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Publication date:
2007

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to publication from Aalborg University

Citation for published version (APA):
Jørgensen, K. M., & Keller, H. D. (2007). Learning as Negotiating Identities. Aalborg: Institut for Uddannelse,
Læring og Filosofi, Aalborg Universitet.

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Abstract

The paper explores the contribution of Communities of Practice (COP) to Human Resource Development (HRD). *Learning as negotiating identities* captures the contribution of COP to HRD. In COP the development of practice happens through negotiation of meaning. The learning process also involves *modes of belonging* constitutive of our identities. We suggest that COP makes a significant contribution by linking *learning* and *identification*. This means that learning becomes much less instrumental and much more linked to fundamental questions of being. We argue that the COP-framework links learning with the issue of time – caught in the notion of *trajectories of learning* - that integrate *past*, *present* and *future*. Working with the learners' notion of time is significant because it is here that new learning possibilities become visible and meaningful for individuals. Further, we argue that the concept of identity allows us to overcome the gap between the individual and organization present in the HRD-literature.

Introduction

This paper explores the contribution of Communities of Practice (COP) (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) to human resource development (HRD). The approach in the paper is that we wish to identify and provide reasons for some of the interesting and promising aspects of the COP-approach rather than explore the COP-approach as a whole. The idea that we wish to follow in COP is that learning is about negotiating new identities. We suggest that this idea opens up a range of possibilities and has a development potential that may work as connecting points between HRD and more fundamental aspects of being – specifically aspects such as *time* and *narrative* in learning.

Two critical remarks about COP may serve to clarify why we have chosen this approach. First, Wenger introduces four basic components in the social theory of learning: *practice*, *meaning*, *community* and *identity*. He suggests that these elements are deeply connected and mutually defining and that therefore we could switch any of the four components with learning and put each of them at the centre of analysis (Wenger 1998, p. 5). In other words, COP is a general learning theory offering many points of entry for researchers, academics and practitioners. But it also implicates a lack of depth in regard to the development of the specific components in the theory. This leads to the second critical remark. Even if Wenger introduces the idea that identity is fundamentally temporal (Wenger, 1998, p. 154) the notion of time and how he works with time is

somewhat superficial. We will elaborate on this point later. We will begin the discussion of HRD and COP by clarifying two questions: (1) *what is HRD?*; and, (2) *how does COP relate to HRD?* We will then elaborate on the concept of identity in social learning theory leading to the discussion of the contribution of COP to HRD. We conclude with some implications for HRD practice.

HRD and COP

With regard to the first question, *what is HRD*, we suggest that there is no general agreement on what HRD is (O'Donnell, McGuire & Cross, 2006). HRD is heterogeneous and dynamic and like many other scientific disciplines it is characterized by the production of different paradigms, different concepts, different methods and different criteria for evaluating HRD-practice. In our opinion, this is not a weakness in HRD; and it is not the result of weak scientific concepts and validation methods. HRD needs multiplicity and diversity; among others because of the interplay between theory and reality. Reality is complex, ambiguous, paradoxical and dynamic (Schön 1983). Thus, we need diversity to handle all the different problems that may emerge in reality. Furthermore, reality is socially constructed (Henriksen et al. 2004). Reality – and problems and solutions in reality - can be constructed in an innumerable number of ways. Because of this there is no objective truth that we can move towards. We can only learn from experience and as scientists we can formulate these experiences in concepts, methods and relationships that may be used in other circumstances. As such theory is a way of generating new perspectives and possibilities in reality (Pålshaugen 1998). Adding to the complexity is that HRD-theories are developed by different people in different places and under different circumstances. HRD is thus itself a *social construction* (Astley 1985). It is a *language game* (Wittgenstein 1983; Jørgensen 2006) with its own rules, concepts and methods and with its own contradictions, paradoxes, inconsistencies and holes. The conclusion is that the question "what is HRD"? is the wrong question to ask. Instead we should ask "how is HRD?" (Henriksen et al. 2004; Jørgensen 2006). We need to focus on HRD where it works. HRD emerges through the work of HRD-practitioners and HRD-academics using concepts and methods from the HRD vocabulary. The intentions are, usually, to develop individuals, organizations or communities (Garavan, McGuire & O'Donnell, 2004), but the intentions and the effects are not always very consistent, because the effects depend on the interaction between HRD-practitioners and potentially a lot of other people.

We now turn to the second question: how does COP relate to HRD? What we have emphasized above is the interplay between HRD and context, which is problematic. McGuire and colleagues for example argue that "…there is a critical lack of theoretical rigor and research related to the impact of cultural issues in the field of human resource development" (McGuire et al. 2002, p. 25). In the same paper, it is argued that HRD is *culturally bounded* and that culture is a highly complex, intangible and elusive concept (McGuire et al. 2002, p. 25 and p. 36). Our approach to the question is that we believe that HRD concepts and methods can be applied in a range of very different cultures.

What matters is *how* HRD is practiced. In other words we need a language on practice in order to understand practice; we need a language on practice so that we can work intelligently with HRD in practice. And one of the advantages of COP in relation to HRD is that it focuses attention on the culturally specific forms of participation and reification that exist in a particular community. In the opening chapter of *Communities of Practice*, Wenger states the purpose as follows.

> *Yet in our experience, learning is an integral part of our everyday lives. It is part of our participation in our communities and organizations. The problem is not that we do not know this, but rather that we do not have very systematic ways of talking about this familiar experience. Even though the topic of this book covers mostly things that everybody knows in some ways, having a systematic vocabulary to talk about it does make a difference. An adequate vocabulary is important because the concepts we use to make sense of the world direct both our perception and our actions. We pay attention to what we expect to see, we hear what we can place in our understanding, and we act according to our world views* (Wenger 1998).

Learning is an integral part of our everyday living and being in the world. According to Wenger, the problem is not that we don't know this but that we don't have a systematic vocabulary for speaking of this kind of learning. By giving us this vocabulary, Wenger hopes that we "…become reflective on our discourses of learning and to their effects on the ways we design for learning (Wenger 1998, p. 9). It is our suggestion that COP has a lot to offer to HRD because it provides a language for talking about all the informal and tacit learning processes that occur in organizations and communities all the time.

Linked to all these informal and tacit learning processes is the concept of identity (Brown and Duguid 2001). The integration of identity and practice suggests that learning not only concerns instrumental adaptation but is linked to people and cultures, which define the conditions for learning and its effects. In other words learning is linked to time and space and thus to fundamental issues of *being* (Heidegger 1962; Ricouer 1984). These matters are largely overlooked in the HRD-literature. For example the term *human resource development* is equivocal because the metaphor of the individual is *the resource*. From one perspective HRD is positive because we talk about developing individuals. From another more critical perspective, we could argue that the individual is presented as some sort of intellectual capital where the individual is measured and evaluated according to how organizations may capitalize from the knowledge and learning of the individual (Jørgensen 2004). We may say the same about human resource development. The term identity however involves an interest in the identification processes of individuals within social networks. When individuals participate in negotiation of meaning, they also negotiate their identities and it these identification processes that make negotiation processes meaningful to them. Thus, to talk about identity implies a shift in attention from a strategic resource to the identification processes of individuals. This doesn't however imply that focus is shifted from organizations to individuals. We address one tension in the HRD-literature here; the tension between what is referred to as the *individual level* and the *organizational level* (Garavan, McGuire & O'Donnell, 2004).

Approached from an individual level perspective HRD is concerned with the expansion of individual skills and capabilities, while HRD approached from an organizational level perspective is about the development of organizations and where the individual is approached as a resource for achieving goals (Garavan, McGuire & O'Donnell et al. 2004, pp. 419-421).

This tension has also been captured in the metaphor of the *oxymoron* in the organizational learning literature (Weick and Westley 1996). Organizational Learning is presented as an oxymoron – a concept that contradicts itself - because learning is about the creation of difference, while organizing is about the creation of standards. We argue that identity is one way of overcoming these tensions because it somehow dissolves the distinction between the two levels. Working with identity is to work with individual identity and collective identity at one and the same time; they constitute each other. As such it does not make sense to talk about individual identities - because individuals identify by something and with something that is out there – in the collective. The collective is to be considered as *identity capital* (Pullen 2005) because individuals use socially produced and accessible symbols and resources to create their identities (Geertz 1973; Bruner 1996) and when they use these resources they (re)create the culture but they also (re)create themselves.

The concept of identity in social learning theory

The concept of identity has been understood in many ways. One example is the humanistic idea of a true self hidden behind a fence of socially enforced norms and attitudes, obstructing the original potentialities of identity (Rogers 1961). In this conception of identity, social influence on unique personality is seen as restricting and destroying our access to our own personalities so that we become alienated from ourselves. A different idea of pursuing identity is the sociological idea of role and the significance of gender, age, social status due to family and work roles. Usually this leads to critical studies of how discourses construct identities and thus how identities are the results of relations of power (Linstead and Thomas 2002; Ainsworth and Hardy 2004). The concept of identity in social learning theory is a third approach to identity formation. Social learning theory emerged with the notion of *situated learning* (Lave and Wenger 1991). The idea was to situate learning as part of participation in practice. When people participate in practice they use symbols, artefacts and other reifications to (re)recreate the social world. They use these symbols and artefacts according to the tacit norms, traditions, uses, and rules in the social context. Learning is therefore seen as *internatilization* of the cultural given (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 47) – a process which resembles Polanyi's descriptions of how we come to know how to do things which we cannot explain, describe or define very precisely which is why knowledge always has a tacit dimension (Polanyi 1966). Situated learning theory thus seeks to dissolve the artificial separation of elements like subject/object, tacit/explicit, mind/body, individual/organizational level etc. Wenger's work on COP has emerged from this tradition. In it, the concept of identity is better developed than in situated learning. Learning and development are seen as an integral part of participating in communities of

practice. It is inseparable from issues of practice, community and meaning (Wenger 1998, p. 145). Thus, social learning theory rejects both individualistic and abstractly societal perspectives on identity and proposes instead that the concept of identity be viewed as a pivotal point between the societal and the personal. Identity formation thus becomes viewed as a process based in the mutual constitution of the community and the person. Wenger (p. 149) argues that identity is characterized as follows:

- Being a negotiated experience
- Established in the membership of the community
- Connected to our learning trajectory
- Reconciling our memberships of different communities
- A relation between the local and the global

Identity formation is integrated in the process of participating in communities. We negotiate our experience with other members of the communities and in that process we discover what we are able to do and who we are, and in addition how others view our experiences and interpret who we are: "Bringing together experiences of participation and social reifications we construct who we are in a negotiation of meaning (Wenger, 1998, p. 151)." In the processes of identification we, in other words, participate by using publicly accessible symbols or reifications that can be used to construct, communicate and negotiate meaning. As such the individual modes of participation are merged with social history, culture and context. The individual process of participation is conditioned on the cultural toolbox for construction of meaning; culture would not be culture were it not for individuals participating and reproducing the cultural traditions, rituals and uses of reifications. As such COP is part of what Gherardi and Nicolini term a *microinteractionist tradition* in the organizational learning literature. The distinctive features are its constructionist epistemology and the role of language as the medium of such social construction (Gherardi and Nicolini 2001, pp. 42-43). Through the processes of participation, we define ourselves by what is familiar and understandable. We also develop a sense of what we are not. As such, processes of non-participation may also contribute to identity formation, if of course the community in which we experience non-participation is of significance to us.

The idea of identity as continuously negotiated points to the temporal nature of identity. Identification is in other words a matter of the learners' conception of time. In the COP-framework this is incorporated in the notion of trajectory. Wenger notes that "…trajectory suggests not a path that can be foreseen or charted but a continuous motion – one that has a momentum of its own in addition to a field of influences. It has a coherence through time that connects the past, the present, and the future" (Wenger 1998, p. 154). This notion of temporality denotes how we deal with specific situations; how we do this incorporates the past and the future in negotiating the present. "They give significance to events in relation to time construed as an extension of the self" (Wenger 1998, p. 155). Such negotiation of meaning both compresses time in the lived present but also gives a feeling of an extension in time. On this matter, it is close to some of the

important philosophical contributions to identification. Actually, we might describe Wenger's notion of identity as *circular* just like Ricouer's hermeneutic approach to identity (Ricouer 1984; Cunliffe, Luhmann et al. 2004). In COP-terms, the argument would be that we construct our identities through processes of participation and reification. Since we know how to participate - and thus to reify by means of extant reifications - by means of experience, the process is circular in that we participate by means of what is familiar and understandable - and what we produce are familiar and understandable patterns. What is important, however, is that we are not talking about closed circles. The circles are open and are continuously disturbed – or even disrupted – through interactions with people, symbols and circumstances. Viewed from a learning point of view these points of disturbance and disruptions in identity construction are where we distinguish between *continuous* and *radical learning*. The latter involves a paradigm shift – that is a fundamental change in world view (Imershein 1977).

There are a number of sources for these disturbances or disruptions. Wenger, for example, mentions boundary objects or new participants as learning possibilities. But disturbances and disruptions are also an integral part of being because any individual may be on a number of different trajectories because she participates in a number of different communities. As such, individuals may be on peripheral trajectories, inbound trajectories, insider trajectories, boundary trajectories and outbound trajectories. The type of trajectory the person is "on" gives the person different perspectives on work and on the future possibilities related to this work. It is crucial to identity formation if you view your self and are view of the other members as an "insider", "outsider" or in a "peripheral" or "marginal" position (Wenger, 1998, p. 167). The point is that when non-participation is a constituent element of participation, boundary crossing can be very difficult. One of the central challenges is to reconcile these different trajectories in identity formation as a nexus of multi-membership of different communities.

To summarise, identity inherits the texture of practice. Identities are rich and complex because they are produced within the rich and complex set of relations of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 162). What characterises identity is that it is *lived*, which points to the fact that identity is more complex than categories like personality traits or roles; it is *negotiated*, which points to the idea of identity as emerging and identity work as ongoing through life and different settings; identity is *social*, which means that membership of communities provides the formation of identity with a fundamentally social character; identity is a *learning process*, which points to identity as a trajectory that incorporates the past and the future into the meaning of the present; finally identity is *a nexus* of multiple memberships where identity has to encompass processes of reconciliation of different forms of membership and *a local-global interplay* (Wenger, 1998, p. 163).

When we construct our identities, they are manifested in *modes of belonging*. Wenger distinguishes between three modes of belonging: *engagement* which is active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning; *imagination* which is to create images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experiences; and *alignment* which is to coordinate our energy

in order to fit broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises (Wenger, 1998, pp. 173-174). Engagement is distinct from the other two modes of belonging by its bounded character in that it demands direct involvement. Imagination is our ability to connect our experience with past and future, and to more global ideas that are not directly connected to our local engagement in a community. It's our social fantasy and it's a way of expanding ourselves by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves. While engagement is direct involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning, imagination allows us to extend ourselves from these mutual processes in time and space and thus capture the processes of negotiation of meaning in larger stories. Imagination is thus a symbolic process whereby local everyday mundane activities are connected to more global matters – a process, which other writers have referred to as *storytelling* or *narrating* (Brown and Duguid 1996; Czarniawska 1997; Czarniawska 1999; Chappell, Rhodes et al. 2003; Sfard and Prusak 2005). Narrating gives plot and coherence to the world. As such imagination may be viewed as the process of plotting our existence – by integrating past, present and future – and in seeing ourselves as part of stories, which involves other people other than those with whom you engage. Alignment denotes the process by which we coordinate our energy with others in order to become something that is bigger. Alignment emerges from the subjection of individuals to specific norms, standards and traditions of a particular community. It is thus the alignment of individual stories to organizational stories.

The contribution of COP to HRD

We now turn to the question on how COP contributes to HRD. Basically we have HRD as a set of language games that comprise concepts, methods and techniques for developing human resources on an individual, organizational and community level. These concepts, methods and techniques are developed and applied by HRD-academics and HRD-practitioners in order to create learning and development. However there is a critical tension in HRD between HRD as a toolbox and the organizational and learning cultures (O'Donnell, McGuire & Cross, 2006). At first glance HRD appears to be consistent with the modern presumption that the employment relation has become more informal, consensual and loosely democratic. Whether this in fact so is, however, subject to the more critical exploration of how HRD actually works in practice (O'Donnell, McGuire & Cross 2006, pp. 5-6). This is a question that may be answered by scrutinizing the use of HRD-techniques by means of a Foucauldian conception of power (Jørgensen 2006; Jørgensen 2007), because it will focus on how a discourse like HRD works on the people subjected to HRD. The levels of analysis approach (Garavan, McGuire & O'Donnell 2004) capture these tensions very well in describing the contradictory goals of development at individual and organizational levels. The notion of strategic human resource development, in our view, reproduces the metaphor of the organization as a pyramid: that is, the organization is directed strategically from the top and methods need to ensure perfect consistency between the strategic, tactical and operational levels. "Managerialist discourse, unsurprisingly, dominates the organizational-level practice literature and, in particular, the strategic HRD literature" where the word "…*strategic*

emphasizes the company perspective and connects the link between HRD and the organizational goals and objectives" (Garavan, McGuire & O'Donnell 2004, p. 421). Our argument is that we need to dump this metaphor of the organization and instead see the organization as a *network* of different activities, which criss-cross and are related to each other in many different ways and where many different people and personalities participate in many different ways creating a range of different stories.

The ideal-conception of the organization as a perfectly consistent system has destroyed many organizations because the pressure towards homogeneity runs counter to the fact that people are different; they have different backgrounds, different interests and see different possibilities. When do we say that people have a common identity? We might introduce Wittgenstein's notion of *family resemblance* in order to answer this question. Wittgenstein argues that when we call all languages for *language*, it is not because that there is something common to all languages but because they are related to each one another in many different ways (Wittgenstein 1983) (§ 65). There are similar characteristics between languages but we cannot say that there is something that is common for all of them. Instead, there are networks of similarities among different languages. When we say that an organization is characterized by a common culture or common identity, we may imagine the same. It is a network of similarities that criss-cross and are related to each other in many different ways. When we use the idea of *family resemblance* on organizations, we emphasize first of all that they are networks of people and activities and we thus wish to introduce a more balanced relationship between the individual and the organization instead of trying to reduce the individual to the organization. This is the crucial point here. We suggest that the COP-approach to learning and development introduces a similar balanced relationship because the term community also comprises people participating in many different ways and having many different relationships to one another. But this means also that we need new methods for working with learning and development. The HRD-concepts, methods and tools in themselves may not need to change that much, but we do need more thorough knowledge of how we can work contextually with learning and development in organizations. We need to know how we translate HRD-concepts, -methods and -techniques into something that can be used by the individual and the organization. A COP-approach to HRD would focus on how such concepts, methods and techniques are *translated* or *transformed* into practice (Latour 1996; Gherardi and Nicolini 2000) through processes of participation and reification. The decisive question is whether these processes of participation and reification lead to the HRD-language becoming accepted as an appropriate and meaningful way of communication and constructing reality. The systematic vocabulary for speaking of learning in practice gives HRD-academics and -practitioners the possibility of reflecting on the ways of integrating HRD-language into learning cultures and communities and in the same process reorganizing these learning cultures and communities.

The concept of identity in the COP is especially important here. We have described how the COP introduces the notion of trajectory or time in working with learning and development. As such learning becomes a question of reorganizing the learners'

conception of time. Wenger's observation that identity is fundamentally temporal has important implications here because it means that we can claim that learning is about the reorganization of the learners' integration of past, present and future.

> …a community of practice is a field of possible trajectories and thus the proposal of an identity. It is a history of possible pasts and of possible futures, which are all there for participants, not only to witness, hear about, and contemplate, but to engage with (Wenger 1998, p. 156).

Working with the modes of belonging is Wenger's proposal of working with the learners' conception of the integration of past, present and future. By the process of engagement learners gain access to participative and reifying aspects of practice and they thus gain access to their interpretations of the past and their imagination of learning possibilities in the future. From a COP point of view, managing and developing human resources is to create the connections between all the different trajectories in the organization and the larger narrative of the organization. This is a critical task for HRD and it is perhaps one, which has become more difficult, because HRD has to be practiced more and more in a globalized society. This means that people have to balance more and more contradictory and equivocal forces in their daily negotiations of meaning. According to Bauman (Bauman 2004) the global society is characterized by an ever increasing speed of change in a way which is not even always comprehensible for us. This means that we talk much more about our identities – simply because they are under pressure. Identity is under pressure because the ever increasing speed of change jeopardizes the relationship between individuals and social groups like organizations, professions and institutions. In our view this amplifies the argument for focusing on identity in HRD, because the effort of constructing new identities is central in relation to keeping the individual and the organization together. Boje's antenarrative approach (Boje 2001) is a very good example of why this is so. Antenarrative is the expression he uses for "…the fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculation, a bet" (Boje 2001, p. 1). He introduces *antenarrative analysis* as a solution to the modern crisis in narrative analysis. Antenarrative analysis is the analysis of stories "…that are too unconstructed and fragmented to be analyzed in traditional approaches" (Boje 2001, p. 1). The relevance of antenarrative analysis is thus a manifestation of an increasing fragmentation of life and thus an increasing degree of internal contradictions and tensions in identification processes between the many small stories and the larger narrative of self. These are the results of many changes and thereby identity is subjected to an increasing amount of disturbances and disruptions. This means that the *reconciliation between different trajectories* becomes a central task for management.

It is however also in relation to this task of reconciling different trajectories in periods of more or less continuous change that we are most critical of COP. The means of working with identity in COP are access to different modes of participation and reification in extant and new learning communities. But even if Wenger uses the term participation in describing the active involvement of individuals, the COP-approach doesn't explicitly call for an involvement of unique human qualities – such as, for example, the ability to be

reflexive on practice. COP relies solely on the specific qualities of particular communities of practice when it talks about learning, which in our view is based on a much too optimistic view of organizations and how they work. In any case he is not a critical writer in the sense that he does not seek to question the values embedded and embodied in organizational practices (Jørgensen 2007, p. 40). Moreover, the concept of practice in Wenger's approach is only *pre-reflexive practice* (Gherardi and Nicolini 2001, pp. 47-51). In a world of flexibility, change, innovation etc. we need reflexive practice where reflexivity is the difference between *knowing-in-practice* and *knowing-a-practice* (Gherardi and Nicolini 2001, p. 51). Many people know how to participate in practice, but they cannot talk sense about this practice. In order to participate intelligently – and not blindly – people need to be able to talk sense of the practices they participate in (Ryle 1949; Dewey 1991). Ryle and Dewey talk about reflection here as the means of intelligent participation. As noted above we go even further than that and talk about reflexivity as a basis for becoming intelligent participants. The difference between reflection and reflexivity is that the former is characterized by

> …a "going toward" objects or willing something into truth by representing it as we think it is. This means an objective observer reflecting on a situation to understand that what is really going on and to develop theories to explain that reality (Cunliffe and Jong 2005, p. 226).

To reflect is in other words a systematic inquiry to find the "best" practices and it is characterized by what Dewey calls *suspension of judgment* (Dewey 1991). Reflexivity, on the other hand, is grounded in presumptions of reality as socially constructed. Reflexive thinking in other words means a questioning of our concepts, methods and models in order to avoid being caught in "…definitive language and truth claims" (Cunliffe and Jong 2005, p. 227).

> In particular, it means engaging in the reflexive act of questioning the basis of our thinking, surfacing the taken-for-granted rules underlying organizational decisions, and examining critically our own practices and ways of relating with others (Cunliffe and Jong 2005, p. 227).

Intelligent participation in practice thus requires systematic exploration and questioning of the participative and reifying processes through which practice is (re)produced. It requires a systematic exploration of how participants integrate past, present and future. Interestingly, it can be argued that many learning methods and HRD-methods actually aim at reorganizing experience by means of the systematic exploration of time and that the issue of time is therefore central in learning. These methods include for example evaluation techniques, aimed at reconstructing the past in order to improve on the future; portfolios aimed at building a reflective relationship between means and ends and the actual sequences of events; scenario techniques aimed at building new possibilities in the future etc. Other methods like supervision, coaching and dialogue techniques have similar qualities. In order to become a more reflexive practice, we need to bring in such methods

that are capable of a more systematic exploration of the learners' notion of time. Practice in itself will not do it alone.

Conclusions

The paper has explored the contribution of COP to HRD. We have followed the idea that learning is about negotiating new identities. The notion of identity in COP opens up a range of possibilities and has development potential that may work as connecting points between HRD and more fundamental aspects of being. We have argued that COP contributes to HRD in developing a language on practice, which means that we become better able to work intelligently with HRD in practice. One of the advantages of COP here is that it focuses attention on the culturally specific forms of participation and reification that exist in a particular community. We have argued that the notion of identity in COP is particularly important here. COP rejects both individualistic and abstractly societal perspectives on identity and proposes instead that the concept of identity is to be viewed as a pivotal point between the societal and the personal. It thus dissolves the artificial distinction between the individual level and the organizational level. Further we have described how COP introduces the notion of trajectory or time in working with learning and development. As such learning becomes a matter of reorganizing the learners' conception of time. Working with modes of belonging is Wenger's proposal of working with the learners' conception of time. We are however critical in regard to COP's potential in regard to developing a reflexive practice. Here we need to combine COP with more systematic ways of exploring practice.

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