Rethinking Agency as an Assemblage

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) from 'change agent' to 'collaborative work'

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The movement toward inclusion comes together with a neoliberal audit mentality whereby individuals are held responsible for the transformations- the Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO) are seen as a 'change agent' to increase the number of children that make the transition from special to regular schools. In this paper we want to problematize the 'responsibility-blame discourse' and look differently to agency. By using a diffractive methodology based on collaborative work, in which we have used material images of the workplace of the SENCO, and read-the-data-while- thinking- with- theory, we deconstruct the individualization of agency . The SENCOs are no longer seen as separate individual humanist subjects where agency is solely lodged in the body of an individual agent (Barad 2007) but the SENCOs are part of the intra-active entanglement of multiple agencies, of an assemblage. This re-conceptualisation of agency leads to a different approach to inclusion, in which the participants in any encounter can work as part of the assemblage to develop communities capable of re-thinking practice and transforming it into a place where children with special needs become legitimate members of the school.

Word Count: 6950

Introduction

The conceptual and practical shift from segregation to inclusion entails a move toward a discourse of acceptance of many forms of humanity. The UN Convention on the Rights

of Persons with a disability (United Nations 2006) is one such discourse. In Flanders (Belgium) a new educational policy, 'M-decree' ('Measures for students with educational needs'), came into force in 2016, as a first step in meeting the expectations of that 2006 UN Convention. The 'M-decree' mobilizes the neoliberal strategy of audit, in order to document changes, where change is defined in quantitative terms as the number of children who make the transition from special to regular schools. In this case, audit strategies are in themselves seen as effective agents of change; Vanobbergen (2015, 13) observed, for example, 'when the decree came into force the number of pupils enrolled in special education at the primary school level already decreased by 3%'. The audit mentality, however, pays no attention to how the change is to be achieved, and does not define which children are involved and with what effect. The numbers take no account of *who* is included, and *how* they are included (Bansel et al. 2008). What inclusion is taken to mean in an audit mentality is no more than initial placement; the ideal of giving all children the full benefit of education is narrowed down to access the general curriculum (Miles and Singhal 2009). The work that needs to be done to enable the various players, children, teachers, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), principals and parents, to find ways to collaboratively contribute to the event of inclusion cannot be addressed.

In this paper we want to problematize audit mentality, and its individualization of accountability and responsibility (Bansel 2007). The discourse that is mobilized in response to the M-decree is a responsibility-blame discourse: who is responsible, and what is the responsibility of each participant. Individuals become, by default, the agents who are responsible for the new policy's success or who are blamed for its failure. Sometimes it is the individual child who is blamed (they couldn't be included because they were not 'normal' enough or their presence was disruptive); sometimes it is the

teacher (who have failed because they have not adapted their teaching practices appropriately), or the parent (who has not accepted the shortcomings of the child and has not prepared the child for school well enough), or the principal (who did not create the necessary conditions for inclusion to work),or the special needs coordinator (who did not provide adequate support to everyone else).

Flemish educational context: focus on individual agents

In the current educational system in Flanders children are identified by their category membership, those categories defining who is normative and who lies outside the norm. The category is given signifying power: it defines who the child is. The child who is categorized as different from the norm is then perceived as having a problem, a problem that is located *in* the child (De Schauwer et al. 2016a) rather than in the normalizing discourses and practices themselves.

For some privileged students, their belonging is made self-evident through the practice of categorizing those 'others' who do not fit in. As Brantlinger (2006) observes:

> Individuals and groups who fail to achieve dominant standards are identified (marked, labeled, branded) with stigmatizing names (e.g. failure, disabled, at-risk) and sent to separate locations (special education rooms, low tracks, vocational schools). These distinction-making processes create a binary of (dominant) insiders and (subordinate) outsiders. (Brantlinger in Annamma et al. 2013, 1279).

This process of categorization can be described as abjecting the other, placing the difference *in* the other. The effect of such practices is not just on those who are abjected, but also on those who remain. As Shildrick's (2002) analysis shows the

abjection (or casting out) serves both to construct and protect normalized identities as being 'not-that', not that which is at risk of being cast out. It is both an epistemological and an ontological challenge for those who have been identified as normal individual entities to see the work they do to abject and thus exclude those who cannot present themselves as that generic, normalised entity (De Schauwer et al. 2016b). The educational traditions of categorization and segregation on the basis of ability is not based on empirical evidence, but on the normative assumptions that make segregation unobjectionable (Danforth 2015). Even under the current new policy, the M-decree, it are the children who have been excluded who are required to adapt to the very institutions that position them as not-normal, not the same, not able to be the same as others (Davies and Harre 1999, Davies 2008).

The discourses at work are multiple and entangled. Like Waitoller and Kozleski (2015) observe: 'pressure is also put on individual workers through the neoliberal mentality where there is a focus on individual competence, that comes together with pushing responsibility down to low level workers. This is also made clear in the communiqué about the new policy from the Department of Education, states: "*The M-decree is about children who are challenging the mastery of the teacher. You could say the M is a reference to mastery of the individual teacher to educate children with special needs*" *(Oral statement of administrator of Department of education about the M-decree, 19th April 2016).* This communiqué rests responsibility with individual teachers; their mastery of their profession is placed in question; they too become vulnerable to the audit technology and its demand for specific outcomes. Their mastery is under surveillance; responsibility and blame are mobilized with no account being taken of the complex assemblage that creates and maintains the problem of categorization and separation.

To support teachers in changing *their* practices, a new layer of individual agents, also given responsibility, has been created; educational support workers, (pedagogical) counsellors, therapists, and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (a new position created in 2003); each with their own vulnerability to the discourses of blame. Rarely has any attention been paid to how each of these individual agents might reinforce each other's work. Audit mentality is only interested in whether the extra funding produces the right statistics. This study focuses, in contrast, on the collaboration that might take place among the various players, not through allocation of individual responsibility and blame, not through the intensification of vulnerability and insecurity, but through developing communities capable of re-thinking practice.

The SENCO: from remedial teacher to change agent
The work of the SENCO evolved from being a remedial teacher, whose work was focused on closing the gap between individual categorized children and the normalized group, toward a coordination role (Forlin 2001). Rather than working with individual children, SENCOs were to coordinate the school policy on special needs, write plans and protocols, and support the professional development of teachers. In practice, however, the support of teachers received less attention, with SENCOs often taking up tasks more in line with the old function of remedial teaching, becoming an extra pair of hands, providing extra instruction, co-teaching, adapting standardized materials, and so on.

Because of the current inclusion efforts, SENCOs were to create opportunities for all children. The SENCO has to act as a powerful advocate for inclusion, and as a change agent for children with special needs (Swedz 2007). Predictably enough, with the M-decree, the SENCO's individualized success, that is, successfully ensuring that fewer children were referred to special schools, was also to be brought about through

the practices of audit. They were produced as the highly individualized, responsibilized and accountable arms of management (Davies and Bansel 2007). It has become an unquestionable truth within neoliberal regimes, that there is no other way to do things, and that we don't have a choice to act differently.

In this article we want to challenge that truth by looking differently at agency. We will not theorize agency as the work of separate entities, but as mutual entanglements of multiple forces. By focussing on the entanglement itself as productive we hope to open up new possibilities of thought and action in working toward the transition from exclusion to a multi-voiced humanity.

From individual agent to mutual entanglements of being

Working with feminist new materialist concepts, we abandon the assumption that the world is composed of individual entities with separately attributable properties (Barad 2003). We move away from representationalism to a more performative understanding of discursive practices, and we 'challenge the "thingification" through which ongoing, unfolding relations are reduced to "things", "entities", "relata"' (Bennett 2010, 2). New materialist Karen Barad emphasizes matter in relation to discursive practices, and uses the concept 'intra-action', which refers not to the interaction between separately existing entities, but to the 'mutual constitution of entangled agencies' (Barad 2007, 33). In this conceptual framework, SENCOs are no longer separate individual humanist subjects but part of the intra-active entanglement of multiple agencies through which schools for all children might be constituted. Thinking in terms of intra-actions means giving up simple, linear, cause-effect relations, and reworking the notion of agency. Agency, in a new materialist sense, emerges from relationships in intra-action, and produces an ongoing reconfiguring of the world. It is this entanglement we want to

explore in this paper. Our goal is to imagine, and thus to open up the possibility of a school where difference gets a legitimate and valued place.

The concept we adopt here, to open up thought that moves us beyond the primacy of separate organic entities, is what Deleuze and Guattari (2004) call *assemblage*. An assemblage is *'a whole made up from heterogeneous and self-subsistent parts (human and non human, material or nonmaterial) that gains meaning by being assembled in specific ways'* (Delanda in Schoepfer and Paisiou 2015). Deleuze and Guattari (2004) define heterogeneity and exteriority of components as characteristics of assemblages. An assemblage is made up from ad hoc groupings of diverse, heterogeneous elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts (Bennett 2010, 23), including not simply objects or things, but qualities, speeds, flows, and lines of force (Bansel and Davies 2014). For example, different actors, a history of exclusion, audit technologies, categorization, negative language, etc.

The emphasis on exteriority of components draws attention to the fact that an assemblage 'is not the result of the *sum* of its properties, but the *actual exercise* of its' various components' capacities to intra-act with each other' (Schoepfer and Paisiou 2015, 389). The parts of an assemblage may retain a certain autonomy from the whole; the parts are not necessarily determined by their positioning within the assemblage. This way of thinking relationally emphasizes emergence, multiplicity and indeterminacy (Schoepfer and Paisiou 2015). Further, a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage, in which its intra-actions are quite different. So the relations may change without the terms changing (Delanda 2006); the question becomes not what an assemblage *is*, or what parts it *contains*, but rather *what it connects with* (Lather 2015).

The SENCO is, in this way of thinking, emergent within the entanglements s/he is caught up in, with teachers, parents, resources, curricula, etc.; what is interesting then is to explore the possibilities of what a SENCO assemblage can become and do.

> Assemblages are not governed by any central head: no one of the multiple acting agents has sufficient competence to determine consistently the trajectory or impact of the group. Each member of the vital assemblage has a certain force, but there is also 'an agency of the assemblage' (Bennett 2010, 24).

So agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation or intra-active affect of many agents (Bennett 2010). In this way agency emerges from the entangled relationships and it has the possibility to rearrange the world through deterritorializing some aspect of it. An assemblage, like the movement to inclusion, is an event, it has agency, it can open up the possibility of transformation.

The monitoring of the transformation process of inclusion happens on the molar level by auditing—that is by measuring items that are easily documented, such as the number of children who have moved into regular schools. Such strategies do not, and cannot, take into account the molecular particle flows, the micro shifts that are always ongoing and always becoming different. Those molecular fluxes involve deterritorializations, where assemblages open up toward an unknown future. These ruptures are often completely unexpected, but can also be provoked or sought out (Deleuze and Parnet 2007). At the same time, new and emergent possibilities are always vulnerable to being re-territorialized—turned back into the forms made recognizable through old habituated forms of thought. So assemblages, are unstable and are constantly being made, remade and unmade; territorialized, reterritorialized and deterritorialized (Bansel and Davies 2014).

Diffractive methodology: (Re)thinking with assemblage in a collective biography

In the work that forms the background to this paper the first author worked over a period of two years with four SENCOs. The work we focus on here took place in a 'collective biography' workshop (Davies and Gannon 2013). Collective biography works with the collaborative telling of memory stories relevant to the topic in hand. Collective biography is not interested in whether the memory is reliable or not; nor is it interested in the individual as an essentialized subject; rather, it is interested in the discursive and intra-active practices through which people and events emerge in all their multiplicity (De Schauwer et al. 2016b). In the collective biography with the SENCOs we first worked with an image of the workplace of each participant in order to establish a relational, materialist ontology. We then moved from working together on an exploration of those places of work, to a specific focus on memories of responsibility.

In what follows we focus in particular on the ways that SENCOs' spaces are inhabited (Castodale: 2015), and on the ways in which those spaces become, themselves, agentic. We focused on the *space* of the workplace, where the concept of space denotes and connotes all possible spaces, whether abstract or material, mental or social (Lefebvre 1991, 299). We came to see the workplace space as an active agent among the entangled, multiple, intra-acting agents that made up the assemblage of inclusive practice.

To engage in the collective biography workshop, the first author of this paper and four SENCOs gathered together in a cozy house in the countryside for three days. Through the images each participant told their stories and listened, asked questions and wondered out-loud in intra-action with those stories (Davies and Gannon 2013). The collective method breaks up the privatized and individualized model of interviewing or storytelling (Lather: 2015), and goes against the grain of phenomenology's liberal-

humanist subject, whose life unfolds in a more or less rational way (Gannon: 2001).

This collective work involved us in moving 'from an ontological unit of the individual

to the forces at work producing voice as an entanglement' (Mazzei 2016, 153).

The new materialist analysis we adopted abandons representational thinking;

rather, by plugging in the concept of assemblage, we sought new connections and new

knowledge (Jackson and Mazzei 2012). The images of the workplace were not taken to

be reflections or reproductions of what was already there, separate from us in the

schools, but provocations to open up the practices of diffractive thinking; our work thus

involved us in a mapping of interference (Barad 2007). A practice of diffraction is

'reading / analyzing diffractively for patterns of difference that make a difference'

(Dolphijn and Van der Tuin 2012, 49). Through 'reading-the-data-while-thinking-with-

theory', we sought to 'identify assembled relations and the affects and the capacities

produced in bodies that together make an assemblage work' (Fox and Alldred 2015,

407).

In writing this paper we pull the threads of our analysis out of the images of one

SENCO's workplace and out of the memories of her practice as a responsible SENCO.

We choose this one place to present what we found through our collaborative work,

because it was the one that provoked the most lively flows of telling and listening

among the participants. The work with the images that we elaborate in this paper was

thus generated in an intra-active mo(ve)ment among the workshop participants.

Through that work they made visible to themselves the complex flows of the

assemblage of inclusion as they had each experienced it in their own workplaces. It was

through the collaborative focus on all of the workplaces, over the three days of the

workshop, and the focus on the memories each participant told about being responsible,

that the analysis we present here became possible.

A workplace assemblage

The SENCO, whose images we work with here, worked in an urban school with children from 2.5 years to 6 years[1]; she worked across three different locations, with a total population of 400 children. For the last ten years she had been the SENCO, and before that she was a teacher. In the beginning the SENCO's workspace had consisted of three closets in the staffroom. That location had given her the feeling that her work and the participants (teachers, parents, students and herself) weren't taken seriously. There was no space for private, confidential one-on-one discussions. As her work was transforming itself from remedial teaching to professional guidance of regular teachers, it became evident she needed a different space; and with the support of the principal, she lobbied for a space in which the work of collaboratively developing different ways of thinking about difference might take place.

One of the significant elements of that re-thinking was the Deleuzian move away from difference understood as categorical difference, toward difference as a continuous process of becoming different, of differenciation (Deleuze 1994). Differenciation does not fix subjects in static, binary categories, where difference is other to, or less than, normal. The SENCO's new place opened up a space where creative energies were mobilized (Davies 2009) and old practices and beliefs were able to be de-territorialized.

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[1] Compulsory education in Flanders starts when children turn six. Most children start at the age of 2.5 years in kindergarten/ infant school.

A former Classroom

Figure 1: Desk

The current workplace is a former classroom. It is a spacious room with two large

desks, a number of sorting trays and a large table. The improvisation that was necessary

to create an office in a former classroom is still visible (the loose wires, exposed

electrical outlets, the old printer etc.) In the first image it looks like a regular office

(two computer screens, schedules, checklist, a classification system ...), nothing

suggests its location in a kindergarten/infants school, where hundreds of small people

are going to school. Much more prominent, visually, is the discourse and power of

technologies of management (administration, reports, follow-up measurements, etc.).

While there is no linear causal relationship between having a spacious office and

the school creating space for children with special needs, the office has agency within

the inclusion entanglement. The room is located in the middle of the school near the

staffroom – the meeting place of the school. The central placement, and the open door

policy, makes this place approachable, and it opens up the possibility of establishing

relationships with teachers before there are difficulties rather than after. But the downside of that approachability is that people may interrupt the SENCO too easily. She decided not to have a coffee maker in her office because otherwise no moment of rest or time for contemplation would remain.

While open access is very important in the work of SENCOs, there is always a risk that a SENCO will be seen as the sole expert, who knows everything, and who therefore takes over all responsibility. The most usual response to teachers' fears about not knowing what to do with children who are different, is to provide professional development for teachers, training them in the range of children's deficits with 'recipes to fix' each one (Allan 2007). The SENCOs experiences that such training makes it more likely, rather than less, that teachers will pass their questions to 'the expert' in the new discourse, and they will be more likely to 'hand over' children, or else help to exclude them from their regular classrooms and schools. Lessons in categorization involve re-territorializing the spaces of schools and classrooms, and do not open up new ways of thinking about difference that go beyond normal-abnormal and us-them binaries.

Before this classroom space was made available, the SENCO-in-the-closets found that her colleagues were critical of her work, seeing her as an arm of management. Her new location and her openness and transparency enabled them to appreciate her work differently. She commented: *"Now they know what I 'm doing and that I'm not a second principal."* These perceptions of her work mattered; if she is recognizable to her colleagues, if she is seen as one of the teachers, they are better able to be open to seeing her as a partner. In her new space she is able to position herself, and she is positioned as multiple: devoted teacher, loyal colleague, a person who is advocating and negotiating the place of children with special needs, etc: *"Therefore I do*

tasks such as organizing the annual school party, doing duties, etc. this means I cannot

do all my work within office hours but I think it 's important that they (teachers) see I

do things like them." These multiple tasks are externalized by the many yellow post-its

all over the office. Being the same as teachers helps avoid the risk, inherent in the

SENCO's position, of being either marginalized along with the children with special

needs, or given all responsibility for their care.

The new space is powerful, but it is not able to hold the de-territorializing

movements in place. The changes require a continuous openness to difference as it

unfolds in all its multiplicity. There is always the risk of re-territorialization, where old

ways of thinking and being reassert themselves. That is most likely to happen when the

workplace is seen as an exclusive place for the SENCO, the exclusivity interpreted as a

signal of her superiority/difference. When read this way the space itself becomes loaded

with normative control and power (Lefebvre 1991), positioning the SENCO as outside

the team, isolated, a specialist whose job is to provide solutions.

Sharing the office / mutual entanglement

Figure 2: Shared desk

Much of what happens in the life of a SENCO is a product of serendipity; not a product

of an orderly plan, but responding to the emergence of possibilities. When the childcare

and the kindergarten were integrated into one institution, for example, the principal of

the school didn't want to share his office with the manager of childcare. The SENCO

offered to share her place, and their subsequent collaboration has been productive. The

arrangement of the desks -face to face – provoked more dialogue between them, as they

de-territorialized the space together. New support networks, beyond the boundaries of

school, and connections with other assemblages, became available. By working

intensively together communication could flow from school to home and otherwise. For

example when parents couldn't pay their school fees and/or childcare bills, a different

rate could be negotiated. Their cooperation also opened up new possibilities, such as

childcare workers doing activities with the children while a teacher attended meetings.

The players in the inclusion assemblage thus rapidly multiplied and diversified; multiple

agencies were interconnected making the assemblage more powerful and more resourceful in facing the multiple challenges.

The manager of childcare was an unexpected companion who made the SENCO's job more do-able. For example in the past the SENCO felt powerless when she had the difficult and demanding task of testifying on behalf of students to the youth welfare committee. Within the new assemblage she could discuss the meeting in a way that opened up to new ideas for action. At the same time, she could give background, navigate her new colleague through the school bureaucracy and its rules, because of her long history there. He in turn offered strategies for ordering, structuring and cutting down the number of tasks he took on so that energy was left for life beyond school. This mutual entanglement made their assemblage more powerful; their relationship was one in which they found they could 'continually transform themselves into each other, cross over into each other. Becoming and multiplicity are the same thing' (Deleuze and Guattari in Davies 2014, 9). So they are no longer the persons they were before but are produced through intra-actions with each other, in relation to the space, the school, their colleagues, the children and the wider community.

Such an assemblage does not, however, make the practices of audit and micro-management vanish. They are a forceful presence, always needing to be managed so that they do not re-territorialize the space of the assemblage. The development of those alliances through which a shared responsibility for special needs can emerge, requires encounters in which there is a possibility for new thoughts and actions.

The diary
The diary of the SENCO had a central place on her desk, visible and continuously open to spontaneous appointment-making. The diary took on a life of its own and intra-acted with the SENCO who became, via the open diary, a subject who was accessible. At the

same time it took away her time, with commitments to meetings with teachers but also meetings with agendas concerning neoliberal procedures, rules and formalisation. In responding to the needs of others through the open diary, inviting itself to be filled, the SENCO had no means to defend her own time and priorities. The open door and the open diary were important, but there was also a downside: *"I want to be very approachable but it's like I don't have a door. They just come inside and ask their question or tell their story."* New strategies were needed to generate *encounters* that disrupted the old patterns of positioning the SENCO as expert with answers, filling up her day with providing "solutions". 'An encounter is an intensity, a becoming that takes you outside the habitual practices of the already-known: it's intra-active, and corresponds to the power to affect and be affected' (Deleuze and Parnet in Davies 2014, 10).
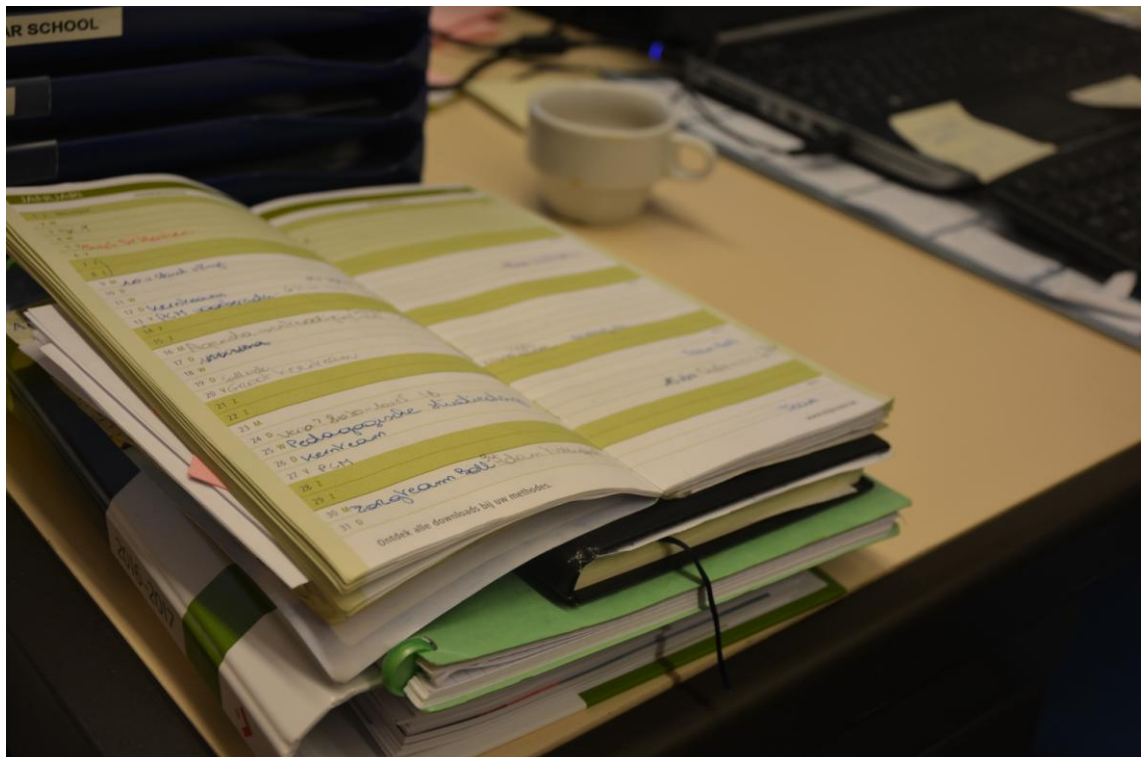
Figure 3: The diary

In such encounters the SENCO, together with the teachers, made spaces full of potentialities where new forms of belonging for children with special needs became

imaginable, and possible: *"Some teachers like to show material, want to sit down where the child is sitting, show the art work… Being in their environment helps them and me to picture how it is to be this child in this classroom, with this teacher and these classmates."* In such moments the excitement, the struggle, and the doubts of the teachers became the excitement, the struggle, and the doubts of the SENCO. In these micro-moments of being, the world was reconfigured, and there was openness to difference and to the new. The regular practice of requiring every child to achieve the same standards was deterritorialized. In moving away from standardized outcome-driven teaching, the participants eventually found themselves up against the teachers in the primary school, who complained that the children weren't prepared for the transition into primary school. The force of the dominant discourse re-territorialized the teachers and the SENCO, pulling them back toward an audit mentality with a focus on producing standardized 'outcomes'.

One of the locations the SENCO worked in had many children from low-socioeconomic and diverse cultural backgrounds. This location had fewer resources and had a bad reputation. The other two locations had a higher reputation and had parents who were very involved. The SENCO divided her time, as she moved between the different locations, as evenly as possible. By taking up a nomadic position she was able to resist hegemonic structures and categories (Braidotti 2011) and to give recognition to everyone, no matter their background. To this end she made her attendance visible by sending everyone (principal, school/child personnel, administrators and cleaning staff) her weekly schedule. But this could work back upon her, regulating and controlling her, her transparency making her more accountable for, more open to surveillance of, her hours and her work. By being visibly present in each location the SENCO not only initiated encounters that opened up new thought, but as expert, she invited repeated

citations of the old refrains: *"The more I walk in the hallway the more problems there are."*
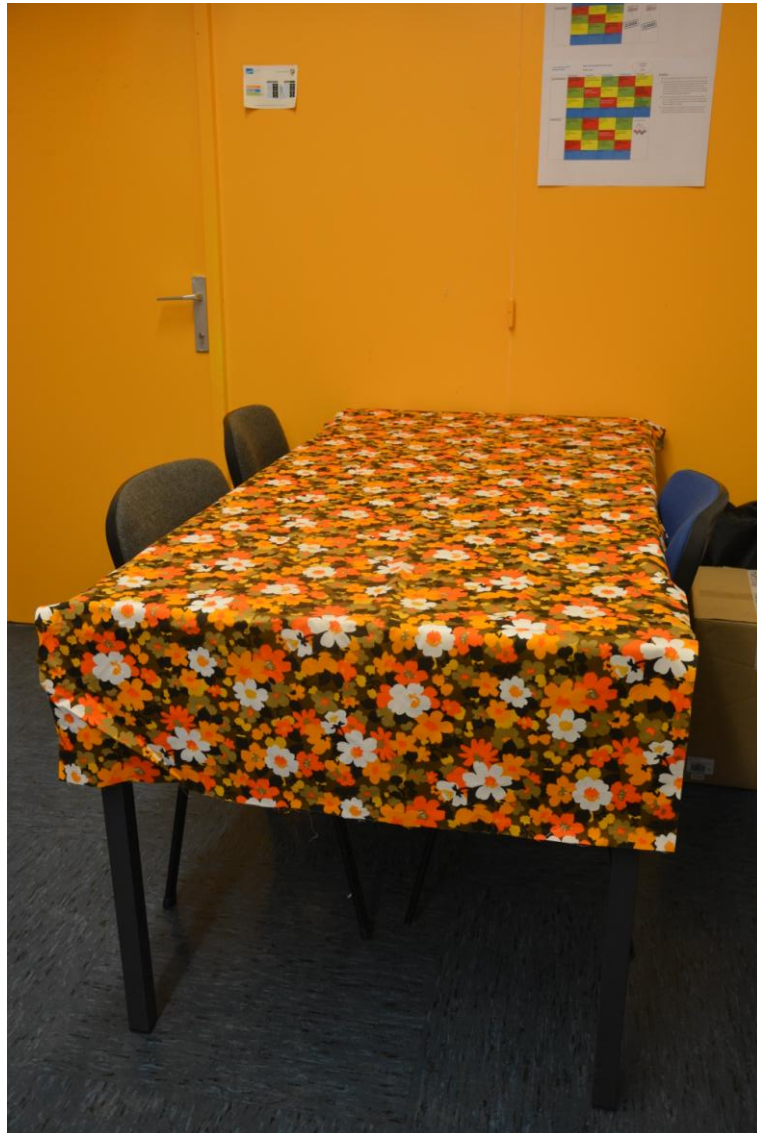
Space that enable intra-active encounters

Figure 4: The Table

In order to avoid material being stored on the table, the SENCO provided a tablecloth, which might actively invite encounters around the table. The colorful tablecloth had a softening effect on the room and created a relaxed atmosphere around the table. The adult-sized chairs around the table stated: this is not a place for children but for adults.

Around the table it became more common to discuss practices together with teachers, parents and other stakeholders, though concepts of testing, labelling and categorization would still territorialize the space, being used to hold everything in place (Barton 2003). The increased measurement of performance has become more frequent and sophisticated in schools (Waitoller and Kozleski 2015), this brings into the conversation labels (ADHD, autism), stigma (failure, disabled, at-risk) and students' scores, with a big focus on the students' abilities, on comparisons among students, and on benchmarks of what will count as normal. These repeated citations or modes of enunciation reduced the capacity for, and the possibility of, generating new ways of thinking.

Because of the power of the deficit discourse and the normative assumptions made about the acceptability of segregation, a lot of work had to be done by the SENCO to acknowledge the multiplicity of identities (Davies 2014). She found that normally at the beginning of her meetings with teachers, the teacher would begin by pointing out the problem, defined in terms of test results and categorizations. To counteract this closing down of creativity, she would start the meetings with the question: *"Can you first tell me how your relationship is with this child/ parent/ etc.?"* That question served to positively transform and de-territorialize categories and the limitations that came along with them: *"Muhammed is not only the child that disturbs the classical moments but also a boy with a lot of humour".* In those encounters the SENCO momentarily disrupted the teachers' reliance on categories. The SENCO analyzed the construction of categories and teaching because these has impact on the boundary between inclusion and exclusion (Hamilton and Kecskemeti 2015). It's a constant search for ways to bring difference into standardized lines. But at the same time the neoliberal power of formalizing and documenting is also working, the SENCO expects that teachers are prepared for a meeting, that they already thought about the situation, put their questions

together, made an observation, take a drawing to the meeting, etc. *"Otherwise it 's small talk and then teachers start very easily talking in labels; he has ADD instead of showing his work where you see he colours one thing and then another piece but none of his drawings are finished."* If they are not prepared she postpones the meeting. *"They don't like it but I'm very strict, there is no negotiation, I will explain why I ask the preparation but the meeting is rescheduled."* By expecting a preparation re-territorialisation can happen when teachers feel dictated and controlled how they should think and act, it could close down the creative line (Davies 2014), than this collaboration and space is experienced as disciplinary where no thinking is happening.

Including parents

We said earlier that encounters with parents were made more accessible through the collegial relationship with the manager of childcare. The SENCO saw the parents as vital participants in the inclusion assemblage; they were potential catalysts of new thought; they potentially de-territorialized normative assumptions and practices. Although it required a lot of energy and organization from the SENCO to establish an encounter with all the different parties around the table, the encounters produced energy and intensity: *"When we all sit together the process comes in a flow, not one person has the simple answer, not the parent, not the teacher, not the speech therapist, not me as a SENCO. When we meet each other, there is more respect for each other. It's not the lazy teacher anymore, it's not the terrible child… other words are used, how we speak, how we judge, etc."*

Listening was central in those encounters; they were not focussed on governing the other, or on telling the parent what to do, or managing and controlling the teachers (Davies 2015). All participants entered into a 'process of transformation where you lose absolutely the possibility of controlling the final result' (Rinaldi in Davies 2014). The

moments around the table were a line of flight from the orderly striations, and they produce a space that refused the norms of power relations and expertise. They were about taking up other positions, about letting go of taken-for-granted discourses, and they were about generating an openness of being affected**.** The possibility was there in such encounters for transformation; the SENCO's office became a place where different ways of knowing and thinking about difference could arise. The SENCO described these de-territorializing moments as magical moments, *'Sometimes you get goose bumps, suddenly other possibilities and other approaches for difficulties are seen.'*

Intra-actions such as these are movements of de-stratification, where dominant discourses are crossed over, where roles and positions change. Yet, as we have said now several times, the potency of the striated lines of force, the tendency for the SENCO to position herself as expert and to be so positioned, is an ever-present dilemma. The ontological-epistemological accomplishment of self as belonging in whatever categories one has been assigned becomes real very quickly (Davies 2015) and re-territorialization takes place.

In(conclusion)

The movement toward inclusion comes together with a neoliberal audit mentality that will monitor, control and manage the changes, and this comes along with an individualization of accountability and responsibility. The underlying assumption is that agency is solely lodged in an individual agent, who is working alone and intentionally. In this article we have sought to disrupt that taken-for-granted humanist assumption, by using a diffractive methodology based on collaborative work, in which we have used material images, and read-the-data-while-thinking-with-theory. We have argued that individual agency is entangled with multiple enlivening agencies that are simultaneously at play and that affect each other. There are assemblages of intra-acting

agents, human and non-human (SENCOs, teachers, children, parents, processes of normalization, offices, open doors, diaries, the M-decree, neo-liberalism, processes of differenciation), that have agency, and can open up new possibilities for children with special needs.

In this paper we have focussed on entanglement instead of on individual effectiveness and individual responsibility and accountability. Each SENCO must work with teachers and parents with a focus on collaboration and emancipation, forming alliances, setting up networks, creating a collaborative learning community--all of this in order to make the inclusion assemblage more powerful. The entanglements and collaborations will be different for every assemblage. This openness to (unpredictable) intra-actions is always under pressure from professional management logic, which emphasizes efficiency, effectiveness and outcomes. So thinking outside territorializing lines is vital work to be undertaken, it involves critical thinking about what education we want, and 'everybody involved needs to consider how their own actions create barriers to inclusion' (Allan 2003).

We have shown in this article that re-conceptualizing agency leads to a different approach to inclusion, in which the participants in any encounter (human and non-human) can work as parts of an assemblage to open up the capacity for thought and the capacity to reconfigure the world. In this way inclusion is not reduced to a discussion about placement but is seen as an assemblage that opens up the possibility of becoming different, a work in progress that is never completed.

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