

Organizational User Participation: From Dramaturgy to Pedagogy in working with vulnerable young people

Autor: Strandgaard Helm, L. L.

This paper is based on an ongoing action research (AR) project in a mental institution for young people. The purpose of the project is to investigate whether theories, experiences and methods from a dramaturgical perspective can inspire the development of a framework for organizational participation that meets the young people's challenges in various social contexts.

The aim of the project is to provide a theoretical and methodological model so that users' interests and potentials can be involved with awareness of ethical claims and openness about the asymmetric power relations. Thus using the dramaturgical methods, theories and semantics behind Conceptual Devising (Kjølner, 2004 & 2009 p. 352-371) and Recursive Creation (Szatkowski, 2017 & 1991, p.19) in pedagogical reflection and management of social projects.

The field for this AR is a Danish treatment home for young people (14 to 23+ years). The residents are normally gifted but suffering from different psychiatric diseases like Schizophrenia, Borderline, Eating Disorders, OCD, ADHD or Asperger's Syndrome.

In my research, I focus on the question whether the combination of Conceptual Devising & Recursive Creation is transferable to projects and processes in '*real life*' without the impact of acting *in fiction* perspective. Is it possible to use the models in combination with Action Research in a social field? Is it appropriate to transfer methods, principles, and elements, related to the combined model for theater projects, into a pedagogical context? - And can this dramaturgical way of working enrich communication, actions, relations, and possibilities for developing self-confidence, and assist the recovery of vulnerable young people.

The AR is planned as a '*Future-workshop*' (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2016, Cpt. 3) with focus on the means by which the young people are encouraged to express their personal dreams and ideas in relation to organizational improvements. The project has a dual participatory perspective: the young, and the employees. It is the employees who in the long term are those in the institution, who shall help, secure, and continue the changes in culture and processes of organizational user involvement. The hope is, besides qualifying projects and organizational development to encourage and stimulate the young people's self-confidence, wellbeing, empowerment and possibilities of rehabilitation as actors in society. In form as well as content, the project builds on democratic ideals and has an ongoing and ethically based focus on transparency in relation to the existing hierarchies and power relations.

In England, Norway, and Denmark we have witnessed many public policy statements to increase user participation for more than two decades. Research indicates that appropriate results have been few, and often appear not to match the wishes and needs of the users (Bjerge & Selmer, 2007; Tjalve, 2001; Uggerhøj, 1995). Never the less social economic policy has increased focus on user participation in treatment, and social actions in Denmark through the last couple of years.

A Bio-psycho-social perspective

Feelings of inferiority and anxiety make people with mental issues evade taking part in social contexts. This often makes them feel lonely. The fact is, however, that the relational and organizational contexts give the exact potentials for mental development and empowerment (Topor, 2005).

According to systemic theorist, professor and psychologist Peter Lang we live our histories in interaction with each other. The narrations create our identities. We can observe the problems as a detection of unfulfilled expectations. Expectations addressed to ourselves and towards others. We create meaning in an action by ascribing expectations. As we live our lives in interaction with others, we continually negotiate the web of expectations that is constitution our identity.

Lang's main ideas were that social workers, teachers and therapist have to be open minded and curious in order to understand the emotions behind any problematic behavior as invitations. The professionals have to talk with people about their dreams for the future, because the possibilities and dreams always are behind the behavior and the frustrations (Lang, 2002; 2007). It is important to focus on what *works* for vulnerable young people, to help them develop dreams and hope for the future, and by rephrasing problems to possibilities, to emphasize even small successes supporting them in 'rebuilding' their identity, and to give them the dignity in the group (Lang & MC. Adam 2006).

The Danish child and adolescent psychiatrist Søren Hertz (2009; 2011) refers to G. Bateson (1972), P. Lang (among others: 1997), and the Australian psychotherapist Michael White (2008) and argues for systemic theories in combination with a psycho dynamical way of thinking, and new neuroscience. Hertz labels it a "*Bio-Psycho-Social-System*" (BPSS) (2009, Cpt. 11) that provide a wide range of different opportunities of action. This is in contrast to the attitude of many Danish psychiatrists, who often refer to neuro-science to select medical solutions, and to a health science approach that risks reducing options based on the biological bias.

BPSS is assigned social, and contextual relationships in the systemic and narrative understanding The Bio-psycho-social perspective also corresponds to theories of the developmental psychologist, Daniel Stern emphasizing that we are all born to engage in each other's nervous systems and that our complex brain and nerve system is highly plastic, which means that changes are never too late (2001).

Hertz uses, the aphorism *from "I-identity to 'We-identity"* (2011 p. 342). It is a basic condition for human beings to be included in communities. All children and young people need to be a part of emancipating communities, and their actions always represents what they are able to according to the actual conditions. We need to succeed in communities, and we have to learn to cope with, and even develop our dissimilarities. All behavior – also the problematic kinds of behavior – is about communication. Hertz (2011, p. 334).

Pedagogues, therapists, and social workers have to meet the children and the young people "with the belief in unmatched opportunities" (Hertz 2011, p. 339). The invitation to learn something that goes beyond what you expected, and avoid jumping to selection of understanding and action based on habits and routines, also applies to the professionals. Openness for even tiny information can open new horizons (White, 2008). Hertz (2011) writes about going from Recovery to Discovery, to readjust the traditional process of recovery to a new process of discovery, where new expectations extends the range of actions when we are communicating with children and young people. Then we might give the young people the possibilities to experience that he or she is more and something else

than the diagnosis, the problem, the disease or the disability. According to the mentioned theories, the main purpose is to develop a community culture in order to create social integration.

In this context, it becomes evident that we need to focus upon communication and interaction including not only the narratives in spoken language but also the nonverbal elements.

My hypothesis is that, it is possible to use the same countenance in an approach to pedagogy. As the purpose is to meet people believing in their potentials, and the effects of synergy, in order to experience in the social context, with a concept, and an idea of the goal, but open and curious about the ways to get there Recursive Creation and Conceptual Devising give some inspiration in relation to both the pedagogical reflections and actions.

The Dramaturgical perspective

Theatre projects conducted in several pedagogical contexts, among others 'Opgang 2 - Ungdomsspor' (Ørskov, 2014), and 'Teater Billedspor' (Harste, 1995) have proven to have a positive effect on exposed young people's self-perception, and social development (Helm, 2008 & 2011). Studies of theater projects with mentally vulnerable young people have also shown that the participation of young people in theater production processes has stimulated their confidence and their ability to metalize (Helm, 2011). Metallization means to have "minds on mind" (Skårderud & Karterud, 2007 p .13-32) to be able to look at yourself from outside, and at others from inside, and in that way develop the possibilities for regulating affect and behavior that could directly or indirectly harm you in a social context (Bateman & Fonagy, 2007).

The effect of using a combination of the two mentioned dramaturgical models have been used and examined in drama teaching and theatre productions with vulnerable young people (Helm, 2011), and the model of Recursive Creation has proved to be useful as the overall framework for planning and developing in social projects, and contexts (Helm, 2009).

Preliminary literature studies (Data bases: ProQuest, PubMed) have shown that searches for the words: "dramaturgy" and "theater" in connection with "pedagogy", "user involvement" or "(social) psychiatry" provide almost exclusively hits that refer to drama/theater education, theater /drama therapy, psychodrama, or pedagogy and didactics in connection with teaching in and about dramaturgy and theater. Searches that include the words "management" or "projects" in connection with dramaturgy / theater primarily refer to the field of business management.

Professor of arts education at Program for Teacher Education, the Norwegian University of technology and science NTNU in Trondheim, Anna-Lena Østern is one the few current researchers who is connected to working with artistic approaches to learning, art and science combined in inquiry based learning, and supervision in teacher education. Østern (2012) discuss the potential of including some of these characteristics of artistic supervision in teacher education, as an aesthetic approach to supervision in teacher education. Østern argues this way: "*Dramaturgical thinking in particular opens up complex affordances by using other semiotic resources in addition to the semiotic resource of verbal language. The challenge posed to education by multimodal theory (Kress, 2003) is to open up a more complex understanding of what learning is, what there is to be learnt about something by including aesthetic ways of knowing. Sensing something aesthetically might add to the multi-layeredness of human insight*" (Ibid, p.404).

Conceptual Devising

Conceptual devising arose in the 1970's as a protest amongst artists against the artistic methods used in traditional, institutionalized theatres. It was an uprising insisting upon more participation of all members in the totality of the creative process.

Traditional institutionalized theatre follows production routines that are generally based upon a top-down hierarchy. The theater director buys a manuscript from a dramatist and then employs a director who stages the play and distributes the roles and other tasks associated with the production of the performance: dramaturgy, scenography, costumes, sound, and lightning. All those who work on the performance have their firmly defined tasks and routines.

Devised theatre

Devising, as a theater production form, differs significantly from the traditional and more hierarchically organized productions. Devising is per definition characterized by a democratic artistic view where a group, through collective and creative decision-making generates a performance. The group produces the ideas and materials together. All participants are creative subjects e.g. actors, scenographers, dancers and musicians who together share a notion: an idea of a final product. Here is no hierarchy and no pre-defined tasks. - Everything is for debate.

The participants acquire ownership of the work, as the process, which is often based on a particular proxy or location, defines it, for example: How can a group explore, experience, and improvise together creating a theater performance based on big old lorry in a rose garden?

Conceptual Devising is a method that combines design, dramaturgy and conceptual art. Conceptual Devising consists of a 'material generation phase', a 'composition phase' and a 'staging phase'. All participants have the opportunity to be and contribute creatively to project development (Kjølner, 2009, p. 358)

The Danish professor in dramaturgy, Janek Szatkowski (2017) defines theatre as dramaturgy as a science studying poetics and aesthetic hierarchies at work in Poiesis i.e. the creating, directing and experiencing of forms of vitality exploring issues of performativity in communication of communication.

Inspired by the work of the English theater- and Art teacher Malcolm Ross (1978) Szatkowski has developed a model of *Recursive Creation* (1991, see App. 1), and Professor in dramaturgy, Torunn Kjølner developed, as director of the Actor Studio at the Academy of Performing Arts, Norway, the theater production form, Conceptual Devising as complementary to Szatkowski's model (Kjølner, 2004). As will later be seen, Recursive Creation and Conceptual Design thus constitute two dimensions of collective art creation processes.

Szatkowski's model for Recursive Creation. The model Fig. 1, (App. 1) shows the original model, as developed by Szatkowski, while Figure 2 (App. 1) shows how it appears if translated into model for development social projects (Helm, 2011). Both figures illustrate how agents gather around a common vision. The actors might have different notions about how the goal is achieved. The process of work, and what initiates the movements of the actors towards establishing themselves as a group, is largely the specific medium. A *Common Third* (Husen 1996, p 218-232) which 'embraces' the entire development of the project, and gives it a concrete common focus and a sense of coherence according to Antonovski (2014, Cpt.2) for the individual as well as for the entire group. The movements between the actors around the common vision create a funnel-shaped movement, which

reduces the number of opportunities along the way. The intensity and the complexity of interactions vary throughout the process.

This way of creating and working together towards a common goal close to the meaning of a Common Third seems to accommodate a way of tackling social challenges in a way that develops the participants identity, and self-confidence as well as their motivation and abilities to take part in other groups and new social contexts (Helm, 2009).

Arguments for using Action Research in this project

Action Research is chosen because of the importance of user involvement on all levels of the project, and because AR offer the possibilities of including phantasy, creativity and perceptions of all involved, and AR is open for art-based ways of communication beyond linguistic terms and spoken languages.

With this short description of the inspiration from dramaturgical science, it should be obvious how important attitudes are shared by Conceptual Devising (as an artistic research process), and Action Research models. Just to name a few: There is an ideal of co-creation and both methods include the 'vision of the world as emergent' and dependent on interactive focusing on relationships and networks. The interdependency between theory and practice, in a recursive, abduction strategy, comes to the fore. Further, we notice the emphasis on creativity, experiments and openness in the joint process, as the ideal to create the framework for democratic and ethical work process.

This Action Research is inspired by what initially was called as a critical utopian design (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2016, Cpt. 7), and by Systemic AR (Burns, 2015).

The dramaturgical inspired process management will constitute a framework of the action research at the meta-level, as well as inspiration for management of the concrete projects that may occur during the research process.

Proposed design for the Action Research:

The concepts from dramaturgy may be applied as frames on three levels: The overall academic research, the concrete project, and the 'sub-projects' that may arise.

The prior review leads to the following outline for the project's action research design. The study methodology, as mentioned earlier, is in accordance with the Knowledge Center for User Induction Criteria for Organizational Enrollment ([https://danskepatienter.dk/vibis/definition-consumer involvement](https://danskepatienter.dk/vibis/definition-consumer%20involvement)).

It is important to note that the participating residents do not have to participate throughout the project development, but that they can participate in parts or periods of the course, as their energy and profits may be very limited in periods. However, the above-mentioned causative feedback loop is a point in relation to both this project and the overall social psychological and inclusive view that it is better to participate a little in organizational user involvement rather than not participating at all.

Material Generating Phase

1. Introduction and discussion of the action research project on pre-determined meetings (including systematic observations).

Thus, at the student council meeting, management meeting, meeting meetings for employees and house meetings for residents will be possible for debate. Material generation is ongoing.

2. Utopia Workshop. Unlike traditional future workshops, the Utopia workshop will have an individual starting point, as a sensitive act for residents' participation in the social / organizational field. The interviews will take place on time, locations, alone or together with other persons depending on the wishes of the participants.

In order to accommodate residents' fear of "answering incorrectly" or "criticizing" or misplaced aggressions due to lack of mentalizing ability, the structure of the Utopia workshop is maintained in three parts, the first being characterized by the fact that residents only have negative statements, the 'No-hat'.

In the second part of the interview/workshop, the 'Utopia', residents are encouraged without regard to what is realistic to come up with their utopias, ideas, dreams, ideas and suggestions on what possibilities and possibly, wanted changes. The utopia part has to be mentioned and to remain as phantasy, and dreams as many of the young people are already full of hopelessness and self-censorship.

About 45 residents will have the possibility to participate in the project and the young people's proposals will be anonymized and collected in a catalog.

Composition Phase: (Realization Started)

'Student council' of the institution suggested that the catalogue should be handed out in paper for all the inhabitants of the institution. The Interested residents, management representatives and employees discuss and select based on the generated material, which tracks, should be followed / pursued. The Student council wanted to be a part of this process.

Especially in this phase, it has a server ethical importance that there is transparency in relation to existing hierarchies (e.g. ethical, economic and organizational). It is important the participants do not feel discarded if their idea does not become a reality.

Differentiation of tracks

Analysis and interpretation could lead to a differentiation in three tracks:

- Track 1: If nobody or only a few residents are interest to get involved in one form or another in relation to plans for research and project development at Holmstrupgård
- Track 2: If more residents are interested in being involved in one form or another in relation to develop the overall Plan for Research and Development
- Track 3: If more residents are interested in and motivated for active participation in the development of a specific project

Staging phase

Ad Track 1:

- Semi-structured, qualitative interviews of residents, contact educators, and possibly. The lack of motivation and interest in taking part in the planning and development of specific projects.
- Experiences in terms of involvement in individual level plans and evaluations
- Experiences and experiences as part of plans and evaluations at the organizational level
- Suggestions of what could change the situation if wishes of changes are existing.

Ad Track 1, the result of the interview investigation, after coding and sentence condensing analysis, could provide a basis for mapping where it could be set in order to change the situation, whether there is a basis for a new material generation phase or if the purpose itself is to be changed.

From now on, the further development of the project would be unpredictable...

Ad tracks 2 and 3:

The reports in the compiled catalog will be followed up by oral dialogue with interested residents.

- Concretization and elaboration of ideas and suggestions
- Clarification of individual residents' current wishes and expectations regarding the extent, form and role of participating in the setting of the general guidelines for projects and development on the institution
- Clarification of individual residents' current wishes and expectations regarding the extent, form and role of involvement in the development of a concrete 'practice-oriented' project.

Interested employees relate to the selected projects and actions according to their interests.

PARTICIPANTS	Incl. the residents	Incl. The project staff	Incl. all employees and leaders of the institution
ACTIVITIES			
<u>Forms in relation to the establishment of sub-project groups:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations and formulation of objectives (notions) • Concrete agreements / plans 	X	X	
<u>Workshop, 1: Introdution:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual Devising Project Management 		X	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected Items / Principles of Recursive Creation Discussion in relation to the individual sub-projects for inspiration and implementation 			
Introduction and application of App, an ongoing digital evaluation (DE) using a Likert scale, (Appendix 2)	X projekt-møder	X workshops	
Tools for use in connection with trial actions (in the form of a schema) introduced at the joint meeting.			X
Presentation of selected items from Recursive Creation for general inspiration and information introduced at the Joint Meeting.			X
Development of sub projects	X	X	
Continuous application of evaluation app as inspiration for dialogue, mapping and development of further work on projects.	X	X	
Continuos trial actions	X		X
Continues registration of trial actions			X
Workshop 2: Refleksions and feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiences in relation to the implementation of Conceptual Devising and the Recursive Creation elements. Exchange of experience with the application of the ongoing evaluation (App) Mutual sparring in relation to individual concrete projects. Adjustment of projects and sub-projects 		X	
Continued work in sub-projects	X	X	
Continued application of evaluation app as inspiration for dialogue, mapping and development of further work on the projects.	X	X	
More trial actions	X		X
Continuing registration of trial actions			X

<p>Workshop 3: Gathering experience regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status in the sub-projects • Changes • The applicability of Conceptual devising, such as project management model and possibly. Ideas for improvement • The usefulness of elements from Recursive Creation, as inspiration and a possibly semantic for the educational work and possibly. Ideas for improvement • Applicability in the current evaluation form (app) and possibly. Ideas for further improvements • Plans for continuation of sub-projects • Possibly. New ideas about sub-projects 		<p>X</p> <p>Focus Group</p> <p>Interview/ Semi</p> <p>Structured</p> <p>Qualitative Group</p> <p>Interviews?</p> <p>Videos?</p>	
<p>Experience Collection and Reflections in Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sample actions • sub-projects • The action research project at the meta level <p>At a joint meeting or on a smaller internal pedagogical conference.</p>		<p>Sound</p> <p>recordings/video?</p>	<p>X</p>

In connection to this workshop, I would like to get some feedback and ideas about how to make the documentation for the end of the academic part of the AR.