases as follows:

- *Planning*: Planning of an agenda and activities based on preliminary knowledge from the literature and researchers' experiences in the context.
- *Research, observe, and reflect* (participatory pre-analysis of practices): The use of participatory methods results in the identification of problems and revision of the agenda for change.
- *Action* (facilitation in action): The researchers and participants con-
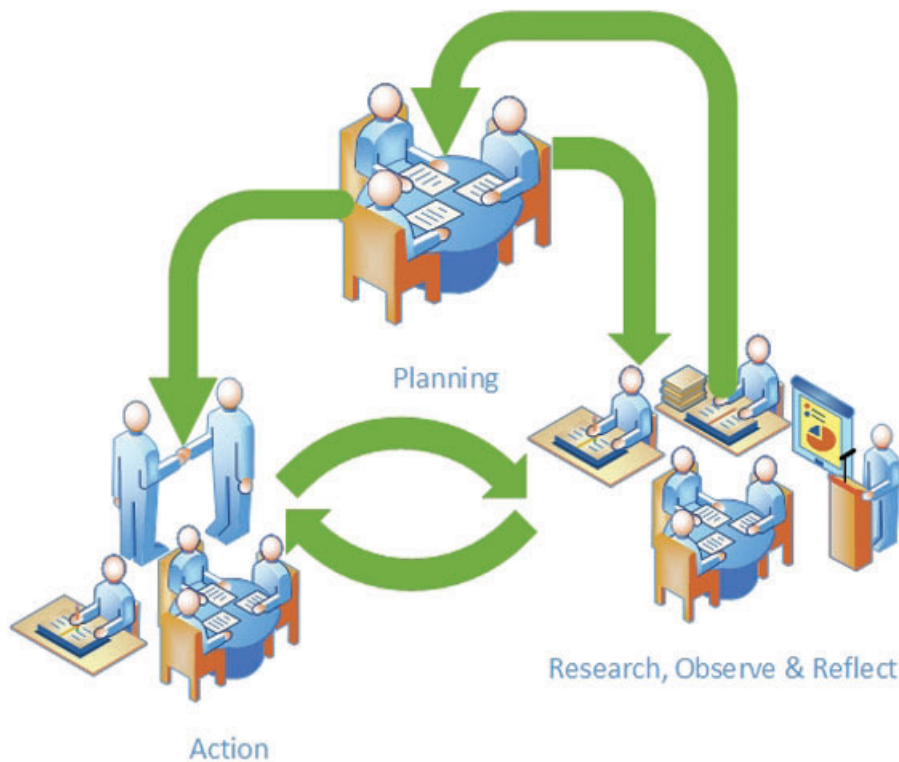
Figure 2. The Process of Ethnographic Action Research

struct knowledge together through agenda-oriented, problem-based actions and interactions.

· *Research, observe, and reflect* (participatory post-analysis of actions for change): The use of participatory methods and the action and interaction experiences contribute to an analysis of an informal/formal inquiry into the agenda for research and the agenda for change. This post-analysis allows further change in the planning for action and research.

Based on a literature study (partly represented in the previous section), previous facilitation experience in the researched institution, and consultation with the school's management, the principal researcher set out an agenda as follows: the school should practice computer-supported instruction in the classroom. The preliminary list of problems included funding, resources, and knowledge and skills. This agenda for transformation from a chalk-and-talk classroom and the related initial barriers to change triggered the action phase.

Methods for Data Collection

The ethnographic action research includes participatory action research and uses the methods and triangulation principles of participatory action research (Tacchi et al., 2009). Moreover, participatory action research methods are well established within participatory rural appraisal and are also recognized as participatory learning and action methods (Chambers, 2008; Narayanasamy, 2009). Thus, as part of the EAR, this research exercised participatory rural appraisal methods and principles. Essentially, the methods used included a series of workshops, focus group discussions (FGDs), semi-structured interviews (SSIs), and participant and non-participant observations by the management, teachers, staff, and students. All methods contributed to the voices of stakeholders being heard. The participants and the change agent co-identified which issues to work on in workshops and which issues to discuss in interviews. Concerning these participants, the methodical application of participatory rural appraisal-based research and the findings regarding the barriers were elaborated by Khalid and Nyvang (2013). One example is the problem-tree analysis connecting causes and effects to the central problem: "students are not acquiring computer and internet related vocational and practical skills from the institute" (Khalid & Nyvang, 2013, 116). The central or core problem, its causes, and its effects were all identified by workshop participants.

Moreover, the very situated and participative role of the change agent in collaborating with the various stakeholders in terms of services and resources involved a large number of face-to-face, mobile phone, and Internet-based communications. These and several other actions and interactions contributed data: the assessment workshop with the multimedia content development company, email and mobile conversations with the mobile-Internet service provider's customer service and system analysis departments, and coordinating the mobilization and installation of resources from D.Net at the Tofail Ali Technical School and College. Thus, these actions and interactions, intended to aid in problem-solving facilitation, also contributed in the form of research data gathered through a plurality of methods that are inherently complex, difficult to put into methical order for analysis, and could be labeled participant observation.

5. The Ethnographic Action Research Process

This section reports on the ethnographic action research process one overall theme for four iterations: 1) planning and preparation, 2) first field experience, 3) many challenges, and 4) organizational change.

Iteration 1: Planning and Preparation

The agenda of this ethnographic action research was to identify the barriers to integrating and adopting ICT in a rural secondary educational institution and to adopt strategies to circumvent or to overcome these barriers. Prior research focusing on the barriers and close interaction with management led to a decision to focus on the barrier of lack of funding for ICT at the institution. To obtain funding, the researchers contacted potential donors and secured different kinds of support.

The point of departure for applying the ethnographic action research was taken from the authors' former experiences in the field of educational technology, the barriers identified in the literature on various learning contexts, and former experiences with the barriers in the context of the Tofail Ali Technical School and College. Former experiences with the Tofail Ali Technical School and College and work done to identify barriers by means of participatory processes by the local stakeholders specifically at the Tofail Ali Technical School and College (Khalid, Nyvang & Islam, 2013) played a major role in developing the agenda (we will return to this issue in iteration 2).

The agenda was discussed with the members of the Tofail Ali Technical School and College's management committee (the founder, the chairman, and the principal) via mobile phone, and the high-priority barriers were identified as follows: the Tofail Ali Technical School and College's lack of funding; ownership of computers for instructional activities; access to computers for classroom activities other than labs; classroom infrastructure; and knowledge and skills in relation to technology, pedagogy, and administration, as well as the national electricity crisis. The principal researcher was accepted as a consultant, and two field studies were planned to obtain the required knowledge and skills. In addition, possible ways of obtaining/applying for funding and prospective resource mobilization designs were examined. Two field studies were planned, reserving about six months for the first and about two months for the second.

The lack of funding for computers and supporting technologies was dealt with first. The local organization D.Net called for private sponsors for a Computer Literacy Program (CLP, 2012). The sponsorship funding was granted by the C.W. Obel Family Foundation, and additional resources and funding for the first field study were granted by Aalborg University. The CLP involved establishing a smart classroom (SCR) to be used as a formal classroom and a Computer Literacy Center (CLC) to be used as a non-formal training center.

The SCR implementation involved the following resources: a 32-inch LCD TV for mounting on the wall beside the backboard or whiteboard,

a laptop with extended battery capacity to be connected to the TV, a four-panel hybrid solar control panel system with an AC input to backup up to 200 watts through two batteries, a flash drive, and a one-year maintenance contract.

In addition, two and half days of training on computer use and teaching with a multimedia CD and selected lessons for classes VI to X for teachers of English, mathematics, science, and geography were included, as well as a Computer Teaches Every English (CTEE) multimedia CD, a teacher's manual, guidelines on class-routine restructuring, a printed lesson plan, and a book titled *Esho Computer Shikhi* (*Let Us Learn the Computer*) for teachers.

These resources also had the potential to address the electricity issue via the use of a hybrid solar power backup system that could be recharged via both AC inputs and four solar panels; laptops with longer battery lives, as opposed to traditional desktops with expensive backup systems; an LCD TV that could be used for educational TV programs and multimedia content for the class and whose power backup requirements were significantly lower than those of multimedia projectors; and preliminary training for teachers. Furthermore, the selected subjects were those for which there was a low rate of passing on the state tests: English, mathematics, and science. For instance, in 2010, more than 20% of students failed the Secondary School Certificate exam, and most failed English, mathematics, and science (Habib & Nobin, 2010).

The CLP project required the prospective institutes to ensure the allocation of one classroom with traditional resources and provide for installing the SCR resources. The authors decided to sponsor the Tofail Ali Technical School and College to gain additional insight into the CLP project's barriers and at the same time take advantage of the facilitation with resources and training. This was, however, not done without hesitation. By implementing the SCR resources before the local stakeholders had much opportunity to participate in defining problems and solutions, we did not empower them to shape their own future. Empowerment did, however, follow when the Tofail Ali Technical School and College allocated one room for SCR in an under-construction tin shed structure with concrete walls and floors, and four teachers received training in a traditional computer lab environment regarding how to use computers and operate multimedia CDs, as well as regarding the concept of SCR, along with books and other materials for self-paced exploration.

Iteration 2: First Field Experience
During the second iteration, field action was taken to overcome barriers and implement ICT at the school. The field researchers facilitated local partici-

pation for local voices to be heard in the identification of problems. Many problems surfaced during the participatory and change processes. The field researcher thus had to resolve many technical problems and adapt equipment to the local conditions (such as, for instance, when loudspeakers were needed because the rain on the roof was too noisy). This iteration showed the difficulty of facilitating change and indicated that a change agent bringing in knowledge and skills from the outside is needed since local skills are not always enough.

During the first field study, by the end of September of 2011, both action and research were conducted and complemented one another. The PRA methods explored (a significant proportion of) the barriers in relation to informal practices (Khalid et al., 2013) and the formal Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curriculum (Khalid & Nyvang, 2013). In addition, significant numbers of discussions and interviews were conducted, and workshops on three themes were initiated as actions for problem solving, decision making, and participatory analyses for research.

First, a workshop with selected teachers and student volunteers was conducted to redesign a classroom and make formal decisions about organizational actions. Second, workshops with teachers about integrating SCR resources into instructional practices involved preparing a year-long lesson plan by the subjects and topics taught, an assessment plan, the evaluation of multimedia content via state assessment factors, and a formal class intended to understand the barriers that teachers face, the troubleshooting experiences that teachers go through and gather student feedback. Third, teachers were engaged in evening planning workshops to discuss formal committees that were involved in various organizational decisions, policies, and procedures. These workshops were initiated and scheduled until the end of the second field study in response to facilitation requirements but were not pre-planned as part of the project's strategic plan. These workshops, involving administrative meetings, training, design, and experimentation, required additional time from the already-overworked teachers, who were motivated or otherwise inspired. These workshops were a support service that is otherwise not present in the area. Organizing such an in situ workshop required less effort for the change agent, reduced dislocation expenses, and offered great convenience for the female teachers, who cannot easily travel on their own for safety reasons as well as cultural reasons.

During the first visit to the SCR, it was found that the devices were never fully installed for testing; both the TV and the laptop remained packed and secured. However, there was a provision to hang the TV on the wall using two custom-made iron bars. Moreover, the method of con-

necting the devices was not known to anyone, the solar control panel came without a manual, the AC power connection cable was found to be without a two-pin plug, and the wire was coiled and secured with a high-hanging rope.

In particular, knowing the appropriate resource persons, as well as their ability to provide support, access to information, and decision-making abilities, was the key to overcoming certain barriers and identifying other underlying barriers. The authoritative approach of the field researcher, along with the power of the sponsor, helped to verify that the reasons that the equipment was incomplete were as follows: the SCR was under construction when the vendor arrived to install the solar power system. He or she found that the plaster and the painting had not been completed. The teachers, particularly the electrical trade instructor, reasoned that the system components were new, that neither training nor a manual had been provided regarding them, and that the equipment was expensive and should not be experimented with. Due to the busy schedule of the vendor, support involved a waiting period of more than four weeks due to the Tofail Ali Technical School and College's disadvantaged location in terms of communications. Thus, the field researcher facilitated some teachers in installing the resources and testing to ensure that all of the equipment functioned. During the first test run, there was a need for a loudspeaker under the tin roof because of the drizzling rainfall sound, so later, a sound system was purchased for the SCR.
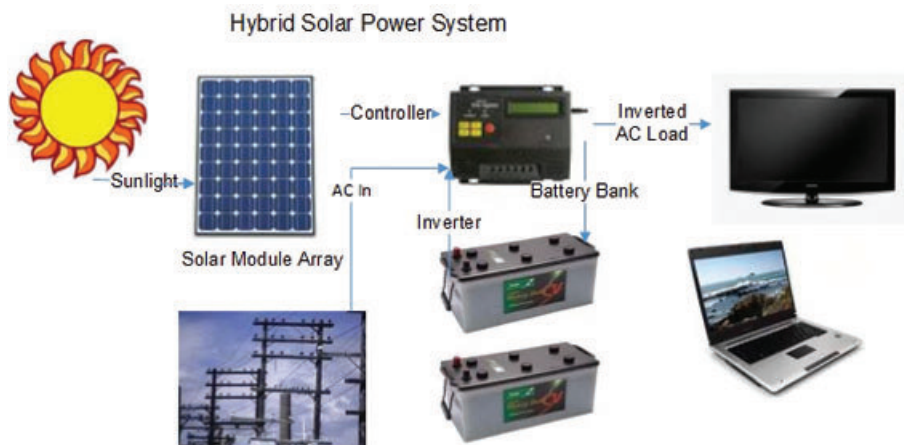
Figure 3. Hybrid Solar Power System for SCR Power Backup

During a short-notice workshop, the principal, three teachers, and some students in grades X–XII redesigned the SCR with the facilitation of the field researcher. A six-day experiment with trial classes showed that at least 16 hours of uninterrupted classes could be conducted with the hybrid power backup in the absence of an AC power supply under a partly cloudy September sky. Additionally, each connected device gave a small shock, which could not be understood or fixed, even by the support engineer. The problem remained unresolved. Moreover, as the vendor could not provide documentation for the hybrid solar system, an outline was prepared with hand-written notes (redrawn in Figure 3). Excessive mud, dust, and chalk on the TV and laptop screens increased the possibility of high maintenance requirements. Thus, giving the TV a cotton cloth cover was suggested. Additional suggestions were to replace the blackboard with a whiteboard and place the whiteboard in the middle of the class, keeping the lecture dais with the laptop on one side and the TV on the other (see Figures 45 and 56). All three must be at around the same height. The data cable behind the TV was pressed against the wall, and protective cushioning elements were used to prevent it from becoming damaged. This flaw in the design of the tools in terms of hanging remained unresolved.

Figure 4. SCR Setup in Progress

Figure 5. Experimental Class in Redesigned SCR

Iteration 3: Many Challenges

During the third iteration, more challenges surfaced. Even with the equipment more or less in place, teachers decided that further use would not be possible until later. More urgent matters, such as preparation for upcoming exams, were given higher priority. On top of that, the teachers lacked the knowledge and skills needed to utilize the new equipment in classes. The field researcher started planning capacity building in accordance with the observed needs. He conducted workshops to determine how to integrate the smart classroom in school practice, but in the process, he found that the teachers did not plan ahead, which made it difficult to work on a plan together with them.

During a planning meeting, the teachers decided that the SCR could not be formally used in 2011. The reason for this was that the teachers would be busy preparing for the Junior School Certification (JSC) examination and for final examinations in November. The teachers would not have sufficient time to practice the technologies, map the project-provided content with a lesson plan, plan the activities for each class, and schedule a new routine. Most importantly, the Tofail Ali Technical School and College

has around a 50% teacher vacancy rate, and current teachers are working for the to-be-approved junior school (VI–VIII). Moreover, the SCR must be accessed by both mathematics and English teachers and by both grades IX and X. This involves complexities in preparing the routine and must involve the academic committee of the school.

At the time, we would have liked the project to proceed faster, but in hindsight, we can see that, if we had pressed for faster change, the teachers would not have been empowered in the process—rather, the contrary would have occurred. We would have neglected their knowledge and reduced their influence on the school.

We were, however, not the only ones experiencing severe challenges. The field researcher attended a D.Net workshop with a D.Net team on September 27, 2011. The workshop involved analyses of the findings from the team's visit to 30 schools involved in the same kind of development project.

One of the aims of the D.Net development program was to achieve contributory participation and the empowerment of local stakeholders. The sponsor-motivated and school-inspired expression of interest involved a participatory approach to expressing the need to adopt ICT. However, despite dedicated efforts, the project continued to depend strongly on dedicated change agents.

Diverse and unforeseen barriers, including multi-level barriers to the integration and adoption of ICT in the education system, remained. On the planning and organizational level, little or nothing changed until much later (if ever) in many cases. In terms of the implementation of the SCRs, parts were reported to arrive in an unplanned manner, and the initial support appeared to be lacking in many cases. Other institutions did not even have the proper electrical installations to power an SCR. In institutions that had the SCR up and running, teachers and students could not fully utilize it due to lack of support and training. Based on the findings, refresher training, an SCR setup manual, an improved teacher guide, a training manual and training guide, and longer on-site training and visits were prioritized by D.Net for the next two years.

After returning to the village, a series of workshops was held to analyze the existing instruction and assessment practices and to integrate the SCR into the lesson plan.

It was found that none of the subjects was taught using a formal lesson plan. The Tofail Ali Technical School and College teachers understood conducting classes as including textbooks, guidebooks, and blackboards. However, when integrating the SCR, it was essential to plan each activity in the class. Thus, focus group discussions with the teachers resulted in deciding to use a guidebook, multimedia content, and the blackboard.

Therefore, without altering their existing practice of the use of resources, it was decided to consider textbooks to refer to chapters and sections. Thus, to integrate the SCR, both teachers of mathematics and English were instructed by the principal to prepare one year's lesson plan for one class (IX or X) in their own way. Moreover, other teachers were facilitated in preparing an outline of activities for a preferred subject. An official deadline was set for submitting the plan to the principal's office, and the principal demonstrated his outline of a lesson plan for motivating the teachers.

To identify students' attitudes, a tenth-grade mathematics class was conducted by the field researcher. The students reported that the content was interesting, easy to visualize, and easy to follow, in addition to covering more content in a shorter time and including more examples. A test class was conducted by the subject teacher, and the students commented that pronunciation and attentiveness might be improved because of the audio. However, the sound of the rain on the tin roof was distracting.

Iteration 4: Organizational Change

During the final iteration, the field researcher worked with management to create an organizational structure for supporting the continued use of ICT in the school. Unfortunately, teachers were still hesitant, probably for good reason (lack of knowledge of how to utilize ICT), and several teaching positions were still open. Students' interest were, however, increasing, and more teachers started learning to use the smart classroom. We found the development to be promising but also fragile because the field researcher was still deeply involved in all initiatives.

During the planning workshops in December of 2011 and January of 2012, decisions were made in relation to funding for ICT issues, leadership, operations and maintenance expenses, the employment of an ad-hoc computer teacher cum support staff member, the roles and resources of an ICT committee, a separate account for this ICT committee, the fact that the class routine preparation would be a collaboration between the academic committee and the ICT committee, the fact that English and mathematics for the ninth and tenth grades would be held in the SCR, and the fact that the Tofail Ali Kindergarten's primary-level students would be able to access the SCR. These decisions addressed the lack of leadership regarding ensuring access, maintenance, support requirements, and facilitation by a computer teacher in relation to the computer labs, the SCR, and CLC resources. Because one lecturer position, two trade instructor positions, and one demonstrator cum mechanic for the computer subjects and lab position remained vacant, even in 2013, there had been no funding for the operations and maintenance of the ICT equipment.

The proposal for the ICT committee and the routine, along with the integration of the SCR, was approved by the core decision authorities, the founder and the chairperson. However, the separate account for the ICT committee was approved much later, after trying out potential contributions in administrative functions, local administrators' autonomy, and financial sustainability (Khalid & Nyvang, 2014). The field researcher had trained one Tofail Ali Technical School and College alumnus, who was appointed to be a teacher cum mechanic. This new role, as part of the ICT committee, was assigned the responsibility of maintaining the SCR, CLC, lab classes, and other computer classes. The salary for the job was allocated from the project funds. At the end of the first field study, the mathematics teacher suffered a motorbike accident, and healing the resultant broken leg took more than three months. The fact that this same teacher was responsible for teaching science was a great loss to the Tofail Ali Technical School and College and the Junior School, including the further integration of the SCR. Until the second field study began, the SCR was used sparingly, and during the rainy season, some seating was broken. Regular classes had to take the furniture from the SCR. Furthermore, the English teacher moved away from the Tofail Ali Technical School and College, and the SCR adoption in English classes was not sustained.

During the FGDs in the second field study, students from the ninth and tenth grades expressed overwhelming excitement regarding the experience of attending the SCR. However, teachers experienced major challenges. The regular use of the SCR required moving the students to the SCR, accessing the SCR during the exact scheduled period, turning on the devices, preparing the contents for access, proficiency in both the technologies and contents, and sufficient time to turn everything off if another class would not be occupying the classroom immediately. More barriers were identified as follows: lack of time between periods, the fact that access to the SCR depended on the availability and prompt support of a support stuff member, teachers needing a copy of the SCR key, the cost associated with such liberal access, the fact that whiteboards must be wiped before leaving class or sand and dust would stick to the board, causing marks on the whiteboard and decreasing duster longevity, etc. The field researcher arranged for external funding from Bangladeshi sources, and seating arrangements for the SCR were ensured. Once again, workshops for SCR lesson plans were conducted, newly appointed teachers went through the learning process as others had, and other teachers improvised lesson plans based on their prior experiences. Although the integration of ICT with the lesson plan was not identified as a major challenge, the adoption of the ICT-enabled instructions in the routine activities of institutional practices was hampered by some major barriers: lack of teachers, lack of time, ease of

access to the SCR, lack of trust, and high maintenance due to rural environmental factors.

During the end of the second field study, the teachers, students, founder, and field researcher evaluated the experience through role-based and collective FGDs. From the FGDs, it can be said that both the Tofail Ali Technical School and College and the Junior School went through certain sustainable changes as a result of facilitation in situ, the freedom to participate and express requirements, dedication to contributing toward the goal, and the facilitation of the balance of power between the provider and the receiver of information, decisions, and services.

6. Findings

We set out to study how a researcher and change agent by means of a participatory process can construct and distribute knowledge together with local stakeholders to empower them. We wanted to make local voices heard and to influence the improvement of education by means of educational technology. Our purpose was to inform both our own community on ICT for development and practitioners such as development agencies on the complexity and potential of a participatory process. Our basic understanding of participation and power came out of the Scandinavian approach to the participatory design of ICT: participation started out as a means to empower the worker and developed into a way of producing better products. Transferred to the case of the present paper, this would mean a more democratic educational institution and a better education. This of course sounds very nice, but in reality, it is rather messy – especially when one attempts to implement educational technology in a rural context in a developing country.

It appears that we succeeded in providing more knowledge about collaborative processes in a rural Bangladeshi setting, which we will return to shortly, but did we succeed in empowering the local stakeholders through participatory processes toward the sustainable use of ICT at the institution? The short answer would be *no* since the measurable change is limited and we cannot know for sure yet whether the change has been sustainable. A more complex answer is that we did manage to involve the local stakeholders; management, teachers, and students were part of and influenced the process, and it appears that all parties developed new knowledge with regard to the use of ICT in the process – many voices were heard and influenced the process of identifying problems and solutions. We learned from listening to local voices that all steps of the change needed support and inspiration, but we also learned that many local stakeholders took an active part in the process as long as time and other resources allowed them

to do so. Again, to add a critical voice, we cannot say for sure that all relevant voices were heard and that sufficient knowledge to make the project sustainable was created. In a similar critical voice, we cannot claim and document that those teachers who experienced the fact that some of the existing teaching skills started to become obsolete with the introduction of ICT had the old knowledge sufficiently been replaced with new knowledge. If they did not have the old knowledge sufficiently replaced, it is disempowerment rather than empowerment and a threat to the sustainability of the change project.

In terms of empowering local stakeholders to influence the institutions in new ways and perhaps even introducing a new kind of institutional democracy, we did not succeed. The management was still in charge of the institution and teachers were still in charge of classes. Students were still only sparsely involved in decisions. In that respect, the distribution of power was not changed and the empowerment of teachers and students had its limits. However, we also see signs that the process we initiated also stirred up the distribution of power. The field researcher was granted power to conduct research, to carry out experiments, and to bring in new technology. The field researcher was well connected with the management and brought funds and knowledge, and by doing so, he had the power to influence many processes at the school. The project also led some of the teachers to be told by management to plan classes differently as a consequence of the work done by the field researcher. The student helper who took on the role of assistant to the field researcher, because he knew a great deal about ICT, was empowered and probably challenged some of the existing power relations because he knew more about ICT than the teachers and because he was so closely associated with the powerful field researcher.

The trust issues mentioned several times cut across the knowledge and power themes. Lack of trust (and self-confidence on the part of the teachers) keep teachers from experimenting with ICT and keep students from being allowed to play with the technology. The equipment was not properly installed in the first place – most likely because staff was afraid to break something and perhaps also because they did not believe that they were formerly allowed to do so. Here, further empowerment is needed for a continuous participatory process to emerge – a process in which stakeholders formally and informally engage in collaborative creation of knowledge on ICT.

Despite the critical comments, we have learned that changing institutions in rural Bangladesh is a collaborative process that still appears promising. A change agent bringing new knowledge can facilitate management, teachers, and students in developing an understanding of the local poten-

tial in ICT. A change agent must, however, spend a great deal of time at the institution to train all teachers continuously until the institution itself has the knowledge and power to both train new teachers and further develop the institution.

With respect to conducting research in rural Bangladesh, we have also learned that an action-oriented approach is promising. Had we opted for a traditional ethnographic approach, we would probably still have been waiting for anything really interesting to happen with respect to our interest in educational technology. We had never seen boxes of equipment arrive without being opened and used, and we had never experienced the rest of the many practical problems in relation to using ICT in the specific setting, just to mention two examples. We also believe that we have seen the multi-level problems and barriers to ICT more clearly because we saw them enacted instead of only foreseeing them by analyzing existing practice. Moreover, we clearly saw that changing an institution like the one we have worked with is not only about funding. It is very much about conducting participatory action research in the field. If the field researcher had not spent considerable time in the field willing to plan, re-plan, and re-plan once again to adapt to any challenge that emerged, the process would have been halted.

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Abbreviations

BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics-
BCC	Bangladesh Computer Council
BPDB	Bangladesh Power Development Board
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CLC	Computer Literacy Center
CLP	Computer Literacy Program
CTEE	Computer Teaches Every English
EAR	Ethnographic action research
FGD	Focus group discussion
GNI	Gross national income
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information and communication technology
ICT4D	ICT for development
JDC	Junior Dakhil Certificate
JSC	Junior School Certificate
MoSICT	Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology
NGO	Non-government organization
PAR	Participatory action research
PLA	Participatory learning and action
PPP	Public-private partnership
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
REB	Rural Electrification Board
SCR	Smart classroom
SSI	Semi-structured interview
TAKG	Tofail Ali Kindergarten
TTSC	Tofail Ali Technical School and College
TTSC-JS	Tofail Ali Technical School and College—Junior School
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ACTION RESEARCH AND EMPOWERMENT IN DENMARK

– experiences from three different contexts

John Andersen, Annette Bilfeldt, and Michael Søgaard Jørgensen

Abstract

This chapter presents experiences from action research projects in Denmark in three contexts:

1. A *public nursing home*, where the objective was to improve the quality of eldercare with special reference to social life among residents, as an alternative to the rigid and bureaucratic focus of New Public Management
2. A *marginalized urban area*, where the objective was to develop a community centre which could strengthen social capital and facilitate empowerment of both residents and welfare workers
3. A local project about *sustainable housing*, where the objective was to design and build houses which could act as prototypes and inspiration for the development of sustainable housing.

The chapter illustrates and discusses how action research can, with the active participation of local citizens, public employees, private employees and environmental organizations amongst others, contribute to strengthen these actors' capacity to actively influence the development of society and contribute to better social and environmental conditions.

The first part of the chapter introduces the core concepts of action research and empowerment with references to international contributions. The next part concerns the larger societal context and the concrete methodologies applied in three projects, and the successes, failures and results from these three cases. The last concluding part compares and reflects upon similarities and differences in the methods and empowerment mechanisms across the different contexts, and illustrates thereby the roles of Danish action research.

Action research and empowerment

Action research is an umbrella term for research based on democratic and inclusive values where "democratically developed knowledge" contributes actively to socially innovative and collective actions. In action research researchers and practitioners work together in "*a shared commitment to democratic social change*" (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). Action research is not a fixed method or a collection of principles, theories and methods. Action research should be understood as *an orientation to inquiry* in which research supports collective action and social innovation and at the same time produces new knowledge (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Together with the participating practitioners, action researchers should define their research questions and the agenda for collective action should be based on the participants' needs, experiences and visions (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Thus optimal knowledge creation is generated through shared learning cycles of problem definition, design and implementation of strategies for social change (Nielsen & Svensson &, 2006).

The ideal of the action research approach concerns the co-production of knowledge between social actors and action researchers who contribute actively to democratic change within the field where the research is conducted. This contrasts with, for example, the positivistic research tradition where the ideal is that the research has an external and "objective" relation to the research field and its actors. Thus action research challenges the research methods which separate the researchers and their research "object" (Clausen & Hansen, 2007) and give the social actors a role as "subjects" in the research process.

Action research stresses the close connection between *understanding* the world and *changing/transforming* the world. Knowledge becomes a product of collective knowledge developed in creative processes and practice cycles which consist of 1) *criticism* of unsatisfactory conditions within a given field, unfairness, underprivileged group conditions etc., 2) *investigation and documentation*, 3) *reflection* which includes the *development of a concrete vision and transformation strategy* and 4) *action* (Andersen & Bilfeldt, 2010). As one of the creators of action research, Kurt Lewin, stated: *The best way to understand society is to change it*! (Lewin, 1946).

Action research is "*value oriented and seeks to address issues of significance concerning the flourishing of humans, their communities, and the wider ecology we participate in*" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The ontological starting point within the tradition of action research is that societal structures are not unchangeable. Those engaged in action research can be empowered and can influence the conditions of life and society. Epistemologically, action research frames the creation of knowledge where reflection is linked

to action and can be defined as research which contributes to social mobilisation and empowerment (Kemmis, 2008). Kemmis employs the concepts of "practice" and "praxis". "Practice" is based on ingrained behaviour/habits. "Praxis" is the social and morally obliging action that can arise from the critical and self-critical reflection and dialogue in the action research process (Kemmis, 2008).

Historically speaking, the concept of empowerment is associated with the work of Paolo Freire, who defined empowerment as "*the ability to understand social, political and financial contradictions and the ability to act against the oppressive influences of real life*" (Freire, 1974).

In line with Freire's thought, empowerment can be defined as "*processes through which social groups improve their ability to create, manage and control material, social, cultural and symbolic resources*" (Andersen & Siim, 2004).

The American professor Richard Levin offered a wider definition of empowerment in continuation of the Latin American tradition:

"… the all-round capacity, resources, information and knowledge, confidence, skills, understanding, organization and formal rights which people can use individually and collectively to decide what is going to happen to them. I also include people's mobilization of collectively visions and imagination, intelligence, creativity, enthusiasm, courage and energy in a liberating project" (Levin, 1995).

As a critical paradigm the empowerment approach has had a revival over the last decades because it places collective action, and changes of unjust opportunity structures in the centre of societal change in contrast to neoliberalism and market fundamentalism (Craig & Mayo, 1995).[15] Firstly, it fosters horizontal empowerment, strengthening trust, commitment and networks inwards and downwards e.g. between different groups at the workplace or in the community. Secondly it concerns vertical empowerment strengthening power and the possibilities of multilevel influence outwards and upwards, e.g. in relation to power centres outside the workplace or the community, including governmental policies. Successful action research implies robust empowerment which often results from a mix of horizontal and vertical empowerment processes and becomes mutually strengthened over time (Andersen, 2005).

Even though the empowerment strategies are often tested on the local

15 The concept of empowerment is sometimes (mis)used in a misleading way by neoliberals as a pure individual and entrepreneurial concept unlike the heritage and understanding from Paulo Freire (Craig & Mayo, 1995)

community level and/or with certain social actors, it is crucial to point out that empowerment strategies also embrace the societal (macro) level. Strategies of empowerment deal in this way with changes on the societal level, changes on organizational and institutional levels (meso) and changes in peoples' everyday life nexuses (micro level).

Experiences gained from three action research projects

Action research project in a nursing home for the elderly

The first project took place at a public nursing home in Copenhagen and was based on the Critical Utopian Action Research model CUAR developed by the Danish action researchers Kurt Aagaard Nielsen, Birger Steen Nielsen and Peter Olsén. Robert Jungk's "future workshop" model was the central activity for developing future scenarios and changes supplemented with a network conference organized as a research workshop.[16] By presenting the procedure and experiences from the project we will show how the action research contributed to residents possibilities of social interaction (Andersen & Bilfeldt, 2010).

The aim of the project "Quality in eldercare seen from an employee's point of view" was to create a social needs oriented alternative to the predominant New Public Management (NPM) control of the nursing home sector (Bilfeldt & Jørgensen, 2011). Under the NPM regime, the employees work under strict budget control and quality control systems based on standardized measurements. This standardization of eldercare based on detailed job descriptions gives limited resources to care workers to attend to the social needs of the elderly people.

The purpose was to develop better quality within elderly care focusing on the social dimensions of care. The project process was divided into three stages:

- Stage 1: Group interview with employees.
- Stage 2: The future creating workshop.
- Stage 3: Task force groups and the network conference.

Stage 1: Group interview (4 months): The first stage began with a group interview with employees from the different departments in the nursing home. Inspired by Bjørg Aase Sørensen and Asbjørn Grimsmo, the group interviews were planned to focus on how the employees handle challenges

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16 Research workshop is described in Nielsen, Nielsen & Olsén (1999).

at work, their insights into the dilemmas they face and also their criticisms of the conditions of quality in the nursing home (Sørensen & Grimsmo, 2001). The role of the researchers was to facilitate the reflections of the employees and to create a dialogue and, on that basis, to draw up a list of problem fields in a "problem catalogue" for subsequent action oriented activities.

Stage 2: The future creating workshop (4 months): This stage was organised as a future creating workshop with the employees and ran for two days. The workshop consisted of three stages: a critique phase, a utopian phase and a realization phase.[17] (Jungk & Müllert, 1984).

The rules in the critique phase are that all participants must be consistently negative and must focus on the challenges in their work. Based on the group interview, the researchers sum up the problems and dilemmas that were documented in the problem catalogue. In the utopia stage "reality is invalidated" and the participants express their dreams and desires. In the realization phase, the participants develop action plans for how the utopian perspectives can become reality. The realization phase was followed by work in task force groups that developed action plans in relation to some of the utopian ideas, including how to get more time for caring for the residents and a better living room for the residents.[18]

Stage 3: Task force groups and the network conference (4 months): In the final stage, employees worked in task force groups with their action plans in co-operation with the researchers and the management of the nursing home.[19] The participants at the network conference were employees and management of the nursing home, the researchers, employees from another nursing home, experts, people from the trade union, a dementia coordinator, eldercare researchers, working life researchers etc.

The employees at the nursing home presented the utopias from the future workshop to the guests, and explained how the task force groups worked with the action plans. Afterwards the participants asked clarifying and critical questions about the utopia and the action plans. The invited experts contributed with their knowledge through presentations and gave input to the employees' action plans and the colleagues from the other

17 In all three phases of the future workshop the researchers make notes and put all the issues on posters hanged on a wall. The future creating workshop is thoroughly described in Jungk & Müllert (1984).
18 For a detailed review of the methods used in action research, see also Clausen & Hansen (2007).
19 The network conference is described in Nielsen, Nielsen & Olsén (1999).

Figure 1: Participant presentations at a similar network conference.
(Source: Authors).

nursing home contributed to the workshop with their own experiences with eldercare.

The elderly from the nursing home did not participate in the conference. By virtue of the insight the employees have gained through observing and interviewing the elderly about their needs, the employees obtained an advocacy function on behalf on the elderly to express their needs.

From vision to action

The employees felt trapped between the needs of the residents and scarce human and economic resources. Because of the elderly policy of the municipality "as long time as possible in their own homes", an elderly resident is now weaker, when he/she moves into nursing homes than previously, and at the same time there is less staff than previously. The quality standards (part of the NPM), which are based solely on the physical abilities of the residents, were not consistent with the employees ideas of quality in care that include the social quality of the residents'. In the afternoons there were no activities in the nursing home, the residents felt bored and the spatial design of the building made it difficult to gather the residents.

On the basis of the critique, a number of utopias concerning quality, focusing on social life, were developed. We now turn to the output from the future creating workshop related to spatial design.

During the future creating workshop, a group of employees developed a utopia consisting of a plan for the reconstruction of the nursing home

which would include a new living room. The idea was to make two resident rooms into a new living room, close to the lift, where the staff passes back and forth and there are windows facing the street. The walls were to be painted in a bright colour and the lamps should give a soft light. The purpose was to create a physical room which could support the informal communication between the residents and between the residents and the nursing staff.

Conversations between the staff and the residents about their wishes concerning their social life, and an employee's observation of the residents bunching together in the hall around the lift had been the background of the ideas that lead to the development of the utopia. The residents preferred staying on the "square" in front of the lift instead of sitting in the distant living room which was almost always half empty and where the television was the central activity. The residents who were not able to walk to the "square" often asked the staff to help them get to the chairs by the lift. At the "square" they could talk with the people walking to and from the lift, greet one another's relatives visiting and have contact with each other and with the staff crossing the "square" during the day.

The staff at the nursing home chose to back up the informal empowerment process of which the habit of the residents "to hang out into the square" was a token. The decision was made to move the living room into the "square" instead of moving the residents into the current living room. In this way, better physical surroundings could be created around less institutionalized social activities, strengthened by the placing of sofa sections shielded by house plants placed in a semicircle.

At the end of "the future creating workshop" a task force was formed to present the ideas to the manager and afterwards to the residents, so that their comments could be added to the suggestions. After negotiations with the management, the presentation of the living room plan was received positively by the residents, as the nursing home had the possibility of getting the renovation financed, because it could be included in the reconstruction plan which the local authority had prepared in co-operation with the management.

Empowerment perspective in the reconstruction plan

The planning of the interior decoration of nursing homes is normally made without the involvement of employees and residents. In this project, the employees were acting as advocates for the residents. Instead of limiting the elderly's autonomy by maintaining the placing of the original living room far away from the "square", a suggestion was made which could strengthen the social life at the nursing home. As elderly people who do not walk so well often remain seated in the chair where they have

been placed, the idea was to change the location of the dayroom in an attempt to support the elderly's need for social life in spite of physical weaknesses.

The "square utopia" is an example of a suggestion that could only be developed because the employees were focusing on the importance of the social alternatives to the NPM standardizing the work. If the employees had not gathered their practical insights into the habits and wishes of the residents for spontaneous social interaction, the management of the nursing home and the local authorities would not have been presented for an architectonic alternative to their plan.

From the horizontal (inwards) empowerment perspective it is important that the employees were able to gather their practical knowledge from observations about where the residents wanted to sit and to transform this into a new vision. Supported by the researchers, the staff developed concrete initiatives which could support the social life of the residents. From the vertical (upwards and outwards) empowerment perspective it is important that the proposal reached the management and the local authorities and that it actually was used as part of the reconstruction plan.

From a learning perspective, the employees in the nursing home project gained experience by facilitating the needs of the elderly into a more socially framed modernization project.

The risk of "blind actions"
Gaventa and Cornwall realized that while it is clear that action research brings new insights, priorities, problem definitions and themes which can be object of changes, they point out that even if the participation methods of action research promote democratic and inclusive knowledge development, there may be a risk of "blind actions" (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008). It is a challenge to avoid undemocratic transformation initiatives built on dystopias in the form of ideas which strengthen one group's power at the expense of other groups' interests. Action research within eldercare requires special attention to the risk of such "blind actions". Partly because the elderly at the nursing homes are physically and/or mentally weak and may find it difficult to express their disagreement about utopias and action plans made on their behalf, and partly because there is a specific risk of misuse of power at nursing homes. The elderly, who are dependent on receiving nursing care, may be insecure about expressing disagreements with the management and the staff. This stresses the need to facilitate the voices of the elderly in the process, which in this project was done through interviews with the residents.

In projects where dystopias exist (e.g. about providing regular bedtimes before 9 PM so that the night nurses should not be too busy, bans against

residents' birdcages etc.) other employees have stopped these suggestions before they were put into reality. In projects with weak actors, such as the elderly at nursing homes, a serious risk is implied by the development of suggestions which deteriorate the quality of life for the elderly instead of improving it. The question: "Is this proposal democratic compared to *all* the residents' needs?" was discussed in plenum and in workshops at the conference with the invited experts. In this connection the attention was especially drawn to the demented residents. The dementia coordinator and the representatives from the senior citizens organization pointed out that residents, who suffer from dementia, need to sit in a special shielded corner away from the other residents and their relatives. Accordingly this knowledge was incorporated into the modernization suggestion.

Action research within the local community – Community Centre Gellerup (CCG)

The next example comes from another practice field: the empowerment based local community work and development of a community centre in Gellerupparken in the city of Aarhus. In terms of income, this urban district is the poorest in Denmark and a large number of the citizens are immigrants.

CCG was initiated by a local branch of the public library, community workers, community activist, local associations and NGO's with the objective of developing a multifunctional citizens community centre uniting library services, health promotion, counselling service (job, education, citizenship rights) for ethnic minorities (the majority among the residents). The idea with this type of community centre was to bring public welfare services "back to (or closer) to the people", mediating the gap between citizens daily "life world" and the public institutions and professional "system world". The objective was to create daily practices and strategic capacities, which in a holistic and flexible way responded better to citizens' needs than mainstream fragmented bureaucratic organised social services. The CCG as socially innovative institutional platform emphasised commitment to practical knowledge sharing and learning across the different professional groups (social workers, nurses, librarians etc.) working directly with the citizens' needs and daily problems in the neighbourhood. Furthermore the community centre was a common platform for active networking and capacity building among community activist, NGO's and associations in the neighbourhood

The development of the community centre in the neighbourhood of Gellerup was facilitated by action researchers through an empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 2005) from 2005-2007 (Andersen & Frandsen,

2007). The community centre development project was in part linked to a seven year long integrated area renewal program financed in part by the European URBAN 2 program and also inspired by the Imagine Chicago and the Asset Based Community Development approaches (Andersen, 2008).

The CCG-case illustrates that the capacity to create and pursue local institutional reforms and making empowerment possible is built up over a period of time. There must be energy from the bottom and support from the top. This example shows that a cross-sectorial and empowerment facilitating practice and organizational frame is practicable. Rather than a simplistic distinction of citizen-ruled bottom-up-strategies and management controlled top-down strategies, the CCG-case points to the productiveness in what we could call "bottom-linked" innovation strategies (Andersen, Delica & Frandsen, 2013). "Bottom-linked" strategies can be defined as strategies which are based on a dynamic interaction between, on the one hand, empowerment facilitating institutions and networks, and on the other social mobilisation among the citizens. Robust empowerment strategies can build on the combination of mobilization of the citizens and the facilitation of committed professionals (social workers, health professional staff, librarians, etc.) who are willing to make a difference.

The difference between this example and the former example is that we here are talking about a more complex local community context with many stakeholders involved. CCG has a long past history with roots in an active NGO, project and activist environment, among other things about the EU-supported URBAN project which framed an empowerment inspired urban regeneration strategy from 2001-2007 (Andersen, 2008). An important part of the local context is a long tradition of a close working relationship at the management level between all the public institutions based on the specific challenges and social needs in the area. Persons employed within the institutions in Gellerup (e.g. social educators, healthcare workers and teachers) receive a community course about the citizens in this area, the area history and about the effort to develop citizen mobilization (empowerment) through interdisciplinary co-operation and conflict resolution to meet the local needs and challenges.

CCG is a multifunctional learning, counselling and activity centre where the library shares premises together with the Health House, the People's Information, the Job corner (job counselling) and a number of voluntary association (e.g. the Red Cross, homework assistance, IT guides, immigrants associations) see figure 2.

The crux of the community centre construction – the result of many years of development work – was:

Community Centre Gellerup
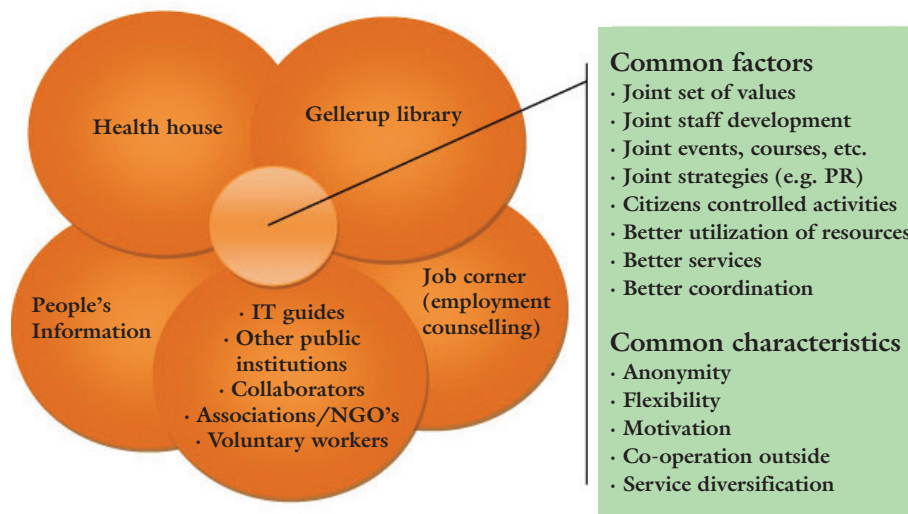
Figure 2: Outline of Community Centre Gellerup

1. Health, work, education and other counselling have been decentralised which makes the close contact to the citizens and the communication between the citizens and the system possible. Especially the disadvantaged groups with multidimensional problems see the Health house, "Peoples Information", and the "Job corner" as less bureaucratic than the traditional social security office and the employment centre.
2. Cross-sectorial organization and better knowledge sharing across the professions. This counteracts the escape from responsibility and development of the professional competence towards a holistic approach to the citizens' needs and resources. A cross-sectorial and knowledge shared approach creates a learning environment for the empowerment facilitation.
3. The co-operation with various types of volunteers improves the utilization of resources, enlarges the activity field and builds up a reflexive culture.

Peoples Information – handles open and anonymous counselling in connection with social conditions, employment, education, citizenship, residence permit, etc. Therefore the employees of the People's Information act as "advocates" and "bridge builders" vis a vis the municipality. The

Health house is a co-operation between more municipal authorities e.g. dental care, nutrition, child nurses. The activities comprise various thematic groups, who e.g. work with health promotion, birth control, mental health, children's diseases and nutrition. The groups for young mothers work more deeply with the challenges and problems young first-time mothers may have.

For example a "Tupperware" model is used for the project "From Woman to Woman" where a health visitor or a midwife meets and teaches a group of women in their own homes about sexual and reproductive health. According to the employees it was of great importance that the teaching took place in the private homes. The women experienced openness and trust in the group and in this way experiences were shared. Another example of citizen controlled activities is the workshop about crime and khat abuse problems, which was held by young Somalis and followed up by the local Somalia association. Here a tabooed and complex problem was really discussed.

In the evaluation, CCG employees expressed that they had been better at using each other's expert knowledge when dealing with citizens and volunteers, e.g. in connection with health promotion, job seeking etc. (Andersen & Frandsen, 2007). The example from CCG points to a new role for the professionals in their work with the citizens. The professionals (e.g. librarians, health visitors, social workers and integration consultants) were not delivering "standard services" to the individual citizens; they were able to act as empowerment facilitators on more levels and in various roles under the auspices of the community centre. An important role is e.g. to assist in facilitating knowledge sharing and in building up networks with other public institutions (e.g. schools, clubs, day care centres, social services departments and job centres) and with active mobilization of local informal and formal networks, e.g. volunteer organizations, senior citizens councils, sports clubs, social workers, etc.

The empowerment approach involves meetings and work with citizens face to face. The citizens are supported in self organization and learning processes, i.e. horizontal empowerment. The empowerment strategies also deal with the capacity to change policy and influence outside the local community, i.e. political mobilization and vertical empowerment.

The advocacy role is a central dimension of community empowerment: the professionals enter the role as "advocates" in co-operation with or on behalf of citizens and groups which are not heard or are stuck in the existing systems. An example of this is a social worker that undertakes the advocacy function for ill citizens, who have been forced to participate in job training programmes which they are not able to complete. As a consequence the citizens are in danger of losing their social security benefit.

In the case of CCG, the agents of change were both professionals in public institutions and community activists. They were able to draw on a particular path dependency, namely the close collaboration between the public institutions in the area which has been developed since the beginning of the 1990s in the so-called *Gellerup model*. This model entails that new public employees in the area are introduced to common basic values of active citizenship and inclusion and to the particular history of the area. The core values for the professionals are loyalty, commitment, multiculturalism and solidarity with the urban neighbourhood and its citizens – rather than identification with the formal administrative bodies of the City Hall.

Furthermore regular monthly meetings at the management level are arranged between the welfare institutions: schools, day-care institutions, social centres, crime prevention work etc. In periods of trouble and social unrest in the area (e.g. the riots during the 'Cartoon Crises' (Andersen, Larsen & Møller, 2009)) this network also meets with community leaders (e.g. the parents' network working with youngsters in the area). CCG builds on an organisational concept of knowledge and experience being shared in which collaboration goes on across professional borderlines in order to accomplish specific tasks, such as cultural activities, information services and informal learning sequences. This might include language assistance, courses in IT, homework assistance, club activities, as well as individual, anonymous advice on e.g. health, housing, labour market, and family matters. It might also include advice to parents on their parental role. In this respect, the CCG and the staff employed there commit themselves to act both as *detectives* trying to spot the needs that are to be fulfilled amongst citizens in the neighbourhood and act as *advocates* in helping citizens and groups in dealing with possible problems and getting them through an often complex bureaucratic system in the public sector.

In Denmark, a national program for transforming public libraries into community centres was established in 2008 following some pioneering 'first-movers' amongst public libraries based in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This suggests that libraries in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are taking major steps to facilitate empowerment of the local community and ethnic minority groups.[20]

On the basis of the CCG experiences, the Danish Agency for Libraries

20 International examples of libraries reinventing their roles are Chicago's public libraries (see Putnam & Feldstein, 2003), Queens Library in New York (www.queenslibrary.org), Idea Store in Tower Hamlets in London (www.ideastore.co.uk) and Toronto Public Library in Canada (www.torontopubliclibrary.ca). £80 million in funding was available through the Community Libraries Fund for public libraries in UK engaging in partnerships with in the local communities (Goulding 2009, p. 80)

and Media have, by securing a government grant of 2.5 million Euros, established a national development programme for libraries' transformation to Community Centres in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, in which approximately 15 public libraries take part.

Action research in sustainable housing – the future single-family houses in Køge municipality

The third action research project is about the development of sustainable solutions within housing.

In the project, the term "sustainability" was defined on the basis of criterion for the energy consumption of the houses, the building materials' environmental impacts and the plant coverage (a so-called 'bio factor') on the building site. The project was a co-operation among a number of different stakeholders and was facilitated by a local Agenda21 centre, "The Green House" ("Det Grønne Hus") in Køge which is supported by the municipality, local utility companies, and project funding. "The Green House" works within a number of fields such as housing, mobility, water and wastewater, waste, etc.

The project is one of many environmental projects in recent years where more sustainable solutions have been developed and tested on commercial terms. The idea to the project "The Detached Houses of Tomorrow" ("Fremtidens Parcelhuse") was developed in 2002 in a co-operation between the local Agenda21council in Køge and "The Green House" in Køge. The project was an action research project which empowered the "Agenda21" centre to initiate a development process where the centre facilitated development of more sustainable solutions within housing.

The objective of "The Detached Houses of Tomorrow" was to organise a "future-oriented prototype building project" (www.fremtidensparcelhuse.dk). The purpose was to show that it is possible to build and live in an energy and environmentally friendly neighbourhood – without being a do-it-yourself builder and without deteriorating the comfort and quality of the houses (Fremtidens Parcelhuse, 2005), and at the same time improve the competences and willingness of the construction industry to build houses in more energy and environmentally friendly ways. The main part of the project was to display energy and environmentally friendly houses either as finished or projected houses south of Køge on an area owned by the municipality. The plan was to build 86 houses (single-family houses, twin-houses and terraced houses) which subsequently were to be sold to citizens.

Agenda21 centre as facilitator

"The Green House" had an action research role in the project by facilitating co-operation among a number of different interests. Together with Køge municipality, the Danish Building Research Institute (SBi – Statens Byggeforskningsinstitut), Eco-labelling Denmark, and a national centre for urban ecology "The Green House" developed a project proposal which attracted funding. Therefore it was possible to employ a project manager and some experts in "The Green House" and involve other partners that could assist architects, building craftsmen and construction companies in the projecting of their houses according to the requirements concerning energy, environment, plant coverage on the building site, etc.

As one of the first activities, a workshop was conducted with construction companies, architects, etc. where the companies could comment on the criteria of the project. One of the key issues was that the houses had to live up to the new Nordic Eco-label criteria for single-family houses which were developed at the same time. At the workshop, "The Green House" facilitated co-operation between construction companies, architects, etc. This resulted in horizontal empowerment of environmental concerns of "The Green House" through new co-operations between both larger and smaller companies and between conventional and ecological construction companies on environmental and energy saving issues of house building.

The subsequent project activities were:

· The finishing of the sustainability criteria of the houses, and of the district plan where these criteria became a requirement for building on the sites in the area,
· Sale of sites to construction companies or architect companies,
· Planning of the houses and counselling of these companies about strategies to fulfil the criteria of the project which included the new national building regulations and its requirements for energy efficient buildings, etc.
· The construction of the houses (see example in figure 3),
· Exhibition with the finished houses (in some cases only the design of the house), where interested citizens were able to buy the houses,
· Five weeks display of the houses before the buyers moved in.

The building of the houses began in 2006. By the end of 2012 approximately 50 out of 86 houses had been built. The project lost interest among citizens, as many other building projects during that period, because of the financial depression which developed from 2008 and led to the limited sale of sites and building of houses.

Figure 3: Example of a house built in "The Detached Houses of Tomorrow", Køge (Source: http://www.ny.fremtidensparcelhuse.dk/)

In line with the principles of action research concerning critique, study, reflection and action, "Det Grønne Hus" and the researchers from The Danish Building Research Institute associated with the project, carried out an evaluation to assess the energy consumption in the houses compared to the theoretical estimations, and analyse the experiences from the occupants of how it was to live in the new houses. The study showed that lower energy consumption was achieved in several of the new houses compared to houses of a similar size. However, the study also showed that there was some discontentedness and problems with living in sustainable housing. Some of the occupants expressed discontent with the indoor climate, and the limited possibilities of controlling the indoor climate themselves. The information from the companies responsible for the houses about the installations and instructions of how to operate the installations was too limited (Kristensen & Jensen, 2010).

The lack of information to the occupants is a potential "blind action" from the construction industry and architects at the expense of the occupants' possibilities of using the sustainable house in practice. For instance this might imply that the occupants, because of lacking knowledge about the house's energy system, choose to open the windows to get a breath of fresh air. This might mean that the energy saving potential of the house is not achieved. Another risk of "blind action" lies in lacking coordination between the craftsmen at the construction site. For instance a vapour bar-

rier was incorrectly installed and was therefore perforated when the occupants tried to nail pictures on the walls, which resulted in heat loss and thereby higher energy consumption in the house.

From experiment to sustainable transition?

The project shows how a local initiative – an Agenda 21 centre like "The Green House" – through an action research project with non-profitmaking as well as commercial participants can ensure both horizontal and vertical empowerment of the interest of creating a more sustainable development. This empowerment was achieved by ensuring a wide degree of participation from the municipality, research institutions, construction companies, etc. in the project "The Detached Houses of Tomorrow". The participation was achieved because many actors all were able to see that their interests could be strengthened through the project.

The case also shows that horizontal as well as vertical empowerment is closely related to national financial and political dynamics. With the national and global financial crisis, the interest in buying houses in "The Detached Houses of Tomorrow" was, as earlier mentioned, weakened – as on the rest of the real estate market. Despite this, the experience from the project has contributed to a horizontal empowerment of the environmental interest. Environmental considerations became important within a new urban development project in the local harbour area and within a new local social housing project.

The project has also contributed to some vertical empowerment of sustainable housing. The Nordic Eco-label criteria for single-family houses were, as earlier mentioned, tested as part of the project and afterwards some of the participating companies integrated low energy houses into their assortment offered to customers all over the country and used the eco-label as a public approved quality label. Furthermore "The Green House" has advised other municipalities about how sustainable housing projects are to be planned and implemented.

However, the experiences from "The Detached Houses of Tomorrow" and a number of other building projects also show a number of blind action-like challenges to a continuing empowerment of the interest of sustainable housing (Jensen et al., 2012; Jørgensen et al., 2012):

· It is the energy consumption per m² and not the total energy consumption which is the focus of sustainable housing projects. In some places, relatively large houses are built, so the energy consumption per person is not necessarily low.
· It is not always possible to achieve such low energy consumption as the projecting of the house promises, as the users of the house are not

well enough informed about energy efficient operations of the installations in the houses (ventilation, central heating, etc.).
· The building regulations make it possible for construction companies and architects to compensate for a large energy consumption by placing solar cells or solar panels on the roof. However, the total energy consumption will not be lower when lacking construction innovation is compensated for by merely installing a renewable energy facility.
· Today sustainable houses are built so that they look like normal houses. In this way a wider group of citizens are attracted but they are not necessarily environmentally concerned.

By evaluating and communicating positive as well as negative experiences from the project, "The Green House" and the other researchers have contributed to the empowerment of other actors within sustainable housing who did not participate in the project. The importance of analysis of experiences from environmental projects is confirmed by van den Bosch (2010) who points out that Dutch analyses of experiences from environmental projects have been the basis of similar and/or larger projects and created more permanent sustainable changes. It requires that the interactions between the participants in a project and with the social context are analysed so that conditions for future initiatives can be identified. Ornetzeder and Rohracher (2009) also points out that experiments and analyses of experiences are important elements in creating direction and inspiration in striving towards a more sustainable development through research and market development.

From practice to reflective practice
– perspectives and challenges
Common to the three cases is research, seeking to further democratic and societal improvements through knowledge development and experiments within eldercare, within counselling and support of marginalized groups through local community work and within sustainable housing. Table 1 gives an overview of the three cases.

In the following similarities and differences between the three action research projects are summed up. The diversity of the cases shows that action research is conducted within rather different societal areas. Furthermore, the cases also show that local initiatives can empower actors outside the involved institutions and organisations. The first case was a local project which dealt with a general societal problem. The background was stress and frustration among the employees at not being able to offer the

Experiences from the three cases	Nursing home: Quality within the eldercare	Local community: Community Centre Gellerup (CCG)	Sustainable housing: "The Detached Houses of Tomorrow"
What were the background and the goal of the project?	*Background:* Individual stress among the staff and lack of social life of residents. *Goal:* Development of better quality within the eldercare.	*Background:* Area based urban regeneration strategy and empowerment approach. *Goal:* Community Centre used for cross-sector co-operation about citizen's needs. Encourage active civic culture and active citizenship.	*Background:* Lack of supply of sustainable family houses. *Goal:* Show it is possible to build sustainable houses for ordinary people without compromise on comfort and quality.
Who was involved in the project?	Employees, management, residents, another local nursing home, senior citizens organizations, dementia coordinators and researchers.	Immigrants, NGO's, voluntary organizations, social workers, librarians and researchers.	Local environmental centre, municipal administration, researchers, architects, construction companies. Citizens as customers.
What were the roles of the action researchers?	Facilitate and frame the process of change, document, support the task forces, add knowledge, involve other external parts with additional knowledge.	Facilitate co-operation and building of trust between volunteers, citizens and professionals. Communicate knowledge about socially marginalized urban areas and empowerment of local actors.	Create local interest, establish project group, apply for funding, facilitate development of environmental criterion, support construction companies, analyse experiences.

Central processes and methods?	Group interviews, future workshop, observations and interviews of the residents, task force groups, network conference with nursing home employees and experts.	Facilitation of common goals and criteria for success based on empowerment evaluation	Integration into district plan, matchmaking between companies, technical counselling, full scale exhibition, interviews of occupants.
Challenges and barriers?	The risk of un-democratic blind actions – due to power relations and lack of knowledge.	Horizontally: the various professions were to learn to work together with empowerment in the local community. Vertical: The municipality management was to acknowledge the strength of a cross-sector community centre.	Financial crisis implied not all the houses were sold. Some construction companies not very innovative. Too little information to occupants about use of house installations. Lack of exchange of experiences among occupants.
What results were achieved?	Reconstruction of the nursing home that could frame informal social activity between residents, and residents and employees. Reduction of stress for employees.	CCG locally strengthened. From the local to the national level: Launch of a nationwide program: Libraries transformed to community centres in deprived urban areas.	Lower energy consumption. Municipality and housing association integrate sustainability into subsequent projects. Environmental centre advices other municipalities. Companies integrate sustainable houses into their assortment.

Table 1: Characteristics for the three cases of action research projects.

social dimension of care. The focus was aimed at a socially weak group's interests, senior citizens living at nursing homes. The case shows how the action research project contributed to empowerment of the residents (framing possibilities for social life activities) as well as empowerment of the employees (less stress by framing the possibilities for informal social talk with the residents). In terms of Kemmis' concept of praxis, the project contributed to an important change (Kemmis, 2008). The daily practice of moving the residents to sit in front of the lift and giving social care to the residents left in front of the television in the old living room was substituted by a new praxis. The new living room framed a social praxis for informal talk and social activities between the residents and between the employees and the residents.

The case concerning the community centre CCG was local to begin with. At the same time, CCG took its starting point in national and EU financed programmes for local empowerment strategies in socially deprived areas with focus on improvement of the area through empowerment and resource mobilizations (Andersen, 2008). Central to the institutional empowerment was the development of expertise in handling concrete social needs and development of a continuous work for network and resource mobilization with the citizens. The community centre structure may, according to Kemmis, be characterized as a platform for development of an institutional reflective "praxis" aimed at the co-operation of employees across professions and resource mobilization (Kemmis, 2008).

An important rationale in the development of CCG was, moreover, that citizens on the margins of society needed coherent professional and accessible counselling and service at street level in the neighbourhood. This required a practice across professions and a platform for voluntary association and active citizens, who could co-work and at the same time be "the advocats" for citizens needs and interests vis-à-vis the municipality and e.g. employers.

The sustainable housing case was locally based, but the goal was to achieve both horizontal and vertical empowerment of groups working for a more sustainable development in relation to housing. The case shows that it was necessary to involve many different actors to create new environmentally based directions of development. The term "action researchers" should here be understood as both researchers and other experts who are able to facilitate, contribute with analyses, etc. – like the Agenda21 centre "The Green House".

The project is different from the two other projects in the sense that market mechanisms were used to enable changes. In Kemmis' terminology, the existing routine based practice for construction of houses was developed into a reflected "praxis" where the sustainability requirements and

support from "The Green House" formed the basis of the companies' competence development within sustainable housing. The construction companies were attracted by the market possibilities and were maybe also afraid of losing market shares to the competitors if they did not participate themselves. The project also showed that the market of sustainable houses is sensitive to the socio-economic state of the housing market. Despite this, the project has created both horizontal and vertical empowerment of sustainable housing. Some of the involved actors have used their experiences as arguments for initiating similar projects where they can build on the new competences. Also some actors outside the project have initiated projects with reference to the experiences from the project.

The three cases illustrate that development funds and programmes make it possible to initiate action research projects with the purpose of encouraging and enabling more democratic, inclusive and sustainable agendas. However, the many funds and programmes targeting public institutions also include risks for "blind actions", e.g. at nursing homes where a continuous flow of projects could cause stressful daily life for employees as well as for the senior residents. As the regular staff at the nursing homes does not increase and the demands and expectations from the society become bigger, it is important to be aware of this challenge. When planning action research it is important to consider the time and resources necessary for the anchoring and follow-up on the initiatives which are developed during the project.

Whether action research creates empowerment outside the involved work places, local communities etc. depends, among other things, on whether better frameworks for influence on social conditions are created and whether involved actors are able to use and pass on experiences from one project to other projects and initiatives. One example is the initiative for a national development programme for libraries' transformation to Community Centres based on the Gellerup experiences. Another example is the changes in the legislation on district plans which has been implemented nationally after pressure from The Municipality of Køge and other municipalities that have been involved in sustainable housing projects. The changes imply that a municipality in future will have better possibilities to make demands on aspects of environment and energy of new buildings within a local area.

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COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

– Ideals and practices in a neo-liberal era

Birgitte Ravn Olesen

Abstract

In this article, the author reflects on the conditions for working with collaborative research in current academic settings. On the basis of reflections on goals, challenges and results of earlier projects, the author looks into how economic and political shifts and transformations in work have changed the conditions for shared knowledge production with the institutionalization of neo-liberal discourse of the knowledge economy as managerial regimes. She questions if context-specific enactments of the discourse of participation can be handled, when neoliberal managerial regimes guide research activities and other working practices and the identities of academics and other professionals who are inscribed as subjects in these regimes. The conclusion is, that we have to look for cracks in the wall and insist on collaborative research because it is it the process of "being in relation that forms the basis for learning and understanding more about others, ourselves and our world" (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morten, 2001;342).

Keywords: Collaborative knowledge production, relational constraints, action research, toxic shame, research as commodity

Introduction

My ambition in this chapter is to cast a critical, reflexive gaze on my own research practices and ideals. I work with processes where my ideal is to create knowledge through collaboration between researchers from universities and other professionals in dialogical processes. Here the aim is often to give voice to differences and dissenting meanings in order to produce long-lasting, relevant and socially robust knowledge with catalytic validity[21] where complexity is seen as a quality rather than a problem. Looking back at the many rich processes I have been involved in makes it clear to me how the quality of the *relations* which were established became crucial for the outcome of the research projects.

I take my starting point in the assumption that we can learn a lot from methodological reflections and analyses of what happened when different interests, experiences and knowledge forms were brought together with the goal of producing socially robust knowledge in a specific field of practice. A prerequisite for working with dialogue where difference is considered a transformative force that may push the process forward is that research relations are characterized by mutual trust and engagement in each other and the process.

My purpose here is to sharpen our awareness about the impact for collaborative research of current, more general changes in socio-political and organizational contexts in welfare state institutions all over the western world (eg universities, social welfare and healthcare). I am interested in how these changes influence our possibilities of establishing, and being part of, projects driven by the desire "to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently." (Kaufmann, 2011, p. 149)

I will start off by introducing my epistemological stance. Action research, dialogic communication and poststructuralism frame the way I conceive my research. In action research, emancipatory ideas about social change often guide the collaborative processes. Here human dialogue is understood as the basic form of communication, not a mere tool for practice change. New approaches to theories on dialogue go beyond dialogue as a buzzword and critically seek to de-romanticize processes of co-production of knowledge (Phillips, 2011; Phillips, 2012; Phillips et al.

21 Socially robust knowledge can be seen as an underlining of the importance of 'context' and relevance . Changes in its epistemological dimension have been reflected within science in moving towards a pragmatic and context-sensitive aim of providing a provisional understanding of the empirical world that makes sense in social practices (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2001) Analytic validity represents the degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses, and energizes participants towards knowing reality in order to transform it. (Lather, 1991, p. 68)

2012b). Following this line of thought we need to examine dialogue through context-sensitive, reflexive analyses on tensions in processes where knowledge is created collaboratively. Following a poststructuralist tradition dialogic processes and participatory designs would be considered entangled power/knowledge relations which implies that the existence of a "power-free zone" or a bracketing of dominant discourses makes no sense. We can't escape power; what we say and do is constrained by, works against or reinforces discourses that (re)produce social structures (Foucault, 2003; Olesen & Pedersen, 2012). Referring to the work of communication researcher Louise Phillips I claim that, by bringing together action research, dialogic communication and poststructuralism, a platform for involvement in change processes can be established. (Phillips, 2011) Social change must be understood as more than isolated changes of practical issues in the everyday life of, for example, an organization. The product of a process of social change may also imply critical-reflexive understandings of practices that produce new insights that impact all participants in a research process. And it is in this bringing together of the three theoretical traditions that I find that dissensus and differences become productive forces rather than constraints.

I have worked with collaborative knowledge production in pedagogical, social and health welfare institutions for many years now. I want to bring this experience into discussion about how a market orientation is becoming more and more prominent and a discourse through which individuals and institutions recognize themselves. This change has challenged the ideals I work from and, looking back, I wonder how it is at all possible to work with collaborative knowledge production in the neo-liberal knowledge economy we face today.

Action research I

Let me tell you about a collaborative project I facilitated 15 years ago. The project was formulated as interdisciplinary research collaboration in relation to "children at risk" on an island in Denmark with 40,000 inhabitants. We were two researchers who were invited to facilitate the process in which a number of professionals such as childminders, schoolteachers, speech therapists, social workers, psychologists, nursery teachers and health nurses worked together in order to better understand and improve the quality of care for children living in families with socio-economic and socio-psychological problems.

Over the period of a year we spent 6 weeks together and the involved professionals worked with the project in between our research workshops; they observed each other during a full day's work and made joint analysis

of their observations. They observed, taped and analyzed conversations with family members/clients and meetings about the families/clients.

When at the end, the project was evaluated, one of the social workers burst out: "It is a tremendous relief to now understand why I will never succeed doing what I do…"

I remember the statement clearly as if it were said yesterday. At first it surprised me but later it made me feel that our research project had succeeded in producing important knowledge through joint work. Through our collaborative process it became clear that it was impossible to do a good job by following an ethical prescription or a specific procedure for interviewing or supporting families. No matter what the professionals in their specific organizational context had done to unfold their professional knowledge in the best way, they were "doing structure". They were trying to make a system work, which on a more fundamental level entailed a marginalization of the children in these families.

The project led to important insights and important discussions. The first step was finding out that the conceptualization of "a holistic approach to the family" contained quite different understandings of what "the whole" in "holistic" meant to different groups of professionals. We found out that different welfare systems did actually work counterproductively against one another in their efforts to achieve solutions that would help a specific family in need. From analyzing excerpts from meetings, the professionals found out that their own talk about the families was less supportive and appreciative and more normative than what they had expected. The professionals participating in the research project concluded that despite their political principles and ideals of "doing what is relevant in order to support the family", welfare regulations and, in particular, economic resources represented the primary basis for decisions made. It became clear when a so called "network-meeting" between professionals about a family was analyzed:

> "We were surprised to see, how we as an interdisciplinary team accepted and followed the social worker-professional perspective on the issues which were under discussion. Probably because this perspective represents the money, and we were surprised to see how professional assessments where overridden when taking resources into account" (Health nurse in internal report, my translation).

The insights were followed by discussions about how to support marginalized families and enable their voices to be heard. We also discussed how they, as professionals, could act with respect for the family or defend their rights to receive financial, personal or social support. One could argue that

working this way was to allow individual strategies 'overrule' strategies for radically changing the system. The outburst from the social worker point in that direction; "*I have found out, that no matter how good you are at trying to make small changes happen, you can t change the system*" (Axelsen & Olesen, 2002, p. 52)

I want to use this case to illustrate and discuss what I see as the potential of action research within a dialogic poststructuralist framework to produce (basis for) social change.

Three-in-One
– Action Research, Dialogism and Poststructuralism

In action research, there is a prevailing ideal that democratic knowledge production ought to and can emerge through processes of change. Together, researchers and professionals are able to "identify important emerging issues that would otherwise remain invisible" (Bammer, Brown, Batilawa, & Kunreuther, 2003, p. 86). The involved professionals are meant to produce new knowledge together in a mutual development of practice while unfolding the research together. In this collaboration, the relationships and the local "networks of power dynamics" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) which are formed are essential to the knowledge production and possible outcomes of the research and change processes. "Participation" is a defining characteristic of action research, based on the central premise that research is enacted "with" people rather than "on" or "for" them (Heron & Reason, 2001). The ideal is that we talk of a democratic relationship in which both sides exercise power and shared control over decision-making and interpretation. All partakers are conceived as active participants, stakeholders, partners, co-researchers, co-learners or co-producers of knowledge as opposed to research subjects, target groups, consumers, clients or voters (Phillips, 2011). And the researchers are seen as facilitators, participants, and learners rather than distanced, neutral, detached observers, analysts, or manipulators (Arieli & Friedman, 2009, p. 265; Preissle, 2006, p. 691). In action research dilemmas and contradictions between participants in a research project have often been underplayed. I guess it is partly due to an understanding of power which leads to neglect of the play of power in social relations where people are engaged in a shared project. (Pedersen & Gunnarsson, 2004; Pedersen & Olesen, 2008). In my view a poststructuralist epistemology makes it possible to recognise that reproductions of deeply rooted cultural norms will constantly mould the formation of our relations, interpretations, sense makings and categorisations. Our position as knowledge producers is never innocent; power is never absent (Foucault 1994, p. 100; Søndergaard,

1996) and differences are productive when the goal is to produce new knowledge.

In a poststructuralist framework, a central premise is that research-based knowledge, in common with other forms of knowledge, is a social construction and that knowledge is the product of the application of particular rules and norms. That means that all knowledge can be seen as contingent knowledge-claims (Foucault, 1994), which means that they are not stable and can be disputed. In a poststructuralist perspective both the greater truth value of research expertise and the greater legitimacy of marginalized voices per se is denied (Phillips, 2011). Poststructuralist deconstructions are an attempt to avoid the mere reproduction of existing discourses and, instead, challenge taken-for-granted views of the world through the disruption of taken-for-granted understandings in the meeting between different knowledge forms.

Let us for a moment go back to the process on the Danish island. You may rightly question whether what we did was to create new knowledge together in a process where differences and accept of entanglement were 'guiding stars'?

My (hesitant) answer is yes. Through a collaborative process in which our different knowledge forms, ideals and practices were subject to reflexive analysis and discussions, we succeeded in creating a robust knowledge that was not only about the nature of conditions for social work or about how the individual professional tried to do her very best in each specific situation. We also produced knowledge about how to handle context-specific processes where power/knowledge relations are negotiated and evaluated among professionals with different rationales and functions in their jobs.

Together, we did produce change understood as concrete, modified social work procedures, but these fragile changes were soon overruled of economic and structural changes in the organization of social work on the island.[22] Still I think we produced change or conditions for change when change is seen as somewhat less tangible than concrete, modified social work procedures. Our cooperation contributed to new perspectives on existing practices. The project provided opportunities for greater self-reflexivity and critical perspectives on the structural framework for practice. Through our process, it became possible for the professionals to see how they were cocooned within discourses supporting and legitimizing social

22 We know that, because we had a two-day follow-up meeting with all participants one year after ending the change-process. The main impression was that "the effects of the process has been minimal since problems of economic cuts and lack of filling vacancies has been so massive that there has been no focus on interdisciplinary collaboration." (Axelsen & Olesen, 2002, p. 52)

structures, norms, resource constraints and cultural codes. They discovered how the way they talked about, and related to, the families affected their possibilities for action and their evaluation of the situations and how they viewed their own, their leaders' and their colleagues' work. As for myself, I was totally engaged in the collective process and retained my confidence that this process would produce lasting changes in the practices of the professionals. I wrote little but learned a lot about how difficult it is to give up ideal notions of what is going on in favor of critical analysis of actual practices. This was true when the professionals related to each other and the vulnerable families, and when it came to me and my colleague's relationship with participants in the process.

Action Research II

In the following I will describe another project I was involved in 6 years ago with a colleague from university.

The project took place on a psychiatric ward and it was initiated by the ward's management who sought and procured funding for the project. The topic of the project was "psycho-education for schizophrenic patients and their relatives", understood in a broad sense as the communication of diagnoses and treatment possibilities. The agreement was that a working group would be formed consisting of three professionals attached to the psychiatric ward (a doctor, a nurse, and a psychologist) and two researchers from university (a researcher [me] and a research assistant). All parties would spend approximately seven hours per week on the project for one year.

Recent psycho-education was primarily presentations held by a professional for an invited group of patients and relatives. These meetings had few participants, which aroused the interest of thinking psycho-education anew. We were asked to disturb taken-for-granted perspectives on psycho-education and find ways of involving patients and their relatives in more dialogically oriented ways.

In the working group we decided that we needed to find out what communication processes concerning diagnosis patients and their relatives wanted to be part of. I suggested that we should interview some patients and relatives in order to better understand their experiences and identify their needs.

At this point the professionals in the working group were a bit skeptical. Would the patients be able to say anything useful? After some discussion, we decided to give it a try. Maybe the professionals thought that we would soon learn, they were right, maybe they thought our professional experience should be given a chance. I don t know, but the fact is, that we de-

veloped an interview guide together and decided that all interviews should be conducted with the participation of a university researcher and a professional (co-researcher).

We distributed the transcriptions of the interviews and decided to work with the analysis collaboratively in pairs. The processes of interviewing and doing analysis created – surprisingly to me – a violent rupture of everyday taken-for-granted understandings of how one can communicate with patients and relatives about mental illness and hospitalization. To listen openly and relate differently to statements from patients and relatives about their experiences led to glimpses of new insights about how patients and relatives could be crucial partners in developing new ways to communicate within the field of psycho-education. An example is Katri, a young woman with a schizophrenia-diagnosis who told that she thought communication could be much better between patients and professionals if they tried to get a common understanding of concepts:

> "I remember in 1999 I was asked if I had hallucinations, and I replied 'no' because to me a hallucination was a picture of a desert with a lake and a palm tree. And I had not had anything of that, so I had not had any hallucinations. A half year later I started reading about it and then I found out that I just had so many hallucinations of all my senses, it was just crazy". (Olesen & Shaw, 2009, p. 19, my translation)

The psychologist, the nurse and the physician in the working group told us about their astonishment following our analytical work. They compared the communication with patients in the interviews to what they were used to from their everyday practices, where they often experienced the patients as demanding and critical. They pointed out how thoughtful the patients were i.e. when asking for better information about the effects and side effects of medication:

> ""I need more knowledge about for what purpose you are using the medicine. Sometimes you get it without really getting to know what is the meaning of it – what is it – there is both anti-psychotic, relaxing, anxiety-reducing, etc.". (Olesen & Shaw, 2009, p. 19)

'The revolution' seems banal and simple. The interviews can be described as an attempt to listen to patients and relatives as persons with valuable knowledge whom the professionals could learn from rather than seeing patients as "passive" recipients of care and information.

Writing in this categorical way about the professionals "common view on patients" makes me feel uncomfortable. But I would still claim that it

was the de-stabilization of the existing images of patients and relatives which was made possible through our joint interviewing and analyzing process that made it possible to create meaningful knowledge that could be used on the psychiatric ward. I think there is a fundamental debate to be taken on how researchers write about the partners they are collaborating with when analyzing the processes of knowledge production. Partly the challenge is that it is so easy to see, how "the others" get new insights. It is much harder to see and analyze the change processes of the researchers. A close examination of normativity, interpretation and emotional reactions in collaborative knowledge production may stimulate critical reflections about how to write about the processes of co-producing knowledge (Olesen & Pedersen, 2012; Bishop & Shepherd, 2011; Heen, 2005), and at the end of this article you will see how we learned an important lesson from our research partners.

My embarrassment on "othering" our research partners are especially clear to me because I think we did build up mutual trust and involvement in the process of collaborative knowledge production. A precondition for being able to work in pairs with joint interviewing and analysis was that members of the working group had spent many hours together. We had taken the necessary time to establish trust and mutual respect. We had been through a collaborative process of co-learning, and a strong group identity formed foundation for further collaboration.

While we worked together we produced a deconstruction of social realities and shared insights with one another. Next step in the process was an observation and feedback process, where the professionals on the ward were working together in pairs in order to find out how they were talking with patients about the patients disease. The result of the project was not concrete solutions to practical problems. When it comes to procedures and practical solutions I'm convinced that the professionals ought to be the ones to decide on whether or not it is relevant to change future practices. I hope there have been changes, because new knowledge was produced in processes of observing each other and of giving and having feedback, but it certainly is something less concrete than a new normative method for communication or a new curriculum, which the patients should be presented to.

Toxic shame in neoliberal academia

The two projects I have introduced were established and conducted as the neoliberal discourse of the knowledge economy was spreading across Danish welfare institutions. I will in the following look into how "economic and political shifts, transformations in work and psychosocial experiences"

(Gill 2009, p. 5) have changed the conditions for shared knowledge production with the institutionalization of neo-liberal discourse of the knowledge economy as managerial regimes. And I will use my two examples to discuss the effects of this discourse on the conduct of collaborative knowledge production which I find meaningful. How are context-specific enactments of the discourse of participation (eg Phillips, 2011; Phillips et al., 2012a; Dutta & Pal, 2010) handled, when neoliberal managerial regimes guide research activities and other working practices and the identities of academics and other professionals who are inscribed as subjects in these regimes?

The neo-liberal discourse constructs research as a commodity, ("From Insight to Invoice" (Ministry of Science, Technology and Development, 2003). The usefulness of knowledge is understood as the capacity to generate innovations that strengthen the market position of the institution or organization where the research takes place (Dutta & Pall, 2010; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2005; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2007).

To discuss my own experiences in a neo-liberal university I will primarily draw on Bronwyn Davies' and Peter Bansel's analysis of the relationship between (self)governmentality and academic work (Davies & Bansel, 2010) and on Rosalind Gill s analysis of the 'hidden injuries of neo-liberal academia' (Gill, 2009).

With reference to Foucault, Gill describes how technologies of selfhood bring into being the endlessly self-monitoring, planning, prioritizing "responsibilised" subject who requires little management, because she manages herself in a manner that is a far more effective exercise of power than any imposed from above by managers (Gill, 2009, p. 6). I recognize the description in my everyday life at university. I will mention a few examples concerning how researchers' "production" is translated into quantitative scores in terms of three parameters, research, teaching and communication.

Scores refer to a bureaucratic system, where all research activities are redefined in quantitative terms rather than being valued in their own terms. A complex system has been established with A and B journals (which give different scores), the ranking of publishing houses and differentiation between number of authors which makes it most lucrative, points-wise, to publish alone. Likewise, all teaching activities are given scores. The parameters include length of study (the faster the students complete their studies, the better) grades given (don t let anybody fail, that makes them stay longer in the system!) and user evaluations which are posted on the website of the degree programme with a note from the professor about how (s)he will change his/her course in order to take account of the critique made by the consumers/students. Finally all media exposure is registered and given scores, no matter if the researcher communicates about his/her re-

search or not. All research, education and communication scores are translated into government funding of the universities and, in some cases, internally in order to differentiate between research groups and degree programmes. (Davies & Bansel, 2010, p. 14; Auken & Emmeche, 2010; Thyssen & Raffensøe, 2013)

Changes have also been made at a structural level.[23] Here's just one example from my university. About 8 years ago, all researchers were asked to organize in research groups. 4 years later, the local management through unclear processes ended up defining some research groups as "strategic centers", channeling resources to these groups at the expense of the other research-groups. One consequence is that we as researchers and colleagues are set up against each other in the already-mentioned intensified competitive systems of funding.

I still remember when we were organizing us-selves in research groups. In my group we told each other that we would "fight the system", insist on our integrity as researchers and not succumb to the standardization and regularization of our research and teaching through the managerial regime of the measurement of performance. But as Davies and Bansel with reference to Gramsci says: "a new cultural hegemony can occupy people s heads, and their hearts and hands will follow" (Davies & Bansel, 2010, p. 5)

As the above-mentioned examples indicate, the ways in which the new knowledge economy shape conditions for researchers has a clear impact on a personal level. Let's take a look at this e-mail which I received while writing this paper:

> *Dear Birgitte, I have dreamed of you all night; you were the chairwoman of a PhD defense and I was a critic who had not read the thesis, but had to find something to say. I am so sorry to say that I won t find time for commenting on your paper before your deadline. I'm pretty stressed out and feel as if there is an amusement park inside my head. I have two big deadlines which I am striving day and night to reach, and I already know that I won't. Partly because I am teaching all day the rest of the week and I haven t finished my preparations yet. One last thing. I am editing a journal and I feel terribly embarrassed asking you, but would it be possible to find time to read one of the articles? It is only 12 pages long, and I think you will find it interesting. If it's too much, let me know. We need feedback from you in three weeks.*

I think that this mail tells us a lot about current working-conditions – dreaming of university at night, having an amusement park in your head

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23 In 2004, a university law was passed which replaced collegial leadership with "professional" management

and striving to keep deadlines even when you already know it is impossible. On the top of it you have to, as an editor of a journal, send a paper for blind review to your friend because it is harder for her to decline even when you know better than anybody else how tight her schedule is.

Gill describes the emotional costs that come not only from work done, but also from work not done. She suggests that the overall picture of university researchers is of a profession "overloaded to breaking-point as a result of the underfunded expansion of universities over the last two decades, combined with hyperinflation in what is demanded of academics, and an audit culture that, if it was once treated with skepticism, has now been almost perfectly internalized" (Gill, 2009, p. 9).

The heads of our department are aware of the problems. They do try to help us to manage ourselves by offering Performance and Development Review (in Danish: Medarbejder Udviklings Samtaler) and free courses on "stress management", "conflict-solving" and "mindfulness". I have never attended any of them, partly because I haven't felt I have had time and partly because going there would be a way of showing acceptance of the individualization of structural problems and of the idea of individual problem-solving through socio-technical fixes.

At the end of her article, Gill introduces the word "toxic shame". She concludes that "the individualizing discourse consumes us like a flesh-eating bacterium, producing its own toxic waste – shame. I'm useless, I'm nothing, I have just cheated everybody till now. So I have to work harder, read more widely, do a better job…" (Gill, 2009, p. 13)

With these words, I will now dwell on the tensions that might arise when I pursue the collaborative knowledge production described in the above two projects in the current sociopolitical conjuncture.

Collaborative knowledge production – ideals and constraints

As already mentioned, the two projects I have presented were established and conducted when neo-liberal discourse was in the process of spreading. I will now reflect on how we managed to work productively with differences in processes of mutual learning in the two projects and why it would be hard to imagine working in the same way today. The aim is to gain insight into how sociopolitical transformations and resulting work situations for both researchers and professionals have changed the conditions for collaborative knowledge production. First of all I will focus on time as a constraining force and then I will point to how the neo-liberal definition of research aims puts pressure on co-productive processes where different knowledge forms are involved.

Time is money

Time is an always limited resource and in the knowledge economy the limitations have increased. When looking back at the project on the psychiatric ward, I am sure that it was the many hours spent together in discussions about what it would be meaningful to do, whom to involve when and how that enabled us to get to know each other so well that we dared to look into new ways of conducting knowledge production. Processes where new understandings emerge between participants with different experiences and knowledge-claims take time. At a certain point, you leave a meeting thinking "something happened today, we spoke a new common language instead of trying to translate in order to understand each other" or "we managed to accept the disagreements, because we have learned that it is alright not to agree on everything in order to do something together". An example from the psychiatric ward was an evaluation meeting in the working group where the nurse said: "I find that both we (professionals) and you (researchers) are too afraid to say when we think `this is too much'. We choose not to talk about it but it's stuck in the atmosphere. I think we know each other so well that we can manage to disagree." (research-notes) I think she was right. However, I must admit that I did not dare to tell when I was provoked i.e. of a general (in my opinion negative) statement about `how patients are .

Looking back I simply do not understand how we managed to establish joint sessions in which researchers and professionals together engaged in interviewing and doing analysis of the interviews. After the culmination of the process, it was revealed that the three professionals had not been given time to be part of the project. They had been told that they should find time for the project in the gaps which appeared when patients did not turn up for therapy or meetings on the ward were cancelled.

When the project was initially negotiated I was told that both researchers and professionals had seven hours a week for the project. I never thought of asking the professionals how their time was structured. Today I cannot believe that we did not talk about the structural conditions for our collaboration. I am uncomfortable to admit that I sometimes was frustrated because I felt that we – researchers from the university – were more engaged in the project than the professionals. But (again) I did not (dare to?) bring it up as I did not want to run the risk that they would suggest that we gave up the whole project.

We felt as researchers that we had to finish the project in order to fulfill the contract and be able to publish the process. You may say that we pushed the project forward by encouraging, supporting and comforting the professionals in different ways from, for instance, taking responsibility for taking minutes and summaries of our meetings, sending

personal Christmas cards and bringing chocolate and coffee for the meetings.

The nurse Mette Kjerholt describes how she decided to end the collaborative knowledge production process in her Phd project because everybody on the ward where the project took place talked about it as "her project", which they "hadn't time for" and "only joined because they had to". (Kjerholt, 2011) Being a researcher working with co-production of knowledge may get you into a pest or cholera situation: to continue with the project claiming that you are working together in spite of a feeling of pushing the others beyond their limits; or to give up the project after having invested lots of extremely precious time.

Time becomes a challenge in other ways too.

As researchers we are forced to publish results frequently. About ten years ago, with two colleagues, I did a literature review for the Danish Board of Health of research on "fear as a tool in health campaigns" (Jensen et al., 2004). I was, at that time, surprised how many experiments on, for instance, how scary movies about breast cancer which were targeted at women aged 50+ were tested out on graduate students in order to measure effects. The target group was never exposed to the movies, but all (other) formal criteria for conducting a controlled experiment were fulfilled. Why bring up this story?

Compared to qualitative research, quantitative research can be written up relatively quickly in shorter articles in multiple journals. Therefore the points system for measuring publishing performance favors quantitative research. And quantitative research is also favored in many practice contexts as it is seen to satisfy the need of the knowledge economy for directly and obviously useful knowledge and to provide scientific legitimation of decision-making in the form of "evidence-based" research. This is problematic given that much quantitative research does not go into depth with the complexities and context-specificities of knowledge production, including the play of knowledge/power and the politics (Davies, 2014).

Action Research projects such as the ones I have introduced take time. Lots of time! But if you want to keep up on publishing, you have to describe, document and analyze processes of change which in real-life might take 3 or 5 years, as if those changes can be seen after 6 months. And we have to write about the changes in a language and a format which makes it hard for the professionals who have been part of the co-production process to feel part of or even read the results of the writing-process (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2012).

The pressure to publish in journals with peer-review may lead to better articles because most texts improve when they are revised in the light of responses from qualified readers. The problem is that peer reviews replace

important and complex professional discussions with the disciplinary exercise of power. The reviewers at the specific journal where the author wants her/his article to be published refer to spoken and un-spoken norms and traditions to which the author has to conform in order to get the article accepted. The author needs to refer to earlier discussions in the journal, perhaps including discussions initiated by the editorial board, and to include plenty of references to other articles in the journal – read more or less carefully, making more or less sense in the actual context. In my opinion, the risk is that research become more and more incestuous as researchers refer to other researchers' studies instead of discussing them. And worse still, there is a severe risk that research becomes confined to a closed community in which the discussions raised have a minimum of relevance for the everyday life of the people in the field of practice under study. (Davies, 2014)

I find it worth reflecting that accounts of the project on the island I described above were only published in a Danish report for the grant-giver in which the professionals' reports, analyses and discussions were strongly represented and in a critical Danish magazine on social work called "Social kritik". (Axelsen & Olesen, 2002) Neither of these publications went through the peer-review processes of BFI-registered (Danish national bibliometric research indicator publications) so neither of them earned me points in the BFI system. But I still receive money from the article for the many photocopies made yearly and have been told, that it is still used in educational contexts for social workers and school teachers. Surely this kind of response is a better measure of the value and usefulness of the research than BFI's quantitative performance indicators! It is this kind of response that drives my engagement in research processes and makes me feel that I am worth my salary.

Research as commodity
A classic ideal of research is to produce valid knowledge. I have already mentioned how an important validation criterion to me is that the knowledge produced is robust in the practical setting which forms the subject area of the research. In the neoliberal era, the demand for validity (normally understood in a far more positivist way) is expanded with the demand for economically important knowledge which can be "distributed and sold" ("From Insight to Invoice", Ministry of Science, Technology and Development, 2003).

Again with reference to the two projects, I will discuss how such demands challenge collaborative knowledge production.

As I have already described, carrying out interviews with patients and analyzing them caused a major disturbance on the psychiatric ward. What

I did not underline was the many discussions we had in the working group before we agreed on doing these interviews. The professionals in the working group challenged our – the university researchers' – claim that patients and their relatives possessed important knowledge about how to meet needs for communication about schizophrenia. Or maybe they did agree to some point, but they did not see such interviews as part of a "genuine" research project. It might be a consequence of their reference to a more positivistic research tradition or a result of their experiences with neo-liberal discourses for research. No matter the reason, I think the professionals were more knowledgeable about which sort of knowledge production that could be accepted as relevant, than the researchers were at that time. From this ground, they expected objectivity, distance, and control as central methodological claims, whereas I and my colleague from university were the naïve and engaged idealists who celebrated jointly produced criteria arguing for relevance, dialogue, change and the sensitivity to complexity of qualitative analysis.

The professionals had difficulty believing that such claims would produce the kind of results that would qualify as 'proper' research. As far as I remember, they found it extremely provocative that we, the researchers, used time in our meetings to turn questions around and ask what they felt should be the result of the collaboration. When we tried to explain that we did so in order to provide the foundations for joint knowledge production, I think that it, to some extent, sounded like nonsense to them. It did not make sense, but they accepted partly – I think – because they saw us as "the more knowable researchers who possessed the formal and informal power to define how to "do research" and because, over time, they became involved when seeing that "our epistemology" actually brought new insights to the ward. Their former experiences with "research" were extra work filling out files for the use of a medical doctor in his or her research. Our discussions in the working group can be seen as an expression of negotiations concerning the nature of science itself. Looking back I would say, that the professionals accepted not to produce "proper" research in order to produce "meaningful research". I do not know if either they or I would dare to dive into such a project again because all the time used on working with the inclusion of different knowledge forms and on documenting the process to be used for further reflections on the ward led to fewer Danish national bibliometric research indicator registered, peer-reviewed articles. Something the hospital needed as much as the university in order to get future research funded. In short: We did not produce research which could be exchanged to high points in the "knowledge valuation system". With respect to the demand for research as commodity, we did not even succeed in producing a tool or pro-

cedure for "psycho-education". I have mentioned earlier how I think the knowledge produced collaboratively should take the form of critical-reflexive perspectives on the existing practices rather than a clear cut set of new procedures or ways of organizing this praxis. The knowledge economy turns this ideal upside down. I hear demands like; Point out new communication tools, find out how procedures can be more effective and please do it on a foundation that makes it possible to generalize the findings to other institutions or organizations! The search for evidence-based knowledge is without limits no matter which social-, pedagogical- or health task, we are looking into. Phillips and Kristiansen point to how

> "an instrumentalist focus on the knowledge economy discourse in research collaboration can be seen as a strategy for social and technological innovation which may conflict with views on co-production as collective processes of mutual learning as an at least as important outcome." (Phillips et al., 2012 a, p. 3)

I fear that critical reflections which focus on dilemmas, challenges or tensions when working with changes of social practices in a neo-liberal discourse are seen as either trivial/unimportant or directly contra-productive, disturbing the "cruel-optimism" (Berlant, 2011) in organizations or institutions.

Collaborative knowledge production between exhausted partners

"Participation", and related terms as "collaboration", "dialogue", "ownership" "voice" or "empowerment" have over the last three decades grown into buzzwords with a taken-for-granted positive value also in research. Neoliberal framings of 'usefulness' have, at the same time, pushed these historically more critical approaches to knowledge production into mainstream public understandings of what research should be about and how it should be practiced in order to be part of the knowledge economy. So "dialogue" and "collaboration" represent promises that positively embrace a broad range of societal processes, not least in New Public Management scenarios in welfare states as Denmark (Phillips, 2011). Pierre Bourdieu described the tendency as "a programme of methical destruction of collectives (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 95) and Dutta and Pal, who primarily works with disadvantaged groups of people, describe very concrete the impossibilities inscribed in "increasing academic penetration of the subaltern sectors to serve neoliberal politics and the continued deployment of dialogic tools in the form of participatory forums, community relations activities,

roundtables, and corporate social responsibility programs that serve the agendas of transnational hegemony" (Dutta & Pal, 2010, p. 364). I think their "warning" can be spread out to processes of collaborative knowledge production in institutions and organizations, partly because it is hard to find ideals or goals which are not already colonialized by the market. Thinking of the above two projects, I imagine how "holistic actions towards disadvantaged families" in the project on the island and the "patient in focus" at the psychiatric ward were not professionally-grounded guidelines, but strategically formulated "standards" set by management in order to guide politics, plans and daily work practices in particular (economically optimizing) ways. Even an idiom such as "empowerment" is taken up as a self-governmental strategy (Dutta & Pall, 2010). All critique is left out and the individual is seen as the focal point for (individual) change (Pedersen, 2008; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

In spite of the pessimistic thrust of this article, I will insist on ending with a discussion of possible cracks in the wall, looking for opportunities and hope for change and premises for being part of processes where different knowledge is produced differently.

Cracks in the Wall

In social sciences and humanities it is possible to find especially poststructuralist (and feminist) researchers who refer to a discourse about knowledge production as a messy and entangled way of extending our understanding of the world (Burdick & Sandling, 2010; Bishop & Shepherd, 2011). Social and natural phenomena are recognized as complex, indeterminate, relational and constantly open to negotiation in contiguous processes that we as humans do not, but wish to, understand. In this context, collaborative methodologies that include a number of knowledge forms are regarded as a way to enrich academic knowledge by generating new questions, different kinds of relationships and new responses to topics born out of this complexity. One way to expand on the complexity and get closer to new insights seems to be the inclusion of affective and sensual dimensions in human existence. Researchers who work with these dimensions argue that it is the process of "being in relation that forms the basis for learning and understanding more about others, ourselves and our world". (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001, p. 342)

I find hope in this longing for being in relation. It pushes me to insist on processes where new knowledge is valuable for people in the field of practice under study. But I also think we as researchers from university have to attend reflexively to *how* we become part of and "do" these relations.

I know that many researchers working with collaboration have strong ethics on how to be part of democratic co-production processes when working with persons outside academia (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2006, 2012; Dutta & Pal, 2010; Kvale, 1996; Olesen & Pedersen, 2008, 2012), but in spite of a strong advocacy to keep on disturbing traditional views of the research subject as a privileged and objective knowledge producer within academia, we as university researchers often do still go for "collaborative knowledge production" without making ourselves visible by taking our histories, bodies, feelings, relations or political positions into account. Haraway's well-known critique of 'the God gaze' of the academic, still applies (Haraway, 1988).

I see many reasons for this. Bjørn Gustavsen suggests that positivist research ideals still force researchers into individualistic roles, and that "each researcher is brought to see him- or herself as a complete rational subject capable, as an individual, of understanding the world" (Gustavsen, 2003, p. 159). Thinking back on the relations between professionals and researchers at the project on the psychiatric ward, where we, the university researchers, did not dare to talk about conditions for the research project and instead mothered the professionals in order to make them go on even when exhausted. We never talked about our (work) conditions in order to establish a shared ground for action. By not doing so, I think we were "doing structure" in invisible and blurred ways, in the terms of Katherine Irwin (2006). Her point is that all the choices researchers make on how to facilitate a process (support or disturb), how to discuss field notes or writings (involve everybody in all, some or no parts of these research tasks), and how to write (norm-breaking or traditional) work against or reinforce social structures (Irwin, 2006, p. 171). I will add to this list the ways in which we do or do not talk about our own work-conditions, constraints and feelings of power(lessness). Not in order to sit down and cry together but as an opportunity for recognition, reflection and new understandings of how the same discourses are played out differently in different institutions. Maybe it would have made us say as the social worker in the project on the island, "It is a tremendous relief to understand now why I will never succeed in doing what I do..."

And maybe I would have been able to understand the situation whereby the professionals on the ward packed their stuff together in order to leave the room at 5 minutes to 4pm, no matter what we were doing in the group. They might have taught me the value of not letting your work be your life, but insist on "leaving production when the bell rings", behaving like the blue-collar, de-professionalised workers we are positioned as in the neo liberal economy.

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ANTI-GROUPS AND ACTION RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONS

Susanne Broeng and Søren Frimann

Abstract

Merge and change processes in organizations often result in complex relational problems among leaders and staff. These relational issues may uncover psychodynamic patterns. In this article we focus on the psychodynamic concept of *anti-groups* (Nitsun, 2006) in relation to a specific action research process. The aim is to reflect on an organizational change process in which the interpersonal relationships between group, management and organization exhibited anti-group patterns. We show how a psychodynamic approach and, in particular, the concept of negative capabilities may offer a pathway to change and participation when poor social and emotional relations between organizational members have emerged over a long period.

In the design of action research processes, some conditions in relation to power, participation and the researchers' roles are discussed because both the external consultant's and the researcher's roles exert an influence on power and participation when working with conscious and unconscious interpersonal processes in the organization.

Keywords: Anti-group, participation, power, negative capability, action research, psychodynamic organizational theory

Introduction

In this article we discuss action research, participation and power when action research processes take place in an organization with severe professional, emotional and social problems. The case concerns a team of co-workers in a Danish healthcare centre with deep-rooted problems. They became evident for all members in the course of an organizational change process. Power became central and participation was made extremely difficult due to a lack of confidence and good faith among staff. This was evident for both employees and leaders.

The original plan of conducting an action research project was complicated by anti-group implications of which we became aware along the way. In typical consultancy and research work, such problems are rarely evident before our work begins. In this case we were aware of such change problems and decided to work together with them. Because of these power and participation issues the negotiation of a clear contract was a major object.

Our identification of anti-group patterns emerged in the reflection period after the action research process. Had we labelled the group an anti-group while the process was under way, it was likely to have aborted the research process as this would have involved diagnostication, categorization and thus define a part of the whole group. This may have resulted in severe power and participation problems as the participants may have resented the labelling and seen it as evidence of our lack of sensibility and understanding of their problems in the organization.

We are inspired partly by psychodynamic organization theory in the Tavistock tradition, which emphasizes organizational development and consultation (Obholzer et al, 2003 p. 12), partly by psychodynamic organizational psychology, which offers a theoretical framework for understanding group processes and the attendant emotions. Democratic and dialogic change processes are key elements of action research. The contribution offered by the Tavistock approach concerns the knowledge of group processes and organizational dynamics (Lewin, 1948). Between them, the two approaches equip members with abilities to co-determine organizational decisions and conditions, such as emotions, relations, work tasks and professional perspectives (Nielsen, 2004, p. 517; Nielsen, 2012, p. 19).

In the first of the article's four parts we discuss our theoretical choices related to our work on participation and power. In the next part we present the case and our field work with action research combined with the psychodynamic approach. The third section introduces the concepts of negative capability and anti-groups as a framework for discussing participation and power in relation to the action research. Reflections and discussions on issues for further work conclude the article.

The psychodynamic approach

When working with participation and power, our transparency as action researchers and consultants is an important issue. We reflect on our participation and understanding of the situation in the perspective of internalized and generalized representations from our life (Stern, 1995, p. 107). For instance we involve our own emotions, reflections and experiences as far as they are relevant and helpful for the process in the professional context. This necessitates transparency on our part and that we are clear about our position as professionals. To secure this transparency we received supervision during the process.

The guiding principle of Broeng's personal and professional life is her psychodynamic approach. Her work has focused on creating healthy developmental processes in dysfunctional families and organizations. As a certified family therapist inspired by the gestalt tradition and experiential perspectives, her training in group analysis of organizations and leadership led to specialization in the connections between personal experience and group interaction in the Tavistock tradition.

Frimann's interest in the psychodynamic perspective stems from his interdisciplinary research in psychodynamic approaches, conversation analysis, psycholinguistics and group therapy. He was trained as a gestalt therapist focusing on groups, relations and individual therapy. In his capacity as associate professor at Aalborg University's communication studies and master programme in leadership and organizational psychology, he has extensive experience in teaching psychodynamic approaches to groups and organizations.

Organizations in late modernity

At the beginning of the 21st century, with the welfare institutions of post-industrial societies experiencing an increasing emphasis on efficiency, cost control and the maximization of returns, the pressure on staff and institutions working with people is increasing (Obholzer, 2012, p. 13). In such circumstances characterized by internal pressures, a competent and qualified management will provide leadership based on well-defined tasks and roles, and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to optimize tasks and relations among employees.

Since the 1990s, New Public Management (NPM) has inspired various management initiatives while employees' self-understanding has been supplanted by a technical and quantitative approach to the job (Heinskov & Visholm, 2011, p. 13). Many institutions have seen change processes lead to unfortunate developments in which staff felt they became prey to anti-group processes (Obholzer, 2003, p. 13). Because unconscious feelings and processes influence workers' performance and experience of psycho-

logical stress in the working environment, we believe that organizations do not solely pursue their formulated objectives and functions. In our view, it is important to work with unconscious processes in order to create well-functioning emotional and social relations in the workplace when organizations and teams experience emotional tensions and (role) conflicts among members. The organization often acts as a projection screen (Obholzer et al, 2003, p. 81) for a variety of emotive reactions such as anxiety, defence mechanisms, and identification. Psychodynamic organizational theory is based on the recognition that such unconscious processes influence work in the organization (Obholzer, 2003, p. 11). In our experience, successful outcomes require contact and a common awareness of the underlying unconscious processes and emotions in a group. This often succeeds in creating an appreciative climate that mobilizes trust, engagement, willingness and courage to participate in open democratic dialogues towards organizational change and action research processes. This is what the psychodynamic approach is able to bring to action research in the dialogue tradition.

Psychodynamic organizational psychology has a view of the organization as a co-operating system which is characterized by its primary task, the existing roles and its authority structure. However, in addition to the organization's conscious level, rational and manifest aspects, the psychodynamic perspective will look for unconscious forces at play beneath "daily business" (Heinskov & Visholm, 2011, p. 34). Connections between working life and private life should be recognized and respected, not only as sources of the individual's creativity and courage to enter into innovative processes but also as the cause of psychological strain. The problem of protecting employees from the strains of a job that draws on their creative, professional, and personal resources cannot be solved through detailed descriptions of work procedures. Rather, the problem should be addressed by an organizational culture which, while respecting the individuals' integrity, allows organizational aims to define the work. In other words, the workplace is not a therapeutic community (Heinskov & Visholm, 2004). We explicitly state our role as researchers-cum-consultants as different from that of a therapist. In the organizational context we share in a democratic way our observations, reactions and reflections with the participants in the dialogue on the specific themes in the organizational change process. As power is a central theme in these processes as well as in action research, a brief account of this concept is given below.

Power is a complex and controversial concept in the academic literature. In the psychodynamic approach, power is defined as the ability to influence and attract followers from above, from below, and from inside the system. Power is thus ascribed to a) the formal roles, b) the personal authority re-

lations, and c) the internal relation between members and their leader(s) (Obholzer, 2003, p. 72). Other traditions distinguish between "power over" and "power to" (Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips, 2006, p. 197). For our purposes we distinguish only between three forms of power: 1) Structural power. Power is distributed to a formal role and position in a hierarchy, e.g. to a leader with the right to hire, fire and make structural and economic changes in the organization. 2) Personal power. Power is ascribed to a person's authority and respect on the basis of personal capabilities and competencies. 3) Relational power. Power is ascribed to the socially emergent relations manifested in communication and discourse in local contexts (Clegg Courpasson & Phillips, 2006, p. 217). In action research, empowerment relates to personal power and to relational power (Frimann & Broeng, 2014) as an ideal for people to reflect and act in democratic and responsible ways in organizational life (Lewin, 1948; Frimann & Bager, 2012).

The purpose of our work was to develop both the organization and the participants through dialogue and democratic involvement (Frimann & Bager, 2012, p. 193). In studying the social system of the organization and its unconscious processes, we used action research in the dialogue tradition, which includes several approaches with different perspectives on action research and dialogue (Nielsen, 2004, p. 542). In the tradition, a shared focus on empowering dialogues is seen as essential for creating and developing change and knowledge in organizations. Henceforth, the term researcher refers to this understanding of the action researcher's role.

Case: A Danish healthcare centre

The data for this article was collected in a pilot study for a consultancy assignment in a healthcare centre. The four-month study period started in January 2007, shortly after the implementation of a national municipal reform that saw the merger of municipalities and regions in Denmark. The data are based on qualitative interviews with managers, the first researcher's on-site observations, field notes as well as written experiences from employees, and conversations between each staff member and the researcher in which they described their experience of the problems and gave suggestions for interventions (Kruuse, 1996, p. 111).

The case illustrates the many aspects to be considered in order to support a balanced relation and dialogue in an action research process. As action researchers and consultants, we run the risk of being biased and influenced by the dense emotional atmosphere surrounding the group and the organization. Action research processes should ideally rest on genuine participation by all parties (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2012, p. 112).

However, this would be complicated by several factors, such as the researcher's emotions and bias in relation to management and inter-staff attitudes.

Where change processes are studied the concept of negative capability is of major interest in relation to competences. Management's and researchers' exercise of negative capability may be compared to a tightrope walk between relevant and irrelevant interventions in the attempt to stimulate development and change in an apparently gridlocked process. A description of the concept follows after a presentation of the case.

Case report

In connection with a major reform of local government structures in 2007, two institutions offering services to similar target groups were merged. The integration of institution Alfa into the larger institution Beta meant that the latter grew from three to four sections. Alfa and Beta were originally under separate local governments, the former belonging to a municipality Gamma while Beta was governed by a regional authority Delta. In the reorganization process, Beta became a part of the same municipality as Alfa. Local elections led to a shift in political leadership at the same time as new administrative systems were introduced.

Beta had been a large, well-functioning 24-hour healthcare centre, whose management had formed a stable group for many years.

Alfa was established in 1996 under the charge of a head with many other responsibilities, Alfa had had no management or staff rooms of its own. The majority of staff were inexperienced and had just completed their training. No objectives, framework and methods were formulated for the work. After a period of growth in staff numbers, the institution was assigned a full-time leader in 2000. At this time the staff had split into two rival subgroups, each with their own informal leader. After a short time the full-time leader resigned and a new one was appointed. As the institution expanded further the new leader was also overburdened by responsibilities. By now the staff had split into four poorly collaborating subgroups. In 2006 the institution was again left without leadership. The present leader of the amalgamated institution was hired six months before the restructuration in 2007.

In conversation the leader of Alfa reported that her group was characterized by subgroup formation, informal leadership, and rivalry. Collusion among staff, also within subgroups, continued even after her attempt to change the interpersonal relations. Municipal regulations concerning working hours, duty roster, holidays and days off were not observed. Finances concerning transportation, staff telephones, purchases, etc., and receipts presented for reimbursement showed no proper separation between private and work-related purchases. No clear boundaries existed between private life

and working life, whether between staff or in relation to clients. Despite the leader's successful effort to provide staff rooms for the group, they continued to meet informally, e.g. in cafés for discussion and coordination. Her work with establishing clear structures and frameworks were met with negative reactions from informal leaders and staff, who saw the new structure as a loss of privileges.

The management of Beta worried that the continued conflicts would affect the staff's ability to focus on their work obligations. The leader's instructions were largely ignored. Dismissal of both leader and staff was therefore considered to allow for a fresh start with a new team. But this was abandoned as it would entail a critical loss of experience and competences in the organization. Instead they asked the consultant to help them handle the changes resulting from the merger process. Despite their training and tools inspired by NPM, they were unable to solve the problem by themselves.

The case was presented to the consultant who discussed it with the leaders. A joint process was proposed to explore the requirements for a good merge process. We saw it as important that both the leader group and the employees had a genuine wish for participation. At the same time we knew the work context posed a powerful framework for the possibility of change: The leaders had structural and formal responsibility and the power to exercise the task of resolving the problems in a professional manner. Although they were entitled to hire and fire employees, they chose not to use it in this case, and opted to implement structural changes. It was also within their remit to choose the consultant and to accept or decline the proposed method. The leaders opted to work with emotions and relations in the organization from a psychodynamic approach together with the employees and the researcher-cum-consultant in a participative way. On their part, the employees had the power to deny participation, participate without any real interest in change, or seek another job. The consultant-cum-researcher was hired to help solve the problems and was responsible for the choice of working methods and for managing the process. Participation had to include the obvious formal, personal and relational power issues. Before the research process could start, they had to be formulated and accepted by the participants. Participation in this organization entailed working with unconscious patterns of power relations in relation to anti-group patterns and behaviours. "The essence of participation is exercising voice and choice and developing the human, organizational and management capacity to solve problems as they arise in order to sustain the improvements" (Saxena, 2011, p.31). During the process the key importance of the contractual work became clear as the anti-group dynamics became apparent to the researchers.

The framework of the process included an acceptance of the work context and of the action research method. In this phase, interviews were made with the leaders and information from the employees was collected from mails. Of the 22 employees, 12 did not respond to requests for information. Among the non-responders, five were newly hired, and two resigned before the process began. One employee died after letters were sent out. The remaining four persons did not want to say anything because they were afraid of getting fired. These people were the main reason why this process was established. The answers from the 10 people who responded to our mail indicated that they found it important to work with the leaders' role, the frustrations in the group, their experience of turbulence, lack of leadership, exclusion, and a lack of hope of improving the workplace.

The process was planned to run over five days in the course of two months. On the first day the researcher presented the action research method to the participants. She gave excerpts from interviews with management and letters from staff, and mentioned that a majority had not replied. Everyone was then encouraged to talk about their expectations, and to say what they found most important to work with. Some typical statements were:

· "It's important to work with the mental working environment – we need things to quiet down at work so we can get a more professional focus."
· "We need more visible leadership – it's hard to trust the leaders. But our clients do get good help."
· "I cannot relate to the new employees. I have said hello to so many, and so many have left again. One has died. I've worn myself down working here, and I'm exhausted."
· "I'd like to drop a bomb, but I'm not sure I dare … okay – I can't handle one of my residents!"

The action research work supported dialogue among staff on such issues in order to reach democratic decisions in relation to what was most important in solving the problems. The concept of democracy in an organizational context is inspired by Lewin, whose view is that action research processes in organisations should stimulate democratic leadership, empowerment and responsible participation in a process leading to critical self-inquiry and collaborative work (Lewin, 1948, p. 82). According to our view, researchers and co-researchers should seek to understand and change their daily workplace through dialogue, collaboratively and reflectively. This is a dissensus perspective rather than a common-sense one (Deetz,

2001, p. 11). It is a dynamic process based on understanding different and pluralistic perspectives (Chambers, 2008, p. 297).

The psychodynamic organizational approach focuses on emotions and group processes. In this case, it helped identify the problems they wanted to introduce in the dialogue and which ones they wanted to leave out. The focus had to be on *system thinking* – working with the whole system, *relational know-how* – engaging people collectively and fully and on *generativity* – defining ourselves through what we wish to create for the future (Bradbury et al., 2008, p. 88).

In the last session the group asked the leader to have a conversation with one of the group members. This employee had phoned the leader and said he was sick and did not want to join the action research process. But the group knew he was not sick and they felt his decision not to join the process could be a problem for the further process. This marked a watershed, as the group had never shown faith in their leader by asking for a conversation. Some statements from members of the group are given below:

> "I found out that when someone is missing, it makes me insecure and I protect myself by not making contact. Now I can see how this influences the whole group and how important it is to talk about it when someone is not here."
> "I feel that our new leader is listening to us and that he wants to include our perspectives – I feel that I can trust him."
> "There is so much open space in the group now. We talk about the problems and it is such a relief"
> "Now I know that our leader from Beta will handle the dialogue with our colleague in a sober way"

The actions research process concluded in collaboration between the group and the leader on setting up a plan for the process of moving to new premises, establishing new working groups and new administrative procedures, and initiating a process of working with values, methods, and the handling of difficult residents.

In this action research process in a workplace afflicted by very strong and powerful issues it was important to take care of the position as a researcher in a way that would support democratic participation. One of the key elements was the concept of negative capability, which will be introduced in the next section, followed by a discussion of key points from the action research process in relation to the theoretical understanding of anti-groups.

Negative capability

In the trait and skill approaches to leadership, traditional management competences are associated with decision-making power, clear analytical thinking and decisive action (Northouse, 2012, p. 17). Robert French calls these competences *positive capability*. He was inspired by the English 19th-century poet John Keats, who defined negative capability in this way:

> I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason (French, 2002, p. 1209-1210).

The opposite, positive capability, is primarily used in relation to management. According to Bonnerup and Hesselagers' recommendations leaders should be capable not only of making far-reaching decisions on the basis of incomplete information. They also need to be able to postpone decision-making when the situation demands it (Bonnerup & Hesselager, 2008, p. 119). Leaders often find it difficult to wait in a state of uncertainty, to take their time to examine the emotional conditions behind the parties' statements and actions until solutions begin to emerge. Positive capability is often praised as part of managerial competences while procrastination may be interpreted as indecision revealing poor management. Negative capability thus involves the ability to tolerate and work in uncertainty rather than escaping from it through premature action (Bonnerup & Hesselager, 2008, p. 119).

As we found negative capability essential to the case discussed in this article, we illustrate how it may be necessary to examine the complex conditions in order to uncover what managerial actions are required to accomplish the change and development needed to support the merger.

To illustrate the changes that relationships between management and staff have undergone in recent decades, some of the sociological conditions which have affected organizations and work life in general are mentioned here. A more detailed discussion follows.

Post-modern work life

Relations between staff and management have changed radically in post-modern society (Heinskov & Visholm, 2011, p. 57). The growing interest in interpersonal processes in organizations is a natural consequence of the closer attachment between organization and staff (Heinskov & Visholm, 2004). The organization depends on professional and personal commitment from staff, whose ability to see the big picture is supplanting the Taylorism characteristic of the industrial age in western capitalist societies. The

answer to such needs is the *reflective participant* (Heinskov & Visholm, 2004, p. 9).

> The individual must be ready for development, change and adaptation in order to function in enterprises that are ready for development, change and adaptation (Heinskov & Visholm, 2004, p. 9).

To a higher degree than before, staff experiences the job as more than salaried employment, and they demand meaningful work with opportunity for personal development (Heinskov & Visholm, 2004). Staff and management thus share an interest in change processes leading to work offering personal development and meaningfulness in such a way that all parties experience recognition and participation. Psychodynamic organizational psychology's concept of interest does not presuppose that the individual and the organization have identical interests. It may be relevant here to broaden the concept of negative capability to include situations where both management and staff are able to meet at a point where they are "… capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Heinskov & Visholm, 2004, p. 16).

But is such a meeting at all possible in the case described here? Is it illusory to hope that everybody wants to participate in a change process? Nitsun's concept of the anti-group points to ways of answering these questions. Later we discuss NPM and the use of action research as an approach for creating participation in the process.

Anti-groups in organizations

The case describes a situation in which an anti-group pattern has emerged in the organization. Nitsun sees the anti-group term as "a broad [one] describing the destructive aspect of groups that threatens the integrity of the group …" He adds:

> Successful action of the anti-group represents a turning point in the development of the group. By helping the group to contain its particular anti-group; not only are the chances of destructive acting out reduced, but the group is strengthened, its survival reinforced and its creative power liberated (Nitsun, 2006, p. 44).

Nitsun emphasizes that destructive group forces such as aggression are expressed in anger, envy and rivalry. This may appear in the interplay between the group and the organization. The group creates its own rules, norms and attitudes in isolation from the rest of the organization of which it is a part. The anti-group is primarily characterized by regression, survival anx-

iety, failed communication, projective identification and envy (Nitsun, 2006, p. 106).

Case report

Group Alfa is characterized by many changes in leadership while undergoing considerable growth. The group has developed four competing subgroups with their own informal leaders and internal rules for working hours, transportation, finances, etc. For example, a full-time 37-hour week may involve only 20 hours on the workplace. The remaining time were set aside for relaxation, commuting to work, and other leisure activities.

The anti-group pattern is a dynamic phenomenon with different manifestations between different groups. In almost all groups there is potential for developing into anti-groups harbouring destructive forces directed not only at its members, but also at its leaders and the whole organization. Helping the group accommodate its own anti-group attitudes and impulses not only reduces the group's destructive acting-out impulses such as bullying, but also strengthens the group, its survival capacity and immanent creative potential.

Social and health sector organizations such as the one studied here are charged with complex tasks that demand cooperation, flexibility and coordination – across professions and sectors (Roberts, 2003, p. 267; Nitsun, 2006, p. 253). Whether the anti-group pattern is observed in management or staff, it is relevant to uncover those conditions in the organization that support the creation of well-performing groups, but also the processes that may lead to dysfunctional groups with anti-group traits (Nitsun, 2006).

The strengthened attachment between staff and organization that we discussed above increases the organization's vulnerability to anti-group forces. In a psychodynamic perspective, the organization is seen both as a creation and a mirror of its members as well as their thoughts and fantasies about their workplace (Nitsun, 1998a, p. 259). This framework for understanding the organization has specific mirroring functions of both constructive processes and potentially destructive dysfunctional processes. *Functional mirroring* describes an organization at its best, i.e. when the group leaves space for differences and enjoys open interpersonal communication; when individual members of staff feel they are appreciated and important for the organization. This applies also to subgroups and sections of the organization. *Dysfunctional mirroring* occurs when staffs are unable to recognize themselves and their values in the organization; when mirroring creates unproductive organizations which may be destructive and bereft of development and real activity (Nitsun, 2006, p. 104; Nitsun, 1998a, p. 262, 1998b p. 515).

Organizational mirroring arises at the internal boundaries of the organization (Nitsun, 1998a, p. 262), which help define differences between departments, tasks, target groups, etc. Without such boundaries, organizations would descend into chaos (Nitsun, 1998b, p. 515) and dysfunctional mirroring would undermine the organization (Nitsun 2006, p. 159, 165, 249). Management's responsibility for defining and regulating organizational boundaries is particularly important where boundaries are fragile and penetrable and where staff anxiety and vulnerability are pronounced. According to Nitsun (2006) this is typical for change processes. Organizational boundaries may be damaged by dysfunctional mirroring expressed in a lack of reflection and *reflex identifications*, which are more primitive and less tangible than the spontaneous interpersonal mirroring (Nitsun, 1998a, p. 260). Dysfunctional mirroring is often reciprocal, characterized by projections and projective identification that resonate among staff. The result is a general experience of weakness, uncertainty and lack of efficiency in the organization. A negative spiral of anxiety is created, which may be modelled in this way:
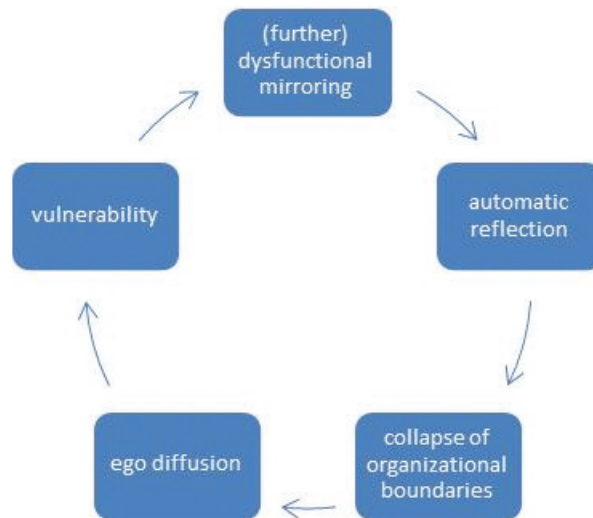
(Own model based on Nitsun,[24] 2006).

24 Our visual model is intended to supplement Nitsun's description of the negative spiral process and pattern of the anti-group.

As a result of the process modelled here, cooperation and focus among organizational members is undermined.

> It is useful to see the organization as a holding environment but one in which dysfunctional group processes can readily subvert constructive work relationships and create an organizational anti-group. Organizational mirroring is at the heart of this process (Nitsun, 1998a, p. 265).

In anti-group work communication is a key element, typically characterized by a range of conscious and unconscious processes that are expressed in symbolic language and shared fantasies, which create and reinforce the identity of the group. In fostering a development that changes unconscious patterns into conscious ones, it is essential to openly discuss some key factors: *mirroring,*[25] *exchange,*[26] *free-floating discussion,*[27] *resonance*[28] and *translation*[29] (Nitsun, 2006; Foulkes & Anthony, 2003, p. 23).

Important elements of the manager's responsibilities include intervention in anti-group processes by articulating values and positions, identification and sanctioning of breaches against norms and regulations, thus providing a professional role model. Conditions should be communicated explicitly as well as implicitly to the group and relationships with staff must be based on confidence and recognition. This requires of leaders both negative capability and insight into their own response patterns to prevent dysfunctional mirroring, malignant projective identification and to stimulate an organizational holding environment (Nitsun, 1998a, p. 255). Such demanding tasks will challenge a leader's professional and personal integrity and competences.

The consultant-cum-researcher role

The leader group's original request concerned consultancy work. In the ensuing dialogue with the group the aim was changed to a democratic re-

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25 Mirroring takes place when people see themselves reflected in another group member. Foulkes and Anthony (2003) regard the group as a 'hall of mirrors', indicating that changes in the individual can happen primarily through changes in the other members of the group, e.g. when their feelings, attitudes, and opinions develop.
26 Exchange among group members is essential to change processes. Deep-rooted and sensitive emotional levels of interpersonal relations must be involved.
27 Spontaneous and free exchange of ideas is essential to the study and verbalization of group relationships. The analysis of dreams, imagery and others emotional means of expression can lead to insight and understanding.
28 Identification among group members through the discussion of subjects and themes is important.
29 Awareness of unconscious processes is necessary to create and visualize the available options for action and to uncover roles and positions among group members.

search and change process. This decision changed our position into a double role as consultants-cum-researchers, which implied help currently with designing an action research project in collaboration with the organization. All parties were invited to participate in a democratic and dialogical organizational change process. We asked leaders as well as employees to describe the issues they saw as important, for themselves as well as for the group, to work with in order to create a successful merger process. The goal was to empower the members and the whole organizational system to act and reflect according to the task and the interpersonal relations in a democratic and empowering way. In a psychodynamic understanding, a democratic process requires that every person is seen as unique and formed by their experiential history. Everyone is to contribute to the democratic dialogue – the members of the organization are given opportunity to bring in information about the organisation and the formal and informal processes in the interpersonal relations. Likewise, the researchers can offer their own reflections and knowledge. As the research process developed, it was increasingly clear that anti-group processes were at work in the organization.

The group and the individual

A recurrent dilemma when working with anti-groups lies in achieving a balance between the focus on the individual and on the group. The two are in a dialectical relation; group mechanisms are thus in force whenever more than two people meet (Bion, 1993, p. 30). New roles constantly evolve, e.g. that of the scapegoat who will talk and act in ways that cause negative attention to be projected onto that person (Long, 2006, p. 128). Focusing solely on the individual would miss this point as the problem relates to the dynamics of the group. Bion's psychodynamic approach offers the opportunity to work with the group's basic assumptions in order to bring their defence mechanisms to the surface. The aim is to let emotions be expressed and stimulate awareness of basic assumptions, thereby enabling the group to work collaboratively on their primary work responsibilities.

Bion emphasizes that all groups will stimulate as well as frustrate its members. The individual is impelled to satisfy his or her needs in the group, but at the same time they are hampered in this by the primitive fears that the group provokes (Bion, 1993, p. 164). A change in the fundamental dysfunctional group patterns is necessary to attend to the more primitive forms of anxiety connected to part-object relations. The tensions relating to family patterns should also be discussed (Bion, 1993, p. 165).

The definition of the anti-group concept encapsulates the destructive processes harming the integrity of the group. Group-internal aggression poses a serious problem for its processes and tasks while aggression di-

rected against the group from other groups in the organization help create and reinforce its identity – as well as its dysfunctional aspects. The collective of groups formed by the departments or sections of the organization make up a gallery of pictures depicting *the effective group* or *the group that has trouble cooperating*, etc. Nitsun argues that the group has an inner life – an organizational psyche working on a deep, intuitive level, which he describes as a "pool for the shared fantasies of the organization" (Nitsun, 1998a, p. 257). Our discussion of shared fantasies is based on Bion's concept of basic assumptions, a view of the individual's influence on the group's inner life that Nitsun shares:

> The picture is incomplete without a corresponding understanding of the psychopathological processes that are brought to the group by the individual members and that are expressed in their interaction with one another. The interlocking of group-specific factors with the psychological characteristics of the membership generates the distinctive nature of the group, including its position on the anti-group continuum (Nitsun, 2006, p. 106).

An important part of the examination of the group's negative capability therefore involves the study of its individual member's competences, e.g. in giving time, waiting, reflecting, and creating dialogue. The family may be seen as the first group in which individuals learn about themselves and how to interact with significant others, such as parents, siblings, grandparents, etc. Values, roles, positions and attitudes from the primary family's 'holding environment' are internalized in this interplay. Representations of significant others will appear in subsequent patterns of interactions with other people (Stern, 1995, p. 108). These early experiences become what Stern calls "representations of interactions that have been generalized" (RIGs) (Stern, 1995, p. 107). They are the child's inner images of itself in relation to others as created by mirroring self-objectifications. Our first experiences of being part of a group stem from our family, whether this provided a safe basis for personal development, with well-organized conditions, or it was disorganized and vulnerable. Each of us begins life in some type of family, from which we develop our relational competence (Shapiro, 1991, p. 63).

The dysfunctional family is seen as an anti-group, characterized by rigid, although unpredictable, rules and roles, a secretive, grave and burdened atmosphere with ill-defined personal boundaries, offering little space for a private life (Nitsun, 2006, p. 238). Consciously or unconsciously, internalized experiences stemming from a dysfunctional family may affect relationships with others into adult life, both in relation to colleagues and

leaders. Such patterns are recognizable in the group's communication, actions and experiences.

This theoretical account of RIGs and the first organizational experience in the family is essential in working with organizational groups because individuals often seek to re-enact interactional patterns, roles and relations according to their early experiences.

Case report

Group Alfa lives a life of its own, overseen by its informal leaders. Alliances are formed and communication is characterized by an insider mentality offering no immediate access for outsiders. Written reflections from group members describe their experience of poor understanding and accommodation by their formal leaders, scant attention from management and little recognition of the group and its members.

The leader describes her experience of total estrangement from the group and her inability to understand why this is so.

In working with change processes it is important that the researcher is able to relate to each group member's experience and create a constructive dialogue about the importance of the necessary changes, thus displaying his or her negative capability. The group is severely handicapped by the gap between management and staff, which offers little possibility of mutual insight and understanding of the actors' various perspectives, responsibilities and objectives. Negative capability in relation to the creation of connection and continuity rather than separation and distance will be a central theme for the merger process. Parallel processes (Nitsun, 1998a, p. 261) are highly likely to be established in relation to the researcher, who must exercise caution in accommodating all participants. It is also crucial to be aware of whether the actors' reactions to the researcher depend on the position she assumes between the group and the management.

Management of change processes

Instability caused by staff replacement, new management, reorganization of work, relocation, etc., will be experienced by all groups and thus affects daily procedures and routines. Such changes and breaches in continuity may influence the group's stability and constancy, depending on its developmental level, its members' integrity and the background for the changes (Hawkins, 1986). In line with Winnicott's work on the holding environment in families, Hawkins has indicated that group members will do "what they can to keep mother stable and available and avoid doing whatever might cause her instability" (Hawkins, 1986, p. 245).

In relation to the leader, Hawkins (1986, p. 245) offers some recom-

mendations, which are explicated below. When catalysing change processes in groups, a leader is likely to experience 'negative transference' from the staff, to which inappropriate countertransference from the leader should be avoided through reflection. Leaders may experience the need to do and fix rather than empathize with staff's unconscious emotions connected with their early-life experiences. Hawkins stresses a number of preconditions as important for successful work with unstable groups: The background for the instability should be identified, and the leader needs to discuss the situation with own supervisor, with a focus on own reactions. Secondly, the group members should be assisted in recognizing the instability and examining the emotions elicited. Further, the leader must identify the coping strategies used by the group members.

Leaders will be unable to follow these recommendations unless their contact with the group is well-established and they are able to create a 'holding environment' in which group members dare invest their trust that structure, stability and continuity are secure. An authentic leader must be able not just to accommodate but also to examine the group's anger, frustration and grief.

> The most effective way for a manager to become a leader during periods of uncertainty is by demonstrating an ability to be a listening but decisive and honest communicator. Clever visions do not necessarily inspire people to change but the feeling of being connected to a trustworthy leader and a committed group encourages people to let go and move on (Wilke, 2001, p. 175).

Anti-group formation indicates the absence of the conditions mentioned above. Instead mistrust and distance may be apparent, as the following case report illustrates.

Case report
In the light of the frequent changes in leadership the group finds it hard to show confidence in the leader. When confronted with this observation, they unanimously affirm it. The group wonder why she would take part in this process. They take her presentation of a new organizational plan for the group as a further indication that she neither involves them nor understands their position. They feel that she has only pretended to be listening, but that she is unable to understand and sympathize with them.

Bion argues for the existence of two modes of group functioning, the *work group* mode and the *basic assumption group* mode (Bion, 1993, p. 66ff). The work group mode represents the conscious rational mode of working

with the primary tasks of the group. The basic assumption group is characterized by an unconscious mode displaying group behaviour based on one of three underlying assumptions: 1. *dependency*, 2. *fight-flight*, or 3. *pairing*. When a group assumes the basic assumption mode, this will interfere with their tasks and raise fears of dissolution.

Bion found that the members of a group were often unnecessarily anxious about the unconscious tendencies in the basic assumption group. He believed that it is the therapist's responsibility to interpret and verbalize these tendencies in the group. This would improve the ability to work effectively and rationally as a group (Bion, 1993, p. 66).

By verbalizing their basic assumptions the group members may increase their insight and consciousness, thus developing the group culture and a rational efficient work mode. This is in line with Nitsun's belief in the creative potential of groups. The anti-group is similar to Bion's basic assumption group in two respects: It is a tacit and unconscious mode which makes the group dysfunctional as it interferes with its primary tasks. The projections of an anti-group influence their negative conceptions of management. Anti-groups are characterized by dysfunctional mirroring and negative projective identification (Nitsun, 2006, p. 122).

> In talking of communication we are thinking of all these processes, conscious and unconscious, intentional and unintentional, understood and not understood which operate between people in a group. At one end of the scale are deliberate verbal communications fully understood and responded to, and at the other, symptoms and inarticulate movements. Between these two extremes lie all those modes of expression which are steps in a ladder mounting from one extreme to the other (Foulkes & Anthony, 2003, p. 23).

Relevant intervention in the anti-group thus presupposes that the leader is able to work with negative capability, communication and consciousness in relation to individuals, groups, and organizational processes. As part of the interpersonal and organizational mirroring processes, the leader will be exposed to pressures on the unconscious as well as the conscious level. Awareness of such effects cannot be established by self-reflection alone, but requires help from external partners with experience in psychodynamic mechanisms.

Recent management theory is concerned with the organization of work, with values, attitudes, and how they may foster organizational flexibility and customer satisfaction. Generally, the focus is on tasks rather than on communication about the unconscious processes in the organization. As discussed earlier, there is a risk that dysfunctional anti-group patterns may

develop if the established organizational boundaries are undermined (Roberts, 2003, p. 57).

New Public Management and leader training

Case report
The management of Institution Beta are angered by the staff's lack of cooperation and by the practices and attitudes to working hours and finances that have been uncovered. They approach the consultant for help in handling the changes arising from the merger process. With their NPM-inspired training and access only to tools inspired by NPM, they feel incompetent to solve the problem.

The theoretical rationale behind NPM, a widespread approach to organizational change in the public sector is briefly presented.

Since the 1980s, post-industrial states have sought to modernize their public sector by reforming it from a closed, old-style Weberian bureaucracy towards greater flexibility, efficiency and openness, inspired by the market and customer orientation of private enterprises. These changes have gradually been implemented under the NPM banner, introduced by the British professor Christopher Hood, who described the change and modernization efforts he saw emerging all over the world (Hood, 1991). Rather than constituting a single theory, NPM represents a collage of thinking on management, streamlining and steering mechanisms belonging to a broader discourse on public sector modernization (Hjort, 2012). Leadership and management principles from the private sector were introduced, such as strategic management, the delegation of responsibility to teams, performance management and new finance steering systems. NPM is informed by neoliberal thinking patterned after the Thatcher policies of the 1980s. The rationale is marketization and streamlining of an allegedly overgrown and ineffective public sector in need of pruning, optimization and stricter oversight, implemented through contract management, outsourcing, privatization, free consumer and service choice, control, and user evaluation. Critics of NPM have charged that the result is a technocratic and cold-handed public sector that has prioritized economic efficiency at the expense of democracy and user influence. The reforms have moreover led to further control and documentation, jeopardizing the real task of supplying services to its citizens. The effect has been a public sector where employees are kept busy monitoring control and documentation systems, producing strategy papers and attending feature days, writing reports and organization plans, while not necessarily improving services (Brunsson & Olsen, 1993).

NPM may be understood as an expression of a normative paradigm (Deetz, 2001, p. 11) among organizational communication approaches, positing a functionalist and technico-rationalist economic philosophy as the basis of public sector organization and management. As an extension of Taylorist and Scientific Management ideas, NPM represents a reifying and depersonalizing outlook on management and organization. Its ideas are presented in management discourses supporting a technico-rationalist, economic logic which is supplanting more humanistic and post-modern discourses (Northouse, 2012). Leaders with NPM training therefore tend to overlook relational, emotional, social, psychological and dialogic processes. Opportunities for remedial action are thus likely to be missed, as indicated in the case report below.

Case report

The management of Institution Beta and the leader of Group Alfa agree that the situation in which instructions are not followed is intolerable, and that problems are so massive that staff dismissal should be considered.

However, the disrespect apparent in the leaders' comments both refer to staff as recalcitrant, incompetent, uncooperative, etc. leads the consultant to suspect that the negative transference of the staff is mirrored by the management. The inappropriate, negative transference might elicit a do-and-fix response from management, expressed in a reorganization of groups and changes in the duty roster, rather than expressing empathy in relation to the underlying unconscious emotions. When the consultant points this out to the leader, she acknowledges the impact of hearing about their experiences in front of the group and promises to reconsider her plans. After some time the two informal leaders of the group respond positively while the group expresses increasing confidence in the leader.

While NPM thus offers management tools for measuring and making the organization more productive, it offers no theoretical framework, methods or perspectives for working with and developing sustainable human relations and emotions. It furthermore fails to give leaders tools for participating in dialogic and democratic developmental processes together with their employees.

The researcher role and participatory action research in change processes

Change processes typically aim at the reorganization and streamlining of tasks and processes while at the same time offering citizens better services (Obholzer, 2003, p. 11). The discussed anti-group patterns indicate the risk of projective identification and dysfunctional mirroring, with the

group isolating itself in a self-image formed by the experience of being neither seen nor heard by management.

The dramatic changes in the public sector triggered by the NPM drive have emphasized a distinct managerial perspective. As discussed earlier, this perspective pays scant attention to unconscious, although often predictable processes. For the individual employee, the change processes may appear threatening and provoke anxiety about redundancy or reorganizations for which they do not feel equipped. Such apprehensions are likely to be expressed in conscious as well as unconscious reactions.

In our experience these conditions has to be taken into consideration when organizing the action research process as this will allow an examination of conditions such as e.g. feelings, roles, social relations and group behaviour that play no part in traditional managerial approaches. This would take both management and staff into a field of vulnerability where negative capability is crucial for the creation of a space for dialogue, exploration and reflection. We believe that in studying changes in relations between staff and management from a psychodynamic perspective, the researcher could avoid taking a firm position and show an open and participatory attitude, although this poses the risk that both parties may project anxiety about a researcher bias in favour of the other party. Awareness of positions does not remove power but gives the opportunity to reflect, react, and relate to the interpersonal relations in organizations.

A key aspect is for the researcher to maintain an impartial position as someone who can accommodate positions and examine the interplay in change processes between anti-group and organization, such as the forming of alliances. To counteract such processes, we continuously received supervision during the research process to clarify processes, roles and position in relation to our personal experiences. As the researcher enters the field of dysfunctional mirroring, malignant projective identification, and parallel processes, he or she must carefully observe what is in front of them: unconscious and conscious patterns, participants' experiences of relations, and verbal and nonverbal communication. The researcher's behaviour will be important for the contract between all parties involved, i.e., the group, its management, and the researcher. Signs of dysfunctional mirroring takes the form of suspicion; for example, staff may worry that management will use the research results for their own purposes, that the researcher is commissioned to do a predetermined job, and that they will be given no real say. It is important to achieve insight into our own reaction patterns and the psychological processes in which the researcher takes part. For researchers as well as for managers, it is crucial to have access to coaching in order to practice self-reflection on their own role, attitudes, sympathies and antipathies, on their impotence and dejection in relation to the processes.

Foulkes & Anthony insist on the importance of communication on *mirroring, exchange, free-floating discussion, resonance*, and *translation* for the creation of change, allowing unconscious patterns to be raised to a conscious level (Nitsun, 2006, p. 24). These competences are useful tools for verbalizing the interpersonal processes among staff, management, and researcher. The researcher may have a double focus in the process as attention could be directed simultaneously towards the defined aim and the unconscious and conscious processes in operation, which may influence how the action research develops. Using symbols and metaphorical language may pave the way for understanding on a deeper emotional level, which may direct the process towards success (Halton, 2003, p. 33).

Participation is a dynamic concept defined by the dominant discourse (Fairclough, 2003; Foucault, 1972; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999) between the researcher and the participants, as one of the parties may feel excluded from the process. The researcher should constantly be sensitive to all participants' experience and be ready to encourage open investigation and the verbalization of feelings. This is essential for stimulating participatory processes that allow the expression of emotions and the continuous adjustment of the process (Kristiansen et al., 2012, p. 109).

Practical and theoretical experience has shown us that the success of the change process in this participatory action research on anti-groups is predicated on the following:

1. The establishment of a clear contract that involves all participants in defining ends and means.
2. The researcher's experience working with anti-groups and management in organizations and his or her awareness of how unconscious and conscious processes affect the group. This can be verbalized together with the participants in the research process.
3. The researcher's adoption of a participatory view in a dynamic discourse perspective, i.e., as something that is developed in a continuous process of verbalization, dialogue and alignment of expectations. In order to prevent dysfunctional mirroring and negative projective identification, the participatory aspect should be subjected to continuous reflection.
4. Willingness on the part of the researcher to develop his or her self-insight and bring it to bear on the analysis of own transference and countertransference, and how this projective identification affects the interaction with both staff and management.

Discussion

Further exploration of action research as a method for the study and uncovering of problems in organizational change processes is needed. This study has shown its relevance in a pilot examination of a consultancy assignment. In fact, it was so relevant that the collaboration on identifying the problems led to their immediate dissolution. Developing insight and awareness resulted in reflection and change, eventually making further consultancy work irrelevant. In collaboration with their leader, the group set up plans for further initiatives to improve their work and relations.

The situation was complicated by two factors. Firstly, the anti-group formation and the dysfunctional patterns had been allowed to develop over several years to become part of a culture into which both leaders and staff were socialized from their recruitment. Secondly, the organization was managed according to NPM principles for which the leaders had been trained. This made them feel incompetent to initiate the necessary processes.

The main conclusion to be drawn from this study is that in order to create a genuine sense of participation, the participants should be capable of analysing and practicing negative capability which needs constant awareness and reflection. Whenever the discourse strays away from participant's negative capability, dysfunctional patterns are reactivated and the courage and inclination to participate are reduced. This forces the action researcher and the participants to closely examine statements, their history and emotional implications in order to draw unconscious actions into the conscious realm in which experiences and statements may be subjected to the participants' scrutiny. Another important component of the studied process is the participation that grew from the participants' experience of being respected, accommodated and encouraged to talk about difficult subjects in a way that fostered shared negative capability in the staff group and management.

As researchers, we are experienced in working in minefields of strife and are aware that transference from staff and management based on fear, impotence, insecurity, anger, and dejection must be accommodated and responded to through dialogue rather than by countertransference. The researchers work with our own projective identification and negative capability is crucial for the quality of the process and the establishment of a genuine experience of involvement and participation in the formulation of the problem.

As the first researcher had been hired by management, the question of power loomed in the background during the entire process, making the staff group probe her loyalty on a number of occasions. The power rela-

tionship between researcher, group and management is unavoidable, even if a high degree of transparency is reached. The immanent subjectivity of action research requires transparency, and in working with anti-groups the researcher must be able to identify and bring into dialogue a multiplicity of discourses. The researcher must furthermore reserve judgement on the validity of the parties' statements. To achieve transparency the various discourses and their influence must be analysed and verbalized in the light of the fact that the researcher may be affected by one or both of the parties' projective identification.

Case report
At the end of the process, the management states that the group has undergone a complete metamorphosis; it displays positive energy; everyone is collaborative and ready to listen.

To sum up, the focus of the action research process with the healthcare centre was on identifying ways in which employees and leaders could enter into a positive change process. The case showed typical antigroup traits, with leaders feeling impotent to change the situation. They were on the brink of firing employees because of cooperation problems. Despite the very problematic conditions for handling power and participation issues, the action research process succeeded in helping employees and leaders to work as a team in creating and planning the process and suggesting solutions.

In order to reach this point it was essential that the group and their leaders were helped into an open dialogue on issues that could stop the process. Negative capability proved to be a useful concept, even for highly charged and emotional topics, with strong conflict potential. Establishing an atmosphere of good faith and mutual recognition with respect for each party's roles were key in helping this organizational process preserve the organization's accumulated competences and bring about change for fruitful development.

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THEORIZING PLURIVOCAL DIALOGUE

– implications for organizational and leadership studies

Ann Starbæk Bager

Abstract

The present chapter explores a Bakhtinian perspective on dialogicality and its implications for participatory research processes in the field of organizational and leadership studies. In addition to Bakhtin, the theoretical basis stems from notions from Foucauldian governmentality and organizational discourse studies. These perspectives are elaborated on and implemented to frame, discuss and criticize the methodological basis of a case study which the author helped to initiate: a plurivocal, participatory research-based leadership forum involving professional leaders, researchers, and postgraduate students. The article is merely based on a theoretical and idealistic discussion and does not reflect/document concrete interaction. Through this I elaborate on a new theoretical framework for the understanding of plurivocal participatory research processes.

Dialogicality serves as the theoretical basis for the analysis. The article discusses how the Bakhtinian conception of dialogue offers a particular way of framing power, participation, meaning-making, knowledge production, and identity work in relation to the leadership forum and collaborative research processes in general. Dialogicality is posited as a positive alternative to, and as means for counteracting, mainstream liberal humanistic approaches with dialogue-inducing perspectives of dissensus rather than consensus. The chapter argues that dialogicality demands the cultivation of dialogic wisdom (Barge & Little, 2002) through the enactment of dialogic participation (Jabri et al., 2008) in open-ended meaning-making processes that hold in balance unity (centripetal forces) *and* diversity (centrifugal forces), which are intrinsic to interaction (and the heteroglossic nature of the language of life) (Bager, 2013). The participants are viewed as subjects in processes accommodating diverse and often opposing

voices that produce vision surpluses through the systematic and ongoing accommodation of otherness. Dialogicality is claimed to allow one to retrieve the real (Iedema, 2010 er det Iedema & Carroll, 2010?) and consider the messiness and tensions immanent in (organizational) interaction and the co-authoring of knowledge. This approach carries great potential for challenging crystallized knowledge forms and taken-for-granted ways of doing things (dispositifs and authoritative discourses).

Keywords: **participatory research collaboration, multi-voiced dialogues, dialogism, discourse, emergence, governmentality, leadership communication, knowledge co-production**

Background: The leadership forum

This Chapter is based on a theoretical discussion of a leadership forum, which, it will be argued, is plurivocal. The forum was a part of a wider research project involving three different forums of research-based participatory interaction: (1) workshops as a part of the master's program in communication (see Frimann & Bager, 2012); (2) the leadership forum; and (3) a cross-disciplinary collaborative research team. In the first two forums, all three types of participants were involved. The third forum involved researchers and sporadic postgraduate student participation. The underlying research purpose of the forums was to investigate and experiment with new procedures for setting up educational participatory practices based on principles of pluri-vocality and diversity (dissensus). In addition to this, the aspiration was to co-create new knowledge about leadership communication based on the participants' (theoretical and practical) diverse experience with this topic.

In the present chapter, I focus mainly on the leadership forum held three times in 2012 and some of the socio-political circumstances that influenced the research team's initiation of it, which also shaped the decisions made in the democratic research team concerning how to frame and stage the forum. The consequences of these negotiations are studied and discussed mainly through the lens of dialogicality, supplemented with ideas from governmentality.[30] The project's realization and its socio-political circumstances emanated from the University of Aalborg's (and the Danish government's) agenda of enhancing collaboration between business, education, and research, an agenda that inspired one of this project's initial purposes. We decided to cultivate a relatively untapped potential for cross-disciplinary knowledge co-creation between postgraduate students and researchers from communication studies and professional leaders. Two researchers from the Department of Communication (one of them is the author) at the university of Aalborg initiated the forum together with an area director (and the authors former boss) from a municipality in northern Jutland, and all of us have practical and theoretical leadership experience. We decided to invite a researcher from the department of Philosophy and learning and we recruited a research assistant and two postgraduate students that worked with leadership in their semester projects. The researchers choose 10 professional leaders according to pre-selected criteria to ensure diversity. This diversity is reflected in differences of age, gender,

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30 Exemplifications of activation of the methodological backdrop (e.g. the staging and facilitation of the forum and the consequences of this activation) along with findings and new knowledge produced are displayed elsewhere in my PhD thesis.

experience, job functions, professional areas (ranging from banking, production, and municipal jobs to Danish Defense), and whether they are employed by private organizations or municipalities in northern Jutland. All 16 participants participated on a voluntary basis and with the common goal of learning more and co-creating knowledge about leadership communication in collaboration with others with similar interests.

The initial purpose of the leadership forum was to enact a collaborative, interdisciplinary, and plurivocal forum for knowledge co-production from which participants could generate new knowledge about leadership communicative practices and from which researchers and students could obtain empirical data for their own research purposes. The empirical case was positioned as *dialogic studies* within the field of communication and organizational studies, as presented by Stanley Deetz (1996, 2001), who argues that conflicts and tensions are natural states of (organizational) practices (Deetz, 2001). This positioning indicates that the methodological basis takes a dissensus approach to meaning-making and knowledge production in general. The case study begins with local empirical situations and aims to produce practical knowledge that strives to disrupt the former order and to co-create a provisional order in which new insights contribute to ongoing knowledge production and change (Deetz, 2001). Thus, to reflect/respect the overall aim of plurivocality, it was vital that all researchers could introduce their own theoretical and analytical concepts. We all draw on postmodern and dissensus-based research frames. This plurivocality requires the knowledge and data produced in the leadership forum to be re-contextualized and processed for multiple research purposes from multiple perspectives. This chapter depicts my theoretical re-contextualization of the leadership forum, with my research purposes, as I, for instance, discuss and critique the framing and design of the forum through the lens of dialogicality and governmentality. This article has a merely theoretical purpose, which means that it does not document or involve concrete examples from the concrete interaction in the forum. Through the theoretical discussions I elaborate on a different theoretical and ideological framework. Thereby I retrospectively question some of the assumptions made by the research team and suggest a more fluid and dynamic framing of dialogue and research processes.

The chapter is organized into three main parts. In Section 1, I position the purpose of the chapter within a body of research that questions a mainstream use and taken-for-granted assumptions of "dialogue" in management literature as a solely positive phenomenon and de-romanticizes the power and promise of such dialogic conduct (Phillips, 2011; Phillips et al., 2012). Hereafter the chapter presents my attempt to provide a thorough theorization of communication processes as the means for co-au-

thoring of knowledge. This theorization draws on Bakhtin's and Linell's related takes on dialogism, with a supplementary sketch of implications of this perspective on the theoretical understanding of the leadership forum and organizational communication processes, as outlined by scholars such as Barge and Little (2002), Jabri, Adrian, and Boje (2008), and Bager (2013).[31] This theorization frames dialogue as an ongoing, unfinalized, and tensional meaning-making process that has implications for understanding communication in organization and leadership studies.

In Section 2, I claim that dialogism has affinities with the notion of governmentality and sketch some subsequent research findings, showing that organizations are full of contradictions, for example, tensions between discourses of post-bureaucratic and traditional work practices (Iedema, 2003a). This section also discusses how "leadership" has become an imperative (an authoritative discourse and dispositif), that is, a solution for self-created problems and a fast-running business that produces numerous concepts with attached competencies for leaders to acquire and master. The leadership forum was practiced as an attempt to counteract this tyranny of concepts and to enact leadership development practices in an alternative and plurivocal manner through a bottom-up process.

The first two sections outline dialogicality, related tendencies, and authoritative discourses in the studied field. This outline follows the thoughts of Mikhail Bakhtin: All utterances, dialogues, and discourses are to be understood as a reflection of their *here* and *now* – the situational interaction – and the social world. Situated interlocutors always borrow words/voices/discourses from others (past, present, and future). These notions represent the cornerstone of Bakhtin's philosophy of language, to which I will return (Bager, 2013; Bakhtin, 1986, 1982).

Finally, the third section offers a discussion of the methodological basis of the leadership forum through the lens of dialogicality, showing how this perspective informs and contests some assumptions and choices made by the collaborative research team. Dialogicality challenges the research team's employment of ideals drawn from the dialogic tradition of Action Research. For instance, I will discuss how the use of a theater metaphor positions or locks the researchers as the stage directors and the other participants as the actors when setting the scene for collaborative dialogical processes. This places the researchers in rather elitist positions that have possible non-dynamic consequences.[32]

31 For instance, a Bakhtinian lens on organizational communication can be found in journals such as *Organization*, *Organization Studies*, and *Human Relations* (E.g. see Shotter, 2011).
32 This is elaborated elsewhere in my PhD thesis and thanks to my reviewer, Louise Phillips, for emphasizing the importance of this discussion.

Section 1:

Voices in/on dialogue and collaborative research
Dialogue has become a buzzword to address a variety of challenges in a diverse range of settings. We are currently part of what we can term as an ongoing dialogical turn in which dialogue serves global, societal, cultural, governmental, municipal, research-based, organizational, institutional, and individual purposes. (Deetz & Simpson, 2004; Per Linell, 2009; Märtsin et al., 2011; Phillips, 2011). There are, however, variations in how practitioners, change agents, and researchers frame and enact dialogue and these variations have consequences for the local discursive practices in which they take place.

There seem to be three main positions on dialogue in the 21st century: liberal humanistic, critical hermeneutic and postmodern approaches (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). The liberal humanistic approaches on dialogue, stemming from the works of e.g. Maslow and Rogers, are hegemonic in today's society because they are "found in basic communication textbooks, personal improvement books, and corporate, religious, and community programs" (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). These approaches form a hegemony that shapes the world, from global structures to individuals' lives. (Bager, 2013)

The critical hermeneutic approaches to dialogue as discussed by Gadamer and Habermas represent the second major approach on dialogue. According to Deetz and Simpson (2004 – som der står i litteraturlisten?) these approaches shift focus away from private internal meanings and psychological individuals and foreground interaction and mutual meaning-making processes, which adds an interesting decision-aspect to dialogue. However, the problem with critical hermeneutics is according to Deetz and Simpson (2004) "its over-reliance in a rational model of civic engagement and deliberation" (Deetz & Simpson, 2004).

An increasing number of scholars oppose the liberal humanistic approach's quest to find common ground and to preserve and maintain imagined states of (organizational) consensus. As an alternative, these scholars sometimes take a postmodern approach – which represents the third major position – to dialogue, building on the work of theorists such as Bakhtin and Foucault[33] (Barge & Little, 2002; Fairhurst, 2007, mangler i litteraturlisten 2007; Iedema, 2003a; Jabri et al., 2008; Linell, 2009; Märtsin et al., 2011; Olesen and Nordentoft, 2013; Phillips et al., 2012;

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33 The postmodern approach to dialogue has also emerged from the work of Derrida and Levinas (Deetz & Simpson, 2004).

Phillips, 2011; Shotter, 2011). This postmodern approach views states of dissensus as a premise in human existence and in meaning-making processes with embattled tensions and struggles. (Bager, 2013) In the present chapter the postmodern position on dialogue is described through an outline of Bakhtin's dialogicality.

This body of research indicates that dialogue is often a taken-for-granted positive phenomenon in a wide range of settings throughout society. These voices indicate that dialogues are often associated with expectations of democratic, participatory processes and emancipating practices that make actors believe that suppressed voices are given an equal say in decision-making processes and in the shaping and reshaping of their discursive practices. A further finding in this body of research is that these so-called democratic dialogues are often practised without critical reflexivity to enhance neo-liberal norms that favor common ground, fixed subjectivities, and consensus based on an essential pre-communicative notion of humanness (Bager, 2013; Deetz & Simpson, 2004). Another claim is that many researchers (e.g., action researchers) and practitioners practice these "positive" dialogues in a range of settings without scrutinizing the situational enactments of dialogue and without deep theorization of their communication processes (Deetz & Simpson, 2004; Linell, 2009; Phillips, 2011; Phillips et al., 2012).

So, in this chapter, I align myself with the tendency to question the common use of dialogues and to de-romanticize the power and promise of the mainstream conduct of this use along with the taken-for-granted assumptions about dialogue as a positive phenomenon. As well as I tend to put out a thorough theorization of dialogue and communication processes.

Dialogical/participatory worldview

Following Bakhtin's philosophy of language,[34] a fundamental dialogical worldview takes shape. For Bakhtin, meaning-making is fundamentally a dialogical activity that includes embattled tensions and often-contradictory *consciousnesses/voices/discourses*. (Bager, 2013; Bakhtin, 1982) New meanings, identities, and *authoritative discourses* are shaped and reshaped through mutual, continuous, open-ended, and messy everyday dialogue/ interaction. Consciousness and identity emerge from dialogue and interaction as a continuation and a rejoinder. They do not enter into dialogue from the sideline as fixed pre-interactional entities, as conceived in some

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34 Bakhtin's early work has been classified as philosophical, and his later work is concerned with issues of linguistics and sociology. I will mainly focus on the macro-level of social structures that he elaborates in his later works (Morris, 1994).

of the liberal humanistic approaches.[35] Bakhtin's battle metaphor involves a state (of mind and of social interaction) full of tensions, conflicts, and opposing voices; every utterance "is a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 272, mangler i littarturlisten). These embattled tendencies within language are the *centripetal force* – toward unity – and the *centrifugal force* – toward difference, constituting the messy, heteroglossic nature of the *language of life*. The centripetal forces "operate in the midst of heteroglossia" and "struggle to overcome the heteroglossia of language… [and are] … forces that unite and centralize verbal-ideological thoughts" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 270, samme). The centripetal force invites normative-centralizing systems and unitary languages and doctrines (monologism), whereas the centrifugal force welcomes diversity and alien voices (Bager, 2013; Bakhtin, 1986, 1982).

Viewed through this lens, the liberal humanistic approaches to dialogue can be said to represent the *language of life*'s centripetal forces that are crystallized in society's *authoritative discourses* and they actually promote forces intrinsic to those operating within the *centripetal forces* that strive for unity and an imaginary state of societal (and organizational) consensus. Thus, approaches stemming from liberal humanistic perspectives often do not recognize,[36] the heteroglossic and complex nature of human interaction and (organizational) practices (Bager, 2013; Bakhtin, 1986, 1982). In Bager (2013), I identify the following consequences of this dismissal: (1) a tendency to focus exclusively on the goal of achieving a common ground (Deetz & Simpson, 2004; Phillips, 2011); (2) a stigmatization of the individual by stressing its responsibility in relation to societal and organizational challenges; and (3) a focal omission of the complex and power-laden socio-political organizational circumstances within and from which they originally emerged (Bager, 2013).

The research and previously mentioned voices represent the *centrifugal forces* within language that strive for diversity and allow space for difference by opposing *authoritative discourses* (Bager, 2013). In this sense, new research voices, including my own, can from a theoretical perspective be said to represent and advance Bakhtin's thoughts on the *heteroglossic* nature of the *language of life*.

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35 For further elaboration and documentation on this argument, see Bager (2013)
36 For further elaboration on perspectives based on liberal humanistic assumptions, see Bager (2013).

Third parties and other(s) strange perspective(s)

Otherness, *strangeness*, and *third parties* play important roles in Bakhtin's dialogism, which offers interesting methods of framing and staging multi-voiced collaborative developmental research processes. Understanding the other in the establishment of entangled consciousnesses/voices/discourses/identities implies that meaning-making and identity-work are generally dependent on participation with others. According to Bakhtin, words are always halfway someone else's, and consciousness and identity are shaped and reshaped on the border zone of someone else's in tensional battles among often-opposing voices from without and within (past, present and future) (Bakhtin, 1952). We always "borrow" words from others, and as Linell (2009) states, the outsided-ness of the other establishes a "surplus of seeing" as people who interact with others gain other visions, understanding, and knowledge that they did not previously hold. The other's different perspectives force one to reflect and attempt to understand the other's strange perspectives. In this sense, the other's discourse might function as a counterpoint to one's own discourse, providing the possibility for new insights and enriched individual and collective knowledge and language as we continuously reflect on ourselves and on our similarities and differences with others. Through our inherent capacities for dialogue with others, we become persons (Bakhtin, 1986, 1982; Linell, 2009).

Therefore, we are shaped and reshaped by others' voices from the past, present, and future. This (re)shaping is reflected in Bakhtin's notion of *addressivity* and the *word with a sideways glance*. *Addressivity* indicates that any word/utterance/discourse is "directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 272), and the *word with a sideways glance* requires that we always bear in mind and draw on individual voices and discourse orders from outside the creative event (past, present, and future).

Meaning-making is fundamentally dialogical and participatory; we co-evolve and continuously shape and reshape identity and knowledge in interplay with others. Tensions and struggles are human conditions, and this dialogic tension permits authorial intentions to be realized as the tensions invoke thoughts in the subject. Interaction generates new insights and new shaping of words/consciousnesses/voices/identities; thus, we are fundamentally ever-changing creative creatures. We do not hold stable and fixed identities, as monological approaches imagine. Tensions and contradictions are basic conditions in the messiness of everyday life which does not meet the demands of a linear model of interaction and organization that relies on rational people making rational decisions or on the achievement of a power- and contradiction-free social space. Thus, these insights oppose

the current socio-political circumstances through which neo-liberal rationalities, such as New Public Management (Pedersen, 2004), have started processes to perfect modern organizations and governments. Such concepts are introduced to streamline and control outputs and to create more coherent and efficiency-oriented practices. I will return to the consequences of some of these tendencies in relation to organizational trends.

Dialogism and its implications for organizational and leadership studies

The numbers of scholars who embrace this pluralistic Bakhtinian perspective on communication has been steadily increasing in particular over the past 10 years and play an important role for scholars who engage a social constructionist take on organizations. For instance, these Bakhtinian concepts are represented by scholars who emphasize plural meaning-making, emergence, and multivocality in organizations, focusing on aspects such as narratives, discourses, and storytelling (e.g., Idema, 2003a; Jørgensen & Boje, 2010; Taylor & Van Every, 1999; Shotter, 2011). As such, it is relevant to mention some implications of a Bakhtinian way of framing communication on organizational studies and how this framework differs from traditional communication perspectives.

Barge and Little (2002) state, inspired by a Bakhtinian perspective, that dialogue insists that organizational members "develop dialogical wisdom in order to make situated judgments, within conversation, that respect the multiple points of view and voices inherent in any situation" (Barge & Little, 2002, p. 377). They observe that dialogue, in the earlier dominant organizational literature based on David Bohm's dialogue theory, has been framed "as a highly structured conversational episode that needs to occur when the 'normal' ways of talking no longer address the puzzles, dilemmas, and challenges confronting organizational members" (Barge & Little, 2002, p. 375-376). In other words, dialogue was traditionally perceived as a unique communicational activity and as a certain skill/tool that can be acquired and activated when change is desired. It has commonly been used to cultivate second-order learning[37] and is seen as a particular conversational episode referred to as a noun ("to have a dialogue") rather than an adverb ("to behave dialogically") or an adjective ("dialogic discourse"). The Bakhtinian perspective, Barge and Little point out (2002, p. 376), paints dialogue as a way of being with people rather than an "*abnormal*" communication "type" that is disconnected from everyday organizational practices. It is also a way of thinking through problems and issues. This perspective marks a shift in attitudes toward dialogue as a way of being in

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37 Barge and Little refer to scholars, such as Senge, who draw on a Bohmian view on dialogue.

the world and as the driving power in our immanent capacities of making sense of things. Dialogue is thus a premise in developmental processes and knowledge production.

Dialogicality also triggers an important shift in how one understands participants in organizational change communication processes. As Jabri, Allyson, and Boje (2008) note, "How one communicates depends entirely on whether one views people as participating subjects in the process or as objects of the process" (Jabri et al., 2008, p. 681). These authors sketch how dialogue toward the perfection of organizational practices has commonly been used to cultivate *monologic participation*, meaning that change agents use dialogue to involve participants in agreeing with the main objectives rather than in knowledge co-creation: "the stress is placed on achieving consensus, or in utilizing rhetorics of persuasion (changing intervention and/conversational styles) to arrive at common ground for all (to keep contentious points of view on the margin)" (Jabri et al., 2008, p. 668). These perspectives frame mainstream communication change processes as static rather than dynamic, in which dialogue is treated as an instrument for achieving pre-set goals, and participants are enacted as objects of the processes.

In Bager (2013), I note from a idealistic point of view that dialogism invites "opposing voices and insights in the beauty of the contradictory and heteroglossic nature of communication that allows us to perceive and enact organizational practices in ways that embrace their complex and power-filled realities" (Bager, 2013, p. 3). This type of communication can be achieved through sensitive cultivation of centrifugal tendencies and a balance of unity and diversity in dialogue (Bager, 2013). Thus, the leadership forum can be framed as an attempt to enact dialogic participation (as opposed to monologic participation) by welcoming diversity in plurivocal dialogic processes, through which participants are involved as subjects in the process and as active co-authors of objectives and principles for the use of the knowledge produced.

I understand the above-mentioned aspects as being rather idealistic and 'context-free' and they have to be reflected according to the socio-political and power-laden organizational circumstances. In the following section I reflect on these conditions by supplementing dialogicality with notions of Foucauldian governmentality. Subsequently I sketch some thought-provoking research findings from scholars that advance and draw on governmentality and depict how the leadership forum can be framed as an attempt to address and give space to such critical elements.

Section 2:

Dialogism and governmentality

Although Bakhtin's optimistic take on interaction's creative and generic forces may indicate the *language of life*'s total mobility and individual agency/freedom through complete speech flexibility, it does not usually apply. Authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses are historically created as persuasive and solidified rather than opposing discourses (e.g., religious, political, and moral discourses) (Bager, 2013; Bakhtin, 1982). Bakhtin's notions of monologist and authoritative discourses have affinities to those of Foucault and his take on governmentality and dispositif. (Iedema, 2003a; Bager, Jørgensen & Raudaskoski, 2014). These perspectives can fertilize each other in a constructive methodological research framework[38] to which I will return. Below, Foucault's notions on governmentality and dispositif are briefly sketched, followed by subsequent research findings that outline some of the leadership forum's socio-political circumstances.

In a Foucauldian perspective power is seen as an omnipresent human condition that produces positive and negative consequences. Organizations are viewed as dispositifs that foster certain corporate communicative practices and actions (Agamben, 2009; Bager, 2013; Deetz, 2001; Deleuze, 1992; Foucault, 1995; Iedema, 2003a; Jørgensen, 2007). Dispositifs are seen as "a set of strategies of the relations of forces supporting, and supported by, certain types of knowledge" (Foucault, 1980, p. 196) that "always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject… [related to] … a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient, in a way that purports to be useful, the behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of human beings" (Agamben, 2009, p. 11). Governmentality is in this way depicted as the complex network of dispositifs that seek to prescribe what should take place in concrete situations. The dispositifs are never here, there or anywhere (at the same time as they are everywhere) in the sense that we cannot pinpoint any place or person that we can recognize as the enemy who wants to control and restrain us. (Bager, et. al., 2014). They are closely tied to knowledge and the crystallization (reification) of certain knowledge forms that we take for granted and that direct us in everyday life.

In Bager, Jørgensen and Raudaskoski (2014) we elaborate on new per-

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38 This discussion is thoroughly elaborated elsewhere in my dissertation (Bager et. al., work in progress).

spectives on governmentality and discourse and argue how a Deleuzian reading of Foucauldian governmentality resembles Bakhtin's trust in the creative and generic potentials of dialogue.[39] Deleuze's framing of Foucauldian governmentality points toward the becoming of the new and he sees subjectification as a "line of escape" in which dispositifs are shaped and reshaped. (Deleuze, 1992) By the same token Bakhtin has trust in our innate capacity for being creative creatures and sees every situation as a unique participatory time-space in which new meaning emerges and authoritative discourses can be transformed (Bakhtin, 1986).

Dialogue as an authoritative discourse has also become a dispositif (Bager, Jørgensen & Raudaskoski, 2014). Through this lens, dialogic enactments as management and/or research techniques are not innocuous. These enactments shape the (corporate) subjects, identities, and behaviours that we take into our private spheres. This to provides a strong argument for reflecting on the enactment and consequences of dialogue (as well as any other management technique) to develop (corporate) subjects according to certain rationales.

Perspectives on governmentality in organizational settings
Several researchers have theorized tendencies of power and governmentality among employees as consequences of liberal humanistic management techniques (Iedemaa eller b?, 2003; Rennison, 2011; Rose & Miller, 2008; Rose, 1990; Tynell, 2002). Some researchers discuss how rationalistic techniques and concepts based on hard-core rationales of economics and efficiency are communicated in humanistic terms, such as dialogue, and are served to employees as offers with positive incorporated individual benefits that cannot be refused (Andersen & Born, 2001; Tynell, 2002; Jørgensen, 2007; Waring, 1994). Andersen and Born (2001) demonstrate how employee perfection has occurred over time and how discourses of love have entered the socio-political scene of Danish municipal organizations. They address the ways in which employee articulation has changed

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39 In this article, the forum is studied as a site of Foucault's governmentality and dispositif as advanced/nuanced by Agamben and Deleuze. We stretch the gaze of governmentality into the concrete 'once-occurrent being-as-event' (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 2) by combining governmentality with Bakhtin's and Linell's dialogicality and dialogism. We do a close-up discourse analysis of the forum by using Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) to disclose the "seen but often unnoticed" constraining and enabling forces of the forum. It allows us to study the manifestations of the dispositifs and authoritative discourses and the situational transformation of them as they materialize through the participants' concrete accomplishments and actions. We show how participants get caught up in prevalent discourses, especially how university as a setting contributes to reproducing existing teaching practices, which constrains the plurivocal ideals of the forum.

from impersonal discourses with an emphasis on duties and rights to discourses that enhance openness and personal and mutual relations between employees and employers. This shift focuses on the whole employee in an aspiring power-free organization (Andersen & Born, 2001; Rennison, 2011). Waring (1994) demonstrates how most recent HR concepts are Taylorism transformed. These concepts share the same ambition of meeting corporate rationales and objectives but differ in stressing management techniques, such as dialogue, as positive initiatives with individual employee benefits (Waring, 1994). In summary, these perspectives show how employee personalities have become an object for management and how soft and humanistic discourses disguise hard-core rationalistic and efficiency-oriented ideologies (Åkerstrøm, 2004).

Rick Iedema (2003a) embraces dialogism in his studies of organizational discourses. He identifies how employees increasingly "talk" their jobs and how organizations have adopted rhetoric from post-bureaucratic discourses and simultaneously maintain traditional top-down discourses. This combination creates tensions between the aspirations of the former and traditional work practices, which can be traced through inconsistencies between organizational "talk" and "walk". This phenomenon is also described as *discursive smartness* (see Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011), spotlighting the fact that many (organizational) actors, such as leaders, know what is appropriate to stress discursively but often do/perform other and often contradictory actions. According to Iedema, intimate and personal discourses are used to "bridge the uncertainties of organizational change, rather than for the maintenance of private relationships" (Iedema, 2003a). Iedema (2003a) stresses how leadership/management is messy and tensional and how

> … managers have to learn how to be comfortable with embodying and encompassing multiple and often contradictory voices… like a hologram these managers are in first instance 'discourse absorbers'. Their organizational influence depends less on what they can achieve, than on how well they can mask the disjunctions and chasms that separate the discourses that populate their organizations, and continue as if there is management, as if there is organization (preface XI).

In my master's thesis (an AR project in a Danish municipality in 2007), I uncovered similar aspects. We found that leaders and employees stressed positive discourses from a team model built on post-bureaucratic ideals but performed opposing actions. Further inquiry revealed two things: first, employers and employees found it difficult to understand and translate model aspects into their actual work practices; and second, they knew

that the executive board applauded this particular model's use, and they wanted to keep up appearances. A peculiar finding was that the executive board had exactly the same reservations and behavior relating to the model. With this discovery, we decided to discard the original plan and work with a new teamwork frame that was developed through bottom-up processes.

These findings provide food for thought. The intrinsic aspect of governmentality is that positive discourses present themselves as beneficial through offers for which one can neither grasp the consequences nor refuse. These discourses offer positive individual benefits that disguise less appealing discourses and ideologies and their potentially negative consequences. The positive discourses seem to be empty platitudes, which, on closer inspection, actually disguise something quite different. This cover-up can be seen in combination with Iedema's points demonstrating that management (and meaning-making in general cf. Bakhtin) is messy and full of contradictions and that leaders concentrate on hiding the gaps between opposing discourses to present and maintain coherent and linear appearances. These theoretical and empirical insights leave us with the impression that current organizational practices are subtle and often contradictory. On the one hand, this neo-liberal quest to attain and obtain streamlined and controlled efficient organizational settings and incorporated subjects that neatly follow linear end-goals seems to be a pipe dream. On the other hand, it seems like a turn toward imaginary monologist authoritative discourses and centripetal forces that dismiss the *language of life*'s *heteroglossic* nature. Consequently, focus narrows, and solutions are reduced to simple, erroneous conclusions that fail to mirror the circumstances and complexity at stake in human interactions in organizational settings. These limited discourses neglect the collective social nature of these interactions and thereby generate organizational language use that legitimates addressing certain aspects (those that support their ideologies) but excludes or subordinates opposing voices that represent the other, and often less flattering, side of the coin.

Discursive activism – *grand question* vs. *grand theory*
Iedema (2003a) is not entirely hostile toward the advent of personal discourses in organizational settings; he admits that the post-bureaucratic modality is not necessarily more hegemonic and oppressive than more traditional modalities. He is explicitly inspired by Foucault and Rose in his view of power as not unilaterally negative nor positive but rather dependent on its management and consequences. He notes that what is good for the organization can also be good for the worker, yet he reflects on the increasing "responsibilization" of employees and the accompanying

greater responsibility and consequences on their part (Iedema, 2003a). In selected works by Iedema, he seems to trust a material/multimodal discursive approach to organizational practices to bring honesty and critical reflexivity to organizational practices, which will also expose negative organizational issues that are often not addressed. This approach is supported by his backing of "*discursive activism*", which urges discourse theorists to grapple with real-life problems and become actively engaged in processes of change, thereby moving away from the common practice of distant criticism without active problem-solving[40] (Grant & Iedema, 2005; Iedema, 2007, 2003a, 2003b). Iedema seems to believe that revealing analysis from discourse lenses has great potential to change situated practices and establish a reflective space for organizational aspects that "lie beneath the surface" and often remain unaddressed. The present research seeks to contribute to this emerging field of discourse activism as the leadership forum aims to embrace the complexity inherent in meaning-making processes and in the creation of new and opposing knowledge/discourses in/on communicative leadership practices. To achieve these ends, the leadership forum creates room for reflection and scrutiny of the negative, positive, and contradictory aspects of organizational and leadership issues.

Through the lens of governmentality and dialogism, critical outlooks capture the ways in which dispositifs and authoritative discourses impact our everyday organizational conduct. These dispositifs and discourses direct us in subtle ways, and we must apply a set of analytical/reflexive tools – a certain lens – to discern them. Dialogism and the notion of heteroglossia can guide our perception of reified knowledge forms (i.e., authoritative discourses and dispositifs) in (organizational) interaction and meaning-making toward what Iedema (2003a) has framed as a "grand question" rather than a "grand theory", which shifts focus from finding one explanation and universal truths toward a sensitivity to the uniqueness and open-endedness of interaction, dialogue, and meaning-making. Thus, focus can shift toward meaning, consciousness, and identity in their socially entangled creation through the heteroglossic nature of (organizational) interaction (Bager, 2013; Iedema, 2003a).

Leadership as an imperative
Leadership has become an imperative *and* a solution for self-created problems. When something goes wrong in organizational practices, better and/or more efficient leaders, leadership concepts, and/or competencies

40 Iedema pinpointed the invitation to "discourse activism" in a video-based keynote speech at the 2nd New Zealand Discourse Conference in Auckland, which I attended in Fall 2010.

are often called upon (Rennison, 2011). Thus, leadership and leader perfection have become expanding and rapid commercial machinery, with all its benefits and ills, producing an increasing number of ideal- and competency-laden concepts about the right way of doing things.

In my professional life as a coach, supervisor, teacher, and researcher in the field of leadership and from my own experience as a former leader and leadership change agent, I have met many leaders who experience extreme pressure from within and from their organizational surroundings. These leaders find it very difficult to make sense of the growing number of concepts and competencies and highlight the pressure they feel (more or less from within themselves, cp. governmentality). They do not always find they are able to express their insecurities, and it seems difficult to transfer theory into their everyday professional practices. Leaders also find it difficult to anticipate and assess the consequences of implementing a diverse range of concepts, all of which offer the best/most appropriate leadership practices/competencies. So, it has become quite an accomplishment to be a successful leader in socio-political organizational settings, which are full of organizational contradictions and in which finding one's way through the wide selection of leadership competencies has become an important leadership competency in itself (Renninson 2011).

The leadership forum was initiated to counterbalance and address some of the aforementioned challenging aspects of leadership in today's organizations. This forum also allows leaders to reflect on negative and positive aspects of leadership and the authoritative discourses/dispositifs that emerge from their accounts. In Bakhtinian vocabulary, this forum can be framed as an attempt to cultivate processes of the *systematic accommodation of otherness*, through which participants gain new insights and vision surpluses as they reflect themselves in the strangeness of the other(s). These research-based processes aspire to co-produce plurivocal knowledge about current leadership practices. In the following section, I discuss the leadership forum's design and its methodological outset as decided by the research team through the lens of dialogicality and governmentality.

Section 3:

The leadership forum
Socio-political circumstances and the knowledge produced
As earlier mentioned the leadership forum was initiated by a group of cross-disciplinary researchers from the Department of Communication and Philosophy at AAU and an area director from a municipality in northern Jutland, all of whom have practical and theoretical leadership experience. For several years, we have gathered on a regular basis to reflect on issues of leadership communication and the intersection of theory and practice. The other participants were leaders from various organizations in the north of Jutland that were chosen according to before-mentioned pre-selected criteria in order to aspire diversity. These along with sporadic participation of candidate students from the Study of Communication.

To recruit leaders, the researchers outlined some of the critical elements of current leadership development practices sketched above and offered a forum that addressed these practices. For instance, leaders were invited to account for their experiences – positive and negative – and their *knowing how* and *knowing that* (Ryle, 1945) about leadership. We emphasized the intersection of practice and theory and the involvement of dynamic, dissensus-based, and postmodern communication theories. We also highlighted experiments through which we gained experience – *knowing how* – in relation to these dynamic communication perspectives and the possibility of co-creating new knowledge in/on communicative leadership practices.

So, the project takes place in higher education settings and invites a diverse group of participants; that is, the forum "takes place" outside of the leaders' everyday organizational settings. In this sense, we are not trapped in a particular organization's production flow, apart from those working in academic settings at AAU. One of our advantages is that we can focus on the processes' emerging aspects because of the project's basic experimental character; we do not know in advance what the outcomes will be. In socio-political circumstances in everyday organizational life, such space for experimentation is often given a low priority and/or subordinated in favor of operational objectives.

The participants are invited into dialogue about their everyday practices, which invokes accounts of their experience and their perceptions of their leadership practices. Thus, we do not have access to their everyday leadership practices, only their accounts/discourses about these practices. As such, the knowledge produced is informed by their practice evaluation (which, according to Bakhtin, is a dialogic premise (Bakhtin, 1982)). This

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self-evaluation creates challenges of how to consider the knowledge produced and how to inform the organizations involved. In addition to the emergence and co-authoring of knowledge, the following questions can be continuously reexamined through co-exploration and dialogue:

- Can we harness knowledge and involve the leaders' entrenched and power-laden organizations?
- How do we consider the knowledge being used?
- Can we prevent participants from using the knowledge produced as universal truths (authoritative discourses/dispositifs) about leadership communication?
- How do we ensure dialogue's openness and unfinalizability?

Action Research
Staging of a certain communication activity type
In the forum's framing and staging, the research team decided to invoke voices from the field of action research[41] (AR) because this tradition offers ideals, experience and tools for practice for the creation of systematic seemingly democratic participatory research-based processes that attempt to produce new knowledge through practical and theoretical intersections (Frimann & Bager, 2012; Gustavsen, 1992). More specifically it decided to draw on principles from the dialogic tradition as originated in Scandinavia through the works of Pålshaugen, Engelstad and Gustavsen.

The dialogic tradition of action research
This part of AR seeks to create conditions for change and knowledge production through dialogue and collaboration in which participation is an end in itself. Drawing on the second generation of critical theory, such as Habermasian and Foucauldian theory, these scholars also take a nuanced look at issues of power and discourse, concentrating on the participatory design through which new meanings emerge and local and democratically founded theory is built (Frimann & Bager, 2012; Pålshaugen, 2004a,

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41 Action research is an approach (not just a method, as several misread), or an "umbrella term", that covers a wide range of research programs. Common to most of them is an aspiration "to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 2) through reflexive developmental processes that, at a minimum, engage three elements: research, participation, and action. (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 6). The role of AR is not so much to solve real-life problems as to help and nurture participants to define and analyze these problems, introducing participants to alternative ways of understanding and tackling real-life challenges (Nielsen, 2012). AR ideals are seen as normative aspirations rather than possibilities – a set of norms that the researcher (and participants) can strive to achieve.

2004b). In this dialogic tradition of AR, democratic participation is viewed as an end in itself, and participants develop competencies to undertake democratic dialogical processes. Power is inevitably a part of interaction, but process and emergence are the focus rather than output. A basic ideal is to draw on the participants' work experience and to foster the participant's reflection about which discourses they draw on and which language games they enact and how to change them if appropriate. They also invite organizational members from all levels of the organization to welcome a diversity of perspectives into the decision-making processes. I understand these ideals as an intention to invite many voices and diversity into play.

This aspires organizational development and research to emerge in the researcher-staged processes and provides space for critical reflection and the possible challenging of habitual thinking and crystallized knowledge forms and discourses (Frimann & Bager, 2012; Gustavsen, 2004; Pålshaugen, 2004a). Pålshaugen describes the benefits of such reflective practices: "we reorganize their (own) discourse in ways that make their own use of words more useful for themselves" (Pålshaugen 2001, p. 212).

The traditional theatre metaphor and its model for role allocation were chosen as a result of negotiations in the researcher team. This metaphor positions the researchers as the stage directors and the other participants as actors (Frimann & Bager, 2012; Gustavsen, 2007; Pålshaugen, 2004a). These role perceptions were crossed with Lewin's (1946) principles for action research processes as the basis for position allocation and the research team's staging of the project, as shown in Figure 1.
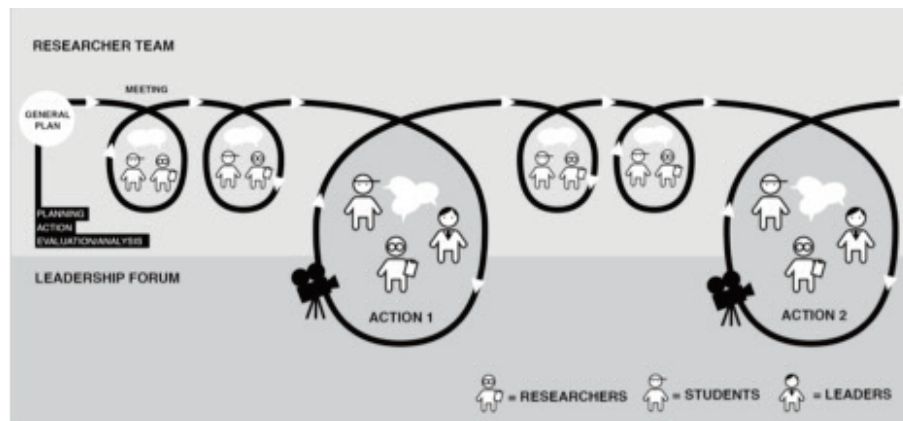

Figure 1. The research process as a series of spiraling "decisions".

The figure paints the research process as a series of spiraling "decisions" made on the basis of ongoing cycles of multi-voiced planning, action, and evaluation/analysis in accordance with the general plan (which can be continuously modified). The entanglement of the research team and leadership forum is evident; the former operates as the (in-between) research *engine room* that directs the process in accordance with voices/discourses that emerge in/ignite the leadership forum. As I will discuss in the following section, this choice of the theatre metaphor can be challenged through dialogic outlooks and replaced by a more dynamic understanding of the emergent nature of the setup and distribution model that can possible nurture less researcher controlled processes.

A Bakhtinian perspective on dialogicality offers interesting differences to the dialogic branch of AR because it demands a nuanced/tensional and dynamic glance at, for instance, meaning-making and the emerging aspects of discourse, identity, and knowledge co-production. As mentioned earlier, the dialogic tradition's heritage from Habermas and critical hermeneutics seems to trust subjects to be capable of making rational decisions in rationally staged dialogical spaces (Deetz & Simpson, 2004), whereas a Bakhtinian lens includes tensions and often opposing voices, along with an interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces, as basic terms in interaction and meaning-making (Bager, 2013). This is supported by the combination with the notion of governmentality, as we will always be caught up in "authoritative discourses", in lines of forces and "dispositifs" that aim to control and orient us according to particular rationales. As already mentioned these forces can be said to be omnipresent premises that we often are not aware of and we cannot break free from but, rather, we can aspire to transform them into new ones by setting up counteracts. So, the before mentioned over-reliance on subjects' abilities to make rational decisions in rational staged dialogic settings is questioned, as this cannot be taken for granted.

On the same note the dialogic tradition's use of the theatre metaphor, in which participant *roles* are pre-determined, can be challenged by a more nuanced term. *Position* highlights the intrinsically dialogic and emergent nature of interaction as opposed to the pre-determined and static character of *role*.[42] The theatre metaphor's attached roles indicate that participants act from a script with certain pre-authored lines. These scripted roles were not, however, the research team's intention; we aimed for a much looser and dialogic setup, through which the distribution model could be trans-

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42 This argument is also evident in the literature on discursive psychology and positioning theory.

formed and negotiated and participants could be increasingly involved in the staging and facilitation of actions throughout the process.

Bager (2013) argues, from an idealistic point of view, for the emerging character of meaning-making and the aspiration to achieve dialogic participation in which participants are attempted treated as subjects in processes that cultivate dialogic wisdom (Barge & Little, 2002). Thus, a possible distribution model and participatory positions can be dialogically and polyphonically negotiated among all participants throughout processes. Through staged dialogue, new knowledge can emerge about how to stage and enact research-based plurivocal dialogue as the means for knowledge co-production in/on leadership communication. This marks a shift away from the traditional focus on privileged researchers toward an understanding of all participants as *co-authors* of such issues. In traditional AR processes within the dialogic tradition, as sketched above, researchers commonly seem to make decisions about issues, for instance, the choice of distribution model and the degree of participation, beforehand.

Participation and power are currently hot topics in niches within AR (e.g. the contributions in *The International Journal of Action Research*). Bloch-Poulsen and Kristiansen Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen som det er anført under References (2006, 2011, 2013) who are also part of the dialogic tradition bring about interesting and relevant problematizations of researchers' management of participation as power-mechanisms. For instance, they distinguish themselves from Pälshaugen and Gustavsen. In their dissensus-oriented dialogic action research they frame participation as power enactment and argue in favor of *co-determination* as opposed to *co-influence*. *Co-determination* requires researchers and participants to co-determine objectives, whereas *co-influence* is related to the part of the dialogic tradition as sketched above. They thereby critique this part of the dialogic branch of AR for inviting participants into dialogue conferences to qualify the background for decisions that are already made beforehand (top-down) (Frimann & Bager, 2012; Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2006). A Bakhtinian perspective and the previously presented *co-authoring* offer another shade to this discussion by introducing participants to an ongoing (re)positioning of themselves, each other, and the way they arrange/distribute the forum that is not predetermined. This *co-authoring* ideal can help match the distribution model and participatory framework with pluri-vocal dialogue. In this way, alternative practices in collaborative research processes, for instance, participation framework and participation positions, can emerge in the ongoing dialogue. This can also give rise to that the degree of participation can be attempted negotiated between the participants and thereby the possible avoidance of "participation conformity" or "participation paradox", which highlights that action researchers

tend to impose their understanding of participation upon the participants (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2013). By inviting the participants into dialogue about such issues transparency and negotiation about the degree of participation can be aspired.

So, an orientation toward co-authoring does not insist on a pre-determination of the prefix "co" as an ideal to enact either *co-determination* or *co-influence*. Rather, it demands an attempt to *co-author* objectives (e.g., content, frequency, and form) as well as the degree of participation throughout the process. This can create a less power-imbalanced relation between researchers and the other participants than the one framed through the ideal co-influence.

It becomes crucial to study the local accomplishments of the forum to see the consequences of the sketched choices as they unfold in the interaction in the leadership forum. This can provide important insights into the practical consequences of chosen research ideals and principles as well as the underlying assumptions of dialogue. It can also open up for a discussion about the researchers' ideals and intentions in relation to the actual accomplishments.

Preliminary open-ended conclusions

Dialogicality offers a dynamic and plurivocal framing of power and participation in relation to organizational and leadership studies in general that requires a change of attitude from monologist and individual-oriented approaches. For instance, the lens of dialogicality offers a positive alternative that incites the researcher to enact *discursive activism*. This activism calls for a *systematic accommodation of otherness* and the cultivation of *dialogic wisdom* in processes that further *dialogic participation*, in which participants are invited as subjects in processes that balance centripetal and centrifugal forces of interaction. These dialogic measures can provide a potential basis for a methodological framework that can contest mainstream authoritative discourses and disposififs about how to conduct collaborative organizational and research-based development processes. This provides a potential methodological framework to set up counter-conducts to some of the critical elements of today's organizational and leadership practices as displayed by drawing on the findings from governmentality studies.

Dialogicality has also proven to be a constructive lens to study and criticize the framing and principles for the staging of the leadership forum as the research team negotiated it. It is applied to challenge the use of principles drawn from the dialogic tradition of AR, including the theatre metaphor as a basis for the leadership forum's distribution model that directs the process and assigns pre-determined roles and scripts. Dialogicality

introduces a framing of participation as *co-authoring* that considers the intrinsically emergent, tensional, dialogic, and often contradictory nature of meaning-making. Co-authoring requires the following from its distribution model: decisions regarding staging and the participation framework (degree of participation), as well as issues of how to approach the knowledge produced, emerge in and out of the ongoing dialogue and, therefore, shift focus from the privileged researcher. This results in the emergence of new participatory positions and knowledge about how to conduct collaborative research, which possible furthers the avoidance of participation conformity and opens up possibilities to negotiate and make the degree of participation transparent through unfinalizable, fluid dialogue and meaning-making processes.

More research is needed to study plurivocal dialogue in action and to explore, for instance, how it is accomplished and what consequences it produces in practice (e.g. in the leadership forum). An analysis that embraces the interactions *small time* (here-and-now) and *great time* (broader circumstances) as well as multimodal aspects of such meaning-making in action is welcomed to expose what actually occurs in such processes and with what effects.[43] It also opens up for reflections on whether the principles and ideals employed actually suit the researchers' intentions of enacting dissensus-based participatory research processes in accordance with dialogic studies as sketched by Deetz (2002 mangler under References).[44]

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43 In the few analyses that I have found that grapple with such talk-in-interaction, the verbal/textual dimension is foregrounded, and multimodal aspects are dismissed (e.g., Olesen & Nordentoft, 2013; Phillips, 2011; Phillips et al., 2012).
44 I would like to address my great gratitude to Louise Phillips for her thorough and detailed comments and review of this article. In my PhD work and in this article I have particularly found inspiration and learned a great deal from Louise's exceptional works and reflections on dialogue and participatory research practices.

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DIFFERENCES AS A POTENTIAL VEHICLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Co-researching-on-action

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Abstract

The chapter describes the early phase of an organizational action research project at The Faculty Office for Engineering and Science/Medicine at Aalborg University, Denmark. By focusing on a simple case of selecting ten internal facilitators, the article first describes tensions among the area managers, employees, and action researchers: Who decides who is to act as facilitators? Second, the article examines whether and how a dialogic dissensus approach can address these tensions in context-sensitive ways where differences serve as an engine for change. This is done through an integration of dissensus and power where all participants practice enactment of power. Third, the article is an example of co-researching-on-action involving four authors: an area manager, an employee and two action researchers. The empirical material for the article consists of audio recordings of meetings, e-mails and a joint conference presentation. Theoretically, the article contributes to a dissensus-based understanding of participation and power.

Keywords: participation, power, dissensus, dialogue, organizational action research

I. An action research project in a Danish public knowledge and team-based organization

In recent years, changes in the labor market both in Scandinavia and on a global scale have meant increasing numbers of knowledge workers and the organization of work evolving toward flatter structures with self-management and team organization (Benders & Hootegem, 1999; Gold, 2005; Larsen, Pedersen & Aagaard, 2005; Nielsen, Jørgensen & Munch-Hansen, 2008). Organizations are increasingly characterized by rapid transitions which require faster reactions to changing environments (Bakka & Fievelsdal, 2010). In the industrial society, a sense of meaning for wage laborers was most often external to working life (Højrup, 1983), whereas for knowledge workers a sense of meaning to a greater extent is central to working life (Buch, Andersen & Sørensen 2009; Eriksen, 2009). At the same time, there has been focus on the possible costs of these changes in terms of increased stress, exploitation, etc. (Barker, 1999; Bovbjerg, 2001; Sennett, 1999).

In many development projects, as action researchers, we have experienced that knowledge workers make different demands when it comes to influence than do industrial workers. Knowledge workers, to a greater degree, seem to desire influence on the formulation of goals for development projects or at least on the concrete implementation of the goals of their team. This is also expected by knowledge organizations. Although the actual form differs from team to team, there are different requirements and issues for development projects in private and public knowledge organizations: Is it possible to develop learning and self-management by addressing the inevitable conflicts and dilemmas between opposing interests in these team-based organizations (Barker, 1999; Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2006; Lotz, 2010; Visholm, 2005)? Is it possible to ensure actual self-management where employees are not merely "running their own race" or are self-managing only on paper (Lassen, 2013)? Does management dare to partially relinquish decision making rights and distribute management of tasks (Elmholdt, Keller & Tanggard, 2013)?

This article is based on an initial phase of an organizational development project. It is an action research project in a modern knowledge organization in public administration, namely, the Faculty Office for Engineering and Science/Medicine, Aalborg University, Denmark. The organization currently has approximately 140 employees—academic, office, and service employees—divided into eleven teams. The project runs from 2013 to 2015 and is funded by the Agency for Competence Development in the State Sector, Denmark.

The organization and the action researchers previously worked together on two projects that were also funded by that same agency. These previous

collaborative efforts have been decisive for the faculty office's choice of action researchers for this project. There was broad agreement in the project working group that the office situation was complex: The organization has worked with values and work culture in the context of self-managing teams for many years. However, a recent shift to a new management structure that introduced area managers occurred without a definition of management and self-management. The background for this new management structure is not discussed in this article. We only want to mention that the process seems to have run on a kind of autopilot where various groups and individuals have acted intuitively given that area management and self/co-managing teams have not been defined.

Confidence in the action researchers has therefore been a key issue. Several action researchers suggest that the quality of collaborate relations is essential if action research projects are to succeed (Bradbury Huang, 2010; Burns, 2007; Olesen, 2014). The action researchers and the organisation have cooperated through various challenges in several development projects years ago. Lone GD, employee, puts it this way:

> For us, the involvement of action researchers was on the condition that it was Jørgen and Marianne because we need someone who knows us and the processes we've been through. This was necessary for us since we felt our situation was complex and did not need external consultants who only observed and directed, but instead action researchers who came in and took part in our work. It was important to ensure that all employees and managers retained their enthusiasm and "dared" to run with the ball and take responsibility.

Since the last project two crucial things have occurred: The organization has nearly doubled in size with many new employees. At the same time, a layer of middle managers, i.e., nine "area managers" has been added. An area manager is in charge of one or two teams. The majority of them were recruited from among the existing staff. For many years, the faculty office has continuously worked with the understanding of self-management, whereas the understanding of self-management combined with management has taken place exclusively in the respective teams. The current project is the first attempt to work organizationally with the understanding of self-managing teams in combination with management. This development is reflected in the title of our current development and action research project: "Framework for learning in self-managing teams in a growing organization" and in the problem statement: "Can the organization be better at creating learning and dealing with different forms of self-management in different teams?"

The organization has extensive experience with project work in co- or self-managing teams where the concept of the self-managing team has been problematized. The project description and the action researchers' initial interview with a number of employees at different levels suggest that it is a challenge to integrate the many new employees into the culture without them just being assimilated into this culture that perhaps can no longer even be considered common.

It is also a challenge to tackle management versus self-management. It is this last challenge that is the focus of this article, a challenge which apparently is also present in similar organizations (Buch, Andersen & Sørensen, 2009; Visholm 2005). Who makes which decisions when there is a new layer of management? These decisions were previously made by senior management, i.e., the director and deputy director, or in the teams and among the employees. Where should these decisions be made today? What are the differences, dilemmas and conflicts that this new management structure can create among senior management, area management, the team and the individual employee?

The current project differs from the previous projects in terms of its organization in two ways. In the previous projects, the action researchers worked as external facilitators and dialogue partners in direct contact with all the teams. A consequence was that the results slowly faded out when the cooperative work ended. This time we decided on another type of organization. Each team thus has an internal facilitator who is an employee working in another team (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). The task for the action researchers is to equip these employees to be facilitators. An important goal is that the organization become better not only at creating learning from unforeseen events, but also at organizing learning processes on a regular basis. The use of internal facilitators should help to anchor results, processes and methods because these individuals have knowledge about the organization that the action researchers do not.

In the previous projects, the action researchers worked with a steering committee consisting of the deputy director and the more enthusiastic of the employees. Here we aligned expectations and adjusted the direction of the project. This time the project is organized differently in that the area manager group is also represented in the steering committee. This raises the issue that is the focus of this article: Who determines how to select and assign facilitators in the context of the project?

II. Aim and points of view

The aim of the article is threefold:
First, it will show how tensions among area managers, employees and ac-

tion researchers are expressed at the beginning of the action research project. This happens in the context of conversations about how the project's facilitators will be selected. The article shows empirically that the co-production of knowledge and decision making with respect to designating and assigning facilitators contains a classic opposition between top-down management vs. bottom-up self-management (Hohn, 2000). The co-construction of communicative space (Reason & Wicks, 2009) at the beginning of a project operates as a process of dissensus, i.e., as differences, tensions, dilemmas or conflicts among area managers, employees and action researchers.

Second, the article examines whether and how a dialogic dissensus approach can address these tensions in context-sensitive ways (see section III). Here, difference functions as an engine for change that may lead to new decisions and routines as well as new forms of knowledge and organizing. This occurs through an integration of dissensus and power; co-learning-in-action therefore includes issues of power. Handling tensions is understood here as a process in which all parties practice enactment of power and speak from specific organizational positions (see section III). The article thus examines whether it is possible to achieve consensus through dissensus. This is done by including the widest possible range of interests and by practicing co-learning-in-action. Here, the different parties – area managers, staff and action researchers – examine possible different interests in the steering committee and the area manager group. The purpose of this approach is to find out whether common understandings and solutions are realistic.

Thus, focus is on the interaction between the different positions of the parties as internal/external and as an employee/manager. For example, what can one say as an employee, a manager and an action researcher, and what is being listened to in the organizational context? Is it the action researchers, for example, who primarily ask critical questions about basic assumptions in the organization – one that in the past was characterized by a flat structure but which is now characterized by an undefined management constellation? Can this structure render the dissensus approach difficult for employees? Which employees dare/want to, for example, criticize a manager who in the past was their colleague, and vice versa?

Third, the article presents an example of co-researching-on-action among the four authors: an area manager (Lone VJ), an employee (Lone GD) and two action researchers (Marianne, Jørgen) who write about their different understandings. This is done based on audio recordings of meetings of the steering committee and area management, e-mail messages between the parties, as well as a joint paper for a conference on human science research in Aalborg, Denmark, in August 2013 (www.ihsrc.aau.dk).

We tell a story about how the selection of facilitators became a "problem" and how that problem was handled. It is remarkable how something as relatively simple as designating facilitators becomes a tension-filled process in the organizational context, especially when we as authors feel there is good chemistry between all the parties, based on the day-to-day work of the organization and the previous action research projects. The initial selection and assigning of facilitators points to a number of organizational dilemmas related to whose reality counts: Who has the power (of definition) to determine how the facilitators should be assigned and who should be selected (Burns, Harvey & Aragon, 2012; Chambers, 1997)? Can this take place in a manner that provides appropriate self-management (the first aim of project)? Is there agreement on what self-management even means – and does there need to be? And can organizational learning, through handling dissensus, be created (the second aim of the project)?

The story is told not only by the four authors but also by the different voices that were also engaged during the process. We thus abandon the position of action researchers as storytellers, with the decisive power of interpretation, in favour of a polyphonic narrative where several narrators each have the power to define their interpretations of the process in a form of co-communication (Letiche, 2010; Olesen & Pedersen, 2013).

III. Theoretical context

This section presents the theoretical context of the chapter. In particular, we will define the dialogic dissensus approach of the project as well as the understanding of the concepts of participation and power in relation to other approaches.

Since the last project with the faculty office, the action researchers developed a dialogic dissensus approach that views conflict and tension as a potential engine for development (Christie, 1977). They would like to develop this notion in conjunction with employees and managers in the hope that it can aid in the effort to create learning and differentiated self-management (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). The knowledge interest (Habermas, 1968) of the action researchers is also to co-create the possibilities of inquiring into the highest possible version of participation or co-determination that might become reality in the organizational context as well as in the action research process.

In political science and organizational theory, there are two divergent perceptions: harmony or consensus and conflict or dissensus (Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Carpentier, 2011; Deetz, 2001; Deetz & Simpson, 2004; Enderud, 1985; Lucio, 2010; Morsing, 1996). According to Enderud (1985), the former views organizations as "stable structures consisting of

well-integrated elements where all the organization's elements have a function". They thus contribute to the maintenance of the organization where "a functioning organization is based on the members' agreement on shared values" (Enderud, 1985, p. 6).[47] The latter conflict approach views an organization as "always changing." This approach contends that "an organization always accommodates dissensus and conflict" where "every element in the organization contributes to the organization's dissolution and change" (Enderud, 1985, p. 6).

In this article, organizations are understood in terms of the second view as tensions between different interests which thus involve issues of power. Conflicts are seen as "disagreements between two or more parties that produce tension in the individual" (Vindeløv, 2008, p. 72) and as opportunities to learn, unlike a consensus approach that perceives conflicts as an anomaly (Deetz, 2001). The dialogic dissensus approach considers the action research process as a study in which opposing interests and tensions can be brought to the table in order to determine whether a new consensus, i.e., a new jointly produced idea, can be a sustainable decision for the time being. As mentioned above, this involves the issue of how power is exercised by the different partners.

This understanding of dissensus is different from a perception where organizations and organizational learning are seen as resulting from a basic consensus, i.e., fundamental mutual interests between managers and employees where questions of power seem to be absent (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Senge, 1992). To put it differently, the project primarily takes an exploratory approach based on the notions that organizations always involve questions of power; that organizations today do not have the same internal coherence and stability as in the past; and that organizational development cannot be predicted and planned (Bakka & Fievelsdal, 2010; Borum, 1995; Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Stacey, 2001). Increasingly, unpredictability or emergence has been put on the organization's development agenda.

The inclusion of various interests and voices in social interaction has proved to be a general principle for dealing with dissensus. We see the patterns that emerge in the social interaction in the action research project as possible examples of patterns in the organization's day-to-day social interaction. We understand them as cultural patterns that act in a sense as parallel processes.

The concept of parallel processes originates from psychodynamic theory and is based on the assumption of unconscious transference. This is where a professional therapist unconsciously repeats themes or problems from

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47 The quotations from Enderud (1985) have been translated from Danish.

relationships to their own clients as the supervisee in relation to a supervisor, or vice versa (countertransference) (Jacobsen, 2005). This unconscious process takes place in parallel with the professional interaction. The term has also been used for similar processes in organizations (Heinskou & Visholm, 2004) where communication in a group is assumed to reflect the same patterns in the organization that the group is a part of. We use the concept in the latter meaning and do not involve the notion of the unconscious in this article. Here, organizational parallel processes therefore mean that what happens in the project may reflect similar processes in the organization, for example, that the organization's dilemmas may play out in the project. Extending the concept, we assume that change and learning in organizations can take place by metacommunicating about these organizational parallel processes. Here, we examine whether it is just a matter of who has "imagined things", i.e., whether there are personal countertransferences or whether there are also organizational issues. A key question then becomes: If there are organizational issues, can and will the organization's managers and employees, in conjunction with the action researchers, discuss these issues and act on them?

The field of power theory includes discussion of the ontology of power (Clegg & Haugaard, 2009). Is power a possession whereby some people – typically managers by virtue of their organizational position – can exert power or coercion over others (Göhler, 2009)? This can occur, for example, through direct power (Dahl, 1961), indirect power (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962) or power through control of consciousness (Lukes, 2005). Or is power based on the ability of discourse to determine what should count as true, valid, etc. (Foucault, 2000)? Following Foucault and Giddens (1981, 1984), we understand power as a basic component of social practice (Giddens) and social relations (Foucault). Thus, the article is based on the assumption that there are no power-free spaces in organizational action research.

The following analysis does not address this substantive discussion, but has a functional perspective: How is power exercised among managers, employees and action researchers in the negotiations in the steering committee and area management in the specific organizational context? This perspective on power is defined as participation as enactment of power (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2011, 2012). In this way, participation is not just a question of involvement, but is about the power to decide whose reality counts and thus whose knowledge will be included or excluded (Chambers, 1997; Cornwall, 2011; Lucio, 2010). The article therefore defines participation as enactment of power and power as anything that creates constraints or opportunities (Hayward, 1998). The article thus focuses on how power works in a specific context and the effects of it.

Moreover, we understand the collaboration between the organization and the action researchers as an interdisciplinary project between professionals in the administration and professional action researchers where everyone – managers, employees and action researchers – is a participant in the project and, as such, exercises power (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2011; Phillips, 2011).

According to Nielsen (2004), in development projects there is a critical tension between involvement and participation. Involvement is understood here as a managerial efficiency tool where employees are involved in the processes decided by the management with regard to streamlining them. Participation is distinguished from this as a more democratic endeavour where employees and managers jointly decide the goal and design of a development process (Carpentier, 2011). With participation, people, in a sense, take part in each other's process. Participation means the highest possible version of co-determination in the specific organizational context. A key issue is therefore whether this project in practice becomes something more than involvement.

IV. Selection of facilitators – tensions, organizational parallel processes and enactment of power

For ease of reading, we begin with a presentation of the individual narrators and an overview of the process of selecting and assigning facilitators.

The narrators:

Lone GD: Employee. Member of the steering committee for the project. Has worked at the Faculty Office for the last eight years and during this period has been involved in both the applications and the steering committees for the two previous office development projects on a voluntary basis.

Lone VJ: Area Manager. Has worked at the Faculty Office for the last six years and during this period was a member of the steering committee for one of the previous projects.

Marianne and Jørgen: Action Researchers. Have worked as consultants for the Faculty Office projects for a number of years and have occasionally consulted on specific challenges in the teams, too.

The process:

It should be noted that the action researchers do not take part in the area manager meetings, but they do so in the steering committee's meetings without being members:

07.01.13: Steering committee meeting
Discussions include the selection of facilitators and the ethical considerations related to this.

09.04.13: Steering committee meeting
Discussions include the selection of facilitators, the ethical considerations related to this, as well as the extent to which area managers are to be involved. No decision on these matters.

15.04.13: Area manager meeting
Discussions include the selection of facilitators and the ethical considerations related to this.

15.04.13: E-mail from Lone S, project manager, to the steering committee and action researchers
On behalf of the area managers, Lone S asks whether the steering committee will accept that the area managers and not the steering committee assign the selected facilitators to the different areas.

15.04.13: E-mail from Lone GD, employee, to the steering committee and action researchers
The e-mail questions the selection of facilitators by the area managers since this effectively negates employee ownership and self-management, which is precisely the main purpose of the project.

16.04.13: E-mail from Lone S, project manager, to the steering committee and action researchers
Lone S clarifies that the area managers wish to assign, not designate, the facilitators.

01.05.13: E-mail from Marianne & Jørgen, action researchers, to the steering committee
Proposal for the process of selecting and assigning facilitators.

08.05.13: Steering committee meeting
The representativeness of the steering committee is discussed. It is decided that the area managers discuss those who have volunteered to be facilitators and assign them.

11.05.13: E-mail from Marianne & Jørgen, action researchers, to the steering committee
Questions the process around the facilitators given that the area managers have begun selecting facilitators with differing degrees of involvement of the teams. As a minimum, the action researchers expected the decision to be made in the steering committee and feared that employees are having a similar experience: they may believe there is self-management,

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but decisions are made in the area manager group, bypassing the employees.

13.05.13: Area manager meeting
The project is not on the agenda at this meeting.

13.05.13: E-mail from Lone GD, employee, to the steering committee and action researchers
Lone GD writes an e-mail expressing the same concerns as Marianne and Jørgen and asks the steering committee to discuss and adopt a position on this at the next meeting, given that Lone GD cannot participate. There is no response to this e-mail.

28.05.13: Expanded meeting of the steering committee, area management and action researchers
The meeting is based on the e-mail from the action researchers and misunderstanding and miscommunication are discussed. Lone GD's e-mail is mentioned only when the action researchers address it. The steering committee will have a decision making mandate (more area managers join the steering committee), unless it is about personnel matters and finances.

The following presents a number of diverging interpretations of this opening. This is not a description of a chronological process but of parallel accounts. As such, we allow different voices to be heard in accordance with the aims of the project.

1. The steering committee as a participant

As mentioned, the steering committee consists of a number of area managers and the more enthusiastic of the employees. Some of the participants were also steering committee members in the previous projects, for example, Lone GD, an employee. An actual mandate has never been formulated and the participants cannot be said to have been selected as representatives of the management and the employees. The issue has more been: who is more passionate about making an extra effort for the project?

As mentioned, in the current office development project there will be internal facilitators such that an employee from one team will be a facilitator for another team. As early as at the first meeting between the steering committee and the action researchers (07.01.13) the issue, as evidenced in the minutes, is:

· How are they [facilitators] selected?
· Can we post some qualifications/attributes that are expected?
· Can those interested volunteer?

· [Can we] Combine a "strict" version focusing on the area managers' assessment of who would be the best, and an employee-driven version where people volunteer? Possibly allow employees to volunteer and then discuss the volunteers at an area manager meeting – we must remember to ensure that the teams are satisfied with their respective facilitators.

The minutes describe some tensions in relation to the selection of facilitators that were discussed at the steering committee meeting. How do you avoid a popularity contest where some who are interested in becoming facilitators are overlooked? Will those who volunteer necessarily make the best facilitators? Who will decide who is the best? The area management, or the team that the given person will be the facilitator for, or...?

Three months later the problem is again up for discussion at a meeting between the steering committee and the action researchers. The minutes (from 09.04.13) state:

> How are facilitators designated? … Area managers can discuss with their team who would like to be a facilitator. The facilitators must have the support of their area manager to take on the task. The area managers send the names of the employees to Lone S [project manager and thus head of the steering committee]. She sends the overall list to all the areas that then may select 2 to 3 names on the list. The desired names are sent to Lone S and the steering committee for the final designation. It is not certain that all the desired selections can be accommodated. The area managers are asked to address this issue simultaneously with the material being sent out.

The project manager presents this suggestion at a meeting of the area manager group on 15.04.13. The same day, she sends an e-mail to the steering committee and the action researchers:

> Dear all!
> Today at the area manager meeting, I gave an update on the office development project and it was actually really good to hear the perspectives of the area managers. They had a lot of good input of course, and I could use some additional feedback from you:
> Will it be OK if assigning facilitators to the areas is determined by the area managers instead of by the steering committee/NMO [= Niels, Faculty Director]?
> The concern of the area managers was that someone might be discouraged from volunteering to be a facilitator if they were in sort of a "popu-

larity contest" where each area would choose from among the selected facilitators...

What do you think about this?

As is apparent from these minutes and e-mails, the designation of facilitators involves tensions and dilemmas. Overall, these are about the degree to which it is possible to combine self-management and area management.

2. The area managers as participants

The above shows how the project manager conveyed the decision of the area managers and the director to the steering committee. In the minutes from the same area manager meeting, the following also appears:

> Designation of facilitators: All [area managers] should submit "a number" (1-3) as soon as possible. You can get a person from the steering committee to help inform your team about it. Subsequently, the steering committee decides how the specific designation of the 11 facilitators will take place. The key focus here is to make sure that no one feels unduly exposed.

The area managers appear, too, to be concerned about the risk that employees would feel exposed, and that they will leave the actual selection process to the steering committee.

As indicated above, there is uncertainty about the distribution of tasks. Overall, there is strong support for the project and a general understanding in the management group that it is important for the organization to work with values, self-management and learning. The director often expresses that we should be an organization "in motion" and places great emphasis on value-based management. At the meeting of 15.04.13 where the area managers and director discuss the designation of facilitators, there is first a general discussion of the project. The area managers are very aware that there must be managerial ownership of the project and take a positive view toward the project being able to create value. In relation to the specific problem of designating facilitators, the management is concerned with the ethical dilemma surrounding the risk that employees will feel exposed if they volunteer to be on a list where the names are freely available to all. At this point, it is not clear to the management group that this concern is shared by the steering committee, which is why this consideration comes to dominate the meeting.

The decision is made that the area managers must inform their team – possibly with the help of a member of the steering committee – about the opportunity to be a facilitator; that they should submit a number of names

to the project manager as soon as possible; and that the steering committee should proceed with formulating a process. This happens after a brief discussion that is action and solution oriented and where it is taken for granted that the area management has decision making capability in the matter. The conclusion is apparent from the minutes, but as the further process shows, there have been different interpretations and the process continues to be marked by misunderstandings.

3. The employees as participants (1)

Parallel to this, the discussion of the dilemma of management vs. self-management continues in the steering committee. In her e-mail of 15.04.13, Lone GD, employee, replies to the e-mail from Lone S, project manager, the previous day:

> I can certainly understand the point about the popularity contest; I wasn't too happy about this either BUT...
>
> I actually think that this proposal from the area managers hits the nail on the head with respect to the main point of the project. How do we ensure active, self-managing employees in autonomous teams, but with area managers ... Aren't we shooting ourselves in the foot AND contradicting our point in the application [of the importance of self-management] if we negate employee ownership by going directly to the area managers and letting them be responsible for designating facilitators?

Lone GD speaks as an employee here in favour of participation and not simply involvement in the decisions of the area managers. Is it becoming automatic in the organization that decisions make their way "up" and land on the desk of area managers?

The action researchers think that perhaps a meeting between the area management, the faculty director, the steering committee and the action researchers is the appropriate way to deal with the dilemmas surrounding the selection and designation of facilitators. This is also mentioned by Lone S, project manager, in a reply e-mail the following day (16.04):

> Hi again!
> Just to clarify – the area managers did not wish to designate the facilitators, but to help to assign them to the areas [the teams].
>
> If we are to have a meeting with the area managers and Niels [faculty director] before the designation of them, it must be scheduled very soon...
>
> What do you think about both issues?

Like the last time, Lone S concludes this e-mail with a question that involves the steering committee in the decision making process. There is agreement in the steering committee that the issues must be addressed at a new steering committee meeting on 08.05.13.

4. The action researchers as participants
In preparation for this meeting, the action researchers send an e-mail of 01.05.13:

> Dear steering committee,
> We can certainly understand that the area managers want to be responsible for assigning (not designating) the facilitators so that there will be an optimal match based on the knowledge they have of the facilitators and teams, thus avoiding the popularity contest mentioned in the e-mails (15. and 16.04).
>
> This leaves the question of who should designate (how many) facilitators:
>
> Our proposal is that each team designates one facilitator from its members in conjunction with the area manager. This means that all the selected facilitators function as such since the number of teams and the number of facilitators are then identical. The weakness of this proposal is that there could be 2 to 3 likely facilitator-candidates in one team that are both willing and able, and none in another. A counterargument to this weakness would be to claim that anyone can learn how to be facilitator ... We are sceptical about that.
>
> On the other hand, if we said that each team could choose up to 2 facilitator-candidates, then there would be up to 11 that would be "overlooked" in the final designation that the area managers have to make. This perhaps would give us better facilitators, but we cannot find ethically appropriate arguments for doing so ...
>
> All things considered, this selection process says something about the limits of dialogue in organizations.

At the steering committee meeting with the action researchers on 08.05.13, it was reported that the area managers, in various ways, had already begun selecting and assigning facilitators within and to the different teams. This made the action researchers reflect on their own status in the development project. This subsequently led to this email (11.05.13) to the steering committee, where they continue to define how they understand the process:

Dear steering committee,

Reflections on the steering committee meeting of 08.05.13

At the previous steering committee meeting (09.04.13), we discussed how the facilitators should be selected, including the extent to which the area managers should be involved. Nothing was conclusively decided apart from including this issue on the agenda again for 08.05.13. Previously, we had taken the time to prepare and send a proposal where we argued that each team should provide one facilitator. At the meeting, it became apparent that teams of 3 to 4 members did not have the same opportunity to provide a facilitator as team of 12 to 18 members. This is a good argument against our idea, but we see the main problem as something else: Area managers had apparently already begun to select facilitators with different degrees of involvement of the teams. We got a sort of 'why bother' feeling: why should we prepare a proposal and be ready to discuss at the steering committee meeting how the selection should take place? We can live with that, even though we spent a few hours in vain, but it suggests two things we think are worth discussing:

A limited learning environment?

The first is that we fear many employees may be having a similar experience. They are working under the impression that they have influence, but the decision is made without them and their input. This seems to us to limit initiative and learning. Methodologically, our fear is based on the notion of transference – something that will also be important for facilitators to be aware of in relation to the team they will be working with – i.e., the fact that, for example, a management relation to employees is transferred as a similar relation to us as third party action researchers. If our fear is true, it is certainly something that needs to be worked on in this project as this is about creating an environment conducive to learning.

A merely advisory steering committee?

As mentioned, during the meeting we indicated that conditions suggested an unclear relation between the (area) management and the steering committee. We will have to realign expectations. Is the steering committee merely advisory or...?

In the above two emails, the action researchers practice enactment of power where they make use of power to define and include how they perceive the tensions involved in the selection of facilitators. Therefore, they do not understand participation as simply making themselves available to others, i.e., the faculty office development process. In their view, this would reduce them to consultants and facilitators. As action researchers, they are seeking to achieve co-determination with respect to the project's

objective of learning and self-managing teams. They thus see organizational action research as a dialogic dissensus process that continuously critically examines what qualifies as truth, i.e., as practical, sustainable decisions and as theoretically valid knowledge in accordance with the aims of the project.

Marianne & Jørgen's e-mail is based on an assumption of organizational parallel processes where they ask whether the area managers are transferring their manner of relating to the employees to their relations to them as action researchers. In practice, they experience that they are excluded. At the same time, the e-mail raises a question as to whether area management exercises direct power (Dahl, 1961) and whether this is working counterproductively in relation to the project's aim of a learning-conducive environment.

5. The employees as participants (2)

Lone GD, employee, sends an email to the action researchers and the steering committee a few days later (13.05.13):

Dear steering committee,
Unfortunately, I cannot participate in the next meeting, therefore this e-mail.

I agree with Jørgen's and Marianne's reasoning. I am mainly concerned about the relation (learning, self-determination and space in general) between the area management and the employees, and the implications this has for self-management, management and well-being (in the project as well as in our day-to-day work). This was also reflected in our application phase where I felt that a great deal of the decision making and control lay with the area management, which is not in line with my view of self-management. We ultimately modified this somewhat, but our problem over and over again, seems to be about this – our understanding of self-management in a space with area management and self-managing teams. Naturally enough perhaps, this understanding seems to be different in the steering committee as well. Nevertheless, this is something we should address and clarify, for example, with the following questions:
· Is it right and desirable that we suddenly refer to a management style where only the area managers, for example, are capable of selecting facilitators and thus evaluating different employees?
· Is it right and desirable that we use area managers and not, for example, other employees as the mouthpiece and success criterion for the implementation and execution of the project? And how do our own processes and focus in the project interconnect with the desire for self-management?

Since it is mainly the area managers who are being consulted in this process, the process itself is very influenced by this and the employees seem very removed. This was not the intention and I have a feeling that we might be heading in a direction that is not the intent, and where our understanding of self-management is not clear or is running on "auto pilot." I would venture to suggest that our understanding of self-management has been coloured by what we hear from the area managers and management in general. In this "auto pilot mode" the employees are no longer consulted and I do not think this is right or desirable.

I hope you will discuss this further with Jørgen and Marianne. My goal is to ensure that the self-management/co-determination rights of the employees are maintained and made visible, both in the day-to-day work as well as in the development project. In addition, that we are explicit and especially question our own understanding of self-management and the involvement of employees as well as area managers – an understanding that, with the help of Jørgen and Marianne's e-mail, I see as a bit one-sided and unfortunately coloured by only having gone through the management and not the employees.

In her e-mail, Lone GD defines her view of reality from her perspective as an employee. She can therefore also be said to be practicing participation as enactment of power. In the steering committee, Lone GD has previously mentioned her doubts about the process and the distribution of tasks, but there has not been consensus on this. It has therefore been difficult to articulate this and include it in the actual application. The action researchers' e-mail with questions for the steering committee and area managers confirms her experience. As the authors of the article, we think that this process raises questions about the importance and necessity of including action researchers who can address these difficult and sensitive topics, since it is unlikely that the organization itself would have been able to address and handle its dissensus, i.e., conflicting interests and viewpoints.

V. Expanded meeting of the steering committee 28.05.13.

The steering committee convened an expanded meeting of the area managers, director and action researchers on 28.05.13. Prior to this, there was a meeting of the steering committee on 08.05.13. Here it was decided that the representativeness of the steering committee should be discussed at the upcoming meeting with the area management:

a. How do we ensure that the steering committee has sufficient decision-making capability? Should more area managers participate? Should more teams be represented?

b. There must be enough formalization such that the steering committee can actually serve as a steering committee, but not so much formalization that the steering committee can only do what has been previously decided.

We see this agenda as an example of the steering committee's enactment of power. The steering committee does not wish to act only as a coordinating body, but also as a group that can make decisions and have an impact on the project. The action researchers have contributed to this process by defining how they perceived the tensions surrounding the selection of facilitators. This is also evidenced by their internal reflections prior to the expanded steering committee meeting.

> …Marianne proposes that there be a permanent agenda item for the steering committee called: "Ongoing alignment of expectations between area management and the steering committee" or How is it going with handling differences in the group? In other words, we believe that the differences between area management and employees are also present in the steering committee. As far as we can see, this would be an example of learning-conducive dissensus organizing …
>
> We also want the area management to be represented in the steering committee such that decisions can be made in the steering committee that need not be submitted for area management approval first. In this context, we propose that regular meetings like this be held where we align expectations and adjust the course.

At the meeting of 28.05.13, the steering committee therefore wishes to discuss these points with the area managers:

· How do we ensure that the steering committee has sufficient decision-making capability?
· How do we ensure the best possible alignment between area managers and the steering committee?

The action researchers' e-mail on the learning environment is attached as an appendix to the agenda. They notice, in contrast, that Lone GD's [employee in the steering committee] e-mail from 13.05.13 is not attached as an appendix. It turns out that Lone GD has not received responses to her e-mail. In Marianne & Jørgen's internal reflections prior to this expanded meeting they wrote: "Is this how culture marginalizes dissensus from em-

ployees? Does this mean that learning is reduced because employees become accustomed to criticism not being taken seriously but simply ignored?"

Studies of learning-conducive conditions in organizations point out that "acceptance of differences can be fruitful" (Clematide & Jørgensen, 2003, p. 3). The action researchers also notice late in the process that the issue of selecting facilitators is not listed as a separate item on the agenda. Bachrach & Baratz's (1962) concept of indirect power or non-decision focuses on what is excluded in advance of the meeting. Is this a case of indirect power, i.e. exclusion, or is this just a coincidence?

Nine area managers, four members of the steering committee and the action researchers take part in the meeting.[48] The meeting begins with different points of view on the framework for the steering committee and the project. Kristian, the deputy head, expresses an emergent perspective. He doubts that one could have described the framework for the steering committee prior to the project. Nina, an area manager, states as a condition of her support that both area managers and employees feel involved.

At the meeting, the action researchers propose that area managers come together in one group and indicate when they will be involved. Annette, an area manager, supplements this suggesting that the steering committee clarify what they want from the area managers. The action researchers are asked to make suggestions regarding what to do if or when an area manager or a member of the steering committee feels stepped on. In this way, the meeting is an example of dissensus organizing where different interests are discussed (Kristiansen & Bloch-Poulsen, 2010). This first takes place as dialogue in function-differentiated groups consisting of the area managers, steering committee and action researchers, and then across these groups in the plenary.

After the group work, the area managers and the steering committee present the results of their work. The area managers would like as broad a framework for the project as possible, and for the steering committee to involve them in personnel matters or anything that affects a team's finances/resources. They emphasize that they would like to support the project and therefore be involved in order to ensure commitment to the project. The steering committee would like support, trust, mandate, mutual information and timely response to e-mails from the area managers.

The action researchers propose the creation of a mailing list for the area managers, steering committee and action researchers so that anyone can

48 The meeting was unfortunately not recorded on audiotape. The section is based on field notes, meeting minutes and the authors' experiences.

respond within a short time, if/when there is an unforeseen event. Like Kristian, they expect that we cannot avoid these kinds of emergent events in the project and therefore propose that we learn from them in order to promote the learning environment at the office.

Discussion of the next items, which are not on the agenda, is initiated by the action researchers. All of them deal with questions that have come up before the meeting, i.e., about non-decision processes that might contain tensions.

Marianne mentions that Lone GD's e-mail, which came in the wake of the reflections of the action researchers, is not on the agenda, and that apparently, it has not elicited comments from the others in the steering committee. Unlike the e-mail from Marianne & Jørgen, Lone receives no response to her e-mail. Marianne is practicing enactment of power here by articulating a seemingly invisible problem. Marianne & Jørgen begin here to get the notion that disagreements meet with silence in the organization.

Lone GD says she feels that there has been a shift in the understanding of self-management following the introduction of area management. Compared to the previous applications Lone GD has felt less involved in the formulation of this application and has furthermore found it difficult getting an actual employee perspective across. Seen from Lone's perspective, the lack of definition of management and self-management manifests as a precautionary principle where, for safety's sake and in order to avoid making mistakes, everyone seeks answers in management and not in themselves.

Jørgen is also practicing enactment of power by highlighting that he and Marianne, as action researchers, were very surprised that, in advance of the meeting, they received an e-mail with the names of the facilitators selected. The action researchers had expected that this selection was on the agenda today. Lone VJ, area manager, says she did not read the document from Marianne and Jørgen, and that this is completely new to her. Annette, another area manager, says that she thinks these are simply misunderstandings. At the area manager meeting in April, it was her understanding that it was up to the area management to select facilitators. They did not care for the pillory or popularity contest that they thought the steering committee's proposals for the selection of facilitators could become. Employees should volunteer and perhaps be deselected/excluded later.

Marianne and Jørgen's interpretation prior to this meeting, that their views were perhaps being excluded, does not seem to hold true in Annette and Lone VJ's perspectives.

The organizational learning drawn from the meeting is:

· In the future, the area managers will make every effort not to act toward the steering committee in a way that may be interpreted as overruling.

· The area managers will make sure that they are adequately represented in the steering committee so that the steering committee has decision-making capability. Two additional area managers will therefore be on the steering committee.

· The adoption of a "contingency plan" with an obligation to reply within 24 hours to the area managers, steering committee and action researchers in connection with unforeseen events: "if someone feels stepped on."

The expanded meeting of the steering committee is thus an example of handling tensions through dissensus and of participation as enactment of power. All parties involved – area managers, steering committee and action researchers – help to define how they see joint cooperation in the future. This results in the inclusion of everyone's suggestions in a consensus proposal that forms the basis for the ongoing project. During the meeting, it turns out that the ambiguities surrounding selecting and assigning facilitators are apparently also due to misunderstandings in communication.

The exclusion of an employee's point of view, however, seems rather to be about exercising power where dissenting views within the organization seem to be met with silence.

VI. Conclusion

In relation to the first aim of the article, we have tried to show how dissensus occurs in an organization, even when it comes to "little things" like the selection of facilitators. Dissensus was especially evident in the different voices of the employees, managers and action researchers.

In their pragmatic action research approach, Greenwood & Levin (1998, p. 12) are similarly critical in relation to a consensus understanding:

…we are suspicious of approaches to AR [Action Research] that seem to privilege the homogeneity of communities or consensus-based decision making, believing that such approaches open up to great potentials for co-optation and coercion.

In relation to the second aim of the article, we have tried to show whether and how a dialogic dissensus approach was able to handle tensions between management, different employees and action researchers on the issue of

selecting facilitators. This resulted in a form of organizational learning that entails that the management will make effort not to act in a way that can be construed as overruling; the steering committee will have the necessary decision-making capability through management representation; and that "unforeseen events" will be a permanent agenda item at the meetings of the steering committee and area management so there can be a quick response and additional organizational learning when someone feels stepped on.

The analysis of the process showed that dissensus is about different forms of enactment of power. It is therefore only possible to address dissensus by addressing issues of power. The process also pointed to a possible power pattern in the organization which had to do with employee disagreements and criticism being met with silence. This pattern became apparent through a parallel process.

In relation to the third aim of the article, it has been knowledge-producing for an employee, a manager and a pair of action researchers to co-author the article. It was only during the discussions in the writing of the article that it became clear to us how complex it was to keep various interpretations apart from each other. We thus created a fusion of horizons in Gadamer's (2004) sense in that we came to the understanding that there were so many possible interpretations that the likelihood of a shared understanding of the procedure for selecting and assigning facilitators among area managers, employees and action researchers must be said to be pretty close to zero.

On the other hand, it concerns us that the action researchers, and not the organization itself, are addressing these differences. This raises a basic problematization of the entire project: The research question is about whether attempting a dialogic dissensus approach could advance the organization's desire for more self-management and learning. But what if the organization is not prepared, so to speak, to discuss its dissensus, i.e., to put differences, disagreements and conflicts on the agenda (moreover, which organization is prepared for that?). This project appears to show that the organization meets criticism with silence. Will it then be possible for internal facilitators to inquire into these differences while also being colleagues? Why should it be less difficult for them to inquire into differences? We will address this in the ongoing project, in the hope of contributing to the further development of the framework for self-management and learning.

Epilogue

The original article ended here. Subsequently, we decided to send it to

Lone S, project manager, to hear her response to the way she was presented in the article. Lone S brought her colleague, Jacob, to an interview with Marianne and Jørgen since she and Jacob had regularly discussed the challenges in writing the application and selecting facilitators. They are both employed in the management secretariat.

The interview confirmed our conclusion regarding the third aim that in an organization it is unlikely that you arrive at one truth, i.e., one interpretation that everyone understands the same way. In the following, Lone S and Jacob thus contend that, in their view, the employees wrote the application.

On the other hand, the interview with Lone S and Jacob problematizes and complicates the article's conclusion regarding the second aim that deals with whether the silence that meets employee disagreement and any criticism is due to the organization's culture or something else entirely.

The interview raises a number of questions:

Who wrote the application?

The first question concerns who writes the application, i.e., who has the power to define the aim of the project?

> *Lone S*: "If we now say that this is the third office development project since we last collaborated with you [Marianne & Jørgen] then the three projects were written in the same way. It's me, an HR employee, who took on the responsibility that they were written ... When I started, one of the managers said: "It's great that you've come because you'll be the project manager on the next office development projects." So I always thought that it was my role ... And I think that this is always something that is enormously difficult, because you are seldom aware of the need to align expectations about who writes what until afterwards: "Hey, that was a good idea!"I thought it was going to be like it was in the last two projejcts. And it is the applications I was in charge of writing, and they were written in a project group ... And along the way I involved the area managers, but we also asked all the employees: What do you think?"

Lone S's statements relate to the aspect of the article's second aim dealing with unforeseen events. Lone S says it is only afterwards that you realize the need to align expectations. According to Weick (1995), sensemaking occurs retrospectively, i.e., meaning is first constructed once an event has taken place. A key point here is that the unaligned expectations that underlie unforeseen events only become apparent once the event has occurred.

Jacob follows up by emphasizing that in his view the application was employee written:

Jacob: "I think that [the application for] the office development project was written exclusively by the employees. Admittedly, Kristian [deputy head] was in the writing group, but that was because there was supposed to be financial oversight within Niels' [faculty director] framework. He never vetoed or wrote anything in the application itself, with the exception that he approved the description of the finances. So I think that it's a very important point that this is an employee written project. There were no area managers in the original writing group. We just consulted with the area managers when we reached a certain point in the writing process – that is my way of working.

Lone S: "And it's also mine and it's something that I learned from the two previous projects I've been a project manager for because you don't make much progress if the management isn't with you."

What does it mean to consult with the management?

Jørgen: "What does it mean to discuss things with the management or have the management with you? Does it mean that they are the ones who decide, or are they kept informed, or do you engage in dialogue, or what?"

Lone S: "Well, we interviewed some of them and asked: "If it were up to you, what would this office development project be about?""

Jacob: "For me it means that I use my tactical competence. So I'm not just asking open questions and using a microphone. I have an idea of what I want from the managers ... And we lacked the managers' angle on this. So admittedly, it's to get their input, but also to include them as partners. They were consulted so that everyone could feel included. And if we had been running things ourselves in the writing group then everyone could have felt excluded ... So there's clearly a tactical element."

Lone S: "We also did it because we also had to find a theme that made sense to them. Otherwise, it would not have been a realistic option.

Jacob raises an issue that has not been touched on in this article: relating in a tactical manner, in this case, to the management in order to include them as partners. Dissensus is about bringing differences out in the open for discussion. Jacob's point of view raises a key question for our dissensus

approach: to what extent is dissensus at all possible in the tactical games of organizations?

Who do you represent as employees in the management secretariat?

> *Marianne*: "But someone could also be in doubt about who the two of you represent? Now let me just check a perception. Are you employees, or what does it mean to belong to the management secretariat. Are you an arm of management or what?"

> *Lone S*: "My answer would have to be that it's a kind of neither or both. I started as a project manager, and thought that I certainly can't be a project manager on a project that I don't have management support for. But I don't think it's necessarily related to the fact that I'm in the management secretariat. It's due to the fact that I know Niels [faculty director] extremely well. So in that way there's probably also a tactical aspect. I haven't thought about it, but I know well what I need to do to have Niels' support … And then I'm probably also extremely naïve in thinking that there isn't this great contrast between the management and the employees here. We have the same goals and desires. We want the same things."

Lone S argues that managerial support is necessary if a project is to be successful in an organization. Her point of view, which is based on experience from previous projects, is confirmed by many studies, for example, Smith, Kesting & Ulhøi (2008).

What does silence mean?

The conclusion of the article's second aim was that the silence that Lone GD's e-mail met with at the meeting of the area management, steering committee and action researchers, was an expression of an exclusionary exercise of power. We interpreted it as such that it was relevant to ask whether it is characteristic of the organization that criticism is quashed by silence. Lone S and Jacob have another interpretation. They agree that a reply was not given, but they discussed the e-mail. Lone S and Jacob reason as follows:

> *Lone S*: "I was probably a bit puzzled over the e-mail where she problematized things so much. And afterwards I think: I wonder if that was why there was no "official response," that is, it wasn't something I perceived as extremely important. I didn't experience any urgency. I can re-

member that we, Jacob and I, talked at the office: What do we do with this?

Jacob: "My explanation for my lack of response is entirely pragmatic. When I look at how many e-mails I answered in that period, I was simply doing something else. It would have taken two hours to respond properly. And so I went on with doing something else."

Marianne: "I remember the meeting [with the steering committee and area management] where the e-mail from Jørgen and me was discussed. You didn't comment on Lone GD's e-mail. And that's why we're asking whether criticism is met with silence in the organization, because I don't know what is being discussed among you back stage."

Jacob: "But where I think it's interesting is the question: Is this silence as a kind of power, or is it "just" because you are thinking or doing something else?"

Marianne: "But the interesting thing is that when you don't write an e-mail or don't say anything then it can be interpreted like that ... And you've done a lot of thinking about replying to an e-mail, Jacob, and all that doesn't get said. Jørgen and I, we just enter the picture and see that an employee doesn't get a reply to her e-mail, and so we of course think, "What's going on there?" And I think that complexity should be represented in the article. Something happens front stage at the meeting, but then there's a hundred other things in the back stage."

Jørgen: "So at least to us there are a lot of invisible subtitles."

Jacob: "Another element, which I've also talked about with others in the organization, is that sometimes you just change your focus because what is said or written doesn't have such a high priority for you."

Jørgen: "So it seems as if sometimes there's a "reasoned silence" where you just re-focus and where we can ask whether we should have meta-communicated about it, but this might feel like just a bit too much?"

We can well understand that it can feel too much to say during a meeting or to reply to an e-mail: "I've just changed my focus," "This is not important to me," "It's not crucial for me," "You can decide just fine without me," and the like. It is, however, a dilemma:
If you define power functionally as everything that works in the direc-

tion of empowerment or constraint, then well-justified but not articulated silence might be said to work as enactment of power because it gives rise to a number of interpretations about exclusion.

This article has endeavored to be polyphonic. It has not been possible to find one truth that is superior to the others and that everyone has the same interpretation of. That is why we would rather not end with one particular interpretation, but with a question: Based on the interview with Lone S and Jacob, there is something that suggests that a dissensus approach does not necessarily make power transparent, so what do you do when unforeseen events necessarily arise? Is our proposal to make them a permanent agenda item for team meetings, facilitator meetings and area manager meetings adequate?

With this open question for reflection, we would like to conclude the epilogue. At the same time, we want to draw attention to the fact that someone (Lone S and Jacob) has now had a kind of "last word" in our narrative, and that their statements may thus emerge as stronger in the reader's consciousness. For the narrative to be truly polyphonic, we therefore ask the reader to consider this in understanding and interpreting the article.

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PARTICIPATION AND POWER
– IN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND ACTION RESEARCH

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