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Linking Theory and Practice
Learning Networks at the Service of Workplace Innovation

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Preface

An experimental type of project activity, i.e. the learning network, was developed by the Finnish Workplace Development Programme in 2002–2003 as a new method of creating knowledge and boosting innovative development in working life. The new project activity was inspired by the experiences of earlier Finnish and Scandinavian programmes, while also responding to the growing needs of Finnish universities, polytechnics and research institutes to commit themselves to longer-term research and development cooperation with workplaces. The Workplace Development Programme TYKES funded 16 very different and diversified learning network projects between 2004 and 2010. In this book, our aim is to draw together key results and conclusions arrived at by eight of these projects.

A Finnish book on the early experiences of the TYKES learning network projects was published in 2006. This book, aimed exclusively at a Finnish audience, sought to make the learning network approach better known among researchers, policy-makers and officials in the labour market organisations working in the area.

In 2009, planning began for a new book providing more comprehensive coverage of the results and experiences of the learning network projects. A small editing group was formed on the initiative of the TYKES programme team. This group held its first meeting in September 2009. Later on, in the same month, a larger group, comprising the coordinators of eight learning network projects and members of the TYKES programme team, gathered in a workshop to discuss the book. All of those invited were willing to make a contribution. It was decided that the new book would be published in English.

The first drafts of papers for the new book were presented by the authors at the second gathering in February 2010. At the third workshop, arranged in May 2010, new versions of the papers were further discussed and an agreement made on the time-table for the editing process. Final versions of the papers were submitted to the editing group between June and October 2010. The editing group bore responsibility for fine-tuning the texts in some cases.

The editing group wishes to thank all of the authors for the contribution of their own papers as well as their constructive comments on the papers of fellow-authors. Publication of this book can in itself be regarded as an example of the co-creative process! We would also like to thank Done Information Oy for the English translation and checking, Mrs. Paula Heiäng for the final technical editing of the text and Mr. Lauri Voutilainen for the cover drawing. Nevertheless, responsibility for the contents of this work rests solely with the writers themselves.

Helsinki, February 2011

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Combinno – Learning Network for Innovative Development Coalitions

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SAKEA – Learning Network for Strategic Human Resource Management and Evaluation of Operations in Municipalities

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Learning Network of South Savo

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Poppi – Learning Network for Rewarding

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I   Learning networks in the TYKES programme

Learning networks as an infrastructure for the creation and dissemination of workplace innovation: an introduction

Tuomo Alasoini

This introductory article examines learning networks as a new means of promoting the creation and dissemination of workplace innovation. It presents a conceptual framework for learning networks, which has guided their application within the Finnish Workplace Development Programme TYKES. The article closes with a summary of the book's purpose and key contents.

Keywords: co-creation, development programme, generative result, interactive forum, workplace innovation.

During the last few years, learning and innovation have become key concepts in charting a path to success for European countries, in the face of increasingly global competition. There is still a long way to go, however, from the general learning and innovation rhetoric, with which policy documents teem, to a situation in which ideas of continuous learning and innovation generation are deep-rooted in everyday life in the workplace, or firmly embedded within new managerial and organisational practices. Arundel et al. (2006, 28–29), for example, have stated that "The bottleneck in improving the innovation capabilities of European firms might not lie in the low levels of R&D expenditure, which are strongly determined by industry structures and therefore difficult to change, but the widespread existence of working environments that are unable to provide a fertile environment for innovation". In practice, there are vast differences between European countries, in terms of the degree to which they have adopted forms of work organisation that support learning and innovation. European comparisons clearly show that learning-oriented forms of work organisation are more widespread in the Nordic countries than elsewhere in Europe (Valeyre et al. 2009).

The increased need for businesses to be innovative has led to a growing inter-est among policy-makers, too, in creating conditions favourable to change and innovation in the workplace. However, this has seldom resulted in legislative in-tervention. What we see, instead, is a wide variety of persuasive and non-binding, soft forms of regulation (Trubek & Trubek 2005), ranging from general policy frameworks and recommendations to the provision of information or education and training on 'best practices' and, further, to more direct forms of support such as advisory and consultancy services, benchmarking tools and grants and subsi-dies for companies. A soft approach can be a useful policy option, especially in situations where the objects of change (companies) are heterogeneous; processes leading to desired changes (workplace innovations) can take different forms; and the means used for promoting change (the introduction of new managerial and organisational practices) are of a sensitive nature.

Development programmes as a vehicle for workplace change and innovation

Development programmes are a widely used soft form of regulation in facilitat-ing workplace change and innovation. By 'programme', we mean fixed-term institutionalized activity in which, first, development is guided by a shared framework which applies to several work organisations at the same time while; secondly, the content of the framework has been agreed by the management and staff of the work organisations in question, together with main stakeholder groups such as central government, social partners and researchers, consultants and other experts; and thirdly, the work organisations involved engage in exchange of information, interaction and cooperation (Alasoini 2008). Spearhead countries in programmes to promote workplace change and innovation include Norway, Sweden, Germany and Finland. In recent years, programmes, or programme-like activities in general, in support of workplace change and innovation, have also been launched in a number of other European countries and regions, such as Denmark, Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Flanders (Belgium), Ireland, the Netherlands, North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), Portugal and the United Kingdom (Alasoini 2009; Brödner & Latniak 2003).

Workplace development programmes differ from one another considerably, in terms of their approaches, aims, extent, design and institutional arrangements. In spite of these differences, a shared feature of the programmes has been the challenge in disseminating the results of programme-supported projects so as to have a significant impact on learning in working life and society in general (e.g. Arnkil 2008; Gustavsen 2008; Riegler 2008). Experience shows that the adoption of any new managerial or organisational practice that is even slightly abstract or

systematically complex is not a mechanical process of transfer from one company to another, but a process of *learning,* including 'local re-invention'. In general, research on innovation dissemination has demonstrated that the degree to which an innovation is re-invented, i.e. modified by adopters as it diffuses, is positively related to the innovation's sustainability (Rogers 2003, 429).

We can refer to the existence of a chasm between the first-order and generative results of a programme. *First-order results* mean changes immediately due to projects undertaken in the work organisations participating in the projects. In programmes promoting workplace change and innovation, typical first-order results are improvements in work productivity, product quality, the organisation of work, the working environment and job satisfaction. *Generative results* show how the results of projects supported through the programme benefit other parties besides those directly involved. However, generative results do not necessarily – and in workplace development, not even primarily – involve ready-made 'best practices' that can be transposed from one context to another; rather, they involve the production and dissemination of generative ideas which can become sources of inspiration or encouragement to actors outside the project.

Demonstration projects supported by the programme typically have the objective of presenting 'empirical proof' on behalf of a principle, practice, solution, or research or development method. In most cases, the piloted demonstration projects are at least moderately successful. This success can be explained by the following factors (Alasoini 2006) in particular. First, the projects are usually equipped with exceptional resources in terms of funding and expertise. They can also be extensively tailored for the company, workplace or work unit concerned. Third, the projects are implemented in progressive companies, which already have experience both of self-motivated development and cooperation with researchers or consultants. The conditions for success may be further improved by the fact that participation in the programme boosts the legitimacy and transparency of the project and, consequently, the commitment of participants to implementing it as well as possible. The fifth contributing factor is the possible Hawthorne effect. This means that the participants improve their performance or give positive evaluations of the results of the experiment, primarily because they themselves have received special attention.

Success in achieving results of the first order is important to the programmes, if only because they motivate potential adopters of project results, such as other workplaces. At the same time, from the perspective of the programme's implementers and stakeholders, success in creating first-order results is an important legitimising factor for the programme. With respect to development programmes, however, it is important to understand that first-order results may have emerged

under exceptionally favourable conditions. It may therefore be misleading to draw far-reaching conclusions concerning the functionality of any principle, practice, solutions or method employed in the project. If a project results in first-order results which are 'too good', this can lead to unrealistic expectations and strategies in terms of achieving generative results.

The environment in which the results of demonstration projects are generated is always artificial, at least to some degree. However, few programmes offer financial or expert resources to a large group of 'second wave' workplaces, or provide opportunities for target-specific tailoring, to the same extent as in the demonstration projects. In addition, in 'second wave' workplaces few programmes are able to attain a level of legitimacy, transparency and commitment to the adoption of new practices, comparable with those of demonstration projects. The programmes' strategies for achieving generative results have often remained undefined and the programmes have been under-resourced in this area.

Finland as a testing ground for workplace development

In recent years, Finland has put more effort than many other European countries into working life development. Until the early 1990s, Finland clearly lagged behind other Nordic countries. Its increased efforts have been influenced by various, mutually supportive factors. The deep economic recession of the early 1990s was an important situational factor in Finland, demonstrating how vulnerable Finnish business and working life was to sudden changes in the competitive environment. It is indicative of the depth of the recession that unemployment rates rose in four years, from slightly above 3% (1990) to over 18% (1994), before beginning their gradual decline. Both in private business and the public sector, the shock effect of the recession clearly accelerated development efforts in technology, productivity and quality improvement. It also resulted in greater attention being directed towards work organisation, personnel and management and leadership development, now regarded as a critical success factor.

The increase in workplace development activities has been simultaneously promoted by several factors in Finland. One such factor has been Finland's long tradition in both bipartite cooperation between various labour market organisations, and tripartite cooperation between labour market organisations and public authorities. In the aftermath of the 1990s recession, employer and employee organisations were well prepared to expand their cooperation with public authorities into working life development issues. Another contributing factor has been the upsurge, beginning in the early 1980s, in working-life research and, specifically, the rise of action-oriented working-life research in universities and

research institutes. This was a result of improved research financing opportunities, as well as being due to the culmination of problems in the quality of working life, as well as the emergence of new approaches. These new approaches included, for example, participatory action research, socio-technical systems design, organisation development (OD), developmental work research, and process management (Ramstad & Alasoini 2006). A third factor worth mentioning was the strong conviction, prevalent in Finland, that research, R&D activities and high education are key factors in a nation's competitiveness. From an early stage, Finland took a systematic approach to adopting a national innovation system as the framework for its science and technology policies (Miettinen 2002). However, it is only in the 2000s that the promotion of workplace innovation has become a generally recognised sector within mainstream innovation policy.

The first government-funded programmes to focus exclusively on promoting workplace change and innovation in Finland began in 1993 and 1996, with the launch of the National Productivity Programme and the Finnish Workplace Development Programme (TYKE). The first programme was initiated by labour market organisations, the second by the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Labour coordinated both programmes, in which social partners were also closely involved. In 2004, the two programmes were combined under a new six-year 'umbrella', titled the Finnish Workplace Development Programme (TYKES) (Alasoini et al. 2005; Arnkil 2008). In the 1990s and 2000s, other publicly funded programmes have, to some extent, also focused on working life development.

In 2008, the implementation of the TYKES programme was transferred from the Ministry to another government agency, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes). This transfer was triggered by a major reorganisation of Finnish central government and the adoption of a new national innovation strategy, based on the idea of 'broad-based innovation policy' (Aho et al. 2008; Veugelers et al. 2009). A motivating factor in the transfer was the objective of strengthening workplace innovation as a sector of national innovation policy, thus creating better preconditions for integrating workplace innovation with other types of innovation in companies' development activities.

In 1996–2010, over 1,800 workplace development projects were funded through the Finnish Workplace Development Programme. Unlike in many other countries, the programme was targeted not only at businesses, but also at the public sector and, specifically, workplace development within the municipal sector. Finland's municipal sector is extensive in comparison to that of many other countries, due to the fact that municipalities are responsible for a large share of the educational, health care, social and cultural services provided to citizens.

With respect to the dissemination of results, Finland ran into problems similar to those observed in other countries in the early stages. In 1997, the then active TYKE programme began to support not only projects initiated by individual companies, but also larger-scale networked projects aiming at workplace innovation through cooperation with various companies. The initiation of the TYKES programme represented a more radical step towards creating and disseminating workplace innovation in new ways. TYKES included a new, experimental form of project activity, dubbed the learning network project. The basic idea underlying development within the learning network was arrived at through experiences under the TYKES programme and by examining the results of earlier Norwegian and Swedish programmes. These had proved successful in supporting corporate development, especially within the context of larger-scale networks.

Within different contexts, the 'learning network' concept has been utilised in various ways. Next, we present a generic framework for a learning network, which was the starting point for the learning networks of the TYKES programme. A separate article in this book deals in more detail with the specific contents and requirements set for the learning network projects under the TYKES programme (see the article by Alasoini, Lahtonen, Rouhiainen and Ramstad).

Learning networks – what, why and how?

The learning network is based on the idea of bringing together actors who share an interest in sufficiently similar development issues, but who still have a sufficiently broad diversity of expertise. These are engaged in long-term interaction, with the aim of creating innovation potential. In addition to companies and other work organisations, this group of actors may include researchers, consultants, trainers, labour market organisations or regional agencies. As the name suggests, a *learning* network is a network created specifically for learning. Here, learning is not simply a 'by-product' of the sharing of experiences, which occurs in all networks. Rather, it is the explicit and primary function of the network to produce learning events (Bessant & Tsekouras 2001; Knight 2002; Toiviainen 2003). The learning subjects involved may be individuals, groups, organisations or other communities, intra-network consortia, the network as a whole or, in some cases, actors outside the network.

Interactive forums and co-creation as the core activity

In learning-network-based projects, the prime target for programme support is not development projects in individual workplaces as such, but the promotion of mutual interaction and, ideally, the resulting shared development work or *co-*

creation. Co-creation does not imply that the development targets of the various network participants are identical, since they all have development agendas of their own. Co-creation does, however, require that the participants are able to identify shared development objects through interaction within the network. In this, advanced methods and tools must be utilised within the network's *interactive forums*. Interactive forums can include, for example, project management or steering group meetings, workshops, seminars, training and discussion events, visits to workplaces, or web-based forums.

One of the assumptions of a learning network is that its participants have complementary expertise. This means that, in any given situation, everyone in the network can occupy the role of a learner. If this were not the case, it would be misleading even to describe the set-up as a learning network. Learning opportunities provide important motivation for members' network participation in the first place. Participants cannot, on the other hand, be 'freeloaders': all must be able and willing to allow other participants to utilise and benefit from their knowhow and ideas. In a genuine learning network, no participant can take the role of master or apprentice only. In addition to participating workplaces, this is also true of the researchers, consultants and other stakeholders who are members of the network. According to the participants' role in the network's interactive forums, three main set-ups can be distinguished (Table 1).

Table 1. Different interactive forum set-ups in learning networks.

Position of participants	Allocation of knowledge	Typical learning actions
Teacher and learners	One member of the network has more extensive expertise in a given area than others	Other members gain ideas and encouragement for their own development work in that area
All teachers and learners	Several members of the network already have experiences of a given area	Benchmarking of experiences between members presenting their practices serves as a learning opportunity for them
All learners	A network examines matters which are relatively new to all members	Explorative activities, which help all members acquire greater expertise in the area in question, are launched

The *Teacher and learners* set-up represents the traditional, expert-driven learning perspective. Some network members have superior knowhow, which the others could benefit from as generative ideas.

The *All Teachers and learners* set-up can be characterised as a benchmarking situation. In learning networks and workplace development in general, the items to be disseminated consist of generative ideas rather than practices in their final form; this means that benchmarking activities differ, for the most part, from traditional benchmarking operations, in which participants review their own practices against one that is indisputably defined as 'the best'. In workplace development, opportunities for such mechanical benchmarking activities are limited by the considerable context and system-dependency of practices. *Context-dependency* means that the characteristics of a workplace's environment determine how applicable any given practice may be in that company. *System-dependency*, on the other hand, means that other practices adopted earlier affect the applicability of any new practice in the workplace.

In workplace development, learning is usually based not on 'best practices' but on the fact that different actors have different experiences. Since learning and innovation stem from differences and diversity, the mechanical use of specific 'best practices' as a guideline, let alone a blueprint, can, in the long term, narrow rather than broaden opportunities for learning and innovative thinking. However, learning from differences and diversity requires that the representatives of these organisations are capable of identifying functional correspondences between their respective organisations, based on which sensible comparisons can be made. The organisation being compared is not regarded as a standard but rather as a mirror which reflects similarities and differences and helps place the practices of one's own organisation within a broader context. The key issue in this kind of *reflexive benchmarking* (Alasoini 2008; Schienstock 2004) is the use and evolution of dialogical methods, rather than the construction of detailed sets of indicators and strict measurement systems.

Within learning networks, the choice between mechanical and reflexive benchmarking is ultimately a matter of expediency. In cases where a member of the network has demonstrably successful experiences of certain practices, which are not highly context or system-dependent, mechanical benchmarking can be an effective learning tool.

The third option presented in Table 1 concerns the *All learners* set-up. In such set-ups, which are genuinely searching for something new, the network will initiate research and development projects shared by various participants. These projects aim at gaining in-depth expertise on the matter in question, sharing related experiences, and discovering new kinds of practical, local applications in the network.

Critical prerequisites for the operations of a learning network

For a programme to use learning network projects, it must have sufficient resources. This applies to time resources in particular, since building up networks, and achieving the confidential interaction relationships required for networks to function, is usually time-consuming. In practice, it is easiest to get started if the network participants have already engaged in some type of interaction or actual cooperation, and have consequently built mutual trust. Networks generally need a coordinator with a sufficiently neutral position towards the network's core members, and the opportunity to make a strong, long-term commitment to developing the network's operations. In learning networks for workplace development, this role is typically taken by researchers or consultants.

Another critical issue is the network's composition, which determines what kinds of mirrors for the exchange of experiences can be formed within the network. Relevant factors include the size of the network, its structure, and the similarity or diversity of its members' expertise. Similarity of expertise may narrow the knowledge domain of the network, whereas diversity can prevent participants from understanding each other's situation, aims, language, concepts and values (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998; Simsek et al. 2003; Tell 2001). The latter can probably be more easily overcome than the former, through interactive forums and other network activities.

An additional issue concerns what motives and expectations the participants have for acting within the network, and how much these differ between participants. Because learning networks are a new and seemingly complicated type of project, it may be more difficult to draw up cost-benefit assessments of participation in them than for the more traditional types of project. The most important anticipated benefit for participants in interactive forums is not so much the discovery of ready-made solutions for problems defined by the participant himself/herself, as redefining and re-contextualising the problems themselves and viewing them in a new light.

The abovementioned factors – prior interaction or cooperation between participants, resulting in trust; the composition of the network (size, structure, similarity v. diversity of expertise); and participant motives and expectations – all play a part in whether interactive forums can, in fact, be created within networks. Moreover, the impact of learning network activities depends on the kinds of processes interactive forums are able to mobilise.

In learning networks, another critical issue is that of which people from companies and other organisations actually participate in interactive forums. As noted above, learning can occur at many levels within a network. Generally, we could say that participation in a learning network promotes learning at individual level more readily than at team level, let alone the level of the organisation as a whole. Significant factors that can be seen as influencing how, and at what levels, learning occurs, include the kinds of people participating in the network and their position within the organisation, how robustly the management supports them, and how well the network is integrated into the organisation's own development system.

The capacity of learning networks for producing first-order and generative results

Learning network projects lack many of the elements which are vital in demonstration projects for the achievement of significant, first-order results. On the other hand, the former have an advantage over the latter, in that participants in learning networks can obtain feedback on their development more easily and more comprehensively from other network members. The good results achieved in demonstration projects are products of an environment which is in many ways artificial. This may lead to an unrealistic perception of the permanence of the results achieved in workplaces that have participated in these projects. In learning networks, the risk is lower. However, we can assume that, on average, it is more difficult for learning network projects to provide the same first-order results than it is for more traditional demonstration projects (Alasoini 2008).

In narrowing the chasm between first-order and generative results, learning networks are by no means the only method at the programme's disposal. Table 2 contains five different strategies that can be applied to improving the programme's capability to produce generative results. In the table, the production of generative results is examined as a three-stage process (creation – transfer – reception). Solutions which prove to be useful are created in a local context; then these, or some elements of these, are transferred into another context; and, finally, they are adopted in one form or another in a new context. There are, however, different options available in how to relate these three stages to each other. The strategies are different in terms of the methods they utilise when seeking to improve various phases, and in the manner in which they define the phases' temporal relationship.

The first strategy is based on the idea of deploying various means of transfer, for example training, mentoring, marketing, consultancy, seminars, publications, data banks etc., more efficiently within programmes. The second alternative is to

Table 2. Different strategies for improving the capacity of programmes to produce generative results.

Strategy	Relation between creation, transfer and reception	How to improve creation?	How to improve transfer and reception?
More efficient use of means of transfer	Sequential	No change	Selective and tailor-made use of means for targeted groups of potential adopters
Shift of resources from creation to reception	Sequential	More focused approach	Increased support for 'second wave' adopters
Elaborating causal mechanisms of demonstration	Sequential	Greater research input	More convincing evidence-based argumentation
Enriching knowledge from demonstration	Partly overlapping	Broader base for validation	Bridging the social and cultural gap between creation and reception
Using learning networks	Parallel	Mutual learning within learning network, through interaction and co-creation, improves creation and forms a broader and more valid basis for transfer	

shift programme resources from the 'over-resourced' innovation creation stage (i.e. the stage at which 'good practices' are created in demonstration projects) to the 'under-resourced' reception stage. Thirdly, it is possible to improve the capacity of programmes to provide generative results, by enhancing the knowledge provided by demonstration projects. This is achieved through a more rigorous analysis of causal mechanisms and the interdependencies between different phenomena. Such a process applies to the relationships between the new (good) managerial and organisational practices and the desired outcomes (productivity, employee well-being etc.), as well as between the managerial and organisational practices themselves (e.g. Hesketh & Fleetwood 2006; Martens et al. 2006). A shared feature of all three strategies is that they continue to be based on the idea of temporally separated phases of creation, transfer and reception

The fourth strategy, in turn, is based on the idea of enriching the knowledge provided by demonstration projects, by rendering this knowledge more interactive and easier to adopt for other workplaces. Within the programme, good practices including a lot of 'flesh and blood', i.e. including emotional aspects and examined from multiple perspectives, are substituted for traditional 'passive' and formal

presentations, case banks or other kinds of description. The interactive nature of good practices is enhanced, for example, by using narrative methods or those which produce different kinds of emotional experiences. Here, particular attention is paid to the distinct learning styles of different potential adopters (Arnkil 2008). The fourth strategy represents a partial departure from the viewpoint that creation and reception are two totally separate phases of the innovation process.

The fifth strategy for creating generative results, i.e. utilising learning networks, corresponds to an even more radical blurring of the tendency to think in phases. In learning network projects, several parallel experiments are ongoing at the same time, learning from each other by exchanging information or joining forces to achieve something together. The production of generative results is an in-built objective in learning network projects. Such projects can function within the context of a programme, not just as a forum for the exchange of information between project participants, but also as an intermediate-level structure which might facilitate the broader exchange of information, both within programmes and beyond their boundaries.

Purpose of this book

Learning networks are 'strange creatures' by their very nature. They do not follow the *teleological* change processes underlying the more traditional forms of project activity. In such changes, goal-driven action to correct a state of affairs is launched by a purposeful entity. Such change has a single subject. This manifests itself in workplace development among the management and personnel of the work organisation implementing the change, alongside researchers' and consultants' support for such change, with all committed to the project implementation plan. The single subject in question functions as the collective expression of the willingness of these parties. On the other hand, in learning network projects, there are several change subjects, each with its own development agenda and contributing its own experiences for collective processing. The purpose of collective processing is to bring about new, innovative combinations of expertise and knowledge and to produce critical assessments that can in turn generate new ideas, or lead to redefinitions of ongoing development work. Following the classification of Van de Ven and Poole (1995), the change process theory underlying learning network projects can be described as *dialectical*.

How do learning networks function in practice? Is it possible to create learning networks that truly fulfil the promises presented above? Can learning networks become a valid tool in bridging the gap between first-order and generative results, both in workplace development and other innovation activity? How narrow a

scope does modern working life impose on activities undertaken under projects based on learning networks?

Such questions loomed in the background when we embarked on the mission of writing a book on the experiences of the TYKES programme learning networks. Eight learning network projects were selected for the book, each of which has written a story on the path it followed, explaining the project's results, experiences and practical activities. The articles were specifically guided by the following questions: Why was the learning network created? Why was development based on networking specifically selected as the method applied? What kinds of interactive forums and methods, enabling co-creation, did the project utilise? The intention was to describe learning network activities through concrete examples, while also presenting the more general results and conclusions arrived at by the network. To our knowledge, the utilisation of learning networks in Finland has never before been described or analysed by a programme, or the equivalent, in a similar manner.

Contents of this book

This book is divided into three parts. In the following, a short presentation of each chapter in the book is made.

Part I: learning networks in the TYKES programme

Introduction of this book is followed by an article by *Tuomo Alasoini, Maarit Lahtonen, Nuppu Rouhiainen* and *Elise Ramstad*, in which those four authors take a closer look at learning network projects within the TYKES programme. In the article, the authors examine the programme's learning network activity in terms of its purpose, objectives and results and the problems that were encountered. The assessment made by the authors is based on their own experience as members of the TYKES programme team and the findings of the external evaluation study on the programme that was concluded in 2010. In addition, the article makes a short retrospective overview on network-based workplace development in Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Elise Ramstad discusses implications of the new, broad-based innovation framework that is now adopted in Finland for the development of work organisations. The author presents a new model, the innovation generating model, which is built on theories of organisational development and innovation management. The model includes an in-built capacity for simultaneous development of work organisation's activity system and the broader innovation infrastructure. The paper

goes through the main conceptual premises of the model and draws conclusions concerning its use in the new innovation-policy context. In conclusion, the author argues in favour of forms of project activity, such as 'new generation' learning networks, that combine versatile and complementary RDI knowhow and are capable of providing work organisations more comprehensive solutions of higher quality.

Part II: structuring of innovative networks

The second part of this book consists of four case studies on learning network projects, with an emphasis on problems and challenges related to structuring of innovative networks. Each article includes, as appendix, a short description of the aims and structure of the network in question.

Anu Järvensivu and *Tatu Piirainen* argue, based on their experience as coordinators of their own learning network project (Combinno), on the importance of a common value base held by participants in 'open innovation' processes. By using the development of a supervisory training model within the network as an example, they highlight how the perception of what is good or desirable varied considerably among the participants. This complicated the innovation process in many ways. The authors emphasize the significance of moral contracts, i.e. agreements negotiated by various individuals and communities what they deem right, good and reasonable, in processes striving for innovation.

Tapio Koivisto and *Katri Valkokari* examine how 'open innovation' processes could be supported, with a special focus on the role of net-based media. Their observations and conclusions are based on the OpenInno learning network project that was carried out in the Finnish technology industry. The authors question an argument that there exist a deep dividing line between the old 'closed system' logic and an emerging 'open source-type' of logic in innovation activity. Instead, they argue that companies are increasingly dealing with various models of selective, strategic networking. This refers to models of shared development that complement the company's core competencies and knowhow. Companies still consider carefully which issues in innovation processes are open, how they are open and to whom they are opened.

Tarja Kantola, *Sirpa Lassila* and *Anu Sipilä* provide a meta-analysis on conceptualising work that took place in the OVE learning network project for tourism business in the Itä-Uusimaa (Eastern Uusimaa) region. The network was built up to generate new, innovative solutions for small tourism companies in the region and create learning spaces for regional actors more generally. One of the goals

was also to create new, long-term possibilities for combining research, development and education in the activities of the local university of applied sciences that was in charge of the project. The article examines three subprojects within the network as spaces for learning, reflecting their role and significance within the overall framework of the project.

In the last article of part II, *Teijo Räsänen* and *Titta Tienpolvi* present the conceptual framework of the SAKEA learning network and the course of events of the project, examining shared learning that took place in the network. SAKEA was an extensive network of about 20 cities, municipalities or joint municipal authorities, with an eye to generating and disseminating good practices in strategic human resource management, leadership and employee well-being at work. A great number of researchers and consultants participated in the project, working in cooperation with local municipal actors. In describing and analysing the implementation of the project, the authors highlight the key insights and procedures that created new spaces for learning, while looking at surprises that were encountered as well.

Part III: co-creation and learning in innovative networks

Part III of this book consists of four case studies on learning network projects, where the focus is on preconditions for co-creation and learning in innovative networks. Each article includes, as appendix, a short description of the aims and structure of the network in question.

Hannele Kerosuo, *Hanna Toiviainen* and *Tuula Syrjälä* examine preconditions for co-configuration and present the results achieved in a regional learning network project that was carried out in the province of South Savo in Eastern Finland. Their paper makes an analysis on one of the five forums – the Forum on In-house Development – initiated by the network, in the form of a narrative and utilising methodological principles based on the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. Their analysis proceeds through seven phases. In addition to their immediate findings related to the development of the Forum that took place, the authors discuss future prospects of development of the network and the workplaces involved, and the wider applicability of the Forum model itself.

Robert Arnkil and *Timo Spangar* present a dialogical approach that was developed in their learning network PEERS for promoting the dissemination of good practices within and between Finnish municipalities. The new method titled as *puimala* (threshing barn) is based on the idea of creating open and integrated peer-learning spaces between peers, i.e. different actors on an equal footing and

in similar situations. In their article, the two authors take us to a journey for exploring learning that takes place at multi-perspective and multi-actor workshops. The authors locate their method to a broader group of learning space concepts and to different strands of action research, while providing also examples of the use of the method in practice and raising future development needs of the method itself.

Research-assisted development of reward systems that took place in the Poppi learning network is the subject of the paper written by *Kiisa Hulkko-Nyman*, *Anu Hakonen*, *Johanna Maaniemi*, *Elina Moisio*, *Minna Nylander* and *Christina Sweins*. Poppi was the biggest learning network funded by the TYKES programme in terms of the number of participating organisations (N=109). The network, which focused on research and development of reward systems with positive effects on both employee well-being and organisational performance, was further divided into five sub-networks. In their article, the six authors discuss the findings of the baseline analyses that were carried out in each sub-network and illustrate how participatory, research-assisted development approach was applied, with a view to enhancing the effects of rewards systems on employee well-being.

Terhi Takanen makes an overview on how the concept of 'letting go' was made use of as a vehicle for renewal of both organisational culture and the self in the Empowerment through Enabling network. In the article, the author first presents the main ideas of the network. Thereafter, she explores the phenomenon of letting go from different perspectives and provides examples on how and why it became a core concept in development work that was carried out in the project. In conclusion, the paper discusses the potential of letting go as a means of organisational renewal and provides insight for the future development needs of letting go as an orientation.

How to read this book?

Learning networks are not a silver bullet to the well-known problem of poor dissemination of 'good practices' or to the chasm between first-order and generative results of development programmes. The written stories on learning network projects that were funded by the TYKES programme should not be read as showcases of successful linking of theory and practice. The projects *did* generate many significant results for Finnish working life. What is more important, however, is the experience that was gained through the projects on the prerequisites – both success factors and stumbling blocks – for this kind of working. This book is an attempt to share this experience with a broader international audience.

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Learning networks – what's new in workplace development?

Tuomo Alasoini, Maarit Lahtonen, Nuppu Rouhiainen and Elise Ramstad

This article positions the learning network projects of the Finnish Workplace Development Programme TYKES within the more general historical framework of working life development in Finland, Norway and Sweden. The article also presents a general description of learning network projects in the TYKES programme, assessing their results and the applicability of an approach based on the use of learning networks in workplace development.

Keywords: assessment, development programme, network-based development, workplace development.

During recent years, public authorities and labour market organisations in the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) and Finland have put greater effort than most other European countries into developing work environments and organisations. This is evidenced not only by the number of programmes and projects (Alasoini 2009; Brödner & Latniak 2003; Gustavsen 2007), but also by the research results of various comparative studies conducted on the quality of working life, work organisations and working conditions (Gallie 2003; Parent-Thirion et al. 2007; Valeyre et al. 2009). Since the 1980s, working life development in Finland, and, in particular, the idea of utilising networks between companies and research and development (R&D) units to create new knowledge and practical solutions, have been influenced by discussions in Norway and Sweden, and experiences of the programmes and projects conducted in these countries.

Network-based workplace development in Norway and Sweden

Gustavsen (1993) characterises the tradition of workplace development in Scandinavian countries as one of searching for productive structures. The motivation for development has lain in creating structures that support a great number of companies in moving closer to the global productivity frontier through cooperation between management and personnel within companies, between

various companies, and between the companies and action-oriented researchers. The objective has been to identify competitive national or regional productivity strategies based on broad cooperation and participation.

The guiding idea for the first Norwegian development projects, initiated in the 1960s, was to observe an individual workplace as a microcosm. This was to serve as a scale model for 'all workplaces'. Based on the related experiences, it would be possible to find 'fundamental elements' that can be utilised in constructing productive structures and implementing macro-level change. However, this approach quickly ran into problems in the results dissemination phase, as well as turning out to be unrealistic in other aspects.

Since then, there have been two main approaches in Scandinavian programmes in finding a solution to the poor dissemination of results of demonstration projects carried out in individual companies. The first involved improving the quality of the demonstration projects themselves. For example, the conclusions of studies conducted in Norway in the 1970s indicated that, as units, individual companies are too small for the creation and testing of functional 'good' or 'best practices'. Instead, field experiments should be carried out within a group or network of companies, which would then constitute a more comprehensive case. Unfortunately, this strategy did not prove very successful either (Gustavsen 1993; Gustavsen et al. 2001).

The second approach to solving this problem involved the promotion of co-creation in networks, or, as a more general approach, at least generating interaction and shared learning amongst companies in the same development phase. Based on development agreements concluded in 1982 by labour market organisations, both Norway and Sweden took significant steps in this direction. In Norway, the agreement resulted in joint activity between labour market organisations, in the form of HABUT (later renamed as HF-B), which began financing company-initiated development projects and conferences, alongside the granting of fellowships. In Sweden, the agreement formed the basis of two major programmes financed by the Work Environment Fund. One of these, the LOM programme (1985–1990), was the first to systematically utilise networks as drivers for development and the creation of new knowledge, rather than as mere tools for disseminating information on existing solutions. LOM was an abbreviation of the Swedish for 'leadership' (*ledning*), 'organisation' (*organisation*) and 'co-determination' (*medbestämmande*). The programme's key development tools were democratic dialogue and dialogue conference. Each participating organisation was to join a wider, typically regional cluster, where forums for shared learning were built.

In 1988, the Government of Norway initiated a similar, five-year SBA programme with the objective of improving the country's competitiveness. This would be done by increasing employees' opportunities for direct participation in companies. One of SBA's objectives was to create development processes based on networks of organisations. SBA's networks were broader, more versatile and more enduring than those created by LOM. They were also more closely integrated with other regional development activities.

Both LOM and SBA received a great deal of international attention. The results of both, however, lagged far behind their ambitious targets. This was particularly true of the target of achieving wide-scale working life renewal through development networks (Davies et al. 1993; Naschold 1993; 1994).

In the 1990s, cooperation between labour market organisations in Sweden waned discernibly. In Norway, on the other hand, labour market organisations were motivated to expand their cooperation in 1994, by initiating the six-year Enterprise Development (ED) 2000 programme. Tools developed through the LOM Programme, such as democratic dialogue and dialogue conference, lived on in ED 2000, but were directed more explicitly towards improving the competitiveness of companies. They were also more closely identified with modern business management concepts. The basic project activity component consisted of a module, i.e. typically a regional coalition of companies and R&D units. The objective within the modules was to build cross-disciplinary cooperation, specifically between the social and engineering sciences. The seven ED 2000 modules also differed from LOM in being intended to form parts of already existing networks, a set-up that would enable the faster commencement of development activity amongst the participants.

Although, in comparison to previous programmes, ED 2000 was a decisive step forward in networked development, many critical remarks can be made when assessing the success of ED 2000 (Gustavsen et al. 2001; Levin 2002). In 2001, the Value Creation (VC) 2010 programme was set up as a continuation of ED 2000, taking the idea of network-based development even further. In VC 2010, development took the organisational form of regional main projects, which aimed to integrate not only companies, company networks and R&D units, but also key industrial and regional policy stakeholders within the scope of their operations. The objective was to expand development targets all the way to the level of regional innovation systems. Since 2007, the renewed programme has operated under the name 'Programme for Regional Innovation and R&D' (VRI 2007–2017) (Hildrum et al. 2009).

We can see signs of similar development in Sweden, although, since the Work Life Fund programme ended in 1995, the country has had no working life development programmes at national level. Based on regional partnerships and the so-called third task of universities, Sweden has implemented network-based development in various projects involving universities, companies and regional stakeholders, such as public authorities and labour market organisations. At the same time, workplace development has been integrated more closely with regional industrial and innovation policies (Ekman et al. 2011; Svensson & Nilsson 2008).

Network-based workplace development in Finland

In the 1980s and 1990s, the institutional and financial foundation of working life research and development in Finland strengthened significantly. This was due to several simultaneous factors (Ramstad & Alasoini 2006). Scandinavian, and, in particular, Swedish working life research and development has been an important source of inspiration also for Finnish research and development in this sector. For example, since the early 1990s, the concept of democratic dialogue created under the LOM programme has greatly influenced the emergence of Finnish participatory action research. In Finland, the dialogue-based development approach has since then been integrated with various other development concepts. Much as in Norway, the result has been the formulation of new kinds of applications. In Finland, the idea of utilising networks in the creation of new knowledge within a workplace-development context explicitly arose for the first time during the Municipal Quality Project of 1991–1993 (Kalliola & Nakari 1999; Lehtonen & Kalliola 2008). The implementation of the project was greatly inspired by the democratic dialogue approach.

On a wider scale, the question of utilising network-based development was brought to the fore upon the initiation of the Finnish Workplace Development Programme (TYKE) in 1996. Development project based on the needs of companies and other work organisations, intended to simultaneously promote productivity and the quality of working life, was the key project type within the programme. However, the programme soon encountered similar problems in the dissemination of results as those faced by the previous Scandinavian programmes. In 1997, after receiving additional resources, TYKE also began funding larger network projects. These were joint projects between several companies committed to production or other kinds of development cooperation, with the aim of creating and experimenting with organisational and other workplace innovations. In addition to goals directly linked to company level, the network projects were supposed to have goals related to new development methods and organisational models, with the potential for wider dissemination. During 1996–2003, 45 such

projects were financed. The highest number of companies came from the metal and engineering industry, while the total number of participating companies was in the range of 250–300. Most companies involved were SMEs.

ED 2000 formed TYKE's main inspiration for how networks could be utilised in the creation of new knowledge. However, the TYKE network projects and the ED 2000 modules differed markedly from one another (Alasoini 2006). The modules were usually larger entities, some of which contained more than one company network. They also involved several R&D units. By contrast, just under half of the network projects involved only one expert organisation. Secondly, the modules and their company networks were horizontal development networks which had been chiefly formed on a regional basis. Meanwhile, about one in three network projects in TYKE was based on vertical production networks. A third difference lay in the modules often being based on cooperation that had already long existed in one form or another between the companies concerned. By contrast, the TYKE networks had usually been created within the programme. Fourthly, it was emphasised that ED 2000 was a research and development pro-gramme, with the experts in the modules being researchers, while the network projects also included consulting companies and development agencies. The fifth difference lay in the modules being forums for the exchange of ideas, where development actions could be formed only later as a result of interaction between the parties involved. By contrast, from the very beginning the network projects in TYKE had clearly defined and specific development targets for the companies involved. The network projects began expressly as *projects*, not as more loosely defined forums like the modules.

The network projects ultimately formed a fairly heterogeneous activity, because the programme included no detailed definition of how a development coalition should look. Despite their longer duration, more versatile group of participants and larger size compared to demonstration projects, network projects still repre-sented a type of project activity deemed traditional in many respects.

In 2004, workplace development entered a new era in Finland with a launch of the TYKES programme. More ambitious and explicit targets were set for the new six-year period and the programme received additional resources. Network-based development was continued with the goal of strengthening the programme's generative results, i.e. results that indicate how successful the programme is in turning new workplace practices and development methods, and the models and tools created and tested within projects, into sources of learning and inspiration (i.e. generative ideas) for other companies and stakeholder groups. Evaluation studies of the earlier TYKE programme period and its network projects led to

several development proposals concerning the establishment of network-based forms of project activity for the future. Some of the lessons learned were as follows (Alasoini 2006; Arnkil 2004): firstly, projects that aim at creating development coalitions in line with an interactive innovation model, as opposed to the traditional linear innovation model in which 'demonstration' has been temporally separated from 'dissemination' and the project's targets consist of 'ready-made' practices and methods rather than generative ideas, must have a sufficient time range and 'critical mass'. Secondly, resources must be allocated for mutual interaction and learning not only *within*, but also *between*, projects. Thirdly, the researcher education aspect of the projects should be strengthened and linked more closely to actual development work in the companies concerned. The new project type developed in 2002–2003 – the learning network project – did, in fact, represent a significant departure from TYKE network projects as a new method of creating knowledge.

Learning network activity in the TYKES programme

Purpose and objectives

The new, experimental type of project activity introduced by the TYKES programme, i.e. the learning network, was based on interactive, 'open innovation' approach. The activity was inspired by the experiences of earlier Finnish and Scandinavian programmes but, compared to previous TYKE network projects, the learning network had more room for development during the project. The project model that was used in the TYKES programme for learning networks evolved from a traditional, meticulously planned model towards more process-like, continuously developing networked cooperation. This could be achieved through the programme and network coordinators initially agreeing on the project's total funding and duration, and then reviewing and updating the project development plan and the budget for the next project phase every 1–2 years.

The learning network participants included a group of working life researchers and developers with a shared interest and workplaces whose development was supported by cooperation with external experts. As network organisations, learning networks tended to be remarkably open. In addition to a compact core group, various forms of network activity were undertaken, either casually or more actively, by dozens of representatives of several organisations. Network participants also varied considerably during the project.

The purpose of the learning networks was 1) to increase the developmental expertise of the participants; 2) to create and experiment with new forms of

development cooperation between R&D institutes and workplaces; and 3) to generate new, innovative solutions for Finnish working life. In the forefront were networks that 1) aimed at the creation of new knowledge and expertise related to workplace innovation; 2) that aimed at learning at several different levels (individual, team, organisational, inter-organisational, network level); 3) that consisted of a large number of R&D units and work organisations of many different kinds; and 4) that showed obvious potential for development in terms of the network's structure and modes of operation, the benefits sought by its active participants, and its potential for expansion. Learning networks were intended to be long-term (3–6 years) meeting forums, rather than projects that progress in a 'linear' fashion, based on traditional 'project logic', and whose implementation is guided by an implementation plan based on this logic and possessing a precise timetable. (Alasoini 2006; Lahtonen et al. 2008.)

Learning was made the priority of network activity. Learning, occurring through network activities, can be regarded from three different perspectives in terms of learning as a subject; learning through all three of these perspectives was the objective of the learning networks. *Learning in a network* refers to learning actions performed by the active participants, such as individuals, work units or groups of experts, of the network in question. The network's ability to act as a learning space for the participant testifies to its internal generative capacity. *Learning as a network* refers to the network's capability for self-development. This perspective on learning was supported by dividing the financing of learning network projects into phases, and by viewing a network's development potential as a key criterion for granting financing. The third perspective, *learning beyond a network*, is also relevant. This refers to the network's ability to create and disseminate new ideas and practices beyond the network's boundaries. Here, the subjects of learning can be other workplaces, for instance. The success of the network in promoting learning beyond the network bears testimony to its external generative capacity.

Learning networks in practice

Learning networks carried out diverse activities whose coordination was demanding. In addition to development work, scientific research was also conducted in almost all of the networks. However, the key aspect lay in seeking new forms of interaction and development cooperation, both among active participants within the network and those outside it. The networks arranged various kinds of forums for learning and joint development processes, aimed at open dialogue between participants. These forums included interactive face-to-face workshops and seminars, as well as virtual platforms.

The programme initiated 16 very different and diversified learning networks built around themes, methods, business sectors and regions. Total funding allocated to learning network projects on the part of the TYKES programme in 2004–09 was €7.6 million. A lion's share (€57 million) of all project funding in TYKES, too, was allocated to more conventional development projects in companies and other workplaces.

Because the learning networks' objectives extended beyond a single value chain, none of them were based on vertical production networks (unlike their predecessors in the network projects funded by the TYKE programme). Many of the networks were based on projects funded by previous work organisation development programmes, with few starting from scratch. There had formerly been some kind of cooperation between key actors in almost all networks. As experiences of previous Scandinavian R&D programmes clearly show (Mikkelsen 1997; Naschold 1993), it is much easier to promote further development of cooperation between players with existing, interactive links than to establish totally new networks. TYKES did not, however, rule out the possibility of funding totally new networks, for which reason the programme made a special appropriation available for gathering participants into the network.

Table 1 summarises the main characteristics of the networks, in terms of their names, duration, the network coordinators, and connecting objects of activity and the related R&D tasks.

The sixteen networks provided a fairly good balance between experts with engineering and educational science as their theoretical background. In addition, there were experts with a background in, for instance, business management, the social sciences and psychology. In most cases, experts with different backgrounds could be found within the same network. Likewise, both private and public workplaces formed part of the same network, thus diversifying and enriching the network's knowledge base.

There were great differences between the networks in terms of their conceptual approaches, the connecting object of activity, the level of ambition of the R&D task, size and overall structure, and the potential for expansion. This reflects the fact that highly heterogeneous development constellations exist between R&D institutes and workplaces, and that, since learning networks were intended as an experimental form of project activity, the programme left a great deal of leeway for them in this respect.

Table 1. Main characteristics of the learning network projects in TYKES.

Name (duration)	Coordinator	Connecting objects of activity and related R&D tasks
Change Makers – Learning Network for Participatory Development of Operating Concepts (2004–08)	University of Helsinki, Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research	Use of the Change Laboratory method in the development of operating concepts.
Poppi – Learning Network for Rewarding (2004–09)	Helsinki University of Technology, The Laboratory of Work Psychology and Leadership	Improvement of reward systems: to develop applications, which help provide combined improvements in productivity and well-being at work.
STRADA – Learning Network for Strategy Practices (2004–06)	Helsinki University of Technology, The Laboratory of Work Psychology and Leadership	Development of interactive strategy processes, the related strategy practices and expertise on them.
TOIVO – Learning Network for Knowledge Management (2004–07)	University of Helsinki, Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education	Creation of models and methods, which can be applied in everyday work, in order to serve the development of knowledge management.
COBTEC – Collaborative Business Networks and Technology Platforms (2004–07)	VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland	Developing the management of dynamic and technology-intensive enterprise networks in complex business environments.
The Hiisi Area Cluster (2004–09)	University of Helsinki, Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education	Improvement of expertise related to environmental management and well-being at work. Provision of information on how trust and partnership can be built and learning takes place in a network.
Promotion of Working-Life Expertise in the Pirkanmaa Region (2004–09)	Pirkanmaa University of Applied Sciences	Development of a regional coordinating centre of expertise on working life, with a special emphasis on the transfer of experience-based knowledge, continuous skills development, anticipation of changes in working life, safety management and coaching in work ability issues.
OVE – Learning Network for Tourism Business in Eastern Uusimaa (2004–08)	HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences	Development of the region as a 'learning region' by strengthening its self-identity and enhancing networking between companies, the quality of their services and the role of the university of applied sciences in regional development.

Table 1. (continued)

Name (duration)	Coordinator	Connecting objects of activity and related R&D tasks
SAKEA – Learning Network for Strategic Human Resource Management and Evaluation of Operations in Municipalities (2004–09)	Innotiimi Consulting Company	Improvement of the effectiveness and performance of municipalities with the help of a SHRM and BSC-based strategy and reformed systems of rewarding.
Combinno – Learning Network for Innovative Development Combinations (2005–09)	University of Tampere, Work Research Centre	Development and provision of customised tools as integrated development concepts that combine knowledge on workplace development and adult education for the use of companies.
TYHJÖ – Learning Network for Employee Well-Being and Work Environment Management in the North-Ostrobothnia Region (2005–10)	University of Oulu, Department of Industrial Engineering and Management	Development of mutual learning and exchange of information between different regional actors on the improvement of employee well-being and work environment management.
Learning Network of South Savo (2005–09)	Anttolanhovi Rehabilitation and Research Centre	Development of methods and competences in collaborative, worker-oriented development in local workplaces and building up a network to facilitate regional cooperation in the development of working life.
Tuoteväylä – Building Business with Networks – Learning Network for Cooperation in Product and Business Development (2007–10)	Foundation of Finnish Inventions	Development of cooperation between public authorities and R&D personnel in companies involved in product and business development.
Empowerment through Enabling Network (2007–10)	Empowering Finland Association	Development of theories and tools which facilitate activities, culture and management to make empowerment possible within work organisations.
OpenInno – Open Innovation Learning Network (2007–09)	VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland	Development of new open source-based approaches in innovation activities and for product development and the quality of working life.
PEERS – Learning Network for the Dissemination of Good Practices in Municipalities (2007–09)	The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities	Development of permanent infrastructure with various interactive tools, to facilitate dissemination of good practices within municipal organisations.

Compared to Sweden and Norway, the regional perspective is still very much lacking in Finnish R&D on work organisation. This is partly because Finnish innovation policy is still firmly based on the concept of the national innovation system. Expertise in R&D on working life is heavily focused in the Helsinki and Pirkanmaa regions. This skewed geographical distribution will probably alleviate in the long run, as polytechnics (universities of applied sciences) become more important players in applied R&D. Six networks, of which two were coordinated by polytechnics, had a clear regional orientation.

Problems and success stories

Evaluating the success of the learning networks and their results is challenging, since the project objectives were broad and open to redefinition during the implementation of network activities. The programme had high expectations for them concerning their results in research, development and development infrastructure. As a whole, the process of coordinating the learning network activity also involved continuous learning in the case of the TYKES programme team. When necessary, they also intervened in dealing with various development challenges and practical questions that were encountered in the projects.

One of the objectives of the learning network projects was to increase the participants' developmental expertise. On the individual, organisational and network levels, a great deal of learning took place as a result of the projects' versatile activities, a fact confirmed by the final evaluation study of the TYKES programme as well (Oosi et al. 2010). Learning also took place outside the networks, through seminars, publications and development tools. Some of the networks had a significant regional impact, either in their own sector, or, when dealing with certain subject matter, on the national scale. During their years of activity, many learning networks developed their objectives and operations further, while experiencing learning as a network. Compared to original objectives, mutual cooperation and learning between networks remained at a fairly low level, mainly consisting of events organised by TYKES for the purpose of exchanging experiences.

The programme's 16 learning network projects involved the participation of 35 researchers working on PhDs. Of these, 15 had completed their work by the end of 2010, i.e. during the TYKES programme. The programme can be deemed successful in rising to the challenge of the previous programme's evaluation, which had called for a stronger role in researcher training. During the years of the project, its researchers and members of the programme team attended dozens of international conferences, both in Finland and abroad, presenting the key ideas of the learning network and the research questions and selected approaches of

individual projects. Both scientific and more practically-oriented articles were written on the projects. In addition, the learning network projects led to the creation of various guidebooks and methodological publications.

In a way, the learning networks served as incubators for innovation activity. They led to the generation of several development projects and new development methods, especially dialogical forums for the improvement and deepening of cooperation.

The objective of the programme was to use the learning network projects in order to increase interaction between various participants, while creating new cooperation structures. Learning network participants included dozens of experts and nearly 400 workplaces represented by individuals, groups of people or, in some cases, the entire organisation. Once funding for the learning network projects has ended, the depth of the various cooperative structures and their future will vary considerably from one project to another.

The target was to create open learning network projects in an ongoing state of change. The fact that these long-term projects with fairly open but challenging objectives, versatile working methods and changeable contents could be carried out to the end, can as such be deemed a success.

According to the TYKES programme final evaluation study, most of the learning network coordinators felt that their project targets had been successfully achieved (Oosi et al. 2010). When the achieved results are compared to the learning network projects' official objectives and criteria, we can say that, based on the metrics used, the majority of the learning network projects succeeded in achieving their key targets.

However, we also encountered problems and weaknesses in learning network activity. Some of the projects were strongly driven by researchers, resulting in an excessive focus on the progress of the participating researchers' PhDs. Support for the workplaces' learning processes then took a minor role, and activating the workplace representatives became more challenging. The evaluation study revealed that, to some extent, recruitment of the workplaces to the projects was made more challenging by the inability to translate the concepts and operating methods of the learning network into more practically oriented language (ibid.). Some projects operated under traditional project logic, which meant that they did not actually learn or develop as networks. In some projects, activities consisted mainly of fairly traditional seminar activities. The amount of networked activity and cooperation also varied considerably. For some projects, building the

network and functioning as one were key issues, whereas for others these areas received less attention, the projects functioning more or less as umbrellas for individual projects.

Organising learning networks and managing ever-changing, open-ended activities presented the implementers with a challenge. Project coordinators of the learning networks considered this project type flexible and generous but also very challenging. This is because as an open-ended form of activity sustaining the involvement of the participants calls for the ability and readiness to continuously rethink activities, and their success in bringing about mutual learning processes. Typical challenges faced within learning network projects included the start-up phase (how to assemble the network), sustaining the commitment of participants, mastering change situations during the course of the project, and managing the diversity inherent in the network caused by the participants' divergent interests and backgrounds (Arnkil 2008). As the projects drew to a close and the TYKES programme's funding ended, another challenge arose in the form of the continuation of network operations. Networks built around a theme usually closed their operations as funding ended. Regional networks were more active in seeking ways to continue their operations in some form, even without additional project funding.

Some learning networks emphasized research, while others concentrated on development activities or building a development infrastructure within the network. According to the internal project assessment made by both the TYKES programme team and the network coordinators, the programme team placed far greater value than the projects themselves on the project objective of strengthening the overall development infrastructure through networked cooperation. On the other hand, the projects were much more likely than the programme team to emphasize concrete improvements in workplaces, achieved through the learning networks, as well as co-creation processes. Compared to the TYKES programme team's assessment, the projects were also more appreciative of interactive network forums for shared learning. This difference between the programme team and the network coordinators indicates that these two groups approached the project from distinctly different points of view, perhaps because of the differences in their own specific roles.

Final evaluation study observations on the learning networks

The final evaluation study on the programme gave separate assessment of all the main project types included in the TYKES programme (i.e. development projects, method development projects and learning network projects). It was

observed that learning networks played a key role in creating and disseminating generative ideas. Assessing the success of the learning networks as sources of added value for the programme represented a specific challenge for the researchers. The researchers noted the objective of the learning networks was to meet various challenges of working life through extensive cooperation, and they aimed at boosting the creation and dissemination of innovation. At the same time, they aimed to develop new models and methods for networked development activity.

Learning network projects were typically preceded by lengthy preparatory work, in cooperation with the programme team. Support provided by the programme team on content-related matters, and its active participation in steering the networks, were viewed as highly useful. This also enabled the projects to shape their objectives and methods flexibly, according to the needs of the participants. The learning target could be loosely defined in the first instance, before being specified in more detail during the project. The networks' flexibility – participants could join or leave the network during the project – was also seen as an advantage. According to Oosi et al. (2010, 47), "This was clearly an insightful way of carrying out projects and we could export this knowhow abroad. The model combines well thought-out planning with flexibility."

Involving the right participants, achieving commitment and building mutual trust were viewed as the specific challenges of practical activities. In terms of learning, participants should be similar enough to be able to find a common development path. On the other hand, their being too similar would result in too frictionless a situation for new learning to occur (ibid., 48).

The researchers noted that this experimental project type's targets and methods varied considerably from one project to another. Initially, this was what the programme aimed for: the idea was to leave the projects' structures, the number of active participants and operational methods undefined. Due to their heterogeneous nature, it is very difficult to evaluate the learning networks using consistent metrics. Some projects focused on methodological development, testing and dissemination. Others were linked to TYKES development projects. A third of the learning networks had a regional focus. Some emphasised in-depth learning, while others concentrated on creating an extensive network. In general, the objectives of the learning networks varied in scope and area of focus (ibid., 49–50).

According to the final evaluation study, learning networks differ from traditional development projects in their aim of achieving learning as a network, in addition to individual and organisational learning. Key aspects also include creating and

developing new development structures and methods of cooperation. However, the networks' project-like aspects and the ways in which the results (knowhow and developed tools) could be transferred to permanent structures, were deemed problem areas. While learning network results were to some extent measurable (PhDs, for example), in some instances they were extremely difficult to measure (knowledge, learning, new methods, practices, structures etc.).

The final evaluation study indicated that the projects were not fully successful in integrating research with practical development activity. Since the nature of the learning network operating model was not fully understood, this presented another challenge, with the external evaluators pointing out that its full potential could not therefore be utilised. Moreover, the original objective of inter-network learning between projects remained at a much lower level than originally planned. This brings us to the challenges related to meta-level learning within learning network projects. Such processes would require far greater resources, time and maturation than was available in the learning network project experiment. Significantly increased resources, coupled with new kinds of innovative operational methods, would therefore be required in their support (ibid., 50–51).

The evaluation study also considered the learning networks' importance in terms of the full impact of the programme. While learning on the individual, workplace and research team levels was successful, in some projects, learning as a network (the ability to reflect and develop one's own actions on network level) remained very limited. This was also reflected in learning beyond the scope of the network (the ability to create and disseminate new ideas and practices beyond it). On the other hand, it was observed that inter-network cooperation is not a goal as such: it must result in mutual benefit. The researchers observed that the learning network model is a significant creator of generative processes, in cases where models of co-creation or peer creation could be transferred to permanent structures or an organisation's everyday operations. In their view, approximately half of the learning networks had such potential. Some of the learning networks also played a role in disseminating awareness of workplace development activities on national, regional and local level (ibid., 51).

Conclusions

With the TYKES programme now over, and workplace development established as a permanent sector of operations funded by the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes), learning network activity in project form has ceased. Although learning networks no longer exist as a separate project type, what aspects of them could we utilise and further develop in order to promote

and disseminate workplace innovations? Wide-scale networks have proven to be an excellent environment for fruitful combinations of research and development and for integrating the dissemination of results into a development project. These networks have formed a framework for various kinds of participants and know-how of broad scope, generating extensive amounts of new innovation activity and research. Moreover, networks have strengthened the development infrastructure.

As the challenges of working life become more diverse, we will continue to need development constellations that operate with wider scope than tradition-ally seen, as well as open, long-term cooperation, combinations of various types of knowhow, new kinds of forums for interaction, and bold, new development experiments. In the final evaluation recommendations, researchers observed that the learning network project model should also be utilised in Tekes programme activities in the future. In this way, new kinds of solution models can be selected and developed in operational environments that require the merging of various viewpoints between individuals and organisations, or between organisations and public authorities, for example through dialogue. As such, learning networks themselves were considered a social innovation (Oosi et al. 2010, 79).

If we were in a position to start anew, what would we do differently? There is no easy answer to this question, as shown by the empirical findings of the final evalu-ation study, too. Learning network projects represented a highly experimental form of project activity in the TYKES programme. Their proportion of all project funding in the programme between 2004 and 2009 was about 10% (€7.6 million); a considerably bigger funding was granted to more conventional development projects. However, the overall strategic importance of learning network projects in TYKES – through their generative mechanisms and their role as a forum for researcher training and a laboratory for new forms of working and co-creation – was much more prominent.

Learning networks in one form or another are a powerful vehicle for reinforc-ing the ability of development programmes in the creation and dissemination of innovative solutions. Successful deployment of learning networks in future programme activities requires, among all, that progress will be made in the de-sign of 'next generation' learning network concepts; enough resources should be reserved for coordinating the networks and enhancing their internal and mutual interaction and cooperation; and a sufficient amount of trust is generated between the network participants. The paper by Ramstad, next in this book, provides some more detailed insights into the matter of how to design 'next generation' learning networks.

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The next generation of learning network? Innovation generating model

Elise Ramstad

In innovation policy and the related implementation programmes and projects, various frameworks and models are used as a strategic tool. With the completion of the learning network projects in the TYKES programme, it is time to discuss how such activity can be developed in the future. During recent years, thinking on innovation activity has broadened into new dimensions. This paper discusses what implications the new, broad-based innovation approach will have for innovation frameworks. The paper presents a new model – the innovation generating model – which brings together the theories of organisational development and innovation management. It provides a systemic view of innovation by taking account of the entire innovation process. It enables the comprehensive development of work organisations, alongside the management of innovation. In order to stimulate the best possible diffusion of knowledge within society, particular attention is paid to the innovation infrastructure built into the model.

Innovation activities and policies are at a turning point in Finland and several other industrialised Western countries. As our operating environment changes and global competition intensifies, we are seeking new ways to gain competitive advantage and renew our policies. The trend is to expand innovation activity and innovation as a concept. A new, broad-based perception of innovation would have an impact on 1) the kinds of innovation generated, 2) the innovation process, 3) organisations that provide research, development and innovation services (RDI), and 4) innovation frameworks (Ramstad 2009). Firstly, innovation activity would be viewed from a broader perspective and regarded as interlinked. Alongside technological innovation, social innovations, such as organisational or service innovations, are increasingly coming to the forefront. It has been observed that solutions developed in the context of a single activity often influence, and have links to, further activities (Teubal 1998; Virkkunen et al. 2007). In terms of the innovation process, there is a trend of moving from linear processes towards open, networked and interactive innovation models (e.g. Chesbrough 2003; Schienstock

1999). These would enable a broader scope of participation, alongside new ways of sharing and combining knowhow. Thirdly, new perceptions of innovation also have an influence on the growing number of organisations providing RDI services. Universities, for example, are expected to be more active participants in practice-oriented activities, in addition to their research and teaching tasks. Similarly, the role of training organisations and private consultancy companies, where the focus has been on disseminating information, will now also encompass the generation of new knowledge. Fourthly, a broad-based innovation framework will challenge more traditional innovation frameworks.

During the last decade, innovation activity has been studied using various macro and meta-level models. Some of the best-known examples of such models include the national innovation system (Lundvall & Borrás 1997), the triple helix model (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff 2000) and open innovation (Chesbrough 2003); these models' renown and popularity are largely based on their systemic approach. However, their applicability to new kinds of broad-based innovation activity has been criticised, particularly since they take no account of the specific characteristics of work organisation development (Ramstad 2005). Consequently, alternative innovation frameworks have been developed as part of workplace development programmes, placing more weight on working life innovation activities. The *expanded triple helix* model (Ramstad 2003; 2005; 2009; Ramstad & Alasoini 2007) and the *innovation generating model* (Ramstad 2008) are based on integration of the development of work organisations and innovation activity. Using these models, this paper presents a new way of promoting broad-based innovation activity, while identifying the various participants' roles and modes of activity and cooperation. Although the paper's topic covers contemporary developments, as part of broad-based innovation policy a discussion is ongoing on how to integrate demand-oriented innovation policy, or 'demand-pull' (e.g. the development of companies and other organisations), into knowledge-based innovation policy, i.e. 'knowledge-push' (e.g. the knowledge production side of the innovation system).

Expanded Triple Helix

The expanded triple helix (ETH) model was created as a generic innovation model for organisational development and innovation, with the goal of analysing the various participants, their mutual relationships and practices. Conceived in 2003, the concept underlying the model arose during preliminary research for the TYKES programme. This preliminary research sought an understanding of the types of learning networks that exist in Finland. In this context, we surveyed the traditional triple helix model and the national innovation system, for example. Due to their focus on technological development, these were soon observed to be too narrow in

scope from the perspective of working life development. The survey resulted in the expanded triple helix model, utilised in the analysis of a total of 50 working life learning networks (analysing, for example, the theme, participants, mode of operation, cooperation, benefits, problems) (Ramstad 2003; 2005). The survey also indicated that a versatile network structure benefiting from various modes of activity and operation is an efficient means of promoting knowledge transfer and knowhow. Since then, this model has been developed further in various connections. In addition, it has been used in the analysis of learning network results, for example.

Concerning the actors, the ETH is an extension of the traditional triple helix model (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff 2000), which is based on the idea that information is generated through cooperation between universities, businesses and policy-makers. The ETH differs from this narrow triple helix model by addressing a wider range of organisations, from a broad-based innovation perspective. This is because ideas leading to technological and organisational innovations can emerge from several sources and at any stage of the innovation process.

Firstly, policy-makers are understood to refer not just to the public authorities but also to trade unions and employers' associations. One reason for this is that organisational development issues are more sensitive than technological development, being closely linked to the employer's right to manage (Alasoini & Ramstad 2007). Social partners play an important role, for example, through collective bargaining, providing guidance and taking part in improving working conditions. They also have good contacts with work organisations, which enable them to disseminate good practices.

Secondly, the challenge of achieving productive, sustainable and innovative organisations is understood to concern not only businesses, but also public sector and third sector work organisations. Work organisations are deemed 'problem-owners', representing organisations that carry out development activities by themselves or with the help of external expertise. They also have the possibility of obtaining financial or other types of support for their development activities from policy-makers. Based on the new way of considering knowledge production, work organisations are also viewed as sources of knowledge that can be used to improve the knowledge base of external experts and policy-makers.

In the system-level discussion, the various parties of the ETH can be roughly divided into three categories, based on their different knowledge bases: work organisations (different sectors, different sizes, suppliers and customers), RDI service providers (universities, research institutes, polytechnics, adult education centres, educational institutes and private consulting firms) and
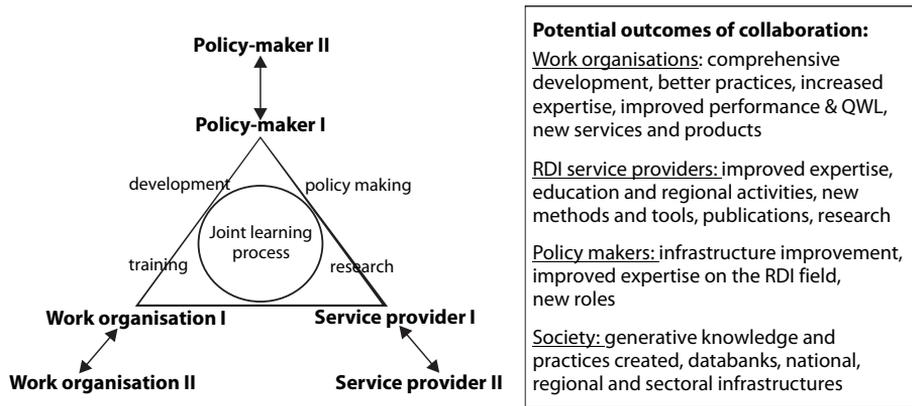
Figure 1. Expanded triple helix: actors, activities and outcomes of collaboration.

policy-makers (financing organisations, social partners, public authorities, the European Commission and regional offices and councils).

Thirdly, in addition to the information generated by universities and research institutions, disseminators are needed. These information processors may include polytechnics, other educational institutions, private consulting firms or development companies viewed as an integral part of the innovation infrastructure. RDI service providers represent the scientific, educational, developmental and market-orientated expertise required in innovation activities.

Fourthly, whereas the narrow triple helix model involves only three kinds of relationship, the ETH model may involve several network relationships. In Figure 1, the diverse relationship constellations in the model are represented by six lines.

Alongside the cooperative relationships between the three knowledge systems (policy-makers, work organisations, RDI service providers), cooperative relationships internal to these groupings are emphasised in innovation activity. An understanding, shared by the authorities as well as employer and employee organisations, of both the need for and the related goals of the activity, is an important prerequisite of innovation activities within organisations. Another example is cooperation between various work organisations, allowing organisations from different sectors to learn from one another. A third example is cooperation between various expert bodies (including consultants, universities, research institutes, educational institutions), which allows for the faster generation of information in society (see below, the innovation generating model).

The *learning mechanism of the ETH model* is based on the complementarity theory. As defined in the economic and social sciences (Milgrom & Roberts 1995;

Pettigrew & Whittington 2003), complementarity can be said to exist between two elements when additional effort in either element increases the marginal return on efforts in the other. Complementarity in innovation activities can refer, for example, to knowledge systems, multiple objectives and development methods, whose diverse parts are integrated in a way that benefits the whole system (Ramstad 2008). ETH brings together diverse knowledge systems with common interests. The term 'knowledge system' refers to organisations, units or groups, formed during the course of history, combined with similar interests, skills, value bases, and methods of producing and exploiting information (Ramstad 2008, 10). In our society, knowledge of innovations is diversified and dispersed between several professions and organisations. Due to the division of labour and accompanying fragmentation and specialisation, diverse knowledge systems have their own rules, activities and methods. However, they can also share the same interests and targets of learning, albeit from different points of view. This creates the potential for knowledge exchanges, since organisations with asymmetric knowledge bases can trade and exchange valuable knowledge inputs with one another. The historical development of organisations and production (Victor & Boynton 1998) has increased the number of interdependencies as well as the need for interaction. Innovation activities are not limited to new ways of organising the production process within a given firm, but, in the sense used by Schumpeter (1942), also include arrangements across organisations within a society. Due to the cultural and historical development of knowledge systems and dispersed knowledge, it has become necessary to achieve collective outcomes by bringing together complementary knowledge systems. The evolution of new, creative innovation environments stems from the differences and complementarities between the players involved and their practices and integration. The ETH model has the specific objective of facilitating encounters between these systems of knowledge, while seeking out and identifying forums and solutions created as a consequence.

The *outcomes of the ETH model* are viewed as emergent solutions from a complementarity learning process. A recent development, the concept of emergence, has become popular within the sciences of complexity, non-linear dynamic systems and interdisciplinary fields in particular. An emergent solution appears when a new kind of relatedness among a number of simple entities forms into more complex behaviour (Morgan 1923; Morowitz 2002). The division of labour following from the ETH enables engagement in larger, intellectually broader and more demanding projects than would otherwise be possible. According to Morgan, the emergent steps are best regarded as qualitative changes of direction, or critical turning points. Emergence is hard to predict, due to interactions between components increasing the potential for new types of elements to emerge.

For work organisations, the ETH may enable more comprehensive, tailor-made and qualitatively improved solutions. This form of cooperation increases the possibility to integrate both theoretical and practical knowledge offering a broader problem-solving environment. Such a broader coalition can increase the breadth of internal and external collaboration, for example creating opportunities for employees and the management to collaborate with external experts and other organisations. These changes may in turn have a positive impact on the performance and the quality of working life (QWL) (e.g. Fuller & Unwin 2004; Huselid 1995). For RDI service providers, cooperation can be realised as improved expertise, new research, new contacts and extended networks, access to public funding, improved reputation, improved education and other knowledge spillovers. From a broader societal perspective, this model can serve the creation of new knowledge, new types of practices and methods, and databanks, or take the form of improved national and regional infrastructures.

Innovation generating model

Alongside broad-based innovation activity at organisational level, the innovation generating model emphasises the need to develop an innovation infrastructure, serving the entire industry on a comprehensive basis. It can be viewed as a subset of the expanded triple helix model, connecting the fields of broad-based organisational development, innovation management and service research (Ramstad 2008).

Integrating innovation activity with an organisation's broad-based development includes the following steps in particular:

1. The more comprehensive development of work organisations' (public, private, third sector) management systems, so as to promote the creation of new services and products alongside increased productivity and QWL. The activity system is used as a general concept that facilitates the comprehensive examination of an organisation's various sub-areas; these include technology, organisation, processes and business, and their interconnections.
2. Reinforcing knowhow within the innovation infrastructure, i.e. the organisations providing innovation services. The idea is to examine the development of theories and methods of innovation activities in general, in addition to the development of work organisations. Otherwise, instead of being mutually supportive, the danger arises that customers' development needs and services will fail to coincide.
3. Promoting the more active dissemination and sharing of information by bringing together work organisations and various expert bodies that are interested in the same kinds of development questions.

The improved or renewed target must generate value both for the user/ customer (work organisation) and the producer/developer of the service (innovation infrastructure). At work organisation level, innovation based on organisations' (management, personnel) and customers' ideas and needs will be promoted, alongside the development of, and connections to, services produced by expert organisations. The key challenge to the innovation infrastructure lies in creating efficient cooperative relationships, for example in the form of shared forums, RDI projects and learning events. These must promote more versatile and better quality solutions and services for customers. Simultaneously, they must continue to develop their own competencies and more efficient ways of disseminating information within society, using various methods (including teaching, research, new consultancy services and methods).

Regarding the creation and implementation of renewals, the relevant knowledge can originate with the users of products and services, partners, the sector's researchers and developers, as well as various intermediary organisations. One can speak of a demand-oriented development in which a customer is actively made a part of activity planning in cooperation with the management and staff. The traditional view is that a company produces value added for the customer one-sidedly. Meanwhile, based on the new model, activity development occurs as
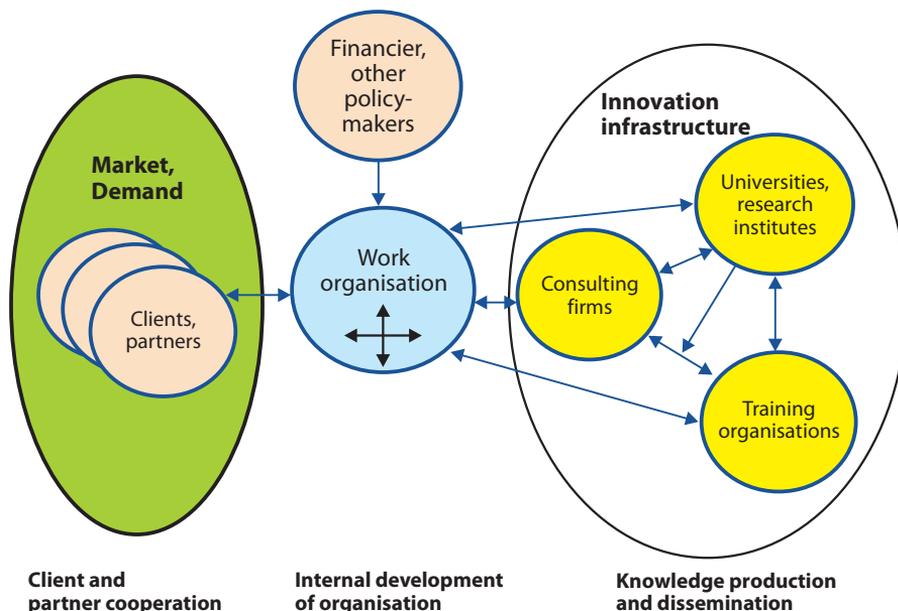

Figure 2. Innovation generating model: simultaneous development of work organisation's activity system and innovation infrastructure.

co-configuration between the customer and various service providers. Cooperation between service providers can also extend to so-called B-to-B operations, for example as part of the development of the product and service chain. This model requires the integration of various aspects of innovation (Figure 2).

Combining joint and own objects of learning

The participants in the innovation generating model share a joint object of learning. A shared development theme can originate in the workplace or in expert organisations. Alternatively, it may concern development areas related to social questions of broader scope, such as sustainable development, health and well-being in working life, environmental questions and public services. Unlike working life learning networks, development targets need not be limited to traditional topics in organisational and methodological development (such as team work, employee participation, processes, leadership, rewarding, job satisfaction, job security). Instead, they can have a broader scope.

The activity system (Engeström 1987; Virkkunen et al. 2007) is used here as a generic term for facilitating the wide-ranging examination and development of activities from various perspectives. These include new organisational and production management approaches, new/or alternative production or service processes, advanced and integrated information and technology systems and new business concepts. A broad-based innovation activity requires a multi-level review of development activities. Organisational solutions must be adjusted to cope with technological progress and changes in the operating environment. The implementation of a new technology often requires new kinds of working arrangements, supervisory solutions and occupational safety regulations. Conversely, changes in managerial and organisational practices may also require supportive ICT systems and other technological solutions. For example, Lokshin et al. (2008) found that those firms which successfully combine customer, technological and organisational competencies performed better in terms of innovativeness than when focusing on technology or customers separately. This reveals the importance of the various sub-areas being mutually supportive, accompanied by an awareness of the activity system in its entirety.

The innovation generating model provides opportunities for joint problem solving and the improvement of participants' own knowledge. In turn, this calls for *multisubjective goal orientation*. In this way, the dissemination component in new knowledge can be combined with the innovation activities of the work organisation. The focus is not only on the company's learning opportunities, but also has a broader basis, on the means underlying the innovation infrastructure. In Figure

3, the multiple objectives (joint and own) are visualised. The participants share a joint target: this can be the activity system in general or some specific sub-themes (e.g. innovation management of public organisations). Service providers collaborate with one another and together with the work organisation, in order to find new and more versatile solutions. The expert organisations may have different types of suggestions (type of knowledge, methods, approaches, tools) on how to develop the organisation (arrows pointing from *actors* to *joint target*). In this way, they increase the number of solution alternatives and combinations. At the same time, the service providers have their own interests and roles in the innovation creation process within society. *Other targets* might refer, for example, to the education of developers, research activities and the creation of new services and methods. The arrow pointing from expert A to target B illustrates the possibility that some actors may also share other joint interests. An example of this could be joint activities, for example, a joint publication, joint seminar or services offered to each other (e.g. academic R&D units organising further training for consultancies). In this way, the joint target can simultaneously be a practical, theoretical, educational, business or political object for the development community. This type of knowledge combination could enable a new understanding of the target of activities, while (re)formulating knowledge systems and the work organisations themselves.
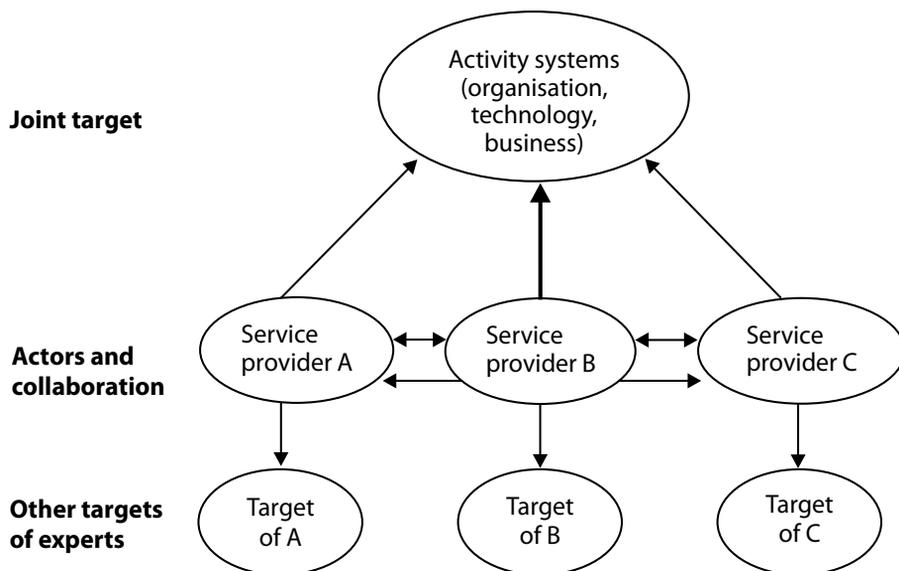

Figure 3. Multisubjective goal orientation of the innovation generating model.

Innovation infrastructure – RDI service providers as supporters of innovation activities

RDI service providers cover a wide variety of organisations and their role in innovation activities varies greatly. The field has been expanding rapidly over the last 20 years. However, only a small quantity of empirically researched data exists on expert organisations' approaches to, and development styles in, innovation activities. Our study of Finnish RDI service providers (N=223) showed that these can be roughly divided into three categories: academic R&D units (universities and research institutes), educational and training institutes (polytechnics, adult education centres, colleges) and private consulting firms (Ramstad 2008). This division is also used as the basis for the innovation generating model.

In this paper, *academic R&D units* refer to *universities and research institutes* with major resource bases and the most potential for wide-ranging activities in the development of activity systems. They are also deeply linked to national and international academic research and development networks. Besides their basic activities (teaching and research), due to greater autonomy and decreasing government funding these institutions are also developing a greater focus on consultancy activities. Many provide services for work organisations as part-time researcher-developers, but also use students in RDI projects. The study revealed that, compared with consultancies, academic R&D units more often use research-assisted development and action research methods. Promoting QWL, building wide-ranging networks and disseminating information through research studies and publications were other areas of emphasis. They also participated in long-term projects subsidised by research grants and other external funding, whereas companies had a prime focus on more short-term practical development and the commercial application of research. It has been argued that the research-assisted development approach can create more favourable conditions for innovative solutions than pure consulting, because the former contains critical and experimental testing of hypotheses and frames the related questions (Alasoini 2005; Falkum 2002). Action researchers have also been viewed as less partial, more open minded and dialogue oriented. On the negative side, from customers' perspective universities are often considered overly theoretical and seen as lacking in project management skills.

Training and educational institutes refer to polytechnics (universities of applied sciences), vocational education colleges and other institutes with a focus on vocational education and training. These are a hybrid between academic R&D units and consultancies, subject to both the R&D units' demands for scholarly relevance and the consultancies' demands for for practical applicability. They

play an important role (somewhere between universities and consultancies) in the so-called *fuzzy front end* of the innovation process, where the basic research of universities and research institutes comes to an end, but the marketing of a new product or service has not yet begun. It is characteristic of them that their RDI activities are closely related to education, enabling the use of students alongside teachers to collaborate with working life; this can be done through final degree work, other small projects and through mentoring activities. Training and educational institutes have a strong knowledge base on occupational education in various fields, as well as of individual and organisational learning issues. The acceleration of technological change and the quantity, speed and complexity of information implies a need to integrate learning and working. Formal education and training do not provide an adequate guarantee of sufficient knowledge and skills for working life. There is a need for individual and organisational learning to become more closely linked to companies' restructuring processes and innovation activities, while having a close connection to the work organisation's strategy. Training and educational institutes also have important pedagogical knowledge of diverse learning methods and strategies. In this way, they play a constructive role by providing new models and tools for joint learning process. Learning should therefore take place in work organisations or in close connection with firms.

The third knowledge system is that of *private consultancies* that work closely with client organisations, in order to help them with their specific needs. Consultancies vary from large multinational companies providing a range of services to smaller, focused consultancies and self-employed consultants. There is little or no regulation of the management consultancy market and no agreed body of knowledge or training is required. However, the education level of consultancies has improved during recent decades. Our study on Finnish consultancies (N=105) showed that 85% of the management consultants studied had a university degree and 9% had a doctorate or licentiate degree (Ramstad 2008). Consulting services seek to generate growth within a company. The existence of this clear economic element means that consultancies primarily consider the marketability and customer relevance of knowledge, rather than its scientific value. Consultancies seek knowledge of commercial value, rather than public value. This involves close contacts to market needs and less regard for disciplinary boundaries and theory. Our study revealed that the experience of markets and client organisations forms consultants' most valuable knowledge base. A consulting firm's development style typically emphasises practicality as well as strong customer and profit orientation. These firms also exhibited strong knowhow on management and process development (process consulting), as well as knowledge of how various methods are created and

utilised. Management consultancies played an important role in the diffusion of new management approaches, methods and models through different media. The low entry barrier into the management consulting business has led to customers becoming more selective in their use of consultants. To remain competitive, consultants must continuously upgrade their knowledge and competencies. A key source of development in consultancy work is cooperation with other colleagues and academic organisations.

Example of broad-based development of activity system and integrated service combination

In this chapter, we show how diverse RDI providers can be incorporated into fairly broad-based improvement projects at the level of individual firms. To achieve a good, workable fit, the required knowledge may not be available from a single supplier, but from a combination of several sources. Based on the production and dissemination of the new knowledge perspective, *coalitions of different types of RDI service providers* might effectively compensate for any lack in capabilities, while offering a wider variety of expertise to work organisations. They may also support the development of their own expertise. This is a complex activity involving multiple actors and elements, combined with various interrelationship patterns.

Service providers' varied knowhow, methods and development styles can be beneficially exploited and combined in various types of development projects. The exploitation of various expert services also facilitates the combination of seemingly contradictory approaches, such as, for example, simultaneous progression in organisational and technological issues, 'from the top down' and 'from the bottom up'; the promotion of profitability and QWL; the examination of short-term and long-term results of development activities; the integration of theory and practice; the strengthening of supervisors' and personnel's knowledge; as well as the individual's professional and organisational learning. Figure 4 presents an example of service combinations between expert organisations.

This model enables service providers to meet the challenges presented by the division of labour. For example, aside from providing basic research and teaching, universities face the challenge of performing a third task concerning society. In this, universities' cooperation with consulting firms and training organisations, characterised by strong expertise vis-à-vis their clienteles and customer interfaces, could solve labour division problems. Consultants' strengths lie in good customer relationship skills, alongside the ability to simplify matters and create tailored solutions to meet customers' needs. Reciprocally, universities and
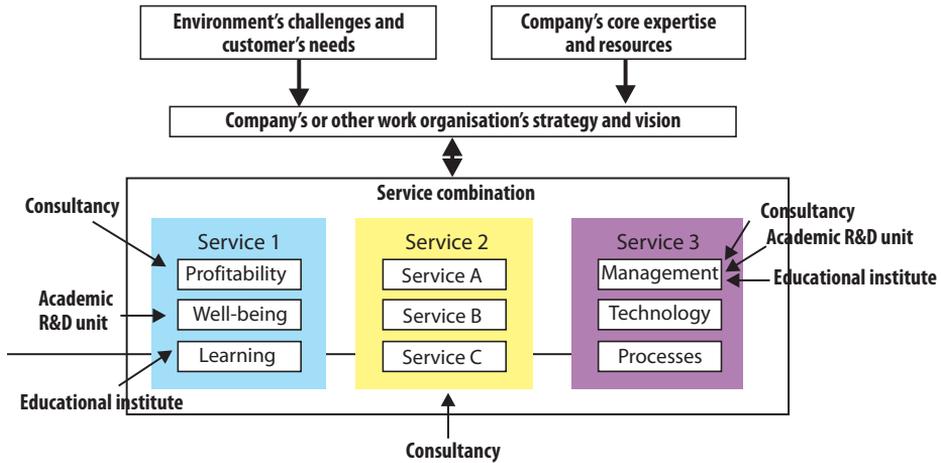
Figure 4. Example of broad-based activity system development and service combinations.

research institutes can provide new research-oriented and critical perspectives to the management methods currently on the market, while promoting the creation of new information that can be applied more widely. Furthermore, among work organisations, consultants and educational organisations can help promote the dissemination of information with a more theoretical emphasis.

Earlier innovation and organisational studies have mainly focused on a firm's outcomes, as gained from innovation networks. On the other hand, experiences of collaboration are seldom studied from the service provider's perspective. However, combinations of services of this type can also result in positive outcomes for service providers themselves. In our study, we compared development projects implemented in collaboration with several diverse service providers (e.g. consultancies collaborating with academic R&D units and educational institutes) with those implemented internally or with the help of a single service provider (Ramstad 2008). For client organisations, development projects in which several experts were used were predictive of more comprehensive development (several development targets), better use of diverse knowledge types (research-assisted v. market-oriented knowledge), and more internal and external collaboration. In turn, these were related to improved performance and QWL. For expert organisations, combining diverse types of knowledge enabled improvements in expertise and social relations, research activity, the productivisation of services, education and regional development and financing. In particular, consultancies and educational and training institutes saw the greatest gain in value of the collaboration between versatile experts.

Learning cycles for broad-based innovation activities

Simultaneous learning by the work organisation and innovation infrastructure can be illustrated with the help of two, parallel learning cycles. The *first cycle* focuses on the development of the work organisation's local activity system in connection with customers and outside experts (Figure 5). The purpose of the *second cycle* is to function as a more generalised learning mechanism for the expert organisations providing services.

Throughout both learning cycles, knowledge can be promoted by exploiting various types of cooperative, reflexive and dialogic techniques that support participation, cooperative learning and co-creation. Reflexivity-based learning aims to achieve a better understanding and awareness of, and meaning for, oneself and one's surroundings, from various angles. Reflexion can occur at three levels: self-reflexion, reflexive benchmarking and reflexion on relations. Self-reflexion emphasises questioning oneself about one's own ways of working and thinking. It clarifies one's own work, capacities, strategies and connections, while creating a balance with expectations and demands from outside. In reflexive benchmarking, the idea is to find and select new ideas, different ways of thinking and complementarities outside oneself. By identifying, understanding and comparing the similarities and dissimilarities between other organisations and itself, an organisation can learn and develop better solutions. When reflecting on relationships, the focus is on the observation and analysis of interaction between participants and the roles actors play therein. This is done in order to sustain the high quality of the interaction itself.

The first-order learning cycle is a simplistic way of illustrating the phases of activity system development. It consists of three phases leading to changes in the work organisation. The first phase is termed basic analysis. Its purpose is to build an understanding of the organisation's developmental needs. An important element in the first phase involves acquiring and coordinating knowledge both inside (management and employees) and outside the organisation, with each interacting party bringing its own perspective and issues to the discussion. The participants communicate on the same object, while applying their diverse knowledge in an attempt to elaborate on this joint target. Collaboration with diverse service providers enhances problem-solving, enabling comprehensive change and the solution of new, acute, rapidly emerging problems. First-phase activities can include the analysis of presumptions, needs assessment, goal-setting, participation in interactive workshops, visiting other firms, and analysing alternative practices and the functions of relationships through a reflexive learning process. As a result

of joint learning, an alternative model can be co-constructed. In the second phase, the new model is discussed, reflected upon and applied in everyday work. The purpose of the second phase is to translate the new knowledge into individual and collaborative plans and actions for the instructional change of practices. Activities in this phase might include participative action research, development groups, team building and training, new management approaches, the development of employee skills and the implementation of new technology and business plans. The purpose of the third phase is to evaluate and refine practices and new solutions. This phase can give rise to new questions and needs. Cyclical evaluation refers to evaluation that is not restricted to the end of the development process, but based on which ideas and models are under continual evaluation.
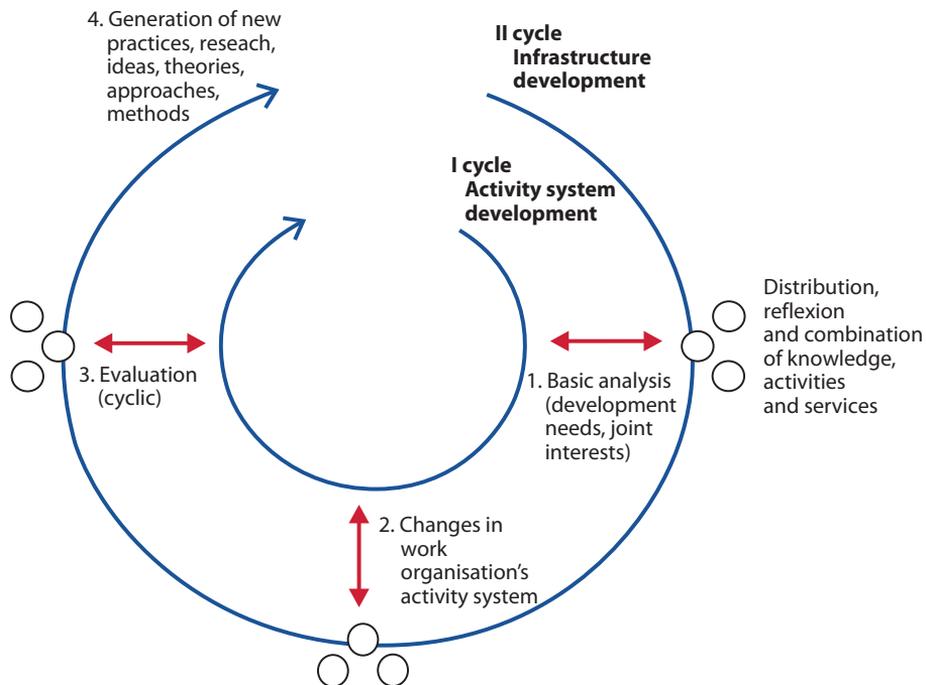
Figure 5. Parallel learning cycles of the activity system and innovation infrastructure.

The second-order cycle provides a learning forum, not only for innovation service providers, but also for the practitioners (e.g. internal developers in work organisations) involved and interested in more abstract and meta-level analyses of development and innovation activities. Here, the aim is the further improvement of development methods within a larger 'professional community'. The second-order learning cycle of the innovation infrastructure consists of four

phases. The first three phases (analysis, implementation and evaluation) are closely connected to the work organisation's internal development phases. These are based on sharing and reflection upon approaches, models and tools, alongside the combination and further development of knowledge and activities during different phases. The idea is to learn from similarities and differences through reflection, while identifying new or better and more comprehensive solutions for customers. Different parties must be willing to disclose their motives and goals (e.g. attitudes, hopes, experiences, frameworks and theories) in order to better understand those of each other, as well as their own perspective. The fourth phase illustrates learning-cycle outcomes. Potential outcomes can be individual, organisational or joint efforts by the entire development coalition. For service providers, this may mean the dissemination of results in the form of education, research, articles and services. Such development does not necessarily have to go through all of these phases, whose order can vary.

Conclusions

Finland has chosen a broad-based innovation policy as a national strategy. Because such a broad-based, strategic perception of innovation is new at European level, Finland's strategy implementation and future success are being watched with keen interest. Promoting this policy with the planned scope is challenging; its effective implementation requires specific actions and systemic tools at both programme and project level. This article has presented a conceptual framework and an alternative model, which enable a more comprehensive development of innovation activities in society in general. In the case of the innovation generating model, broad-based innovation activity can be promoted both at work organisation and innovation infrastructure levels. As organisations that provide versatile and complementary RDI services and knowhow are brought together, work organisations can be offered more comprehensive solutions of higher quality. This model also enables the simultaneous development of expert organisations' own knowhow and services, resulting in the innovation infrastructure's advancement at national level. At the moment, no current forms of funding enable this type of broad-based innovation activity, while funding possibilities are fragmented across various activities. To remedy this situation, there is a need for changes in funding practices, as well as in the cooperative mechanisms employed among various organisational, technological and service-oriented programmes and actors. In Finland, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes) provides a good basis and resources for providing broad-based innovation activity within work organisations.

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II Structuring of innovative networks

When the best is not good enough for all: moral contract as a challenge to the open innovation process

Anu Järvensivu and Tatu Piirainen

Open innovation comes with various promises. It is, however, rare to see this mode of operation placed under critical review. In this article, our goal is to take the innovation process developed for supervisor training and use it to formulate the challenges we face when innovation activities are opened up in the learning network to become the shared domain of developers, users and various support organisations. The views of various stakeholders on good or exemplary coaching will be put to the test, and the ability to reach a consensus or a moral agreement on these issues will be highlighted.

Keywords: educational development, moral contract, open innovation, supervisor training.

During the last ten years in particular, we have seen fundamental changes in the way we understand the creation of innovations. From the linear 'cascade model', we have moved towards understanding innovation as a joint product, created by various stakeholders. While innovation was still thought of as something created in scientists' studies or manufacturing companies, researchers and the companies developing products or services had a strong say in defining what projects could be termed 'innovation'. In innovation activities, the cascade model meant that those upstream were in a position to seize the power of decision over what is in the interests of those downstream.

Since the principles of open innovation and user-centeredness have emerged as the focal points of innovation discourse, concepts and terms such as open source, quadruple helix and living lab have shaped innovation concepts and practical procedures in a more versatile and nonlinear way. At the same time, it can be said that innovation activities have become more democratic, as an increasing number

of stakeholders – from end-users to citizens – can participate in innovation creation (Von Hippel 2005). It seems feasible that the set of values of all innovation process participants will become key points of interest, both in research and in practical operations. Open consideration of what, in fact, constitutes an innovation and what is the set of values on which it is based would be a natural step. Societies and communities comprise various subcommunities and groups that can have differing conceptions of what is good, better or best. What is useful to some is not so from another point of view. In other words, each community has its own set of values which directly influence the community's goals and interests, and which are consequently also reflected in its innovation processes.

In an open innovation environment, the various ideas, organisational backgrounds and knowledge bases of the participants can be a source of creativity; they can, however, also be the root cause of social or communication problems. It is not uncommon for them to cause conflicts or even project failure. Despite the fact that a considerable share of projects fail, empirical study of the challenges faced by open innovation forums and the reasons behind the failure of open innovation projects has been minimal. Moreover, themes related to values and morals are missing from innovation research. The aim of this article is to bridge this gap. It deals with the challenges caused by the differences in the set of values amongst the participants of an open innovation process. The empirical object of research is the Combinno learning network, where supervisor training was developed in line with the basic ideas of open innovation. The authors of the article participated in the network in the role of researcher-developer.

Du Chatenier et al. (2009) have surveyed the literature, seeking to identify challenges caused by the open innovation activities to the collective knowledge creation. According to them, these challenges are related to sharing and interpreting information and the phases of negotiation and combination. Open innovation participants must, for example, succeed in being good and fair partners who avoid freeloading. The team must also be able to achieve an optimal level of cohesion, striking a balance between closed cliques, withheld information and open dialogue. Management is an extremely challenging question to open innovation, as there is no obvious centre of power and control. The researchers state that a balance must be struck between using power and control, or yielding to them. Similarly, there are challenges related to the structure of the team: the team can, for example, split into subteams, or remain a single team with a higher probability of conflict. Answers also need to be found to questions related to team stability and team member attrition. Moreover, the differences and cognitive distance between the teams which constitute organisations can cause problems due to variation in the use of information and concepts as well as differences in goals and working culture. Physical

distance must also be optimised, to avoid becoming too little or, as the case may be, too great. As a result of simultaneous participation in several communities, participants can also feel burdened by their various roles. Time pressures can also mean that solid social relationships need to be built up fast, which can be very difficult. Typical challenges include experiences of uncertainty and questions related to time span. An open innovation team is not always able to operate with sufficient autonomy, nor does it have all the required resources at its disposal. According to the researchers, the operating methods adopted by or optimally suited for a team are likely to be influenced by the innovation goals and the radicalness of the innovation for which the team is striving. However, empirical studies aiming at understanding the abovementioned challenges are scarce. (Ibid.)

In this article, we analyse what significance the participants' set of values and the varying goals stemming from them (in Du Chatenier et al. 2009, mainly cognitive distance) hold for the innovation process. By values, we refer to perceptions of what is good, just and worth striving for. In our example, the innovation process participants, originally from different organisations, worked to a certain extent towards a shared goal: that of creating a new, improved and innovative educational model. On the other hand, participants had very different views of what kind of education would be good or better than before, thereby useful and meriting the term 'innovation'.

In general, innovation research does not take a stand on how an open innovation network's perception of what constitutes a good innovation is achieved. In our article, we study this problem area using the concept of morals, highlighting how the various assumptions of what is good and desirable, held by participants with different organisational backgrounds, influence the innovation process. In other words, we investigate how the process is affected by assumptions of what constitutes a good education held by those developing a new educational model. Our research methods are qualitative, comprising action research and participatory observation. We begin by describing the viewpoints and concepts we have used.

Open innovation activities: bringing morals to the foreground and decentralising target setting

Recent innovation discourse makes frequent mention of open innovation and innovation activities often without making explicit what is meant with the terms 'open', 'innovation' or 'innovation activities', even though they can be understood and defined in various ways (Dahlander & Gann 2010).

The term 'innovation' can be applied to innovations related to products, services and technologies, or innovations related to social institutions, organisational

structures, modes of operation and politics (i.e. social innovations). Innovations can be further divided into radical, groundbreaking innovations that represent change and novelty, and incremental ones representing minor developments. (Schienstock & Hämäläinen 2001.)

Henry Chesbrough is widely deemed the creator of the concept of open innovation: below is one of his definitions of the concept (Chesbrough 2006):

> *"Open innovation means that companies should make much greater use of external ideas and technologies in their own business, while letting their unused ideas be used by other companies."*

According to Chesbrough, for a lengthy period industrial R&D processes were closed, internal processes within a single company. The key point of such closed innovation environment models was to ensure that the organisation generating the innovation was in possession of all the required knowledge and knowhow needed to carry out successful innovation activities. As defined by Chesbrough, open innovation is deemed to mean crossing the various boundaries related to the company's activities (for example, involving the R&D activities of a company or the commercial utilisation of a company's innovations) (Torkkeli et al. 2007).

While there has always been room for openness in corporate activities, for various reasons, this is now an increasingly important factor in companies' success. On the other hand, it is unlikely that we will encounter a situation in which open innovation fully replaces companies' internal R&D&I activities. For example, the attractiveness of a company's internal development is a key to its ability to find good partners. In fact, the internal innovation activities of a company and its external R&D cooperation are complementary rather than mutually exclusive aspects of its operations. It is crucial that various types of openness, such as revealing, selling, sourcing and acquiring, are distinguished from one another. (Dahlander & Gann 2010.)

Some, however, have sought to increase the openness of open innovation by emphasising the principles of open source, for example, where anyone can be an innovator, developer or commercial beneficiary. In such cases, innovation activities can be cut loose from the framework of corporations and corporate activities. Leadbeater (2007) defines open innovation as follows:

> *"There are two faces of open innovation: Open Innovation IN is the basic model where ideas flow into companies from different sources (crowdsourcing). Open Innovation OUT is where a group of people, a movement, sometimes a company,*

created a kernel or a platform, with some tools, onto which people can add their ideas and contributions. Open Innovation IN narrows down a wider set of contributions into a funnel of corporate development. Open Innovation OUT is designed to allow a process of evolutionary innovation that accretes and grows as each new person adds their piece of information, code or module."

In this context, we can also speak of the democratisation of innovation activities (Von Hippel 2005):

"When researchers say that innovation is being democratised, we mean that users of products and services – both firms and individual consumers – are increasingly able to innovate for themselves ... Users that innovate can develop exactly what they want, rather than relying on manufactures to act as their (often very imperfect) agents."

A democratic and user-centred innovation environment is always closely linked to communality and the open network model. According to spokesmen, such as von Hippel (2005) and Lee and Cole (2003), for user-centred innovation activities the Internet, combined with other information technology tools, will allow future innovations to be increasingly created within user-centred innovation communities. Examples of such operations include the open source movement, as well as various internationally active hobby communities and the tools they have developed.

Open innovation activities can be viewed as a sector of a wider development process, which bridges the gap, created during the era of mass production and research-based technological development, between manufacturers and end-users. It can be seen to represent a step towards a situation where development, manufacture and use are again brought closer together. On the other hand, the still unanswered questions of ownership are only beginning to emerge.

In this article, we are not so much interested in copyright issues, ownership or even the openness of activities: we focus more on innovation definitions, participants' set of values and the decentralisation of goals, although, it must be said, these themes are closely interlinked. In their article in this book, Tapio Koivisto and Katri Valkokari deal with the first part of the conceptual pair 'open innovation', reflecting on problems related to openness. For us, the key research question of open innovation lies in the decentralisation of innovation-related target setting, leading to the further issue of morals and the division of power. When innovation activities are opened up to all interested parties early on in the process, participants are given the opportunity to express their opinions on the innovation targets and to integrate these targets with the process, i.e. what is the

good for which everyone is striving, and what kind of end result would be an improvement on the preceding state of affairs. In other words, negotiations on the targets and direction of innovation activities are initiated either through open discussion, or without actually emphasising the theme of the discussion.

The set of values and conceptions of what is good and fair express the morals of a community. Communities and societies can be perceived to be making moral contracts. By moral contracts, we refer to the agreements negotiated by various (moral) communities on what, on the level of issues shared by these communities, is right, good and reasonable – in other words, worth striving for (Järvensivu & Koski 2009; Järvensivu et al. 2009). Within the scope of its negotiating power, each subcommunity will introduce aspects of its own morality into the moral contract, and agreement will be reached between these different moralities. In time, the contract will be modified and altered as a consequence of the actions of members of the community. Moral contracts are made on various levels, covering, for example, the levels of a society or a workplace. On the workplace level, the moral contract defines the kinds of actions considered good on the part of an employee or employer. It also defines what kinds of things it is appropriate to strive for, and the appropriate means to this end.

Out of necessity, a community working on moral issues will be formed around open innovation activities. By definition, open innovation takes place in more or less loosely defined and heterogeneous communities. In terms of the concept of a moral contract, this means that open innovation activities are influenced by various kinds of, and sometimes starkly contrasting, moral ingredients from different moral communities. This could lead us to the conclusion that when the goal is innovation, i.e. an end result that represents an improvement at least in some way beneficial to someone, moral considerations and negotiations would, quite naturally, be a focal point of open innovation activities and the related research. However, at the moment this is not necessarily the case.

How the Combinno learning network was created

In order to shed some light on the moral considerations underlying innovation activities and issues related to the assumed democratisation of innovation target-setting, we set out to analyse one innovation process within a learning network in which we ourselves were participants. Our research methods could be described as action research (Stringer 1996) or participatory observation (Spradley 1980).

Combinno, i.e. the learning network for innovative development combinations in working life, implemented as a joint project of our home organisation, the

Tampere University Work Research Centre and the Tampere Vocational Adult Education Centre. Its objective was to create workplace-centred, innovative development combinations for working life by increasing the interconnectedness of workplace development and the degree-level vocational education, and by aligning the viewpoints of educators and developers.

The need and demand for a learning network project such as Combinno arose from the activities of the partly publicly funded development team, assembled to conduct action research into employee education practices. The development team, established in 2003, consisted of representatives of the labour administration, regional Employment and Economic Centres, educational establishments, research institutions, funders and various parties involved in development. The group's objective was to build an operational model whereby, through the cooperation of various stakeholders, labour administration services are made available to workplaces even before there is a need for actual layoffs or terminations. The construction of this proactive model, which forecasts the change and employment termination needs of companies, focused on services such as labour market training for those already employed and the development of job opportunities based on labour market needs.

Through action research, a gap was discovered between vocational training leading to a degree and development activities in the workplace. The Combinno learning network project was designed to bridge this gap by assembling various stakeholders and companies with different approaches to training and development activities into a shared forum, where mutual cooperation, learning, and the creation of new, working life-related information could be facilitated. In practice, the core of the network was formed by the parties already cooperating within the framework of the abovementioned research.

Network type of cooperation was seen as a natural continuation of the activities of the development team. Moreover, Combinno's goal was such that reaching it required the participation of all stakeholders. As users of the services under development, workplaces were a natural starting point and, consequently, a stakeholder in the network. Other participants were defined by their connectedness to the processes of workplace-related training and development activities. This, first and foremost, provided an entry route for participants involved in training and development coordination and funding, such as the regional Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, the regional Employment and Economic Centres, and the Apprenticeship Centre. Training organisers and development professionals also had a natural interest in the activities. Dozens of organisations, of which some were private (approximately 30) and some public
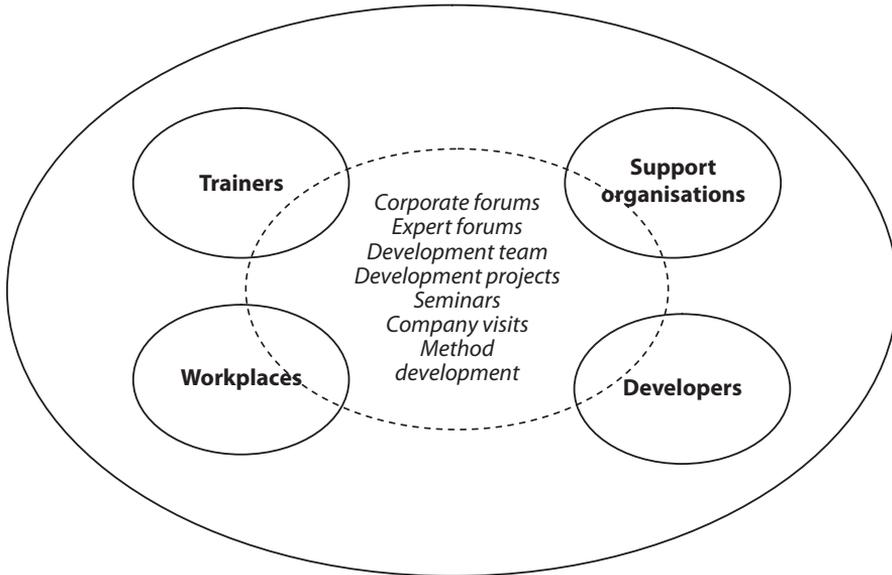
Figure 1. The Combinno learning network, its central stakeholders and operating methods.

(approximately 10), were active within the Combinno framework. Network participants can be divided into four groups: workplaces, training and development support organisations, providers of (degree-level) education, and working life developers (Figure 1).

Following the logic of open innovation, the interfaces between different stakeholders were fairly distinct when Combinno began its operations, but, as development processes moved forward, they became more blurry. For example, the trainer organisation acting as the second administrator of the network became heavily involved in development, and some of its trainers, who had formerly clearly held the role of trainer, became developers through their consultative role in workplaces.

Combinno as an open community for innovation and morals

Membership of the Combinno learning network was open to all workplaces interested in development activities, as well as to developers of working life and the related knowhow. On the other hand, the network was not marketed actively, and its operations did not emphasise the project or the Combinno name. Combinno can be characterised as open and 'unorganised'. There was no attempt to turn network participants into committed members, as the entry and exit of participants

was viewed as a natural feature of networked innovation. Everyone participated in events and subprojects according to their level of interest. Likewise, forums for shared learning evolved into what the participants wanted them to be.

The network also implemented the Granovetterian view of weak and strong network ties. The forum's operational core comprised a group of committed and active participants (approximately 5–7 organisations), whereas a significant number of participants took part in only some activities.

Although the focus of Combinno activities was on concrete, workplace-centred development projects, the network's own interaction and development competence transfer was supported through various learning forums. Alongside Corporate Forums, targeted at all network members, Combinno hosted a number of tailored, interactive forums, such as the Expert Forum, whose task it was to disseminate and develop methodological innovations. Combinno also hosted the project's steering group and the various steering groups created alongside workplace-centred training and development projects.

In the early days of the Combinno learning network in particular, the development team's actions contributed significantly to increasing the working-life related knowledge and knowhow of network participants. Combinno development team participants consisted of developers, education providers and funders. Moreover, all companies involved with Combinno-initiated development or training activities were invited to join the development team. During Combinno's initial years, the development team met every three months. The issues handled at meetings were concrete and related to the questions raised by ongoing or planned projects. In addition to sharing experiences, the goal of the meetings was to build a shared vision of successful development and educational activities.

The expert forums were mainly targeted at trainers and developers, but, if needed, representatives of companies and funders would also participate. Through shared project planning, implementation and assessment, the goal was to create cooperational relationships between members, and to lower any barriers between trainers and developers. In order to initiate discussions, the specialists introduced their own activities, holding presentations on their own areas of expertise. The expert forums turned out to be a highly functional concept, enabling the specialists to get to know each other, engage in networking, and share expertise.

> "[…] at least for me, being new to all of this, it was a pretty nice way of getting to know people and of finding out how many and what kinds of experts are actually in this network." (developer-training 1)

In corporate forums, various experts and workplace representatives could make their voices heard. By making sure that different voices are represented and heard, a broad spectrum of experience, exchange and learning could be ensured. Similarly to the expert forums, the aim of supporting multiple voices and shared dialogue was to mix the participants' roles and generate competence transfer. Company representatives were encouraged to act as experts, holding presentations and introducing their own development projects and working methods.

> *"I think that here we are doing things the way that they really should be done. You have different educational institutions, researchers, companies and experts [interacting], and this is the way it should always be, to have interaction in which everyone can learn from each other. I would say it is a shame that this will end, in the sense that this could be a permanent set-up in some ways."* (corporate representative 1)

The core idea behind Combinno's organisation was to open up and add to the alternatives, rather than closing them down or defining them more precisely. In line with the system's key concept of openness, such 'unorganisation' was expected to open up room for innovation. The ideas of unorganisation and openness arose very naturally from Combinno's target setting, i.e. its emphasis on workplace-centeredness, and the related key aspect of learning theory, in which practice-based and problem-based learning are highlighted. When practice- and problem-based approach, democratic participation, and open innovation are taken seriously, producing a very tightly organised and managed network is somewhat difficult.

Unorganisation also leaves room for unofficial organisation. Although official and permanent learning forums, which may have pre-set themes, generate continuity and strengthen the sense of community amongst their members, their efficiency in terms of innovation remains doubtful. In such forums, the options for what can be achieved have more or less been predefined. If, instead, a network's members share an issue or problem, the solution of which would help them in their everyday work, a whole new dynamic is created. In such cases, only the starting point is, at some level, given, whereas the end result of the shared development work exists within the full range of possible outcomes. Shared activities tie the network together, and its organisation is defined by circumstances and processes. In the case of the Combinno model, the network re-organised itself continuously.

Described in this way, Combinno shows great innovation potential. Because the basis for activities was an idea-generating community, working on various challenges and development ideas, Combinno can be characterised as an innovation space in line with the more radical form (OUT) of open innovation. It is often thought that

innovations thrive in communities consisting of people with diverse backgrounds, viewpoints and knowledge (e.g. Eriksson et al. 2005; Følstad 2008).

A learning network can also be viewed as a development community, consisting of various moral communities. Learning networks, too, could be viewed as having to face moral questions and work on a moral contract. While individuals may naturally belong to various kinds of moral communities, shaping their ideas of what is good and desirable, we can somewhat justly deem Combinno's four main stakeholder groups to have formed a moral community of their own.

To a large extent, the activities of the workplaces participating in the network were steered by aspects of economic rationality, which were also a driving force for the other participants. While this could be expressed openly in the case of companies, for other participants economic rationality remained in the background. The activities of the trainer participants were first and foremost inspired by the idea of increasing learning activities, whereas the researcher-developers focused on advancing science and striving for novel ways of organising training and workplace development. On the other hand, the targets of the support organisations involved enabling a multitude of activities of various types. Each moral community brought its own values, assumptions, expectations, interests and targets to the learning network.

Combinno supervisor training: aiming at improvement

In this article, we take a closer look at an open innovation process that focused on developing a supervisor training model. This innovation process, taking place within the Combinno network, can be seen to represent the less radical, moderate form (IN) of open innovation: although supervisor training was viewed as important by many stakeholders and was developed through cooperation, the end result was, to a large extent, the product of a single individual stakeholder (educational institution), with other network members as contributing participants.

Origins and contents of supervisor training

The Combinno learning network developed a supervisor training programme of 1.5 years' duration: during 2006–2008, this programme was implemented in a certain area of Pirkanmaa. Companies within this area had created two industrial networks: one for companies in the metal industry and the other for those in the rubber industry. Practically all companies from these industries participated in the networks, which were highly active. For years, these networks had been fruitlessly searching for adequate supervisor training. They were therefore ready

to seize the opportunity, presented by Combinno, to create tailored training for themselves in cooperation with support resources and professionals in training and development.

The idea was to combine various goals of manager coaching, while the primary objective of all development participants was to create a new way of providing supervisor training in a way that would be superior to any earlier models. This would entail development activities that increase the productivity of a workplace while focusing on degree-level qualifications that enhance a manager's employability. The intention was to have the costs of the training covered by the student and his/her employer, with additional funding provided by a publicly funded source. In contrast to the traditional model, where training packages and training innovations are created by educational institutions in cooperation with research institutes, if at all, the idea here was to implement the entire process through open and user-centred innovation activities. This was done in order to distance the project from the concept of linear innovation.

In the implemented process, the educational institution and, to some extent, the user-developers can be viewed as service providers, whereas the companies and their coached employees are the end-users. The Apprenticeship Centre, which funded the coaching, took the role of a process support resource, or, occasionally, the end-user. All four stakeholders were committed to common development process of coaching, which was implemented during coaching pilots; i.e. the development and use of training were combined so as to take place simultaneously. In Table 1 and 2 below, the roles of each organisation are presented on the one hand as they would appear in a traditional training innovation process (marked with an O), and, on the other, as they would in the case of open innovation (marked with an X).

Table 1. The roles of stakeholders from the viewpoint of the traditional innovation process (roles marked with an O).

	Researchers	Educational institution	Apprenticeship Centre (publicly funded buyer of training)	Workplaces
Developer	O			
Provider		O		
Support organisation (partial financing)			O	
End-user				O

Table 2. Stakeholder roles in supervisor training as seen through an open innovation process (roles marked with an X).

	Researchers	Educational institution	Apprenticeship Centre (publicly funded buyer of training)	Workplaces
Developer	X	X		X
Provider	X	X		X
Support organisation (partial financing)			X	
End-user				X

As can be seen from the tables, stakeholders play more numerous roles in an open innovation process than they do in the traditional innovation model. A larger number of stakeholders adopt the roles of developers and providers in particular. On the other hand, the roles of the support organisation or end-user were not divided to the same extent.

Figure 2 describes the various phases of coaching development and implementation. As the coaching began, a contents planning day was arranged for all process participants. After this, the trainer and developer visited each company in order to discuss the training goals and plan the development activities related to the coaching, together with company management and the supervisor participating in
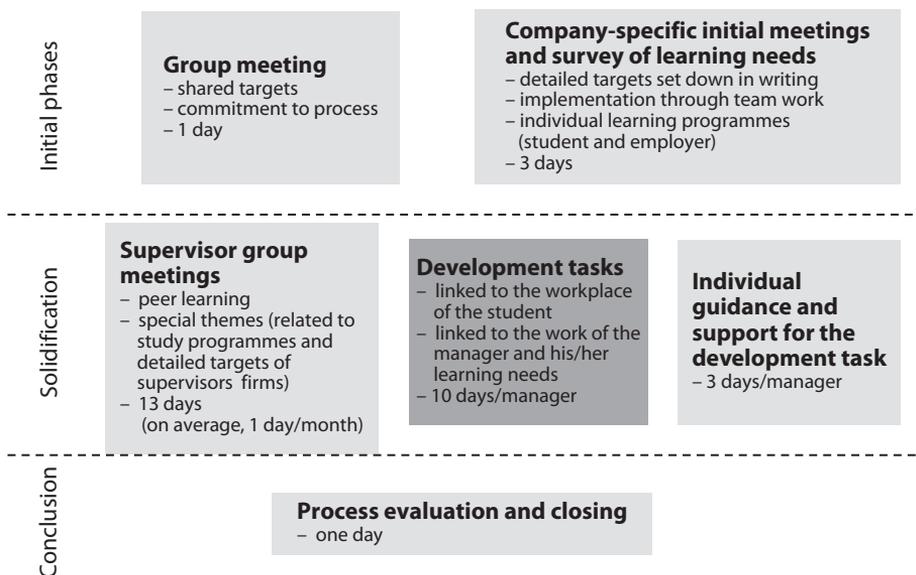

Figure 2. Planned contents of supervisor coaching.

the coaching. For the next step, contact teaching days and the implementation of the development task, supported by both an external and an internal expert from the company, continued until the interim assessment, which was conducted in the summer of 2007. At this point, some aspects of the coaching were adjusted. Coaching was completed in the spring of 2008, when a final assessment was performed, and the participants were awarded 2–3 components of a vocational degree called Specialist Qualification in Technology. Next, if they so desired, the participants could complete their degree through normal studies, an option which many took.

The various goals of supervisor training

Implementing supervisor training proved highly challenging. Although all network participants entered the process with 'good intentions', working towards their shared, ambitious goal, they did not do so with a clean slate. Each stakeholder had set their targets somewhat differently, and the participants' views of what constituted good training could vary considerably. During the process, the greatest differences in opinion concerned the importance of degrees to the training.

The goal of the companies, or, in practice, of the directors who participated in training development, was to gain concrete benefits, measurable in monetary terms, and to see improvement in a process, operational model or in the managerial skills of the coachees. The learning-related expertise of training providers was highly valued, and they were expected to bear a significant share of the learning process. This was evident in the expectation that the external instructor would bear the main responsibility for the success of the supervisor's learning process, rather than the internal instructor, for example, or the coachees themselves. From the point of view of the company directors, degrees were of no significance. In their minds, good managerial training comprised the above elements.

To a great extent, the company directors and coached supervisors shared the same notions of target setting and what constituted good training. The managerial students expected to see benefits in their day-to-day work through, for example, improved performance. Many supervisors were also interested in career advancement or a higher salary. During contact days, they expected to receive information that was already processed and filtered for their needs, giving them direct assistance in solving everyday problems. Everything that could be learnt from the experiences of managers from other companies was also highly valued. By contrast, most regarded the award of a degree as fairly insignificant.

On the other hand, the educational institution implementing the coaching expected it to become a new product in their portfolio. It had particularly high expectations

for degrees, which are used to measure the institution's success and generate funding. Moreover, it was in the educational institution's interests to award only certain components of a degree through coaching, as it could then recruit the supervisors as students, finalising their degree through a conventional educational programme. Training should, therefore, lead to degrees, but not too fast or easily. The educational institution and its trainers also hoped to be able to use previously drawn-up lecture packages, utilising their own expertise. However, for training to be successful, the trainers felt that the students and their employees must also bear responsibility for the learning process. To the trainers, the best way to learn is through doing, leaving the main responsibility for the learning process and its advancement to each company. The researcher-developers also came forward with this very user-centred line of thinking. Differences in perception culminated in the development tasks. The trainers and developers assumed that, to a large extent, the main responsibility for the practical implementation and completion of the development tasks would remain in the workplaces, whereas the workplaces saw the matter differently.

Support funding for the coaching was ultimately provided by the Apprenticeship Centre, which places a high value on degrees and the educational content conveyed by them. The Apprenticeship Centre's contribution to the innovation process was minor. Although the Apprenticeship Centre maintained a distant role, the values and target setting it represented were channelled into innovation activities, steering the trainers' activities through funding and assessment procedures.

Attracted by the intrinsic value of innovation, the researcher-developers worked towards a new training model with the potential to enhance the reputations of those participating in its development. They also emphasised how the companies' viewpoints were taken into account, how the quality of working life was developed in the supervisors' workplaces, and how the viewpoints of training participants would become more visible. For the researcher-developers, good training equalled sufficient support for the development projects executed in connection with the coaching, as well as efficient problem solving, helping supervisors with development activities and managerial work. A degree would have been a side-product, awarded in recognition of managerial skills and learning, as well as work performed in pursuit of the development task. This way of thinking was in almost direct opposition to the basic assumption held by the trainers and funders, i.e. that the degree targets and educational contents are pre-defined by education authorities.

The participants' perceptions of what constitutes good training have been specified in the table below (Table 3). This table is based on the authors' participatory observations as well as an assessment of the research. Materials for the study were

gathered at the coaching mid and end points, based on questionnaires, interviews and group discussions. The table is marked with an X for each participant whose targets included the mentioned aspect. An X in brackets means that a participant was sympathetic towards an aspect, but did not, as such, set it as a target.

Table 3. Perceptions of good training from the innovation process participants' point of view.

Aspect of good training	Company representatives	Educational institute and its trainers	Support organisation, Apprenticeship Centre	Researcherdevelopers from the University
Improves the operations and profitability of the company	X	(X)		X
Improves the fluency of supervisor's work	X	(X)		X
Increases the participant's managerial knowhow	X	X	X	X
The provider, i.e. the trainer, is in charge of the (learning) process	X	(X)	X	
Users, i.e. participants, are in charge of the (learning) process		X		X
Democratic participation in the innovation process				X
Connected to a degree		(X)	X	X
Degree awarded in recognition of skills	(X)		(X)	X
Contents defined by the degree		X	X	
Contents defined to match the development needs of the coachee and the company	X			X
Contains information shared by experts	X	X	X	X
Contains opportunities for peer learning	X	(X)	X	X
Enables the creation and commercialisation of a new service product		X		
An innovation that is significant at national level				X
Brings in new customers		X		
Links development to the training	X	(X)		X

Note: An X has been entered for each aspect that the training development participant viewed as a target. An X in brackets means that the stakeholder was sympathetic to the aspect but did not, as such, set is as a target.

Table 3 shows that the aspects of high-quality, innovative training form a complex and sometimes contradictory grid. In addition to being innovative, the idea that innovative training should also include fairly traditional expert tuition was the aspect over which most participants were in agreement. Peer learning, i.e. information exchange between supervisors from various companies, was also emphasised by almost all stakeholders, but in practice workplace representatives set a clear limit to this kind of openness, declining to discuss the development tasks of their managerial coachees at training meetings. The training session trainers were also reluctant to reserve time for such discussions. Their understanding of peer learning was different: they understood it to mean spontaneous discussions and exchanges of experience that would take place in lectures, with no ties to the development tasks. In the case of some targets, the participants formed subgroups or alliances supporting the target, whereas some targets were only supported by a solitary stakeholder organisation.

When development work began, the participants' differing perceptions on good supervisor training were insufficiently recognised within the network. In a way, the ideal of open, networked innovation activities had overshadowed the participants' differing expectations and assumptions. In shared meetings, well-meaning phrases were repeated, and whatever was said aloud received nods of approval. No variation in the perceptions of what constitutes good training presented itself until the training began. Because adequate account could not be taken of the network members' ties to their own moral communities in the development phase, the need for a discussion which now seems obvious went unnoticed. In other words, because the participants agreed on the basic targets, the need for a moral contract went unrecognised. To the supervisor training developers, as in innovation research, the interconnections between values and innovation remained an obscure area. When the training development and training execution schedules were combined, the entire project fell prey to a tight schedule which left no room for reflective development. As a result, conflicts and confusion were unavoidable, with each participant in turn feeling that the coaching did not generate 'quality training'.

Legacy and end results of supervisor training

The end product of supervisor training turned out to be a form of compromise training, in which the influence of the various participants was clearly visible. The worst conflicts were settled: although at times with no direct goal and no clear responsibilities, the process was always supported. Most of the supervisors' development tasks were finalised, but some were not. Work towards degrees was begun; a couple of years after the coaching had ended, nearly all participants had completed their degree.

The training, created as the end result of the process, was not a compromise based on an equal and democratic division of power; rather, it was in line with the educational institution's targets. The various network participants influenced the end result of the process unevenly. Together with the partial funder, i.e. the Apprenticeship Centre, the party responsible for the actual implementation of the training had the strongest say in how the training turned out. The fact that these stakeholders can be deemed training experts no doubt contributed to the strength of their position. In fact, the autonomy traditionally associated with teaching gave the trainers in charge of contact training a very free hand. Degrees, too, remained an obscure science shared only by the educational institution and the support organisation. Despite the best efforts, their language and regulations could not really be explained to the researcher-developers or the company representatives. During the final coaching phases, company representatives did, in fact, heavily criticise the weight placed on degrees and, consequently, the educational institution.

On the other hand the users, i.e. the company and its managers, held considerable power. This could be seen, for example, in the regulation of attendance activity and the criticism targeted at focusing on degrees. In the end, attendance and the 'use' of the training became based on the companies' preferences. In some phases of the process, trainers had to coax some coachees in order to prevent them from dropping out. On the other hand, the critique directed by the companies towards developing the training contents remained at a very abstract level. This was due to the company representatives being unable to communicate in the language used by the trainers. Consequently, they did not evolve into training developers of substance: they remained closer to the role of users, their power not extending beyond purchase decisions. For their part, the developer-researchers and trainers were unable to build a solid bridge linking on-the-job learning to the degrees and development of working life, despite momentary feelings of success.

After the coaching, many of the coaches felt that the training had not been executed as planned. Other stakeholders agreed since, at an early stage in the process, all had created an individual perception of the nature of the training, i.e. of what innovative supervisor training would be like.

Despite the conflicts and dissent, the innovation process was also characterised by a sense of solidarity. The long-term experience of partnerships on the part of many participants supported the network and kept the training going. Mutual respect and appreciation between the process participants had a similar effect. The trainers and developers respected the company representatives as the highest authorities in their own line of work. Meanwhile, the companies recognised the abovementioned stakeholders as experts on learning and best practices. Acquired through joint

efforts, the project funding also fostered commitment. With this background, the participants shared a strong desire to complete the process in a respectable manner, with the result that nearly all of the coaching participants completed their training.

No one expected supervisor training to become a compromise tinged with disappointment: it was intended to be an innovation. Everyone who participated in the development effort dreamt not only of good training, but of something better, perhaps even the best attainable supervisor training. When the innovation process began, the participants did not realise that they were aiming at the achievement of a radical innovation; they envisaged a moderate innovation that could be achieved through moderate effort. With expectations so high, the end result, a perfectly valid training process, appeared close to failure. If, from the very beginning, the targets had been jointly set as the result of careful consideration and at a slightly lower level – perhaps at the level of moderate innovation – the atmosphere could have been vastly different.

The supervisor training pilot cannot, however, be considered a waste of effort: the model created has since been applied, with some of its features, ideas and components being incorporated in detailed degree-level education programmes produced by the educational institution that participated in the programme. Even we, the researchers, were not aware of this before the final phases of Combinno, when a new trainer noticed that the documented supervisor training included similar features to the educational institution's new training programmes.

The open innovation process is clearly moving ahead. It is viable and will be developed further, first for the purposes of the educational services provider and then as the basis of further academic study. On the other hand, the company representatives reported that the skills of their supervisors had improved, with several development projects proving fruitful. As a result of the completed process, company representatives were also able to form new partnerships and strengthen their existing contacts, from which they had already benefited and on whose basis they had embarked on new joint projects. In the end, each participant in the open innovation process at least achieved its aims with respect to the coaching activities. The innovation process' benefits were therefore in no way restricted to the training producer.

Conclusions

Assessing the characteristics or degree of openness of the supervisor training innovation process is reasonably challenging. However, the completed process can be reviewed in relation to the classification mentioned earlier, i.e. open innovation IN and open innovation OUT.

In the case of the innovation process in hand, the initially open and democratic arena became closed. The emerging innovation, i.e. a training product designed for one-off use, continued to be of use and benefit to the training provider organisation, whereas other participants gained less in this sense. It could therefore be claimed that this was a case of open innovation of the IN type. On the other hand, other process participants also returned to the benefits they had reaped, scaling them in terms of their subtargets. In one form or another, the researchers achieved their research aims, while the company representatives gained increased managerial knowhow and more efficient subprocesses. All of the participants increased their social capital by becoming familiar with their new partners. No problems were experienced related to freeloading or actual abuse, even if this was a clear case of open innovation, with the participants developing a product belonging to another individual network member. In addition to open innovation of the IN type, the process also generated innovation of the OUT type.

Conclusions can be drawn from the supervisor training development process and its relationship with the concept of innovation, as well as the democratisation of innovation within a framework of openness. Innovation is generally something deemed better than what has gone before (Järvensivu & Koski 2009). In an open innovation process, it is generally thought that a better or the best solution is selected automatically, as though obeying a law of nature. However, the supervisor training process we executed within a learning network demonstrated that the perception of what is good can vary considerably among participants. What is good in one participant's opinion can be bad, or simply insignificant, in another's. Varying perceptions of what the concepts of good, better or innovation actually mean can considerably complicate the innovation process. Negotiations, or even conflicts on whose best is genuinely best form an integral part of the innovation process. At least within the systems of capitalist wage labour and the corporate world, the idea of a harmonious innovation community is misleading: just as was the case with linear innovation models, power and its use are aspects of networked innovation models in working life.

Even in an open community, progress is defined by the kind of power each stakeholder yields. The power of producers differs from that of users. Expert status can be of help in gaining power, but an open innovation process can also wear expertise thin. Both researchers and the providers (of education) must be able to admit that they cannot singlehandedly resolve what is best and what deserves to be termed an innovation. In practice, users can vote with their feet and thereby resolve the issue of which innovation is best and most useful. Although open innovation can be seen as a step towards the democratisation of innovation activity, perhaps even of production activity, power relationships and the differing target

settings and expectations of various stakeholders do not disappear when this model is applied: users will carry these aspects over from their home organisations. Responsibilities are juggled as a home base for innovation is sought. Power is given and taken. In time, it may be that the boundaries will become less distinct and the roles of developer, producer and user will become more interchangeable. The learning network project is precisely the kind of setting in which open innovation can be practiced and such dissolution of boundaries may be possible.

From the case of supervisor training, we, the researcher-developers, learned that preconceptions related to the innovation in hand, as well as the demands the innovation sets on moral and innovation communities, must be brought to the foreground. These reflections are primarily linked to what is considered good and desirable, and secondarily – and consequently – to how demanding the innovation is. It seems obvious that achieving an innovation based on moderate basic assumptions and with only a minor impact on the values of the moral community would demand less from the network and its participants than generating a radical innovation in this sense. It would be important to identify the kind of innovation in hand and the distance between the participants' perceptions of what merits the term 'innovation'.

At the beginning of an innovation process, it would be beneficial to discuss what each participant deems right, good and reasonable. Based on these discussions, agreement would then be reached on what is worth striving for, in line with the common good. Since 'progress' concerns values, stakeholders in an open innovation network should arrive at a moral agreement on their development targets. This contract should be drawn up at a sufficiently concrete level, using language that all parties to the agreement understand. In this way, we could ensure that the innovation community members are able to genuinely implement the contract in their activities.

In the light of the process we completed, we recommend further reflection on the morals and values when engaging in innovation activities and the related research. Stakeholders' perceptions of what is right, good and sensible are tested in innovation activities and learning networks, and the network's ability to attain a moral agreement has considerable weight in the evolution and form of the innovation. This is also highly likely to be of significance to the network: how tight it is, how well its members understand each other, and the kind of innovations the network is capable of generating. Moreover, the formation of the moral contract and the success of the negotiating process are significant in terms of the sense of purpose experienced by those working with innovations. By definition, innovations tend to question basic assumptions, which is not necessarily a pleas-

ant experience. This experience becomes more pleasant alongside the sense of security generated by an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, made possible by a moral contract.

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Combinno – Learning Network for Innovative Development Combinations

The Combinno learning network was a network for innovative development combinations in working life, coordinated by the Tampere University Work Research Centre in partnership with the Tampere Vocational Adult Education Centre. The need for a learning network arose from the activities of a development team, assembled within the context of an action research project in employee education practices. This team consisted of representatives of the labour administration, regional Employment and Economic Centres, educational establishments, research institutions, funders and various parties involved in development. The team discovered a gap between degree-oriented vocational training and the development activities of workplaces: in order to bridge this gap, a learning network project, i.e. Combinno, was initiated.
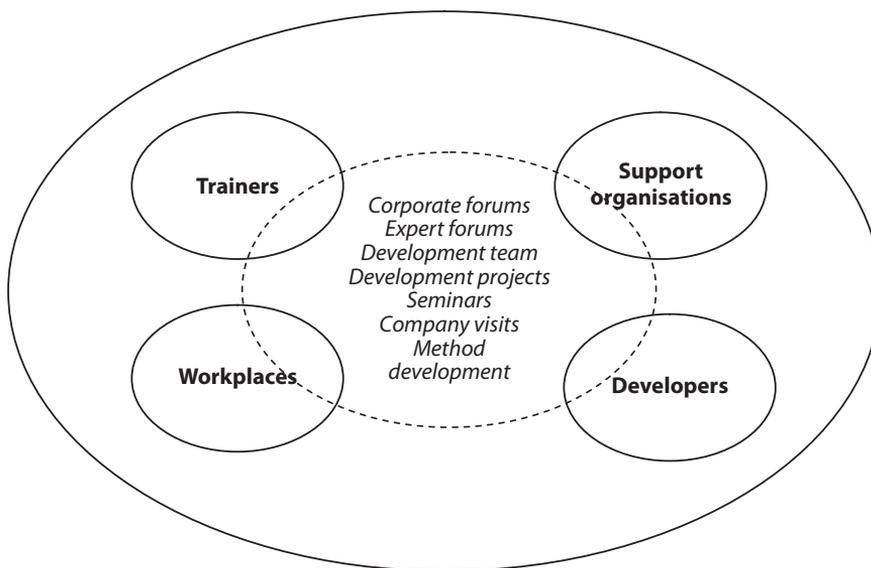
The task of the Combinno learning network was to synchronise and integrate workplace development and employee training, while bringing experts in these two areas closer together. Moreover, the network's general objective was to create new models combining training and development efforts into complete solutions with a focus on the workplace.

The Combinno project's targets were as follows:

1. To enhance network participants' skills and knowhow in working life development
2. To promote the dialogue between workplaces and support organisations
3. To generate concrete development needs and training
4. To develop methodological innovations
5. To generate new research-based knowledge on working life development

Key operations of the network included corporate forums, expert forums, meetings of the abovementioned development team, seminars for the target companies, training and development projects within the participating companies, and research on working life development. The corporate forums had the goal of increasing dialogue between workplaces and support organisations, while generating concrete development activities and training. They also functioned as mutual learning forums for the companies participating in the learning network. The expert forums served as mutual learning forums for experts in working life development and training, while supporting method development.

Making sense of open innovation

Tapio Koivisto and Katri Valkokari

This article reviews the progression, phases and turning points of the Open Innovation Learning Network Project from the viewpoint of the emergence, organising and sensemaking of the project. The objective of the project was to generate knowledge on the idea and nature of open innovation. Another aim was to support the adoption, utilisation and dissemination of open innovation methods and practices. This was to be achieved through networking and new, net-based media supporting horizontal interaction. The project strove to support open innovation practices, primarily amongst companies within the technology industry.

Keywords: open innovation, organising, reflection, self-observation, sensemaking.

This article reviews the progress, phases and turning points of the Open Innovation Learning Network Project (OpenInno) from the viewpoint of project emergence, organising and sensemaking (Weick 1979). Throughout the project, the authors were involved in its preparation, planning, implementation and assessment. The article relies on the authors' second order analyses and observations (cf. Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991; Pulkkinen 2003; Van Maanen 1979) of the project's evolution, phases and progress. The article deals with the project as a social system with the characteristics of a temporary organisation (Lundin & Söderholm 1995; Packendorff 1995) or a temporary network (Hedaa & Törnroos 1997), and approaches it from the viewpoint of sensemaking.

The target of the OpenInno project was to generate experiences and knowledge on the idea, forms and methods of open innovation (Koivisto et al. forthcoming). A second target was to support the adoption, utilisation and dissemination of open innovation methods and practices through networking, new types of net-based media that boost horizontal collaboration and interaction. The project's focus of application was primarily considered companies within the Finnish technology industry.

Framework: projects, sensemaking and organising

Projects as temporary organisations

As Weick et al. (2005) state, there is a strong link between sensemaking and organising. Sensemaking and processing of meaning have usually been considered within the context of formal and relatively permanent organisations. Within the Scandinavian School of Project Studies, projects have been approached as *temporal organisations* (Lundin & Söderholm 1995; Packendorff 1995) and as temporal systems. The Scandinavian School of Project Studies has developed an understanding of projects, primarily by combining an organisational theory perspective with theories on entrepreneurship and industrial development, and based on in-depth empirical studies of how projects unfold in practice (Sahlin-Andersson & Söderholm 2002).

The idea of projects as temporal organisations implies distancing oneself from the traditional normative and technology-based notions of what a project 'is' and how a project should be organised. It also involves paying attention to the organising process and the way in which the project is factually organised as a shared activity with multiple participants. The viewpoint of sensemaking complements the viewpoint of a temporal organisation, both cognitively and in terms of meaning structure. From the latter point of view, organising a project involves the *construction of a meaningful environment of operation*, as well as making *meaningful observations and choices* that direct the project and its implementation.

Projects are social organisations or systems, but fairly distinct ones (Kreiner 1995). Most social organisations have a history and have developed into what they are today through continuous learning and adaptation. They have a future, and the planning horizon for their current action keeps moving ahead. For projects it is different. They are not the product of slow historical development, nor are they destined to become institutions in their own right.

Projects can be viewed as temporary organisations (Andersen 2008; Lundin & Söderholm 1995; Packendorff 1995; see also DeFillippi & Arthur 1998; Hedaa & Törnroos 1997). Changing the metaphor from 'project' to 'temporary organisation' means that traditional concepts of project management, such as planning and structure, become less important, at least as objective entities beyond the perceived reality of organisational actors (Packendorff 1995). In fact, temporary *organising processes* (cf. Weick 1979) form the object of study, i.e. the deliber-

ate social interaction occurring between people working together to accomplish a certain, inter-subjectively determined task. It is the inter-subjective *meaning* attributed to project and project environment that structures and orientates action.

Projects are usually divided into three distinct stages: development, implementation and termination. In turn, development is usually further divided into conceptualisation and planning (Packendorff 1995). Based on the traditional project management model, these stages are sequential; it is always assumed that the implementation of a project is preceded by development and succeeded by termination. Following this ideal internal project logic, the theoretical field of project management can be described in terms of planning, control and evaluation theories. With respect to projects, it is traditionally assumed that the project task is externally given, clearly defined and unambiguous (ibid.).

However, sequential order and unambiguousness is less apparent when the metaphor 'project as a temporary organisation' is applied (ibid.). A temporary organisation is incessantly enacted by individuals' continuously learning through experience and expecting further learning. The difference between the traditional sequential view and the organising processes of temporary organisations can be depicted as in Figure 1 below.

Focus \ Project metaphor	Traditional view: the project as a tool	The project as a temporary organisation
Development	Plan	Expectations
Implementation	Control	Action
Termination	Evaluation	Learning

Figure 1. Project as a tool and project as a temporary organisation (Packendorff 1995, 328).

In the development phase, a formal project organisation is provided with a plan and an organisation or network structure. Simultaneously, project team members form expectations concerning the nature of the project. Implementation involves structuring, controlling and leading the evolving organisation according to plan, while handling unforeseen eventualities that emerge during the project. Organising, i.e. the removal of equivocalities between individuals concerning their conceptions of the nature and objectives of the project, is followed by the enactment of these very conceptions. During the lifetime of the project, this expectations-action-learning loop is repeated many times. The project can thus be seen as a cyclical design process. Finally, the project is terminated. At the same time, the organising processes are discontinued as the project organisation dissolves. (Packendorff 1995.)

Sensemaking and organising

In sensemaking 'sense' refers to meaning, and 'making' is an activity of creating or constructing something. Sensemaking activities involve the construction and bracketing of cues to be interpreted, linking them to a meaningful frame of reference that summarises experiences and revising the interpretations that have thus developed as a result actions, interactions and their consequences (Weick 1995).

Sensemaking activities refer to the means by which intentional agents faced with equivocality seek to 'structure the unknown' (Allard-Poesi 2005; Brown & Jones 2000). Sensemaking is a type of social doing: any reflective act originates in a context where some projects are envisioned, others are underway and still others have just been completed (Allard-Poesi 2005; Weick 1995, 26).

Weick (1995; Weick et al. 2005) stresses seven dimensions of the sensemaking process: the social and communicative aspects of sensemaking; that sensemaking is grounded on identity; that it is a mixture of retrospect and prospect, focused on and by extracted cues, ongoing, driven by plausibility rather than accuracy, and that it is enactive of sensible environments. Sensemaking and the organisational process constitute one another (Weick et al. 2005).

Representatives of the Scandinavian School of Project Studies (Lundin & Söderholm 1995; Packendorff 1995) have researched projects as temporal organisations, separate from permanent organisations and decision-making systems. Projects or a project can also be approached in the manner of Weick (1979), by emphasising their temporal (processual) and cognitive aspects. In other words,

the evolution of projects, or an individual project, can also be observed and examined internally and in terms of content, i.e. as processes involving significant series of events, and the emergence and formation of meaning.

According to Weick (1979, 45), the organisational process can be thought of as a set of recipes for connecting episodes of social interaction in an orderly manner. These episodes, to be called interlocked cycles, constitute the ingredients to be made orderly by organising recipes. Three processes will be described as comprising the bulk of organising activity. These are *enactment* (bracketing a portion of the stream of experience for further attention), *selection* (imposing a finite set of interpretations on the bracketed portion), and *retention* (storage of interpreted segments for future application). These three processes can be connected using four causal links.

When Packendorff's (1995) concept of a project as a temporary organisation and Weick's cognitive viewpoint of sensemaking and significance are linked, it is possible to create a three-level view of project organising and formation (Figure 2).

Project metaphor / Focus	Traditional view: the project as a tool	The project as a temporary organisation (activity system)	The project as a cognitive system (sensemaking)
Development	Plan	Expectations	Enactment
Implementation	Control	Action	Selection
Termination	Evaluation	Learning	Retention

Figure 2. Project as a tool, as a temporary organisation and as a cognitive system.

The focus of this article is on the cognitive, reflective and sensemaking approaches to the evolution and development of the OpenInno project.

Evolution of the project idea and enactment of the operating environment

In retrospect, we can say that certain key observations of the open source movement were the original drivers of the OpenInno project. In early 2006, the project's core team was involved in a small-scale development project on opportunities for utilising open source software (OSS). The other project participant was a start-up company of three people, focusing on the utilisation of open source solutions. During the early days of the company, the researchers assisted in the conceptualisation and formulation of its business strategy. As part of the same mini-project, the leader of the Finnish Centre for Open Source Solutions (COSS) was interviewed on various questions related to the open source phenomenon. At this point it became evident that the open source model can open up various new opportunities.

In the autumn of 2006, researchers from the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT), the Forum for Intelligent Machines (FIMA) and COSS brainstormed various project ideas. Discussions with the leader of COSS had indicated that several large corporations (such as Nokia and IBM) already make significant use of solutions provided by the open source movement in their own products. These discussions also brought up the fact that the operational logic of these corporations (managed, controlled and scheduled product development) differs markedly from that of the open source movement, which is mainly based on self-organisation and voluntary, anonymous developers.

As such, questions related to open source, the open source movement or abstract 'boundary problems' did not provide a meaningful orientation, idea or thought model that could be developed into a concrete research and development project. However, in one of our meetings, discussions led to the idea that 'open innovation' refers to a social movement and change process with a broader scope than that of open source-based software development. An example of this is the peer-to-peer-based development of an inexpensive malaria drug (Vadén forthcoming). Through this line of thinking, the essential guiding idea that was to shape the entire project emerged, i.e. the idea that 'open innovation' can be used as a *general model of thought that can also be generalised*. In early 2007, the verbal form of the term 'open innovation', i.e. innovating openly, became used.

Discussions during the preparatory phase also highlighted the fact that the researchers from the Tampere University Hypermedia Laboratory have in-depth knowhow of both the open source movement and solution options related to the utilisation of social media. This line of thinking led us to the idea of involving

the Hypermedia Laboratory in the preparation of the project. The researchers of the Technical Research Centre of Finland had previously lacked such contacts.

The concept of 'open innovation' during the planning phase of the learning network project

One of the key ideas on which project planning was based was 'open innovation' as an innovation model offering qualitatively new opportunities and prospects for innovation. Open source developer communities have been one of the central social forces of this new innovation model. It was assumed that practices and forms of open innovation continue to expand and grow in variety. Open innovation was therefore viewed as a phenomenon and movement of broader scope than mere software development. In business and other development work, utilising blogs and wikis, i.e. sites that can be collectively modified, is all part of this process. On a general level, the project plan also referred to Henry Chesbrough's (2003) concept of company-centric open innovation.

> *"The open innovation movement and its practices not only deal with creating and utilising new technological solutions: they also promote social innovation, its dissemination and adoption. This is a question of both technological solutions and new types of operational logic, based on a new form of horizontal cooperation. The open innovation movement and its underlying assumptions deal with the combination of technological and social innovations. From the viewpoint of a traditional company, this means that, based on a new kind of openness, new operational models and practices both open up space for new opportunities and pose new challenges in terms of (un)learning for traditional hierarchic practices that follow the logic of a 'closed system' (Thompson 1974)" (Koivisto 2006).*

The idea of open innovation was therefore deemed a new kind of combination of technological and social innovations (a new way of doing and developing). Implementation of the learning network project was also approached as a combination of technical (web-based platform) and social (for example, new social connections) solutions. Figure 3 presents the project as outlined in the planning phase.

According to the planned model, the project would consists of a number of workshops, complemented by the web-based platform and infrastructure enabling shared development activities between workshops. Due to its social and technical dimensions, the project could also be described as a socio-technical (cf. Benders et al. 1995) development project.
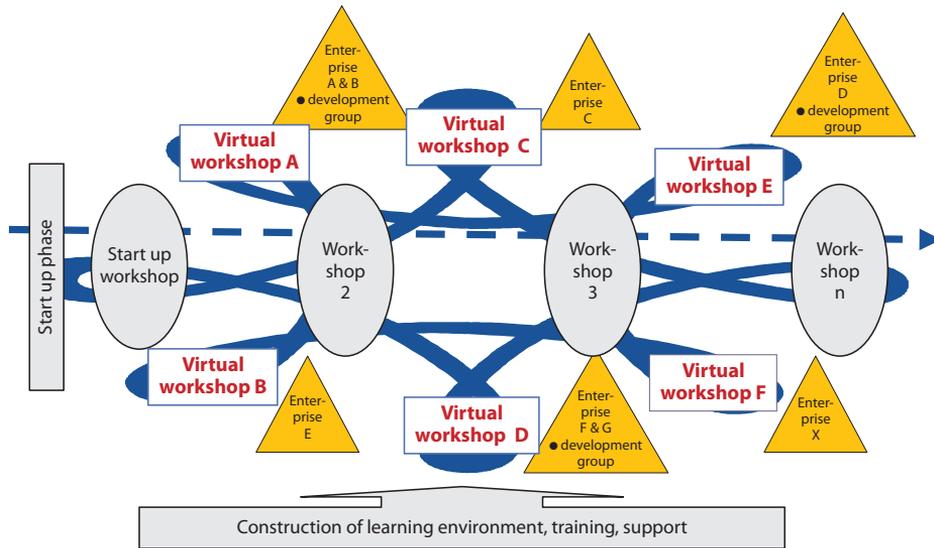
Figure 3. Planned model for the project.

Supposed nature of the network and expected role of participants in the project

With respect to the participants and companies involved, the project was perceived as open and aimed at promoting the activation and involvement of a continuously growing group of participants. There were no preset restrictions on participating companies. During the project, the aim was to expand the circle of participating companies and individuals.

In the planning phase, the project was described as a learning network project based on shared learning for OSS solution providers, intermediary organisations (the Finnish Centre for Open Source Solutions, the Intelligent Machines competence cluster) and researchers (Technical Research Centre of Finland, the Hypermedia Laboratory). In line with this model of thought, companies from the technology industry and, specifically, the Intelligent Machines competence cluster, are the actual utilisers of solutions based on open source code and open innovation. The intention was to recruit companies, as active participants in the project, from the Intelligent Machines competence cluster. 'Intelligent machines' refer to machines and equipment systems for which information technology, electronics, software and data communications generate significant added value.

The Hermia Science Park was to act as the link between the Forum for Intelligent Machines and the companies within the competence cluster. COSS is a

forum supporting the companies' recruitment, the learning network project and the learning results. Researchers from the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and the Tampere University Hypermedia Laboratory are the project facilitators, supporting the participants' mutual learning and communication as well as the adoption of various forms of open innovation. VTT was responsible for coordinating the learning network project.

Assumptions about the key challenges to learning

Learning challenges related to open innovation were viewed crossing the boundaries between traditional technology companies and OSS communities. The key challenge and goal of the project was to gather experiences and knowledge on the nature of these boundary problems and their possible solutions.

"In practice, many traditional technology companies base their operations mainly on the 'closed system logic' of hierarchic governance and control, and on the utilisation of closed technology solutions and practices. The more progressive companies within the technology industry and the field of information technology have already understood the considerable potential OSS solutions bring to R&D. Problems that arise are related, for example, to the fact that the operational logic and dynamics of an OSS community, based on open innovation, differ markedly from the logic of traditional governance, management and control (i.e. questions of quality and delivery schedule etc.) applied by more traditional companies in their R&D projects. Utilisation of OSS solutions is difficult to combine with 'rationally' managed and controlled R&D projects" (Koivisto 2006).

"From the perspective of traditional technology companies, a key learning challenge arises from global open source communities being self-managed by cultural values, interests and principles that differ significantly from the principles, commitments and practices that govern traditional market transactions. According to Demil and Lecocq (2006), open source projects are in the process of creating a new, 'bazaar governance' model that guides cooperation relationships and is separate from the markets, hierarchies or networks. From the viewpoint of a traditional company, the key learning challenges here include how to motivate OSS communities and ensure their commitment to cooperation, how various questions of patents, copyright and licensing can be resolved, how reliable and competent OSS communities can be identified, and how the operations, development and emergence of self-managed OSS communities can somehow be influenced etc." (Koivisto 2006).

Another central learning challenge and target was gather participants' experiences and knowledge of how open innovation practices – and learning to learn – can be supported by, for example, net blogs and other social media that promote two-way interaction and open innovation.

> *"Net blogs can be used to support the development, distribution and adoption of new, open source code solutions for mechanical engineering and the technology industry. Regardless of whether or not they utilise OSS solutions in their own products, companies can also make use of net blogs on a global scale at their customer interface. One shared learning challenge is to recognise and be aware of the various opportunities provided by open innovation on a sufficiently wide scale. In this respect, technology companies, intermediary organisations and researchers all still have a lot to learn" (Koivisto 2006).*

A third identified challenge and target was to accrue in-depth knowledge and understanding of how the methods and practices of open innovation could be utilised in the 'democratisation' (Von Hippel 2005) of innovation activities and the improvement of working life functionality and quality.

Implementation – action and selection

When the project began in March 2007, the domains openinno.fi and openinno. net were registered. In the meetings held after mid-March, VTT researchers and the representatives of the FIMA outlined and innovated solutions that would give direction to the project's concrete implementation.

During these meetings, the idea emerged that the project's aim should be to create a support system facilitating communication, alongside net-based tools for three independent but, complementary company forums. In other words, the idea of open innovation was connected and anchored to the operations of three existing company forums. In practice, the original model (Figure 3) became concrete, evolving during discussions into the idea of three open innovation tracks, or application areas, complementing each other in terms of their content.

1. The first track was described as a product-oriented application area. The owner of the application area would have been the Forum for Intelligent Machines (http://www.hermia.fi/fima/), i.e. FIMA. FIMA is partly publicly funded cooperation forum with the goal of promoting the competitiveness of Finnish companies from the mobile work machines cluster, and steering the industry's cutting edge research and product development in line with the needs of the companies.

2. The second track was described as an application area with an orientation towards production technology. The owner of the application area would have been the Factory of the Future, or FOF (http://www.fof.fi). FOF is a voluntary network of actors, which will supply customer benefits for the manufacturing industry through comprehensive development projects.

3. The third track was described as a service-oriented application area. The owner of the application area would have been the BestServ Forum (http://www.bestserv.fi/). BestServ Forum is a research and development forum for the industrial service business. The foundations of this forum lie in the BestServ feasibility study concerning the opportunities the service business presents to Finnish industry. BestServ Forum is mainly intended to operate as a knowledge sharing and learning network for exchanging knowledge and experiences between industry and research.

Although the participants supported the idea of linking the learning network project to the operations of the three corporate forums, in practice the project did not progress in line with this plan. During the project, virtual platforms (http://besterv.openinno.fi; http://fima.openinno.fi) were created for the forums, but in the end their content development and active interaction did not move onward. The needs and content creation opportunities of both FIMA and the BestServ forum were discussed continuously during the project, in particular at meetings of the steering group.

Towards the end of March 2007, the first company visits were arranged with the companies formally committed to the project (CC Systems, Wapice, Plenware). All of the interviewed companies operate at the interface of open source communities and the metal and engineering industries, providing their customers with both software and the related services. Despite their links to the open source movement, these software companies were fairly 'closed' in their operations and unwilling to discuss their own development needs or targets, or their open innovation practices.

Platform conceptualisation and development

Even in the early phases of the project, the idea of deploying and utilising a web-based platform that supports horizontal innovation was viewed as a central target and media of the project. Based on the work done, the concept of a web-based platform supporting horizontal cooperation and two-way interaction began

to crystallise. The development needs of the platform and the features which set it apart from more traditional models were described as follows:

"Today, a significant share of innovation and development activities take place in the horizontal, distributed networks shared by companies, customers, researchers and developers. In principle, the challenges and problems of distributed, horizontal cooperation (distance, need for fast information exchange) can be compensated for by new information technology solutions. Here, the problem mainly lies in the way that static web pages, content management systems, centralised document management systems or e-mail systems used for sending individual messages do not sufficiently support the interactive, real-time collection and dissemination of user, expert and experience-related information within a distributed network. In other words, there is a need for new kinds of solutions and services that support interactive development work, communication and the exchange of experiences within distributed networks" (Koivisto 2006).

"A networked innovation model needs to be supported by new kinds of tools, platforms and media that promote horizontal cooperation, idea collection and information management. E-mail systems as well as closed, hierarchically managed document management systems will of course still be needed. In parallel, however, there is a distinct need for web-based tools that support dynamic interaction, horizontal cooperation, self-organising and peer networks" (Koivisto 2006).

Planning meetings, arranged in the spring of 2007 amongst the core participants (FIMA, COSS, Hypermedia Laboratory, VTT), defined the criteria for new types of working platforms. In their final form, the criteria were as follows:

- the platform is based on open source software
- the platform can be used and modified with a web browser in a simultaneous and decentralised manner, regardless of geographical location, for example
- user access rights can be managed in multiple ways and on many levels (open wiki, public wiki, semi-public wiki, group wiki)
- the software is reliable and fast
- the system is intuitive and easy for the end-users to use (graphic user interface, wysiwyg features)
- supplementary files, images and multimedia can be attached and integrated to the platform

- based on the same platform, 'virtual workspaces' can be created, copied and replicated for the use of various user communities (expendability – benefits of scale – wiki farm)
- the platforms can be modified user-friendly and user-specifically
- the new tool and media combine wiki and blog features, i.e. become a 'bliki'.

The requirement specification was based on a vision and model of a new kind of working platform. During the project, the platform and media were named a 'Virtual Workshop' (Figure 4).
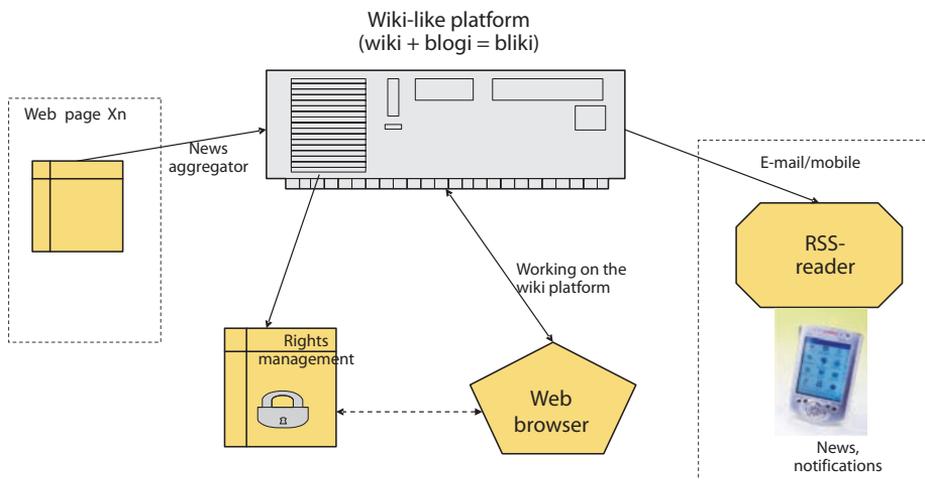
Figure 4. Virtual workshop.

Early on in the project, the need to resolve the challenge of choosing a concrete platform was faced, as well as the question of how independently the platform's development and tailoring would be suitable to execute. The basic options were as follows: a) to utilise a platform provided by an existing service provider (for example Socialtext), or b) to build a platform independent of service providers, running on its own server. After careful consideration, the latter option was chosen. Consequently, a number of new challenges were faced. Firstly, someone who could set up all the required software components on the server was needed to recruit. Secondly, the project would need a server of its own. Thirdly, connections through the VTT firewall would have to be created to ensure external connectivity. Fourthly, all this would have to be implemented in a way that would reliably serve future users.

The comparison of Open Source software programs usable as wiki platforms took place in the spring of 2007. In the comparison and selection phase, the abovementioned criteria were used, as well as the wikimatrix (http://www.wiki-matrix.org) and the experience-based testing of selected wiki platforms.

Within a couple of months of the project's initiation and the implementation of the open, web-based working platforms, it became apparent that the idea of mobilising participating companies to act as content providers was unlikely to succeed. The project will not progress if we await the activation of company participants. This leads to the idea of offering the web-based platform to national and international development projects coordinated by the VTT, involving various, predominantly researcher participants: these projects included the BioAct project, the ExpeShare research consortium, and SolWiki for the method development of cell factories. The core idea was to offer the platform to horizontal development projects, while promoting the utilisation of the platform through the researchers, using the so-called 'lead user' method. In terms of the deployment of the platform, this approach proved very fruitful.

Interim project evaluation – selection and retention

The targets, focus and core idea of the project took shape both through the problems encountered (the 'slowness' of the company forums) and the achievements realised (developed platform). Halfway through, we noted that the project's targets and key idea had become concrete and crystallised in many ways (interim report). At this point, the ideas of 'community-based' and horizontal networking, as well as the idea of an actor-network approach (Callon, Latour), had become more central to the project than initially assumed. One explanation for this was apparent frustration at the slowness of various 'hierarchies' (companies) and the ponderous pace of learning cycles within hierarchic company forums. The project's specific target area crystallised to include the companies' and organisations' internal and external, informal and horizontal development and learning networks.

"Both in the technology industry and with broader scope, the purpose of the open innovation learning network project is to support mutual learning, interaction and open, innovative development work through horizontal developer networks and communities. The project has the objective of supporting the deployment of new, open source-based web 2.0 solutions and their utilisation in learning and innovation networks, alongside open innovation development work. Here, we are dealing with a community-based learning network that supports expansive learning. By community-based, we mean that the project

participants come from various development networks and communities"
(Koivisto 2006).

"To a large extent, the construction and expansion of open innovation learning
networks has been based on applying and utilising the models introduced by
Callon and Latour's actor-network theory (Akrich et al. 1986; Callon 1986;
1992) and innovation research (Lundvall 1985; Rothwell 1992). In practice,
applying the actor-network model has involved the project simultaneously (i)
building an actor-network with existing capability to design, test and imple-
ment new types of open source-based platforms and media, and (ii) seeking,
designing and building solutions, platforms and tools that serve decentralised
networks" (Koivisto 2006).

Lessons learned so far

"During the project's early phases, one of the key learning experiences was
the realisation that the idea of open innovation is difficult to study and apply
at practical level, if the starting point is at the level, and on the terms of,
individual companies" (interim report).

Learning experiences gathered during the project supported the interpretation
stating that, in essence, the open innovation model is a model for community-
based development work (cf. Lee & Cole 2003). The natural focal point is not an
individual company, but a developer community or communities comprising an
array of companies and heterogeneous actors. At internal project meetings, the
OpenInno project was characterised as a '*community-based*' learning network
project. New digital media play an essential role in open innovation in general.
Such media are not only typical of the open source movement. Altogether, open
innovation is inclusive based on decentralised networks. For such networks to
function appropriately, they require well-defined targets and a shared vision, cre-
ated through interaction, of the network's meaning to its various actors (Valkokari
2009).

Halfway through the project, Callon and Latour's actor-network theory (e.g.
Callon 1986) was identified as an applicable functional heuristic model and
approach. The development and deployment of technological innovations is
based on the simultaneous weaving of technology and actor networks. Various
kinds of learning were deemed essential to the development work and innova-
tion process: these included learning by doing, learning by and through using,
learning through interaction, and learning based on the expansion of the actor-
network.

Stabilisation phase

In the autumn of 2007, after the Xwiki farm was deployed, demand for and the deployment of working platforms continued to expand until the end of the project. In all, the project created platforms for a total of 15 horizontal development networks and forums. This deployment was also supported with induction materials and personalised briefings arranged for the projects' key personnel. In the spring of 2009, a specific user meeting was arranged for key users of wiki. At this event, questions related to improving the platform's features, for example, were considered.

The project had three wiki pages for its own use: an open wiki page in English that introduced the project, an open wiki page in Finnish, and a restricted page for technical maintenance and technology-related information exchange purposes ('how to?'). The open page in Finnish was used to collect information on the project, project meetings and the network. The page (http://net.openinno.fi) as also used to collect working papers and make them available to the participants.

Through the English page, a connection was established with Spanish researchers: the researchers working at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain noticed that the OpenInno project utilised the same wiki software they themselves were using. On this basis, they requested Tapio Koivisto to visit them at the University of Santiago de Compostela and to take part in the final evaluation of their project. With Xwiki as its working platform, the project focussed on surveying Mexican wetlands in need of conservation.

Vitantonio Messa, the project's COSS expert, established connections with the key figures of the Xwiki community in Paris. Vito Messa was profiled as an active participant in the Xwiki community. Opportunities for deeper cooperation were also probed during the project.

In the planning phase, companies from FIMA were deemed the project's key target group. Once the project was underway, for a while the notion predominated that the project's target group consisted of the group of companies comprising FIMA, BestServ and Factory of the Future. However, the project moved ahead much slower than planned with respect to all of these companies. In practice, the key user group of the platform developed turned out to consist of the horizontal development projects coordinated by Finnish and European researchers. Additionally, three corporate cases, independent of the abovementioned company forums, were initiated. The first company to connect to the project provides global technical documentation services; the second company operates in healthcare services, and the third provides rehabilitation services adjacent to a spa.

Discussion – making sense of open innovation

Based on the vision of the Scandinavian School for Project Studies and the analysis of Packendorff (1995), the progress of the project's main three phases has been summarised in Table 1, from the viewpoints of both project activity and learning (Figure 1). The 'Project as a tool' viewpoint summarises how the project idea has been transformed into concrete actions, what these concrete actions are, and how the project has been fitted into its concrete framework and the surrounding realities. The 'Project as a temporary organisation' analysis combines the ideas and learning experiences that oriented the project, that were worked on and that gave direction to the project during the various phases of its implementation; these include the obstacles, dead ends and problems encountered that influenced the project's progress and direction.

Although, naturally, there has been progress through an iterative process, the process phases can be further connected to the phases of sensemaking, as presented by Weick (1995). Here, what is to be studied and reflected is, in fact, a set of temporary *organising processes* (cf. Weick 1979), i.e. the deliberate social interaction occurring between people working together to accomplish a certain, inter-subjectively determined task. It is the inter-subjective *meaning* attributed to the project and project environment that structures and orientates action. Accordingly, in this chapter we have reviewed the OpenInno learning network as a group of processes, involving internally and content-specifically significant series of events, as well as the organisation of conceptual contents.

In the planning phase of the project, the assumption was made that many traditional technology companies base their operations on the 'closed system logic' of hierarchic governance and control (Thompson 1967), and on the utilisation of closed technology solutions and practices. Nevertheless, the idea that we are currently experiencing a (global) change from the logic of 'closed systems' towards more open development models remained as a hidden assumption. The fact that several large IT and technology industry companies utilise open source solutions (instrumentally) in their own product development work was seen as a sign of this ongoing change.

Traditional thought models based on activity analysis assumed that a learning network project can function, at least on a small scale, as a facilitator for the change towards 'open innovation'. The activities of facilitator were connected to the idea of solving boundary problems between traditional companies and the open source movement, and horizontal development networks in general. The starting point was the idea that the operational logic and dynamic of OSS com-

Table 1. Phases of the OpenInno learning network project.

	Evolution of the project idea and enactment of the operating environment	Project implementation – action and selection	Estimate of project completion – selection and retention
Schedule	2006–2007	2007–2009	2009–2010
Project as a tool Projectising, project implementation, consolidation of interests, concrete doing, learning by doing (actions)	Establishment and definition of the working platform Idea of the three tracks serving corporate forums (FIMA, BestServ, FOF) Recruitment of IT specialist, purchase of own server	Collaboration and preparation of joint projects with companies (XWiki platform) Briefing/training of the platform users Wikis used by the companies materials Challenges of streamlining various interests, schedules, resources etc.	Expansion of projects using Xwiki Initiation and implementation of publishing work
Project as a temporary (learning) organisation World of concepts and ideas, their evolution and rumination, muddling through experiences, realities, dead ends	The world of open source as a starting point Assumption of open innovation as a thought model that can be generalised v. observations of the closed operations of the companies committed to the project Problem of involving and mobilising the content creators	The actor-network theory (ANT) as an orienting thought model (the story of the hero who creates a social network and a technical innovation) Project implementation and the expectations of the competence cluster participants do not match Joint project with the documentation company does not move forward	The concept of open innovation as an unclear thought model, in need of relativisation The creation of the concepts 'networked innovation', 'networks of creation', 'strategising open innovation' further define the vision of the various forms and levels of open innovation
	ENACTMENT	SELECTION	RETENTION

munities, built on the use of open source code, differ markedly from the logic of management, governance and control applied by traditional companies in their product development projects.

As a horizontal, open source-type learning and development network, the project proceeded fairly well. From what was virtually a clean slate, it developed the work platform concept while using the network's own resources to build a wiki farm comprising several independent platforms. During the project, the platform was deployed by roughly a dozen horizontal development projects. In early 2010, approximately 800 users had registered with the Wiki farm. Problems typically arose during the time when the network needed to be in contact with various types of hierarchies.

Experiences gathered during the project support the perception of companies and organisations as operationally closed systems, particularly in terms of their decision-making processes (Luhmann 1995; 2000; Seidl & Becker 2005). This closed and the related, inertial nature (cf. Hannan & Freeman 1984) of the organisations was encountered in various phases of the project. Not only companies, but also various formally organised development forums and organisations can constitute systems which open up to alternative solutions relatively slowly. In specific terms, the problems become concrete when formal decisions or commitments are required, for example when new types of platforms need to be tested.

A key learning experience of the project was the observation that, as systems, the companies were just as 'closed' as before. There is no evidence of a significant, qualitative change in terms of openness. Changes are, however, underway within the operating environment of the companies, leading to a greater emphasis on selective, strategic networking (cf. Laursen & Salter 2006; Valkokari 2009) between the companies and various actors. The increased complexity of products and services, increased pressure on timeliness and schedules, and increased differentiation in the division of labour that has led to the differentiation of knowhow, are all key global change factors that highlight the significance of networking (Koivisto forthcoming b). Because openness and the issues at which openness is directed take many forms, companies' openness towards this kind of cooperation is relative both as such and as a concept (Valkokari et al. 2009). Correspondingly, Chesbrough's open innovation model (Chesbrough 2003) fundamentally deals with a misleadingly binary (absolutely closed v. absolutely open product development) model of opposites (see Koivisto forthcoming a).

Companies are actually dealing with the various models of *selective networking*. This refers to models of shared development that *complement* the company's core competences and knowhow. Typically, sources of complementary knowledge include (key) customers, suppliers, research institutions – and in many cases, the various open source communities. For this kind of shared development to succeed, it is essential that a company's and its partners' knowhow, interests and business goals are well understood. Based on such understanding, participants can make a conscious choice between the various models of joint development and networking, while also analysing which issues are open, how open they are, and to whom they are opened.

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OpenInno – Open Innovation Learning Network

The target of the OpenInno project was to generate experiences and knowledge on the idea, forms and methods of open innovation. A second target was to support the adoption, utilisation and dissemination of open innovation methods and practices through networking, new types of net-based media that boost horizontal collaboration and interaction.

The OpenInno project was a learning network project based on shared learning for open source software (OSS) solution providers, intermediary organisations (the Finnish Centre for Open Source Solutions, the Intelligent Machines competence cluster) and researchers (Technical Research Centre of Finland, the Hypermedia Laboratory). In line with this model of thought, companies from the technology industry and, specifically, the Intelligent Machines competence cluster, are the actual utilisers of solutions based on open source code and open innovation. The intention was to recruit companies, as active participants in the project, from the Intelligent Machines competence cluster.

The Hermia Science Park was to act as the link between the Forum for Intelligent Machines and the companies within the competence cluster. The

Finnish Centre for Open Source Solutions (COSS) is a forum supporting the companies' recruitment, the learning network project and the learning results. Researchers from the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and the Tampere University Hypermedia Laboratory were the project facilitators, supporting the participants' mutual learning and communication as well as the adoption of various forms of open innovation. VTT was responsible for coordinating the learning network project.
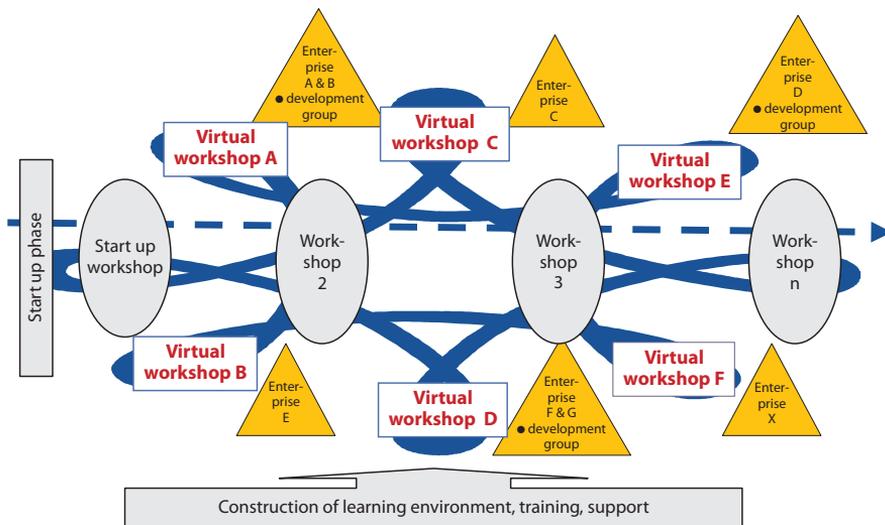
The project consisted of a number of workshops, complemented by the web-based platform and infrastructure enabling shared development activities between workshops. Due to its social and technical dimensions, the project could also be described as a socio-technical development project.

Conceptualising practices as a mediator for learning and development

Tarja Kantola, Sirpa Lassila and Anu Sipilä

This article describes how conceptualising work became an essential part of project activity in the Regional Learning Network, by providing the research and development work with a posture and theoretical framework. In Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, the tradition of long-term research and regional development remains embryonic: for this reason, conceptualisation is of particular significance to practice-oriented development work, which is primarily conducted in cooperation with micro enterprises. This article considers the kinds of concepts we have used and how these concepts have functioned as mediators for learning and development.

Keywords: boundary, co-configuration, conceptualising, identity, multivoicedness, practice-based learning, situated learning.

The purpose of the *Regional Learning Network for Tourism Business OVE (2004–2008)* has been to build and combine the developmental expertise of the involved participants, while creating and experimenting with new kinds of learning spaces.[1] This work has aimed at generating new, innovative solutions for small and medium-sized companies in the region of Itä-Uusimaa (Eastern Uusimaa), as well as learning from joint forms of developmental and educational activity between R&D units, local entrepreneurs, and the Porvoo unit of HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences. One of the substantial challenges in this network has involved augmenting the developmental needs of a number of small tourism companies and organisations in the region with the educational and developmental practices of the local university of applied sciences. This challenge has been met by creating new, long-term possibilities for research, development and educational cooperation. Later, during the follow-up activities, the developmental activity and the related practices were further developed. (e.g. Kantola et al. 2005; 2006a.)

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1   Although this article was jointly written by three researcher-developers, it is worth noting that the articles created under the OVE project and used here as source material were written by various combinations of OVE team members, including Hans Mäntylä, Anne Äyväri, Sisko Kalliokoski, Jarmo Ritalahti and Tuovi Soisalon-Soininen.

The concepts identified and reconstructed during the project served as a basis and resources for the new activities. Conceptualising and developing practices within the subprojects have proven at least as essential as the practices and concrete results of the activity in general. The process of constructing the shared and virtual learning forum (www.osaamisfoorumi.fi) was analysed using the concepts of *co-configuration* and *multivoicedness* (Kantola et al. 2006a; 2006b). Whereas the other subprojects, SYMBIO (a new kind of learning environment aiming at developing micro and small enterprises), VIVA (a project for developing the Old Porvoo area) and the Insightful Encounters Conference (combining the different activities of the Learning Network and developing new conference practices) were based on multivoiced co-configuration right from the beginning. Hence, the previous conceptualising work became an essential resource for further activity. (Kantola et al. 2007; 2011; Lassila et al. 2007.) The objects of the latest conceptualising work were the *shared learning space* (Lassila et al. 2007; Lassila & Sipilä 2009) and *mediating/mediator* (Kantola et al. 2008b; 2011) themes, all of which included a mediating *identity perspective* (Kantola et al. 2008b; Rauvanto 2009).

From a *practice-based* perspective on *learning* (Gherardi & Nicolini 2003), working, learning and innovating are closely bound up with each other, both within the work setting and local practices, and within the culture of those practices. Accordingly, it would not be sensible to separate 'working', 'learning' and 'innovating' as distinct activities (Brown & Duguid 1991; cf. Contu & Willmott 2003). Learning is rather to be understood as something that is 'an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991) which involves the construction of identities that differ from being just a receiver (entrepreneur or student) or a distributor (researcher, teacher or consultant) of predetermined knowledge in a consulting setting. Individuals are supposed to learn by taking part in certain practices or in the Learning Network in various ways: by observing and imitating others within the network or a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991), and by experimenting with, adapting and developing identities, while actively taking part in a certain practice. (ibid.; Handley et al. 2005; Ibarra 1999.)

This article is a meta-article based on the written materials created during the OVE project. Its purpose is to bring the operations of our Learning Network to the fore, not only as a practical regional development effort, but also as an attempt to create conceptual definitions shared by the various participants and forming the basis of everyday development work.

The article examines conceptualisation through the central subprojects and subprocesses of the OVE project. Each subproject is reviewed through the following structure: first, the inception of the activities is examined, followed by the targets,

contents and current status of operations. Finally, conceptualisation and its significance as an integral part of the project are examined. The Learning Forum and SYMBIO remain ongoing. The Encounters Conference will be realised the second time in 2011, as well.

Virtual learning forum as multivoiced co-configuration

The virtual learning forum (www.osaamisfoorumi.fi) was developed in cooperation with local tourism companies. The initial idea for a virtual learning platform can be traced to interviews of 15 tourism enterprises at the very beginning of the Learning Network project. Almost all of the interviewees wanted the Learning Network to coordinate and conduct research and development work in the field of tourism. (Kantola et al. 2006a, 110–111.)

Planning for the virtual learning platform began in April 2005 and was tested in workshops by 18 tourism companies. The site was opened to users on 14th February 2006. Originally, the platform was intended to serve as an information sharing forum which would help tourism entrepreneurs to develop their business. Meanwhile, the virtual learning forum aimed to offer participants a chance to get to know each other and deepen their cooperation: this was especially appreciated by the new tourism entrepreneurs in the region. At the beginning, the forum was mainly just a channel for information sharing, but during the creation process the platform's emphasis moved towards dialogue and learning. There was also a need for forums that would enable dialogue between tourism companies and cultural organisations. (e.g., Kantola et al. 2006a.)

Also, synergy and dialogue were needed between many different development projects related to the tourism business in the region. HAAGA-HELIA's role in tourism research was to process and gather existing information as well as creating forums in which this information would be easily available to regional tourism companies and other organisations.

The object of the Learning Network was seen as evolving through a multivoiced discourse. The research and development work of our Learning Network played an important role in identifying and making visible the developmental tensions and contradictions related to the region's tourism business. A huge challenge for the Learning Network lay in discerning a qualitatively new kind of common object for regional cooperation and development work in the tourism business area. The Learning Network was targeting long-term developmental work rather than, as before, answering only situational needs for cooperation and development. As a consequence, it was important that research and development work would

progress hand in hand in close dialogue. In the Learning Network, it was deemed necessary not only to carry out development actions but also to conceptualise the phenomena with which we were working.

The principles and ideas of *co-configuration* (Victor & Boynton 1998) played an essential role in this work. As a concept, co-configuration was viewed as being close to the concept of co-creation (e.g. Nambisan 2002; Sawhney & Prandelli 2000) used in research on innovations and product development. According to Victor and Boynton (1998), co-configuration has the following characteristics: the object of co-configuration is a product or service with a long life-cycle, which will never be finished and that can adapt to the activity of the user. In addition, 'customer intelligence' is an embedded element that requires continuous reconfiguration in a dialogue between the user, the producer and the product (Engeström 2004, 80–82).

In the activities of the Learning Network, promoting open dialogue among actors and projects in tourism has proven to be one of the essential challenges in the area. As a matter of fact, enhancing *multivoicedness* has been one of the main goals of the Learning Network for Tourism Business in Itä-Uusimaa, as well as being a key research object. At a later stage, a careful study of this dialogue, using voice analysis methods, became necessary. It was essential to understand what and whose voices were actually heard, and how the learning forums might become more dialogical. In the long run, an analysis of whose voice would be listened to, the context in which this would happen, and what the listening would mean for regional development, proved interesting. Studying and developing the learning forums became the core task of the Learning Network throughout the project.

The role of the Learning Network was to foreground the issue of how the regional and developmental challenges were understood and conceptualised within the different discussion forums. A preliminary hypothesis deemed these conceptualisations to contain essential and contradictory elements related to the regional zone of proximal development. *The learning region* was conceptualised as one that would become more conscious of its regional characteristics, and the contradictions within them, thus forming a basis for regional development work.

In the Learning Network, rendering tensions shared and visible was viewed as a challenge. Creating multivoiced forums was viewed as essential, in which the different voices could participate in the following processes: identifying a new kind of common object for regional cooperation; recognising and making tensions and challenges within the region more visible; and making choices about how to progress within the regional zone of proximal development.

An important question was that of empowerment; how the micro firms might affect and participate more in the region's developmental work in the future, while constructing a learning region with individuals as subjects, as well as in active roles and possibly as coordinators of subprojects.

The role of the virtual learning forum in the development work

Since the end of the Learning network project, the learning forum has been developed further as part of HAAGA-HELIA's other project activities. The virtual learning forum was expanded to serve all industries, this being considered an important part of creating networking opportunities for companies outside as well as inside the tourism industry.

Creative industries were strongly involved in the further development work undertaken for the virtual learning platform. The visual layout was renewed and the name of the site changed, the site's core idea being defined as follows:

> *The learning forum is a partner platform, which enables you to network, pass on and search for information regardless of the industry. It offers possibilities for multivoiced regional development and insightful encounters. The content is created by its users: companies, associations, regional developers and educational institutions in the region of Itä-Uusimaa. (http://www. osaamisfoorumi.fi/)*

Regional project actors viewed the virtual learning forum as a tool which helps developers to find each other and identify the ties between different projects. The core idea of the site, which enables co-configuration, has reached a new level. Even if the development organisations are offering competing services, they still consider cooperation within the virtual learning network as an opportunity that benefits all actors. The participants are therefore willing to share knowledge and competences.

The research conducted during the planning process has been an important asset and tool in further development work. In particular, multivoicedness and co-configuration have been important concepts throughout the Learning Network's activities. The virtual learning forum has functioned as a concrete tool in dialogue and co-configuration.

During the lifespan of the virtual learning forum, some of the functions have seemed latent or almost useless, before becoming critical upon a new actor or project joining the network. The office function is a good example of such a de-

velopment. A local group of entrepreneurs have begun to use the 'virtual office', which enables them to work out and develop issues together as a small team. The group also uses the office as a communication channel.

SYMBIO as situated and practice-based learning

In one of the learning network meetings, a couple of entrepreneurs complained that many national quality development programmes were planned for bigger companies and were unsuitable for smaller ones (Lassila et al. 2007). At that time, the learning network was planning its next stage and this need for research and development among small companies was answered by creating a learning environment called SYMBIO. The original idea of SYMBIO as a forum for quality development was extended when the planning process began.

SYMBIO began operating in January 2007. The aim was to develop a learning forum more reminiscent of a real working environment than a traditional school setting (e.g. Miettinen 1999). Here, the participating learners (usually termed 'students', 'teachers' and 'working life partners') would plan, develop and act together within the learning forum, with the primary purpose of learning (Lassila et al. 2007). Learning in SYMBIO was based on the following themes:

1. Developmental competence – we strive to set genuine developmental tasks based on companies' needs, while simultaneously enhancing the participants' developmental competence.
2. Research-based approach – the learning process begins with the formulation of meaningful questions and grows into a search for answers to these.
3. Learning partnership – entrepreneurs, students and advisors encounter each other as equals in SYMBIO.
4. Experimental way of working – we are exploring new modes of activity, learning and developing.

The learning process begins with the formulation of meaningful questions and grows into a search for answers. Developmental competence involves the search for genuine developmental tasks based on companies' needs, improving the participants' developmental skills. 'Learning partnership' describes our roles within the learning process. All actors – entrepreneurs, students and advisors – meet as equals in SYMBIO. We also try to develop our own practices, this having led to our experimental way of working. For students, SYMBIO offers the possibility to take control over one's own learning process and to grow into an expert by working on a real-life case.

"…This learning method forces the student to learn. In this way, the knowledge we gain is more comprehensive than when teachers explain a subject, because we really have to apply our knowledge." (Student N1, 2008)

SYMBIO operates as research and development partner in the region and functions also as a networker and contact point between working life, students and teachers. In conducting authentic research and development work, the students acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes which are needed in working life. In Figure 1, we have described SYMBIO's learning process. We try to make the learning process as transparent as possible. Students receive guidance in weekly meetings and within the virtual learning environment (Lassila & Sipilä 2009).
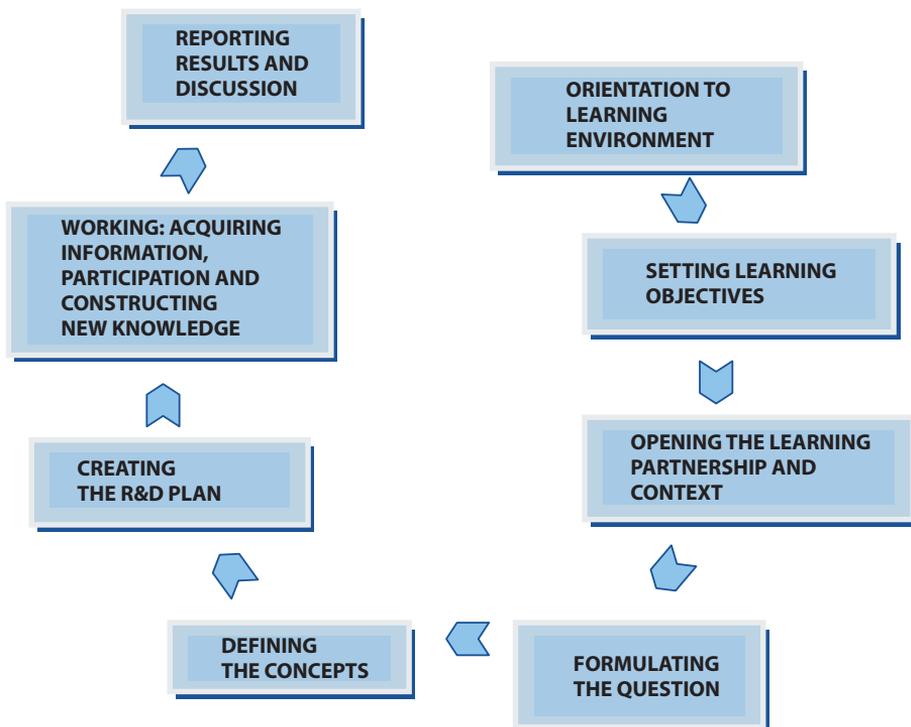
Figure 1. Learning process in SYMBIO (Lassila & Sipilä 2009).

At the beginning of the learning process, we try to create a common understanding of what SYMBIO is as a learning environment. When the student's role changes from passive receiver to active doer, frustration often results: the transition does not occur overnight. The aim of orientation is to challenge the student to contemplate his/her own learning styles and conceptions of learning.

Working life partners join the learning process at a very early stage, since the questions in hand originate in authentic problems. Research forms part of the learning process in a number of ways. The main principal is that the object of research and development is not set in advance but that we approach them as partially specifying and developing research objects, which are defined and outlined by all participants.

The first step in seeking to answer the research question is to try to explain the phenomena through various concepts. Students acquire information from multiple sources and try to construct a theoretical framework, which guides the research and development task. Research questions, concepts and development ideas are discussed in workshops. The working stage can take many forms, depending on the working life partner's needs, and can include working in the partner organisation, gathering research material, writing a research report or/and executing a project. At the final stage of the learning process, all learning partners gather to discuss the results, development suggestions and learning experiences.

When the Learning Network project formally ended in 2008, SYMBIO continued to nurture many of the good practices developed in the project. A co-configuration and action research approach have been part of normal practices ever since. One of the main reasons for SYMBIO's 'survival' and even development has been its role as part of the education function, which is the core process in HAAGA-HELIA.

Significant concepts of learning

When we started our planning and conceptualising process in SYMBIO, the *situated learning theory* (Lave & Wenger 1991; see also Handley et al. 2005) was one of the first concepts we used. An understanding of knowledge as being socially, not individually, constructed lies at the core of this theory. Learning is seen as a process of internalising concepts and values, mediated by 'significant others' and by cultural tools. Situated learning theory takes learning into the workplace context and considers learning and knowing as processes which form an integral part of everyday practice in workplace, family and other social settings. According to this perspective, the focus shifts from de-contextualised knowledge as a commodity (e.g. text books) to the accomplishment of knowing in action and in practice. Situated learning theory still plays an important role in SYMBIO.

Based on the *activity theoretical approach* (e.g. Engeström et al. 2005; Engeström & Middleton 1998) and the *model of expansive learning* (Engeström 1987; 2004), Lambert (2003a; 2003b), Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström (2003) and

Konkola et al. (2007) have created a concept of active *transfer* based on the idea that the meaningful transfer of learning takes place through interaction between collective activity systems. Transfer is understood as a process in which skills and knowledge, which will be transferred, are under active interpretation and reconstruction. Expansive learning is designed to produce change in activity and work practices. If we wish to create active transfer, the object cannot be a well-specified individual object, but must be a work activity which is subject to constant change. In traditional school-based learning activity, teachers are expected to present well formulated assignments. On the other hand, when the learning process begins with problem formulation that has arisen from work activities, the whole process becomes more complex and insecure. This is rather demanding for both students and teachers.

> *"It would have helped to define some tasks more clearly and to speed up the working process from the beginning." (Student N2, 2009)*

> *"Learning in SYMBIO differs greatly from earlier learning models and in the beginning I had difficulties in internalising that… I still have to work hard in order to internalise the SYMBIO mindset that you must learn for yourself, search for information on your own initiative and apply it in practice." (Student N3, 2009)*

One of the founding principals of SYMBIO was, and still is, the notion that individuals learn by taking part in a certain practice. Participation has taken various forms: students have worked in companies and organisations while observing various practices. They have also been the main actors and participated in different networks or have worked as action researchers. This process may be termed 'experimenting with provisional selves' (Ibarra 1999), emphasising the close relationships between the development of identities while taking an active part in certain practices. When learning in a practice-based context, the notion of 'practice' takes on the broader meaning of knowing as practice, including the understanding and adoption of norms, values and intentions relevant to both the community and the activity that we want to understand and learn. Since learning means participation in a certain social practice, it would not be sensible to separate working, learning and innovating into distinct activities.

Participation refers to a more encompassing process of becoming more or less active participants in the local travel industry and constructing appropriate identities in relation to the people working in this field (cf. Wenger 1998). Participation is, thus, not merely understood as a physical action or a passing event; it involves understanding, taking part in and subscribing, at least partially, to the social

norms and values of the learning environment. It also involves adopting appropriate behaviours and ways of presenting oneself within this emerging community of learning.

The concepts of participation and identity are closely interrelated. During the initial years of SYMBIO, the concept of identity has become more and more important.

> *"As a learning process, this has been amazing. The amount of knowledge and skills which the Winterfest project has given to me is undefined. If I try briefly to describe what I have learned, the most important issue is self reliance and understanding my own value. I have learned to trust myself as a student and as a future employee and have seen that 'specialist' is just a concept which you shouldn't respect too much." (Student N2, 2009)*

'Learning' is therefore concerned not only with developing ways of 'knowing' and practice, but also with understanding who we are and the potential we have in a certain context. A more appropriate term would be 'self-identity' (Alvesson & Willmott 2002), which may be conceptualised as a reflexively organised narrative, based on participation in competing discourses and experiences – including those relating to the workplace. In other words, identity refers to an account or narrative of who we are in a certain community, of something that is constantly changing, in a process of emergence.

VIVA as a learning space and mediator for regional development

The proposal for the subproject VIVA Porvoo-Borgå was presented by a few entrepreneurs from Old Porvoo in the spring of 2006. They had visited the virtual platform and had become interested in the OVE project. These entrepreneurs expressed the need for development work in Old Porvoo.

One of the core ideas behind VIVA lay in the joint creation and development of a shared vision, involving all of the actors concerned. The core actors in VIVA represented several organisations: the tourist office of Porvoo, five small enterprises, the Merchant Association of Old Porvoo, the Regional Council of Itä-Uusimaa and HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences. Their shared vision was perceived as a common object to be studied and developed, as well as an object of learning. Hence, the research and development topics were not formulated and defined in advance. Specific forms of cooperation were jointly negotiated and determined. (Kantola et al. 2008b.)

Cooperation and dialogue between different actors became objects of development and learning processes as such, partly because there was no tradition for such multivoiced developmental work. VIVA's development meetings took place every other week in a Café in Old Porvoo town. The idea was to keep the forum open to any new participant interested. Although the project manager outlined the agenda for the meetings, any of the participants was welcome to suggest agenda items. Afterwards, memos were available at the office at which the virtual learning platform was based (see above), for reading, commenting and discussion, to all participants. During the autumn of 2006, a vision of Old Porvoo was created in one of the VIVA meetings as a shared basis for the development work.

"Old Porvoo, versatile, built through cooperation, offering services all year round, appreciating its history, to be developed in close connection with the whole town, involved in societal discourses, living, and above all, a place where people can meet each other." (Wall paper, VIVA meeting 3 October 2006 and 30 January 2007)

Sustainable development, especially social sustainability, was an important aspect of this. The participants intended to develop Old Porvoo as a constantly evolving and learning region that respects and utilises its past and traditions. One entrepreneur set down her ideas of the vision as follows.

"The objective is to develop Old Porvoo into a historically framed experience centre with a whole range of cultural, tourism and other services. It should be a centre which, besides an aesthetic and well-maintained appearance, would work as a base for year-round business activity and an even flow of customers, and which would attract entrepreneurs, communities and enterprises into partnerships, or even sponsors who would be interested in the long-term development of the area. At the moment, you mainly find décor, gift and antique shops as well as coffee shops and restaurants in the area. Some of the shops are closed during the low season due to poor profitability. Also, the Association of the Inhabitants has been invited to meetings of VIVA to give their opinions and tell us about their interest in the development of the area. Their message lies parallel with VIVA's development work." (Written document, 13 April 2007, Entrepreneur of Old Porvoo)

One of the objectives of the VIVA project is to the gather the opinions, wishes and needs of entrepreneurs in Old Porvoo, in order to improve and ensure the future welfare of the area. Together with VIVA, the Association of Inhabitants was also planning to apply for world heritage status for Old Porvoo. (Written document, 13 April 2007, Entrepreneur of Old Porvoo)

VIVA's work mainly focused on developing cooperation methods between different actors. This represented a substantial challenge, not only due to a lack of joint cooperation practices, but also due to various tensions and contradictions between the actors. The actors found that VIVA's main objective was not to create single events to enliven Old Porvoo. Rather, it was to change joint planning practices while making such practices more visible to all of the actors involved in the process. It could be viewed as a co-configuration process, whose object was the district of Old Porvoo. The development work also entailed long-term research aimed at understanding the ideas and wishes held by entrepreneurs, inhabitants and tourists regarding the district's development. The involvement of the HAAGA-HELIA students comprised writing their theses on VIVA.

During the autumn of 2007 and the spring of 2008, VIVA and SYMBIO shared the ambitious endeavour of co-creating, planning and implementing an international conference 'Insightful Encounters – Regional Development and Practice-Based Learning.' This conference was held in the Old Porvoo restaurants. Around ten entrepreneurs, some 20 SYMBIO-students and a host of researcher-lecturers participated in the co-creation process. The process seemed to be a co-configuration process for creating a new conference model and practice suitable for the kind of little old town in question, and enabling multiple encounters. The process and the results of the co-configuration are reported and documented in the DVD Conference proceedings (http://myy.haaga-helia.fi/~tk/Insightful_Encounters/ (Kantola et al. 2008a).

At the time of writing this article, VIVA has been wound up because we (the actors) did not succeed in obtaining external financing for a further project. However, the ideas behind VIVA remain alive, since the students have been offered research topics concerning the Old Porvoo area. So far, three theses have been written, which have stimulated a discussion on the developmental challenges facing the Old Porvoo actors.

VIVA as a mediator in boundary space

The empirical context of our study, the VIVA project in Old Porvoo, has provoked manifold questions concerning establishing, constructing, flattening, and destroying the invisible boundaries that seemed to divide this small area into multiple mini-worlds. Thus, the concept of a *boundary* or rather, boundaries, was of great interest when analysing the *mediating* roles and tasks of the VIVA project and its actors (e.g. Kantola et al. 2008b; 2011). The VIVA Porvoo-Borgå project has revealed numerous invisible boundaries between different kinds of actor communities. On the other hand, we also asked ourselves whether our project was

constructing new fields and erecting new boundaries. We tried to grasp the issue of different fields of actors by reflecting on the notion of learning as becoming, and of identity as fluid and malleable. We considered the VIVA project itself as a *mediator* providing opportunities to support the identity construction process of actors.

Mediating can be viewed as acting in a *boundary space*, bringing together people, groups or contexts, and acting as a catalyst. Bringing together may imply creating a boundary space that enables joint activity between people from various communities, for example creating shared learning spaces. Mediating may also mean enabling joint activity within a community of practice; for example to be able to participate and learn the community's practices, a novice needs to be granted entry and legitimacy. In the learning context, acting as a catalyst is important, for example, in providing an incentive to learn. Joint activities and versatile spaces for interaction between newcomers and old-timers support the *identity building* processes of the learners. (See more Jyrämä & Äyväri 2007.)

When creating and experimenting with new practices within VIVA, in the context of regional development, the theoretical discussion of the articles involved in VIVA built on our understanding of *learning as becoming* (Brown & Duguid 1991; 2001; Nonaka et al. 2000; Wenger 1998; cf. Gherardi 1999), and on mediating as an enabler in knowledge creation processes (Jyrämä & Äyväri 2007; Kantola et al. 2007). Learning understood as becoming highlights the fact that learning involves acquiring identities; it involves becoming an 'insider', in our case an insider in R&D work.

In our everyday development work, we brought people together in order to create shared learning space and practices that would enable boundary space and the identification, at least to some extent, of a shared object of development. Bringing together may imply creating a boundary space that allows joint activity for people from various communities, for example creating shared learning spaces. Making various kinds of boundaries visible and studying them became highly central to our development work. Perhaps we entertained the ameliorative idea of breaking down and lowering boundaries. Interesting research questions remain, such as that of what kinds of boundaries in development work still exist in Old Porvoo. And is it true that, by rendering some boundaries visible and lower, we may be raising others or even creating new ones?

When learning and knowing are understood 'as competent participation in a practice' (Wenger 1998, 137), the following are issues of key importance. How do people become members of a learning space within a Learning Network?

What kind of community of practice might this be? And, how do the actors master the specific knowledge embedded in the various activities under this practice? (see also Gherardi 2001). In our efforts, 'learning' was concerned not only with developing new ways of 'knowing', but also with understanding who we are and the potential we have when working in VIVA. As in SYMBIO, narratives on who we are tell us something that is constantly changing and developing – identities are in a process of emergence, in a state of becoming (cf. Gherardi 1999). Furthermore, the common or shared object seems to be continuously 'running away' from us and might be understood as an *epistemic object* (Miettinen & Virkkunen 2005). Hence, development within the network means changing one's working practices by crossing boundaries and mediating between a number of differing worlds, among a loose network of co-learners.

Kreiner et al. (2006) examined boundary dynamics that are negotiated at the interface of individual and organisational identities. They introduced the identity boundary dynamics of identity intrusion, distance and balance as different manifestations of identity boundary (in)congruence, both within and between individuals and organisations. They also outline propositions that suggest boundary dynamics as a source of identity change. According to them, by using a boundary framework to consider dynamics at the edge of identities, individuals and organisations benefit by understanding how conflictual dynamics may affect desired personal and organisational outcomes. (See Kantola et al. 2008b.)

According to Kreiner et al. (2006), Hall and Richer explored boundary permeability, which refers to the degree that the facets, elements, concerns, or issues of one bounded domain are allowed to influence another bounded domain. Permeability allows certain outside influences in and keeps others out. For example, an individual may create a permeable boundary between family (one domain) and work (another domain) when he or she addresses problems and stresses at home while at work (or e.g. between enterprise and network/development activity within the VIVA project). The permeability of boundaries determines whether or not aspects of one domain are integrated or segmented with aspects of another. Impermeable boundaries reduce the integration of domains and encourage segmentation by maintaining a strong border, excluding unwanted elements. Kreiner et al. speak of impermeable boundaries as being 'strong' or 'thick' in that they preserve segmentation from other entities. Having established a framework for identity and boundaries, Kreiner et al. (ibid.) integrate these concepts within a boundary perspective for individual and organisational identities. (See Kantola et al. 2008b.)

Since both individuals and organisations have multiple identities, it is reasonable to assume that interaction between multiple aspects of identity (individual

and organisational) will also occur between levels. Congruent or interdependent aspects of individual identity may be integrated with aspects of organisational identity at the person-organisation boundary, while other aspects may be differentiated and/or excluded due to incongruence. Thus, the inter-identity boundary between individual and organisational identities becomes a matter of whether the individual perceives that different aspects of individual identity 'match' or 'fit' with aspects of organisational identity. (ibid.)

Kreiner et al. (2006) suggest that instability in either intra- or inter-identity boundaries can trigger identity change. For example, as individuals experience identity intrusion or distance as a challenge to their existing identity boundaries, they are likely to seek ways of alleviating the conflictual boundary dynamic. Individual and organisational (or project related) identities are recursively interrelated, and identity change occurs at the interface, when boundaries within and between aspects of identity are renegotiated. In such recursive interrelationships, not only does the organisation (or network/project) construct the employee (or participator), but the employee (or participator) constructs the organisation (network). (See Kantola et al. 2008b.)

Conclusion and contributions

Conceptualisation and its role in activities appear in a different light, depending on whether the Learning Network is viewed as a whole or through its sub-projects. The research and writing efforts of key participants have contributed greatly to the Learning Network and the evolution of its activity and practices. Throughout the project, research and writing together have enabled critical reflection on the network's activities. Conceptualisation and its identification as a key component in network creation and development have been of particular importance, especially during the period when the project was unsupported by its own organisation.

While the Virtual Competence Forum was being researched and developed, shared meanings were being defined for multivoicedness and joint creation within the context of the Learning Network. Such a conceptualisation of the network and the related learning activities, occurring during the first concrete development project, laid the foundation for the network's future activity and practices. Shared development and multivoicedness evolved as the key operating principles for the Learning Network, including in the future. These concepts were not introduced by the researcher-developers only: they emerged and evolved through everyday development work and the discourse between network participants.

From the very first planning discussions onward, SYMBIO's plans and activities were also based on the concept of multivoiced shared development. Within the context of regional research and development conducted by the Universities of Applied Science, SYMBIO has faced the particular challenge of creating a new kind of understanding of learning in cooperation with small entrepreneurs, as well as the related learning spaces. In terms of their theoretical meaning, situated learning and practice-based learning were introduced to the discussion, by the researcher-developers, as conceptual tools steering both SYMBIO's everyday activity and practices and its writing based on research and development. Despite this, the concepts of learning were defined in cooperation with the students and entrepreneurs.

In VIVA's activity, the concepts of shared development and multivoicedness had a strong presence, their meaning being openly discussed as the project moved forward. Practice-based learning and the concepts of boundaries and identity were touched upon in shared discussions, but as more theoretical interpretations, they mainly informed the everyday activity and writing work of the researcher-developers.

Planning and arranging the Insightful Encounters Conference was a concrete example of the way in which not only practices but also the concepts that give structure to activity (and practices) were integrated and conceptualised in a shared way: this was done through multivoiced, shared development in which discourse, and to some extent the concepts of boundaries and identity, were strongly present. The actual theme of the conference, i.e. 'practice-based learning in regional development', was strongly linked to the central theoretical foundation of the entire Learning Network. The idea of the Encounters Conference is living again and the Conference will be realized second time in April 2011, focusing on the theme of bridging learners and competence in service sectors.

Conceptualisation has played a key role in the operations of the Learning Network. Concepts and their shared conceptualisation with other network participants have been the common thread between various practices and activities, giving shape to activity and supporting learning across activity boundaries. Conceptualisation within a learning network can be viewed both as a result of the network activities and as a tool for creating and developing new kinds of learning forums and spaces for learning.

Interesting themes for further research include how the Learning Network and its projects continue to mature through practices and activities that have evolved

further or which are wholly new. On the other hand, it would be interesting to trace the path and dynamics of the slowly waning VIVA project: this would support independent development work among key players in Old Porvoo.

The Porvoo Campus, where many of the Learning Network's ideas and attempts at conceptualising regional research and development work could evolve further, is the likely platform for future R&D&I. In line with the basic idea behind SYM-BIO, there are plans to set up a new kind of centre for research, development and entrepreneurship, i.e. the SYMBIO as more developed learning environment, co-ordinated by the HAAGA-HELIA and Laurea Universities of Applied Sciences. In 2010–2012, the Learning Forum will also participate in a digital content and e-service development project involving the Campus.

The concepts of multivoicedness and shared development, with their contents and meaning defined by the Learning Network, will be present as concepts and ideas that steer practices in many activities involving the new Porvoo Campus. In its entirety, the new operational environment of the Porvoo Campus will strive to become a shared learning space for various participants, challenging boundaries between different activities and identities through its methods.

This article is a meta-article based on the written materials created during the OVE project, whose purpose was to bring the activity of our Learning Network to the fore, not only as a practical regional development effort, but also as an attempt to create conceptual definitions, shared by the various participants and forming the basis for everyday development work. The OVE project took place at a time when the long-term research and regional development traditions in Finnish Universities of Applied Science remained embryonic. As a result, conceptualisation was of particular importance to the Learning Network's ramp-up and activity. Focusing mainly on the development of small or micro enterprises, in their development work the Universities of Applied Science and the Porvoo Unit had a strong tendency to concentrate on practice-oriented projects seeking short-term benefits. It is for this reason that the activity of the OVE project strived to provide the network with a shared and collective theoretical basis, conveying development and learning.

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OVE – Learning Network for Tourism Business in Eastern Uusimaa

The target of the project, coordinated by the Porvoo unit of the HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences, was to develop long-term research and development knowhow that would facilitate an observational understanding of the area and its developmental challenges, from various tourism industry viewpoints. The connecting idea was to strengthen learning and development within the area and further develop and define the area's identity.

The project aimed at building learning forums and practices that would continue to be useful, even after the project itself had ended. Here, the goal was to ensure that the research and development knowhow and methods created through the project would be preserved for the use of partner companies and organisations in the future. Furthermore, the knowledge accrued would be available as shared social capital for Eastern Uusimaa's tourism industry. The project focused on the specific challenge of making multiple voices heard simultaneously in regional tourism development activities. The aim was to strengthen the voices of players who had not been heard previously. Another goal was to enable, examine and create models as well as learn from new forms of networked cooperation between companies and universities.

The project comprised the subprojects described below; these were all closely interlinked through their everyday operations.
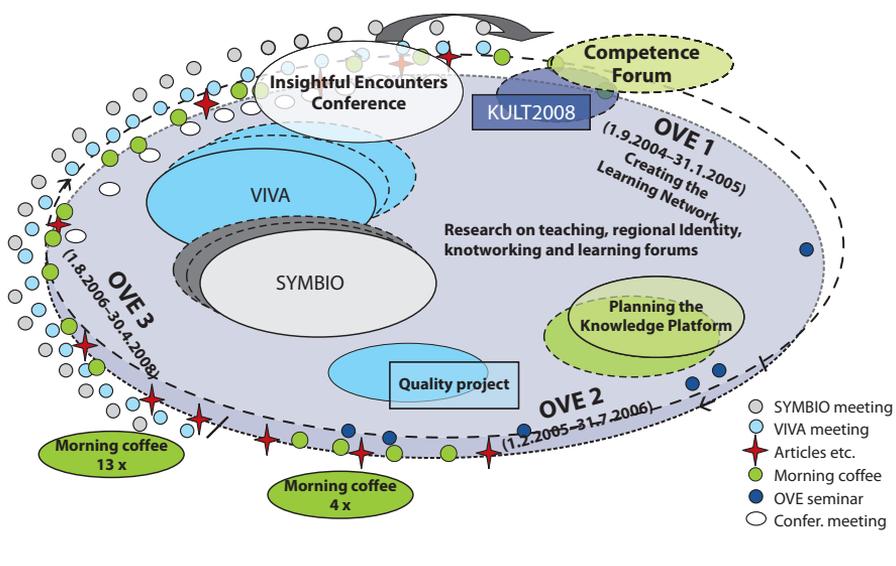
- The Virtual Competence Forum (originally termed the Competence Platform) has served as a virtual forum, enabling multivoiced dialogue and learning. This forum was initially developed to meet the shared need of tourism entrepreneurs for an electronic platform that would assist them in business development. At the same time, the Competence Forum served as the home page of the Learning Network.
- SYMBIO has functioned as a forum for the research and development of small enterprises. Its objective has been to create a forum for learning, in which entrepreneurs, students and advisors work together on the development challenges facing small enterprises.
- VIVA Porvoo – Borgå was the development project for Old Porvoo. This project was initiated by entrepreneurs with the goal of tackling innovative activities and the development of year-round tourism in Old Porvoo.
- Towards the end of the Learning Network project, the aim of KULT2008, or the Research and Development Project for Cultural Entrepreneurship, was to support the development of networked operations within the creative industries. During this project, the Competence Forum's operations were expanded to the creative industries.
- Insightful Encounters Conference The Conference on 'Insightful Encounters – Regional Development and Practice-Based Learning' was organised in March 2008 as the closing seminar of the OVE Project. With this project already complete, the conference aimed at opening up new vistas and opportunities for regional research and development.

During its active phase, the participants in the Learning Network consisted of approximately 40 tourism entrepreneurs and key players. In addition to HAAGA-HELIA, these key players included the Regional Council of Itä-Uusimaa, the Helsinki School of Economics and the University of Helsinki. The Learning Network project was open by nature and in terms of its operations. Participants could be active in the network in various ways, while new participants joined during the course of the project. Through openness and flexibility, it was possible to supplement the original project plans with new and relevant research and development targets significant to the further development of the region's tourism industry.

The SAKEA learning network as a research and development dialogue

Teijo Räsänen and Titta Tienpolvi

In 2005–2009, the SAKEA learning network researched and created municipal working life innovations. The basic intention was to create, develop and disseminate ideas related to strategic human resource management, evaluation and welfare at municipal workplaces. The network's learning processes dealt with the direction of learning and the internal development of work organisations. The network had the target of creating a forum in which the people responsible for human resources and development tasks could interact with researchers and developers. Our approach focused on action research and dialogue and a strong combination of research and development. The article presents the central framework of the network and reflects on events and shared learning processes. We collect the key questions that arose during the network's operations and include examples of the answers at which we arrive.

Finland's municipal sector is undergoing what is possibly the greatest upheaval in its history. The ongoing renewal of local government and the service structure, new tasks assigned by the state and a challenging economic situation all pose major challenges to the production of high-quality municipal services and ensuring a sufficient labour force. Additional challenges are presented by the ageing of the population and mounting retirement trends, which are having a significant effect on the size and structure of the labour force in all employment sectors. As competition for labour force intensifies, the municipal sector's possibilities of participating in this competition through financial means are somewhat limited (Forma et al. 2006). In the near future, key competitive recruitment factors include the development of strategic human resource management (SHRM), for instance intellectual capital management and well-being within working communities.

Municipality organisations have realised that they cannot continue on the basis of their old service structures and production methods. In developing municipalities'

operating models, there has been an attempt to switch the focus more towards co-operation and networking with other municipalities. Alongside the expansion of the institutional and financial base of development work, service and procedure development is now supported by combining research and development activities (Alasoini et al. 2005).

The SAKEA learning network was based on a similar idea of cooperation and networking. Its operations were founded on the principles of a learning or-ganisation, cooperation and creative dialogue between a vast group of experts. Participants included approximately 20 cities, municipalities or joint municipal authorities. Supported by the expertise of university researchers, municipal and private consultants, these all worked in cooperation with local municipal actors (Räsänen 2005; 2008). The network focused on studying the preconditions, targets and methods of learning. In order to ensure shared learning, work was performed simultaneously on a higher, networked level and at the level of the municipalities' case-specific units. The way in which leadership could be applied creatively to everyday situations and how leaders supported basic work tasks – the mission – was essential. Although these principles were well established within the learning tasks at the network level, the network's operations remained fairly distant from the daily activities of communities dealing with basic tasks with the exception of experiments in local projects.

From the viewpoint of new economic sociology, social relationships are highly significant to the way in which an economy functions. The network was built on the social cooperation relationships between individual participants, including project managers and staff from the municipalities, trade unions, researchers, developers, consultants, other learning networks and the parties responsible for funding (Kuusela 2008, 13–14). The idea was to disseminate innovations in everyday working life, by generating and developing good practices in the areas of strategic leadership, HRM and occupational well-being for municipalities and cities.

Key elements of the network were strategic development, performance evaluation and the assessment of human resources based on a Balanced Scorecard (BSC). On the level of practical development work, these themes were a continuation of their predecessors, i.e. the KARTUKE and AURORA projects, which took a markedly scientific approach. Within SAKEA, the focus was on practical devel-opment and learning. The learning environment comprised workshops, practical development project and research result presentations, and a shared virtual learn-ing platform (Kuusela & Jääskeläinen 2008). Towards its conclusion, the network passed its learning and development experiences on to other organisations active

in the municipal sector, such as the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and other, new learning networks (for example, PEERS).

This article describes what took place in the learning network, and how the network's operations supported the development of HRM within municipal organisations. Descriptions of the network's development and learning process highlight the key insights and procedures that created new spaces for learning, while facilitating the achievement of the network's learning and development targets. What happened in the various phases of the learning network? How was learning in the network organised, directed and supported? What surprises were encountered along the way?

In addition to the network's development and learning processes, the article describes R&D on HRM within the scope of the local target, *Public cultural organisation*, which was one of the city organisations participating in the project. Materials gathered on the creative well-being organisation were presented to the other municipal organisations at workshops. In turn, ideas were fed into this local project, focusing on the development of SHRM, from interaction with SAKEA network participants; this process is presented in the following section.

Project framework, methods and roles in learning space creation

The TYKES programme encouraged its participants to innovate. From the point of view of innovation, the themes of SAKEA contemplated how working life innovations can be applied and positioned within the operating environment and practical work. For example, innovations created in the network dealt with pre-dictive strategic leadership, evaluation, rewarding and well-being at work. The key question was deemed to concern how innovations work in real life. Terms commonly used for this phenomenon include adoption, dissemination, increased understanding by participation and a focus on day-to-day work. Innovation deployment took place through shared learning (Kuusela 2007).

The operations of a learning network require a framework that is explicitly revealed to the network. Such a framework helps participants to analyse and form a perception of the interconnections between the network's various activities. The target was to achieve good planning practices and efficient learning faster than would have been possible without a common reflection framework or by questioning the early premises of the project.

Consolidated views on the participative planning and progress of learning comprised the central, shared framework of SAKEA network operations. In addition

to the models created, the thought models of previous projects were utilised in support. The Finnish public sector BSC model and SHRM thinking were the legacy of the KARTUKE project; from the quality-of-working-life researchers, we obtained, for example, the concepts of democratic dialogue, work conference and participatory methods.

Shared planning is of key importance to the network, even if it is difficult to find time for this. In virtual planning, on the other hand, the creation of shared meanings becomes increasingly challenging. To boost the efficiency of our operations, we can use general models tailored to our needs. In the planning of SAKEA, for example, we utilised the following thought model for dialogical learning (Hakkarainen et al. 2004).

The purposefulness of good practices can be increased by planning them together, for example through an exploratory, dialogical learning process. This consists of the following phases: 1) Creation of context and anchorage in previous experience and knowledge, 2) Definition of problems, i.e. construction of one's own theories and explanations, in which one's own interest and genuine questions, with no given answers, are essential, 3) Creation of one's own working theories on the target phenomenon (local theory), 4) Constructive critical evaluation, in which the learning community evaluates its progress and sets new goals (assuming commitment to constructive interaction) and 5) Acquisition and creation of new information: new significant concepts and models. (See also Lehtonen & Räsänen 2008, 211–212 and 224.)

In the SAKEA project, the chosen framework supported the linkage of development questions to the learning process for best practices. Asking the correct questions helped us find good local practices. We believed that learning would become more efficient if we had a shared view of how information was formulated during the network's learning process. We strove for a shared vision of how learning develops and is linked through various organisational levels, from the insights of a single individual to a shared understanding.

First, the network level was adjusted to the scientific learning paradigm based on Crossan et al. (1999), as we surveyed how successfully learning and the establishment of new, recently developed procedures could be implemented. We visualised the learning targets and spaces, and, when required, the links to the municipal operating environment. Moreover, creative problem solving methods were used in the design of the learning forums (workshops, meetings, seminars and the learning platform etc.). The focus was on critical points and episodes where learning had taken place.

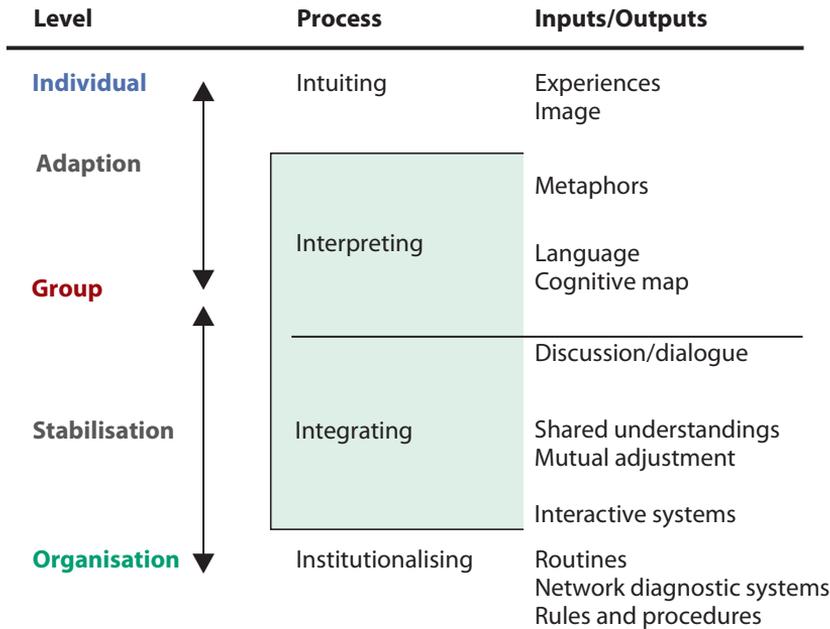| Level	Process	Inputs/Outputs
Individual	Intuiting	Experiences Image
Adaption		
	Interpreting	Metaphors Language Cognitive map
Group		
		Discussion/dialogue
Stabilisation	Integrating	Shared understandings Mutual adjustment
		Interactive systems
Organisation	Institutionalising	Routines Network diagnostic systems Rules and procedures

Figure 1. SAKEA learning framework.

Based on the responses and discussions during various phases of the process, the learning network decided to focus on the identification and description of best practices in HRM and leadership, even at the cost of other themes. The SAKEA learning network discussed development work in municipal organisations, using the concepts of *Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), Human Resource Management (HRM)* and *Personnel Management.* In scientific research, HR strategies are analysed as processes that are separate from other areas of management within an organisation; these processes define how the organisation's management interacts with its employees or *human system* (Sädevirta 2004, 23).

HR strategies are implemented through interactive leadership. As explanatory factors with respect to functional HR strategies, it has been suggested that they should form an integral part of an organisation's overall strategy, in line with HR management procedures, and that employee competencies should be regarded as an organisation's foremost potential resource (Lumijärvi 2006, 32). Nordic R&D projects have also suggested that it would be crucial to draw up a strategy through dialogue with the various personnel groups (e.g. Kalliola & Nakari 1999; Lehtonen 2004). Good HR management aims at organisational well-being and results.

A total of 19 projects participated in the SAKEA network. In addition to the general framework, local projects operated within frameworks of their own. The

theoretical framework for SHRM was formulated through local and networked discussions. In this article, we describe a local discussion with the project *Public cultural organisation* as an example. SHRM, HRM and the framework of well-being and productivity are difficult to define, while verifying their interconnections is challenging (Legge 2001; Storey 2001). Boxall and Purcell (2003) have expressed the criticism that HRM models are too general, leaving out certain factors. With respect to the extant theories, a key problem is their tendency to presume that applied procedures function identically in various competitive settings and operational environments. Another is the assumption that organisations adhere to applying an identical strategy to their entire personnel. However, American, European and Finnish research indicate that SHRM is linked to well-being and productivity (Delery & Doty 1996; Guest et al. 2003; Kotila 2004).

Based on discussions, we arrived at Guest's theoretical model, which explains high productivity and well-being through the connection between organisational strategy and SHRM, and a functional set of HRM procedures. Guest (1997; 2006; Guest et al. 2003) has conducted a vast amount of empirical research on SHRM, personnel management and the processes which explain the connection between leadership, well-being at work and productivity.

From the potential strategic success factors, each organisation selects a bundle that best accounts for the essential best practices of various HRM sectors, creating a set of factors that best fits the organisation's strategy. Developing HRM in these important sectors was a key tool in increasing well-being at work (Guest 1997, 269–270). The more comprehensive an organisation's functional HRM procedures are, the greater the total positive impact in terms of productivity and well-being (Berger & Gerhart 1996). When establishing the set of sub-areas for HRM, both universal and local compatibility issues should be taken into account.

The learning network's steering group had requested that we identify generalised phenomena and causal probabilities existing between municipal organisations' HRM, productivity and well-being. Guest's model was interesting precisely in the light of the questions that arose: Are there universal practices in the literature or identified by the learning network that might promote the success of an organisation and the development of its employees' competences and efficiency? Can we identify interdependencies or priority areas related to management, evaluation practices and rewarding that specifically promote the realisation of an organisation's chosen operational strategy (compatability, internal fit)? If the projects are observed from a descriptive viewpoint, can we identify practices related to SHRM that the network recommends for application in at least certain types of organisations or situations? (cf. Delery & Doty 1996).

HR procedures must be in line with other targets of the organisation. For example, the idea of a balanced strategy would work better if management supported competences, trust and a positive atmosphere in the workplace. We analysed Guest's theoretical model of HRM and surveyed the materials on municipal organisations collected on the basis of the model. We also developed methods for describing procedures in a way that was adjusted to everyday activities. The SAKEA design team, i.e. the learning team including the team leader, had no preconceptions about what we were supposed to learn. Together, we surveyed the initial situation, the questions we had and the process through which we were to seek the answers required at that point. We sought to ensure that the latest information and all creative solutions were available for everyone's use. Based on these assumptions, we began to create spaces of learning from which participants would find their own paths within the network. In retrospect, we can see that a significant number of learning episodes were created.

Course of events from the network's initial planning to publication

A learning space refers to the multidimensional entity comprising the learners, their psycho-physical statuses as well as the physical, social and virtual learning environment. A learning space is a process wherein new information and new skills are created and adopted. By definition, a learning episode is a period or partial narrative taking place in the learning space that, at least in hindsight, resulted in learning. By learning episodes, we mean occasions during the day when you feel you have learned something, or picked up some new knowledge or skill, or you have increased or deepened your understanding of a topic. This can be learning in any form. (Vavoula 2005.)

According to Vavoula, we can observe the following aspects of an episode:
- Temporal context: the date; the time span during the day when the learning took place; and its duration.
- Social context: the other people involved in the episode; and the roles they assumed.
- Situational context: the location and the event during which the learning episode took place.
- Educational context: the learning method employed; the forms of assessment applied; the purpose, if there was an explicit purpose; what was learned in relation to the lesson originally intended; and the area of life to which this episode relates (work, hobbies, community work).
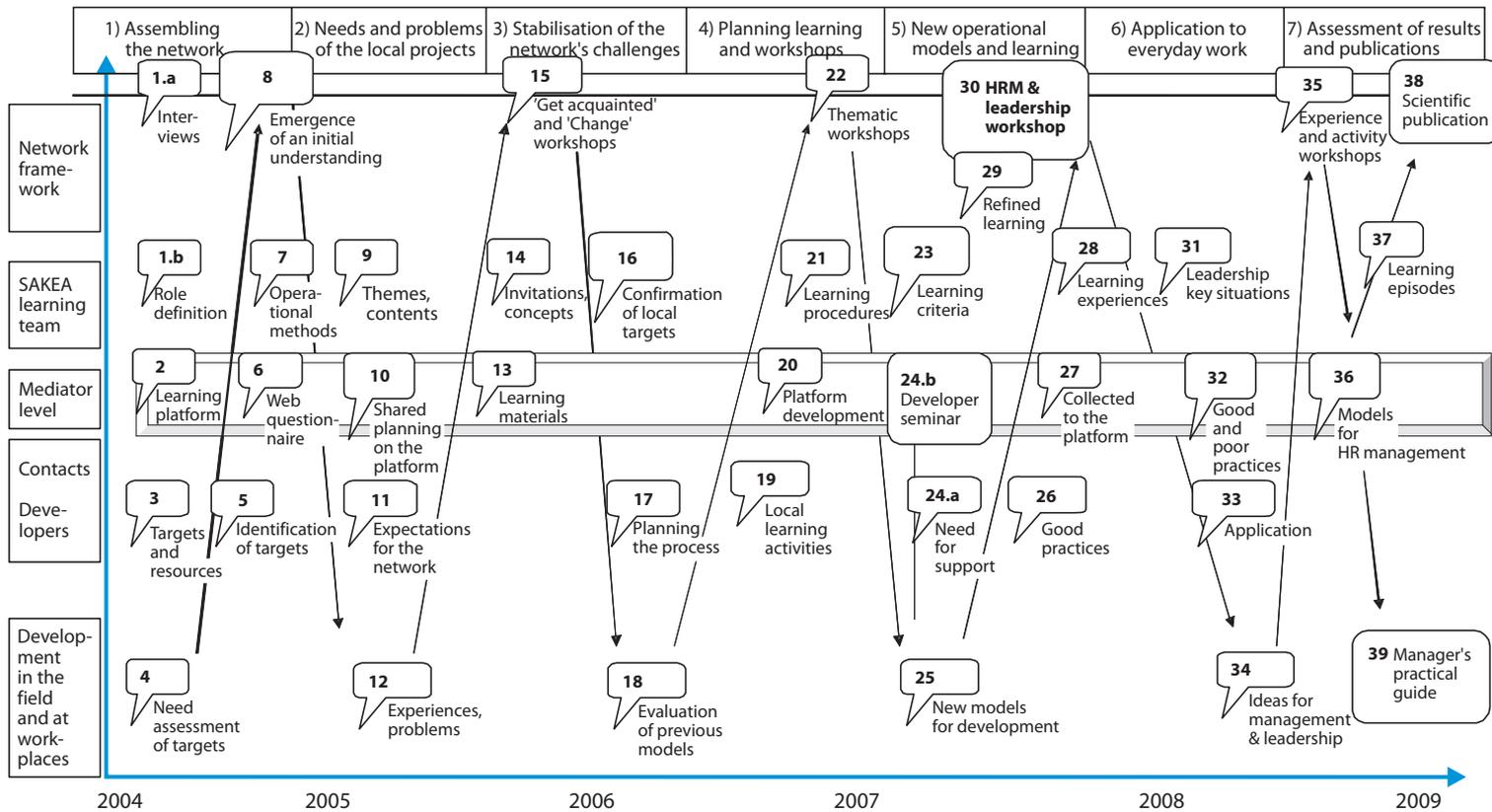
Figure 2. Critical phases and learning episodes of the SAKEA learning network 2005–2009.

- Activity context: the learning topic; the kind of support available in terms of help from other people, printed or online manuals/instructions and other resources; the different activities performed; the different resources used; the problems that arose before, during or after the episode; and the greater learning project that this particular episode related to, if any.
- Historical context: other activities, not directly related to learning that were performed just before, during, and immediately after the learning episode, to capture how learning interleaves with other, everyday activities.

In retrospect, the operations of the learning network can be divided into the following phases:

1. Assembling the network, defining roles and targets as a network.
2. Defining the needs and problems of participating workplaces.
3. Specifying the work and the mode of action of the network so that they match the presented challenges.
4. Designing and organising of workshops and other learning spaces.
5. Constructing and learning new operational models and mode of action.
6. Applying operational models and way of doing everyday work.
7. Evaluation and dissemination of activities and learning through stories, reports and publications.

The key SAKEA learning spaces and episodes in which questions were formulated and insights achieved are described in Figure 2. The numbers after the Figure present the key learning episodes of each phase. In the phase descriptions, we use the case of the local *Public cultural organisation* project as an example.

Assembling the network and defining the roles and targets

Basic research for SAKEA started with a literature review emphasising SHRM studies. We were seeking theoretical support and backup for the coming choices. In order to survey needs and expectations, interviews were first conducted with the developers and contact people. The interviewees were asked what resources the potential participants were prepared to dedicate to the network, and what themes the network should focus on. The items assessed included the mission of the local project and the individual targets and available resources (competences, time, money etc.) of the interviewee. The questions were deduced from Hutton's (2000) three-dimensional role model, where a role is perceived as action towards the fulfilment of the system's basic function, i.e. in this case for the benefit of the network or the local development project.

The materials provided a preliminary insight into the web questionnaire to be conducted in the municipal sector, into the search for targets, and into the selection of themes and a suitable learning platform. These initial interviews were therefore very helpful during the analysis of learning challenges (phases 1–5 of the roadmap). Four main themes for SAKEA emerged from the web questionnaire conducted with municipal representatives: mobilising the strategy and transforming it into shared understanding and action in the work community, rewarding practices as an incentive and tool for work performance evaluation, predictive SHRM personnel work as practical management, and the challenges and solutions of managing regional projects

The initial understanding to emerge from these themes was further defined in cooperation with the applicable actor groups and other interested parties from the network. On the 'basic research/action research' continuum, discussions conducted within the learning team steered research in the direction of action research, although decisions were, to some extent, left to the network researchers' own discretion. The initial starting points of research and development and the related targets and methods can be observed separately. In research, the credibility of the research methods and processes is considered a key criterion; in development activities, the applicability of information is more central. Research-oriented development activities are somewhere between the two.

After considering applicable methods and creating an initial understanding of the project (roadmap phases 7–8), the following functional sub-targets were agreed for the three-year activity period of the network, through a shared work process for the key interest groups. We sought to identify functional, strategic, everyday HR practices for municipalities; enable the piloting and adoption of good practices in learning networks, while providing expert mentoring to participants in local projects; and develop new learning methods and action learning projects for the needs of self-steering, shared and thematic project cooperation.

After giving consideration to the network's way of working, the role of researcher shifted from basic research towards research-intensive development. While research-intensive development can aim at achieving immediate, practical development results, it can also seek results of a kind that can be reviewed within a wider framework of discourse. SAKEA aimed to generate information that could be discussed locally, on a general level within the network, or in new environments, where new ideas could be tested.

Theme analysis and the experiences and problems encountered by local agents

The learning path describes how chosen themes were expressed throughout the project, beginning from the initial plans of a municipal project to the evaluation of the project's success. The focus of the workshops was on learning in different themes of SHRM (phases 9–13 of the roadmap). In addition to theme analysis, participants continuously brainstormed for good network practices and opportunities for new learning spaces.

In the initial questionnaire, the theme of HRM and, specifically, the theme of leadership emerged as fairly equal to other themes. As the project moved ahead, the importance of interactive leadership was further emphasised in the network's dialogue-oriented planning process. Throughout the project, requests relating to theme contents and theme handling methods were presented to the network. The intermediary in this discussion was the SAKEA learning team. Team members represented the views of network participants, researchers and local developers, as well as those of the working communities and personnel organisations in the field.

As the SAKEA participants became acquainted with each other, important questions arose on how the work should be continued: What does the steering group steer? (The focus is on supporting the bigger picture and activities on a national scale). How does the network operate? (The idea was to generate practical models for working life, support work of communities, and promote learning in the area of local development). How are the learning results stored and reinforced? (Ideas for utilisation of project results and the further development of learning methods). How do researchers and consultants stay up to date? (The objective was for researchers to become familiar with each other's goals and supportive of each other's processes). How are concepts understood? ("Words are shells, and their meaning must be renegotiated again and again"; unclear issues must be brought to the table without hesitation). Could we identify an apparatus that would be influential on multiple levels? (Development work means creating arenas for discussion).

Identifying the network's challenges and planning local targets

A theme that turned out to be particularly important to SHRM was vertical communications: the distance needed to be narrowed between 'upper level' planning and real-life practices. We received continuous signals from local level targets, pointing out that too little notice was taken of the opinions of people handling everyday implementation tasks. The emergence of themes required continuous reflection, as well as self-reflection, by network participants. During the research/

development process, a significant insight was gained through the public cultural organisation project, in which, to begin with, there was no clear definition of the boundaries between research and development. A researcher began participating in target events alongside prior developers and action researchers; this turned out to be far more fruitful than anyone had foreseen.

In the *public cultural organisation*, the aim was to cooperate with the researchers working on the target. This turned out to be problematic, since the unit's staff had a somewhat critical attitude towards outside developers, refusing outright to participate in research and development activities. Such an attitude was influenced by the top-down implementation of previous projects, which had resulted in the refusal by the personnel, as well as the management of the institution, to participate in the project. Some research participants pointed out that the most annoying aspect of outside developers is that they "come here knowing nothing, then tell us how things are in here, although in reality they don't have a clue about our work or working environment". From this viewpoint, the role of observer was highly beneficial: the researcher could formulate a general idea of the organisation's operations, personnel and interactive relationships.

Since the top-down or 'looking in from the outside' approach was not well received within the cultural targets, we needed to give careful consideration to our material collection methods, reflecting on what we were doing and moving forward with caution. Getting to know the target in the company of prior researchers assisted us in finding the appropriate means. The target unit was selected on the basis of negotiations and the fact that the researcher was already acquainted with the unit; based on the metrics, it was also the unit most in need of development activities.

After coming to the conclusion that it would probably do more good than harm, the unit's management decided to participate in the project. In the negotiations, we also considered the set-up and course of the research, and what would constitute a representative sample of the target. By representative sample, here we mean the representation of personnel from all vertical levels of the target industry, as well as that of all professions.

According to the unit's management, the participation of the unit's personnel was a prerequisite for conducting the research. One researcher approached the personnel representatives one by one by phone, whereas some joined the project after being contacted at their workplace. In particular, those who had been most opposed to the development activities were approached face-to-face. No one was forced to participate: we emphasised the voluntary nature of the project and its goal of enabling employees in charge of everyday operations to develop their

own well-being at work and to be heard. All individual employees requested to give an interview participated.

Thematic interviews were mainly conducted at the workplace. The themes of these free-form discussions were related to HRM and well-being at work, allowing the interviewees to discuss matters they found important. Getting acquainted with the unit through department meetings and discussions gave us some idea of what issues might emerge as the most important ones. Progress took the spiral form characteristic of development activities related to action research, with information received from various employee teams being used to re-direct development work (cf. Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995).

Had we not known anything about the interviewees' somewhat unique job responsibilities and organisational activities, the interviews would have been tremendously challenging. Our perception would have been very detached and our interpretations would have remained based on external facts (cf. Eikeland 2001, 145–149). Advance knowledge of the interviewees' jobs was important, since this enabled us to steer discussions towards the topics we wished to discuss, while retaining a relaxed and confidential atmosphere.

Preparatory planning and organisation of workshops and other learning spaces

During the project, how to organise learning within the network, how to involve people, and how to ensure that the network will support future success in the workplace remained topics of continuous discussion. We wanted to hear about people's actual experiences and utilise them in network activities.

Based on expectations, a rough action plan was drawn up. Within the learning team and the steering group, the programme was continuously reviewed by participants. The plan emphasised practice-oriented learning environments, where HRM and leadership practices could be jointly cultivated further. This was achieved through exchanging development experiences, and by developing new tools to support the management of strategic human resources within the network. When the project was almost halfway through, real-life managerial work and, in particular, the related aspects of managing people, it means processing leadership began to draw attention. However, this was a topic we had been touching on ever since the 'get acquainted' and 'change' workshops.

We wanted to place versatile learning arenas and various tools and methods of learning at the participants' disposal. The idea of achieving a deeper understanding of

local development work led to the insight that participants need to begin by getting to know each other and then begin planning the change project. The network's 'get acquainted' workshop utilised various methods of helping potential participants become acquainted not only with each other, but also with each other's problems and experiences. Assisted by external participants and the learning platform, the 'change workshop' that followed focused on building our own project.

Through the selected methods, the target of the learning network was to create meaningful interaction and unreserved encounters between the various work communities and experts. Each year, the SAKEA network organised 2–3 theme workshops, as well as other learning events and procedures established according to need. From the side of the network, a great deal of thought was given to how the network might be kept open for newcomers for as long as possible. As interesting themes continued to bring in new members, it was decided that the network should not be closed. Leadership and cooperation was one of the new workshop themes. First, the workshop's programme was discussed within the learning team, followed by contemplation of how to arrive at an adequate understanding of interaction with people and effective leadership.

Within the *public cultural organisation*, the researcher discussed interview results with the various professional and personnel groups, allowing them to interpret and explain their own views of the results and to consider the most important development targets. In order to facilitate the discussions and to bring out the groups' specific characteristics and differences in perspective, the initial events were arranged separately for each personnel group. The unit comprised several professional groups with slightly different, sometimes even conflicting interests and needs. In a culture unused to such practices, it would have been difficult to set up a general discussion of this nature involving the participation of a large group of people from various professional backgrounds.

The schedules of local development work and the network's operations overlapped. In the network discussions, the researcher identified topics for further study. Experiences of local targets were presented both by the researcher and municipality representatives. In this way, cooperation between new participants and the targets could be initiated and both success stories and failures could be shared.

Creating and learning new operating models

The relationship between the research and the implemented development activities was the topic of continuous, lively discussion within the network. These fruitful discussions resulted in the creation of a shared operating model or way

of action. Research into the learning network focused on 1) what aspects of local projects promote the learning process, 2) how experiences are transferred to the network, 3) what takes place in the network, and what promotes learning according to the set criteria, and 4) how learning, having first been 'refined' within the network, transfers back to work communities as learning that supports their further development?

The learning methods of the network were implemented in as versatile a way as possible (phase 21 of the roadmap). We also experimented with various participatory methods and learning support tools. We had a virtual learning space and discussion template to support face-to-face meetings. All information was collected into the virtual learning platform, which the participants could access using their own usernames. This platform, available to registered participants free of charge, was a shared network forum based on action learning. Storing network plans, preparations and ideas, it functioned as a virtual support for learning and was also a tool promoting transparency.

Typical local development project learning methods included need and development surveys, measuring, assessment and follow-up processes, procedural programmes, manager coaching, development events, shared development processes and the creation of support materials for the ongoing project. Other activities included research surveys on development themes, benchmarking visits, work conferences and arrangements for strategy seminars. Goal-oriented change adoption processes, development processes for representative cooperation, group discussions and meetings in the workplace and, naturally, participation in the network's workshops and processes, were also common activity types.

The network built a shared view of what was considered good learning (phase 23 of the roadmap):
- Learning does not consist solely of the cognitive 'transfer of information'.
- Learning results are created through dialogue and interaction.
- One must always begin by estimating how the system and the organisational culture impact on learning ability.
- Learning must be versatile and the methods must always be chosen based on their applicability to the situation.
- Peoples' everyday experiences must be utilised, since they are the basis for affiliation and the assimilation of the learning structure.
- In many ways, efficient learning equates to the mental images created, received and developed through good practices; here, rhythm and timing are significant.

The need to organise a seminar specifically for developers participating in the network was expressed in both locally and the network. It had been observed that junior researchers and developers, in particular, were in need of support and ideas for their activities (phases 24a&b of the roadmap).

In the *public cultural organisation,* the thematic contents of the interview materials provided a suitable framework for the discussion sessions. In these sessions, organised at grass-roots level, improving the unit's meeting practices was proposed as a key tool for improving HRM and well-being at work. This provided an opportunity to have a greater influence on one's own work as well as matters related to the work community and to change leadership communications in a more interactive direction. We assembled a team of a dozen volunteers who, a week prior to the meeting, met to consider current issues pertaining to the work community, for consideration at the next work meeting. Items were also picked from the feedback box. In addition to the issues brought up by the curator, themes were handled item by item. At the SAKEA events, research content and process development knowhow generated by the cultural organisation was distributed in the form of results and experiences. New development work models were thus presented at network level.

The idea of a shared brainstorming meeting for participants, developers and researchers, within the framework of the *public cultural organisation* project, was developed during the summer seminar of the learning team. As a result of an idea walk, new local research and development targets were identified. Moreover, the network had previously conducted interviews with experienced developers (Kuusela & Niiranen 2006). This process resulted in ideas on contextual factors that benefit development-related learning processes.

Applying operating models to everyday work

A key challenge encountered by the project was how best to implement development work and the related new models (phases 25–28 of the roadmap) within the network. Good practices were collected for the learning platform and for the commissioned lectures held in the learning and experience workshops arranged at the end of the learning path.

As we collected good HRM practices from the field, we also defined what actually constitutes good practice. "The description of a good practice is an inner model based on which it is possible to act. In the SAKEA Learning Network, good practice has been defined as an operations model, which is possible to

describe and which has significant impacts in producing good work results. A good practice must not, therefore, remain only an inner view; on the other hand, it must be associated with human activity in a given concrete situation. So good practices are always linked to communities of practice; they emerge and develop locally" (Lehtonen & Räsänen 2008, 224).

In addition to the contents' theme, we were interested in the various ways of working in a shared learning process. We began to collect systematically the most important leadership situations of cooperation at the network level. This activity had already been initiated with the action learning exercises of the leadership workshop. Network events are, however, a far cry from the everyday challenges faced in workplaces. Our question was: how is understanding created? For people to accept and understand the new way of action, understanding its meaning was not enough. For example, in the case of participatory, interactive leadership, we needed to develop a procedure or process through which the purpose could be achieved through an understanding of the common good.

According to the vision that emerged within the network, this could entail actions made by leaders or cooperation by which we build a shared understanding of the described phenomenon as well as management activities and targets. The learning network came to the conclusion that a critical factor enabling understanding can be discovered in the daily discussions between management and employees (workshop observation). For this reason, the focus was on leading people in various everyday situations, such as work planning, brainstorming or practical implementation. We can say that a work community creates tools and methods through shared language and understanding. These tools and methods then steer actions towards the desired state, impact or result. The learning network was interested in discussing good HRM practices. What, then, should the leader do in key cooperative situations?

The network arrived at the idea that leadership creates meaning through everyday discussions within the work community, and through using people's own abilities and insights. Examples of such situations include planning together, assessing success in development discussions and work group meetings, and evaluation-based encouragement and rewarding. Feedback mechanisms had a clear impact on the selection of future focus areas. This was the HRM process that the network studied and supported most intensively. The network appeared to function under the same guiding principles as work communities. Management discourse of leaders resulted in methods and practices that appear to be important to everyday work, since they, at best, create and mediate insights into what the preferred course of action would be and what topics should be further studied.

In the *Public cultural organisation* project, a certain proposal arose at all personnel feedback sessions, namely that meetings should be made more interactive, so that the voices of others, not just the immediate manager, are heard, and more matters that pertain directly to work can be dealt with. Moreover, decision-makers were requested to participate in the meetings from time to time, allowing them to receive immediate, practical information in support of their decisions. Using the same format, we twice organised a modified work meeting. This clearly steered the nature of the meeting in a more multivoiced direction: the manager gave the floor to the employees, whose voices were given a better hearing than before.

Experiences of local projects were discussed in the network's experience workshop. Additionally, a separate activity workshop was organised to establish the continuation of both the network's and the local project's operations.

Assessment and publications

The key results achieved through the learning process were also reviewed in view of the learning space set as a target for the project. Within the SAKEA learning team (planning group), we stated the reasons for selecting certain participatory learning methods (for example, methods of reflection and creative problem solving).

When reflecting later on the *public cultural organisation* process, key components in the success of its implementation were the fact that no one was overlooked in the initial negotiations, and that no communications or announcements were made externally or from above. This positive response may also have been influenced by the familiarity of the researcher, an old acquaintance from seminars and work meetings, although this may just as well have worked against the project. Prior participation was probably most beneficial to the researcher, who was consequently able to reflect on her own methods. For example, it was evident that, in the initial negotiations, leaning on an administrative role in order to dictate activities was not worthwhile. A better approach consisted of becoming familiar with the work community's operations, tasks and ways of working. Summary of key success stories include the following:

- Action research approach: initially, other successful implementations were considered and learned from; later, the research work proceeded through continuous self-reflection.
- Ethnographic approach: getting to know the work and the work community, coupled with being present at the target, resulted in the correct intuitive and spontaneous choices, trust, and the establishment of a shared language (effort, respect, identifying shared meanings and topics of conversation).

- Action research approach, proceeding in a bidirectional, spiral manner alternating between management and personnel; top-down and bottom-up approach.
- Consent at all employee levels to participation; in engendering commitment, the support of the institute's management and personnel was crucial.
- Direct contacts with employees; appreciation of employees as individuals and experts in their respective jobs.
- Flexible implementation: research and development was implemented within working hours, and integrated with the operations of the work community.
- Relevance and benefit from the research object's point of view: time was considered well spent on discussions, since work-related topics were handled.
- Equality and mutual respect: the agreement was based on voluntary participants and reciprocity: their task was to take care of their jobs, the researcher's was to collect materials.

The research and development experience of th*e public cultural organisation* was shared at network events and in other instances by both the researcher and the organisation's representative. In order to solve the evolving and increasingly complicated problems of working life, it would be important to render research continuous and stable; stability and long-term effort would result in more credible and appealing partnerships. The inefficiency of, and even resistance to, outside development were plainly visible within the organisation. Alongside the demands of everyday work, development performed on a short-term basis was viewed as disruptive rather than beneficial. Development should be closely knit to 'real' work and take place alongside the organisation's routine activities and meetings.

The network's workshops were evaluated and feedback was collected. Ideas were also refined further. For example, 'moments of truth' from a themed personnel workshop were later refined into key situations for immediate managers. Articles were published, and literature and recommendations were surveyed, for the benefit of municipal leadership and shared learning. The network's experiences were collected into case studies used in key management situations.

SAKEA reporting was planned in cooperation with the participants, i.e. the learning team and the scientific follow-up team. Reports were divided into 1) implementation report at the end of the project, as required by the project's financier, 2) a scientific final report in the form of an edited book and 3) a practical personnel guide on good HRM practices for municipal managers, based on

separate funding. The key leadership situations comprised the framework for the descriptions developed for the SAKEA guidebook of management in practice (Räsänen 2009).

Through publications and continued work, new networks with new participants were created. In every case, the objective was to pass the accrued experience and information onward to established actors or networks continuing their operations. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the Commission for Local Authority Employers and the Centre for Occupational Safety are examples of these. New methods of disseminating information were also used. Since not all of the created materials could be contained in books, network discussions, memos, slide shows and summaries were also burned onto a CD-ROM and distributed to the researchers.

Conclusions on factors that promote networked learning processes

Shared learning targets are important to the network's cohesion and the achievement of the chosen learning results. We have provided arguments as to why identifying and describing development processes, living in the process and adjusting them to suit the participants' needs are all important aspects of project work. We embarked on a learning journey with SAKEA, explaining the kinds of questions we faced, how the project's success was evaluated at different times and how evaluation promoted shared learning within the network.

A network can support shared learning and offer new options and answers by bringing together resources across boundaries. Uprooted from their original environments, and when supported by a well-functioning network process, questions can lead to more innovative solutions than in their community of origin. Sometimes work communities do become stuck in self-evident, prior solutions. However, answers being developed together can open a new door on the problem. A road can then be discovered that was previously unimaginable.

In the continuation of the research and development performed at SAKEA, a key question concerns the chains of events realised in learning processes related to strategy implementation, personnel management, evaluation and rewarding. In practice, learning processes or episodes refer to situations within the network that lead to changes in leadership practices in terms of procedures or cognitive concepts. The network does not generate change automatically. It is essential that the network operates based on regular and managed procedures and actions. Network learning can generally be defined as a process whereby coordinated

procedures become institutionalised and shared visions are constructed within the network. If no shared cognitive concepts or coordinated activities can be observed within a network, either no network learning has taken place or it is minor in nature (Knight 2002; Kuusela 2005).

Within the SAKEA network, we therefore needed to describe its thematic phenomena, practices and connections with the external environment. Since nothing can ultimately be finalised, uncertainty must be tolerated within a learning network. Network learning can provide seeds that would not have grown in a different environment. In their final report, the SAKEA researchers encourage readers to give up the top-down communications model and reach out for bold initiatives in the further development of municipal management practices. To implement this strategy, we must continuously evaluate the achievement of targets in various service sectors of municipalities. In this, wholesale utilisation of knowhow is a key factor. The role of political players in strategy work should also be increased.

This issue was also apparent in the case of local research targets, where manager participation and leadership was viewed as highly significant in promoting shared discussion and understanding. Through direct interaction, personnel from different levels embark on genuine discussion. In development projects, it is important to proceed without haste, negotiating project implementation with all staff members so that participation is voluntary and supported by the entire work community. This was clearly evident in the *public cultural organisation*, where confidential, interactive relationships enabled development and the collection of research material. In the company of prior researchers, observation and participation in various communications forums assisted in formulating an understanding of the research target. This also opened up initial opportunities for direct contacts. Development projects should consider the means suitable for each individual organisation, which promote genuine discussion and development.

However, cooperation is not always easy. A network can be loosely knit and the roles of its members can become blurry. In the SAKEA network too, developers and researchers could have shared a clearer common target and agreed on who does what, where and when. Concrete basic tasks are sometimes difficult to establish amongst network members, as people are physically and mentally distant, with differing interests, viewpoints and forms of expression. Networks share another problematic feature related to organisational development. Within SAKEA, we realised that development performed in cooperation with management often remains detached from that performed at workplace level. Managers were present at development meetings and many ideas resulted, but without the presence of other levels of employee, the ideas had time to fizzle out before im-

plementation. Because development processes are slow, the span of development is often too short: long-term development structures are required for activities to be fully implemented on a concrete, visible level. The operations of a development structure should also be budgeted for within an organisation's allotted working hours, so that they do not burden employees excessively and thereby engender resistance.

How, then, can we guarantee the creation of innovations in the future and what might be the role of a learning network in such a set-up? From the viewpoint of innovation research within the public sector, this should be dealt with through a number of measures promoting innovation. According to Borins (2001, 314–319), such measures might consist of items such as the following, which can be implemented without excessive cost. In some cases, they may also be relatively easy to carry out in the public sector:

- creating an atmosphere that promotes innovation, supported by the organisation's management
- rewarding innovation and establishing innovation awards
- ensuring the availability of sufficient resources for innovation activities
- defining individual tasks with broad scope; utilising multi-professional work groups
- encouraging organisational learning from the outside
- welcoming experimentation.

Within the spectrum of networks, the SAKEA operational model presented here is just one example of the possibilities for the further refinement of local development processes into shared network learning. A network does not, as such, differ from individual development work, except in terms of the challenges it faces in merging its targets and expectations. Its added value is created from the experiences accrued from interfaces and encounters, and from the more versatile solutions and points of view created by merging the participants' visions. Our experience has led us to believe that a network brings added value, specifically by providing opportunities for the emergence of more innovative operational models. New models are breaking free from old, set patterns.

A work community will operate effectively on the basis of sound cooperation and confidential, interactive relationships. Once we are aware of the strategic focus areas being developed through learning, leadership practices can be used to support development at work as well as the operations of a learning network. At network level, we can search together for the questions that will steer people, from various roles and physical locations, towards working on a shared theme. By allocating resources to participatory learning processes, we can encourage

participants to commit themselves. However, at local level, management must focus more on supporting the good practices developed within the network. To achieve this end, local decision-makers must participate in network activities as genuine players. Furthermore, the implementation of ideas must be followed through in local decision-making all the way to budgets, action plans and result reports.

The municipal sector could come to possess a significant competitive advantage in the major efforts it directs towards management and well-being at work. Well-being at work is not only a fundamental cornerstone in helping employees cope at work and extend their careers: it could also give municipal employers a competitive edge in recruitment. With respect to the Finnish target of extending careers and developing a competitive municipal sector, the key issue is how well strategic HR plans and good practices are promoting well-being function in real life, within the workplaces of the municipal sector (Forma et al. 2006). Should the practical applicability of public policy decisions be tested more extensively in forums such as the learning network?

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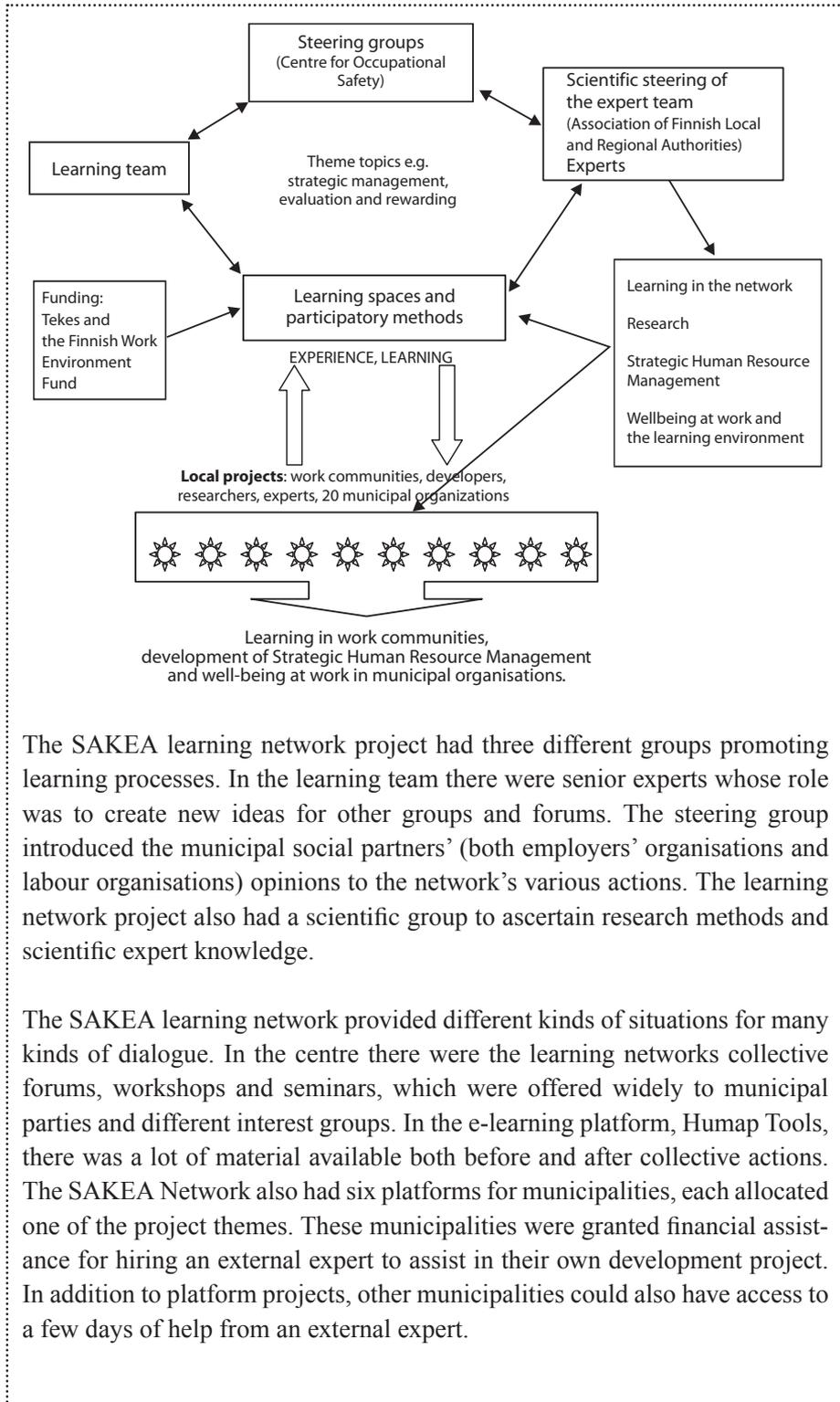
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SAKEA Learning Network for Strategic Human Resource Management and Evaluation of Operations in Municipalities

The main idea behind the SAKEA network was to boost the effectiveness and performance of municipalities with the help of strategic human resource management (SHRM) and Balanced scorecard (BSC)-based strategy and reformed systems of rewarding. The targets of the network were:

1. Creating functional strategic HRM practices for municipalities
2. Providing opportunities for learning and testing procedures in the learning network; offering local projects expert assistance that unites the various participants
3. Learning methods and action learning projects to facilitate self-steering, theme-centred cooperation between projects

Steering groups
(Centre for Occupational Safety)

Scientific steering of the expert team
(Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities)
Experts

Learning team

Theme topics e.g. strategic management, evaluation and rewarding

Funding:
Tekes and the Finnish Work Environment Fund

Learning spaces and participatory methods

EXPERIENCE, LEARNING

Learning in the network

Research

Strategic Human Resource Management

Wellbeing at work and the learning environment

Local projects: work communities, developers, researchers, experts, 20 municipal organizations

Learning in work communities, development of Strategic Human Resource Management and well-being at work in municipal organisations.

The SAKEA learning network project had three different groups promoting learning processes. In the learning team there were senior experts whose role was to create new ideas for other groups and forums. The steering group introduced the municipal social partners' (both employers' organisations and labour organisations) opinions to the network's various actions. The learning network project also had a scientific group to ascertain research methods and scientific expert knowledge.

The SAKEA learning network provided different kinds of situations for many kinds of dialogue. In the centre there were the learning networks collective forums, workshops and seminars, which were offered widely to municipal parties and different interest groups. In the e-learning platform, Humap Tools, there was a lot of material available both before and after collective actions. The SAKEA Network also had six platforms for municipalities, each allocated one of the project themes. These municipalities were granted financial assistance for hiring an external expert to assist in their own development project. In addition to platform projects, other municipalities could also have access to a few days of help from an external expert.

III Co-creation and learning in innovative networks

Co-configuration and learning in and for networks: the case of Forum of In-house Development in South Savo

Hannele Kerosuo, Hanna Toiviainen and Tuula Syrjälä

According to studies of cultural-historical activity theory, co-configuration of the object and the respective implementation of new tools are crucial to meaningful learning in human communities and networks. This has inspired us to follow the object, acknowledge tool use and sensitise ourselves to the network community, in order to grasp some of the specifics of emerging learning and development practices. We approach networks as historically and locally originating settings that engender multiple levels of learning to be mastered by participants. The study concludes by discussing future visions of the regional learning network in question.

Keywords: developmental work research, object-oriented learning network, regional development.

South Savo is a province in Eastern Finland. There are seventeen municipalities, of which three are cities, namely, Mikkeli, Savonlinna and Pieksämäki. One fourth of the area consists of a water system, which makes South Savo a popular area for tourism and holiday-making. Major employers can be found in the forest and metal industry, as well as the graphics industry. Trade and the public sector are also major local employers. However, the majority of firms are small, typically family-owned companies with less than ten workers.

South Savo lacks a university but has many units of higher education within the forest industry, food industry, environmental and material technology, information and communication technology, teacher education, tourism and culture, and welfare services. The population's level of education lags behind the rest of Finland, as does R&D expenditure, although this increased substantially during the 2000s.

The future of working life faces serious challenges in South Savo. Depopulation, the ageing of the workforce, a forthcoming shortage of skilled workers, limitations in mastering up-to-date knowledge regarding workplace development, and falling behind in the development of and investment in working life are issues that call for novel solutions. Simultaneously, the increasing complexity of work and organisations is creating new challenges for workplace learning in general.

In this study, the research context is the Forum of In-house Development in the learning network of South Savo. Internal change agents from six organisations and workplaces, such as occupational health, industrial safety, the employment agency, the environmental agency, mental health work, and reformatory youth work joined this forum. The forum was founded in order to enhance new networked models of worker-based learning and development for workplaces and the region.

Co-configuration has been suggested as a historically emerging new mode of post-industrial production, which qualitatively differs from the standardised knowledge of mass production and even from customised architectural knowledge creation (Victor & Boynton 1998). In the modelling conducted for the Forum for In-house Development, the concept of co-configuration was chosen as a working hypothesis articulating the learning potential of networks, particularly during the Forum's first cycle. The original idea underlying dialogical knowledge creation between a customer, a producer, and the product (ibid.) has been enriched using the concept of expansive learning (Engeström 1987), which highlights developmental contradictions, tensions, and multivoicedness as energisers of collaborative object construction and learning.

Whether co-configuration takes place and really captures the specifics of Forum's learning is a research question requiring exploration from many angles. We ask: In what way, if any, can co-configuration and learning in a network be understood and demonstrated by analysing the construction of the object, the implementation of tools and the articulations of the learning community?

In this article, we present results on the salient elements of network learning that emerged in the co-configurative third phase of the Learning Network in South Savo, 2007–2008. According to studies of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), the co-configuration of the object and the respective implementation of new tools are crucial to learning in human communities. We approach networks as historically and locally originating settings that engender multiple levels of learning to be mastered by participants (Toiviainen 2007).

Case: Forum of In-house Development embedded in Learning Network of South Savo

The Forum of In-house Development was the outcome of four preceding learning episodes (Knight & Pye 2005), during which a new concept of workplace learning was created in South Savo (Syrjälä et al. 2008). First, the initiative phase of the learning network occurred from 2003 to 2005 through informal discussions within a group of regional work life specialists. The need for a learning network was acknowledged and the crucial shift from discursive practices to the systematic and organisational preparatory phase of the network included the idea of worker-based development.

Second, the assembly phase of the learning network was carried out during 2006 with the support of the TYKES programme. A working committee of local developers was organised in Mikkeli. This committee elaborated the ideas submitted by a forum for worker-based development. These ideas were then forwarded to four other forums and a sub-network in the Savonlinna city area. This phase was characterised by struggles and multivoicedness related to the shared object of development, developmental methods and perceived benefits of participation in the network.

The third phase of 2007–2008, which is addressed in this chapter, concerned the first cycle of implementing the forums and sub-network activities, in which the focus is on 'co-configuration and learning in and for' the Forum of In-house Development. The outcome of the third phase was a design for a new in-house development model. Following this, the fourth phase involved the implementation of the new model with a new group of in-house developers during the second cycle, from 2008 to 2009.

The Forum of In-house Development is one of five forums initiated in the Learning Network project of South Savo. *The Forum of Management Networking* focuses on questions concerning the management's role in worker-based development and seeks to enhance management network learning. *The Forum of Entrepreneurship* is for small-firm managers' mentoring and peer-to-peer discussions. *The Forum of Work Life Development* involves the network of experts in the field. *The Research Forum* was founded to enable and support research into the project's network development and learning. Whereas these five forums are located in the City of Mikkeli, the City of Savonlinna hosts a sub-network for developing working life among small-scale entrepreneurs, in partnership with the local unit of the University of Applied Sciences.

All of these forums and sub-networks are partly connected with each other through the work life experts and developers, and the overarching supervisory board. Moreover, the general visions for regional development, as co-created in the starting phase, provided a common orientation. However, each of the forums had the freedom to develop its activities largely independently of other forums. At the outset, the initiators viewed high-level coordination as contradicting the idea of networking.

The Forum of In-house Development was organised for those organisational actors in the network who had an interest in the development of workplaces. The founders of the forum were also committed to learning the methods involved in Developmental Work Research (DWR). Their aim was to obtain knowledge of current development challenges at workplaces and to learn new network-based development methods.

Seven organisations decided to send one to three workers to receive training as an internal change agent, the 'in-house developer'. The related recruitment was performed by the active members of the learning network. In addition, the network engaged two researchers from the Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, University of Helsinki, to supervise the DWR method. Besides these researchers, local experts (hereafter referred to as local coaches) supported learning in the network. To summarise, the learning network, analysed here through the case of the Forum for In-house Development, was a collaborative development effort by a number of work organisations.

Studies of learning networks and the contribution of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

Learning networks and network learning can be defined in various ways, depending on the purpose, content, and context of the network. Knight and Pye (2005) focus on groups of organisations that learn in an inter-organisational context. They define learning networks as 'networks whose purpose is to learn.' They emphasise that, whereas network learning is a normally occurring process in inter-organisational interaction, not all networks are learning networks (Knight & Pye 2005, 372). Söndergaard et al. (1997; Bottrup 2005) make a distinction between business networks and development networks. Business networks are production networks that typically involve different levels of the supply/production chain. Developmental networks have the explicit goal of supporting organisational development and learning (Bottrup 2005, 509–510) in a manner comparable with the learning networks of Knight and Pye. We agree with these authors that learning and development networks represent specific historical forms, while realising that learning and development may take place in any kind of network.

Why are learning networks created? Bottrup (2005) suggests that the purpose is to improve the performance of an organisation, especially in business networks. Furthermore, she suggests that although the goal of development networks is learning and knowledge creation, they often lack specific targets. A primary feature of production networks is their use of shared learning to enable capacity development (Morris et al. 2006, 535). Morris et al. (2006, 534) create multiple benefits that can be gained in learning networks. For instance, learning networks enable reflection on different perspectives, the adoption of new concepts, risk sharing based on shared experimentation, the exploration of new lines of inquiry, increased understanding of network effects and the exploration of experiences outside an individual organisation.

Although the abovementioned benefits describe inter-firm networks, they also reflect the benefits created by other types of networks. However, regional networks often involve specific purposes for network creation arising from the local environment. For instance, a new method relating to management practices within the apple industry was created by a network of actors facing specific challenges in New Zealand (Hill et al. 2007).

How are learning networks studied? Morris et al. (2006) use a process management model to define the construction and operation of production networks. This process includes a set-up phase, operation phase and sustaining phase. In turn, Bottrup (2005) formulates the key factors of learning in networks: an influence on the definition of goals, means and methods, opportunities for reflection and transformation, equal power relations, trust and openness in social relations, and the possibility to follow-up. The network learning model proposed by Knight and Pye (2005, 383) is organised around three descriptive elements: context, content, and process. The network context involves key contextual factors which act in complex ways. Network learning content uncovers learning outcomes for network structures, network practices, and network interpretation. In sum, the variety of predominately empirically derived conceptual frameworks makes evaluation problematic. There seems to be a gap between rich empirical findings and the abstract models formulated, which restricts the applicability of the models in new contexts.

The Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT; Engeström et al. 1999) outlines an approach that emphasises the local history and dialectical development of the network. In this vein, the Learning Network of South Savo, of which the Forum of In-house Development is a part, represents a longitudinal regional learning effort begun by some local actors to improve regional development. The initial start up of the network therefore simultaneously involves motivation towards

shared learning and the joint development of the region. This makes the learning network in question a hybrid construct, combining elements of learning typical to production or business networks and development networks of learning.

The co-configuration of the forum is an outcome of the historical evolution of the learning network in South Savo. This means that the current phase of evolution can only be understood against its own history (Hill et al. 2007, 362). The model of expansive learning is used in this study to specify the phases of learning within the forum and to capture the historically evolving, specific nature of the focused network.

Besides the cycle of expansive learning, the second CHAT-based concept is the object of joint activity chosen as the unit of analysis in the network study. By following the creation of the object of activity, it is possible to gain an understanding of the motives and challenges involved in learning (Hill et al. 2007; Toiviainen 2007). Thirdly, new artefacts mediating human activity can contribute to changes in human cognition and action. Focusing on the development and implementation of new methods and tools distinguishes the CHAT-based approach from the major part of learning network studies by clearly situating the learning activity beyond formal training and workplace learning (Bottrup 2005). The adoption and creation of new conceptual tools played a central role in learning new methods in the forum.

Developmental Work Research in Forum of In-house Development

Developmental Work Research (DWR) is a CHAT-based approach applied in a variety of work life settings and other activities involving societal interaction (Engeström 1987; Engeström et al. 2005). In order to make the following analysis understandable, we present the core concepts underlying our approach to the model of activity system and the cycle of expansive learning. We also depict the Development Radar tool designed for the Forum. We are aware of the risk of reducing DWR to a few tools, while omitting the other methods used and the concepts that each workplace project implemented during the Forum in various phases of the learning cycle.

Model of activity system

An activity system is a systemic model displaying central elements of activity, enabling participants to analyse contradictions in the current activity and envisioning the new one. The model of activity system probably represents the

best-known element of DWR (Engeström 1987; Engeström et al. 2005). It is used as an analytical instrument in academic research, but has also proven useful to practitioners in workplace development. For example, to begin with, it may prove illuminating to model the past and the present elements of a work activity. With the help of modelling, participants may become able to analyse developmental contradictions in activity and design future change. These ideas were applied in Forum's work and in the participants' intermediate tasks.

Cycle of expansive learning and Development Radar

The cycle of expansive learning (Engeström 1987) is a conceptual tool for analysing learning as an expansive process, which means collective efforts to change the object of activity as a solution to historical contradictions within any given activity. This is another core DWR model used in scientific research as well as in development practices to design and conceptualise collective learning. Because analysed processes of innovation and learning are increasingly taking place in complex, collaborative constellations and networks of multiple activity systems, the basic model has been correspondingly remodelled and re-interpreted (Engeström & Sannino 2010).

One of the re-modellings is represented in the Development Radar designed for Forum's work (Toiviainen et al. 2009). Figure 1 shows the steps of expansive learning (in a simplified form) at the centre of the diagram, whereas the levels added around the cycle represent the layers of activity active as part of the in-house development project undertaken by the learning network. One of the basic uses of Development Radar is as a calendar marking the critical dates and events of the project at different phases and on different levels, such as the levels of workplace and local tutoring. Another use case allows an analysis of the asynchronies of the development process across various levels. This implies that the networkshop may work in the modelling phase, while the workplace is embarking on the charting phase, for example (Toiviainen & Kerosuo 2009).

Intermediate tasks and mirror data

The use of intermediate tasks and mirror material derive from the Change Laboratory approach to workplace development and learning (e.g. Virkkunen 2006) and represent a specific feature of DWR that seems to distinguish the setting of the Forum from other participatory methods used in learning networks. The aim is to deal with motivating challenges and contradictions in development and to mediate between the network and workplace practices. The data collected may consist of video-recorded work situations, workplace and customer interviews,

archive material, and all kinds of documentation. This data is then handled by an interventionist in order to 'mirror' important challenges and contradictions in their work, for analysis alongside the workers. Mirror data may also be gathered and prepared by the workers. In the Forum, the participants studied the method and applied it to their workplace projects.
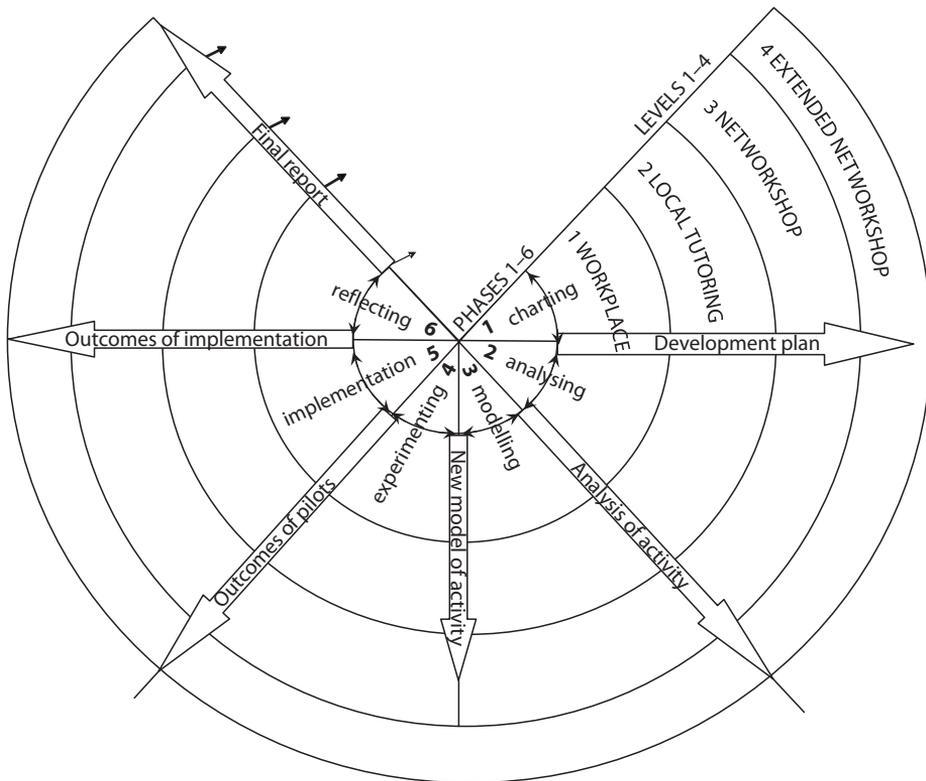

Figure 1. Development Radar (Toiviainen & Kerosuo 2009).
  Note: Cycle of expansive learning in the core (phases 1-6); levels of in-house workplace development (levels 1-4); intermediate outcomes of the develop-ment cycle (arrows).

Data and the proceeding of the study

Data was gathered from the seminars and workshops held within the Forum of In-house Development. Altogether, two seminars and nine workshops were organised during the focused phase of the Forum of In-house Development (a detailed presentation and evaluation of the methods are beyond the focus of this

article). Data on the study was video-taped and saved on CD-ROMs. The authors have created content logs and transcriptions from the video material.

Each workshop lasted four hours. The first and the second authors of this article planned and led the DWR-based programme in collaboration with the third author, the project manager of the learning network. Systematic work on the intermediate tasks undertaken by the in-house developers enhanced participant-centred interaction, which is reflected in the discursive data.

The following analysis takes the form of a narrative constructed by means of CHAT-based methodological principles. These are historicity in contextualising learning, object-orientation in identifying learning and learning outcomes, and tools-mediation as the key to understanding learning dynamics. In addition, we have analysed episodes in which the participants express multivoiced perspectives on the network learning community.

The analysis proceeds through seven phases: (1) Enrolment for Forum of In-house Development, (2) Starting the Forum of In-house Development, (3) Analysing the development challenges and needs of workplace projects, (4) Modelling objects of development in workplace projects and questioning the networkshop activity, (5) Implementation of new tools for planning workplace development, (6) Modelling the present phase of the project: experiences of experimentation, and (7) Evaluation and implementation of project outcomes.

Findings

The first cycle of the Forum for In-house Development, which ran from February 2007 to June 2008, included eleven networkshop meetings. The first two of these were open to interested organisations, whereas from the third meeting on we worked with the six organisations that committed themselves to participating in the in-house development project. This narrative of seven phases temporally follows the process that we planned and carried out alongside the participants. The exact titles for the phases are formulated in this analysis.

Phase 1: enrolment for Forum of In-house Development

Enrolment for the Forum of In-house Development proceeded based on two open seminars in February and April, 2007. Representatives of nine organisations and workplaces as well as the project coordination group and the researchers partici-pated in this phase. Participants were given preliminary reading and 'homework' to be prepared before the meeting, focusing on the network relations and activity

of their own workplaces. The researchers (first and second author of this paper) gave lectures on the DWR method and on network learning. For the second seminar, participants prepared another homework assignment including a mapping of their workplace networks and the challenges embedded in the networks. The future of the learning network was also designed in the second seminar.

To begin, the object of the network was given definitions and interpretations that were characteristically ideological in nature. The 'ideological object' of the learning network of South Savo stressed regional development and well-being as a basic motive for the network.

Secondly, various conceptions of developmental means and tools were discussed. Researchers offered conceptual tools for DWR, such as a model of an activity system and the cycle of expansive learning. These were considered useful for depicting the overall activity of a workplace and its network relationships. Some participants viewed the concept of a tool as difficult to understand, being accustomed to use the word *tool* in the context of concrete tools such as a turning machine.

Thirdly, the network community was discussed in terms of the value it would bring to the region and workplaces. Some participants emphasised profit-based values, whereas others underlined the human value of networks.

Phase 2: starting the Forum of In-house Development

After the two start-up seminars, twenty participants from six workplaces decided to remain in the network community. To begin with, the participants, the 'in-house developers', presented their preliminary ideas for a workplace project. One of the in-house developers wanted to plan a new division of labour in office work, due to a change that new data systems had brought to the work. The second workplace focused on poorly functioning staff meetings, while the third considered a choice between two topics, one on social entrepreneurship, and the other on a personal development plan used as a tool in reformatory youth work. The fourth workplace had an interest in clarifying basic tasks and enhancing work-related well-being in a mental health organisation. The fifth and sixth were adjusting to nation-wide changes in their organisation and wanted to work on these developments in their projects.

Through the adoption of developmental methods, concepts, and tools as well as new ideas of network learning, the ideological object gradually began to fade and give way to new interpretations. Instead of more or less ideal goal-setting

and visions, participants were asked to consider disturbances, tensions, and contradictions occurring in the ordinary flow of work, as a starting point for learning.

In sum, the ideological discussions on the object of the network had switched to an object closely connected to the practical and partly diffuse developmental needs of the workplaces. The topic of the network community was closely connected to the object and motive of the forum.

The network community was motivated to learn new methods and tools for workplace development. Plans for the next phase of the Forum of In-house Development were created in the seminar. The forum would function as a 'closed' network in the autumn of 2007. Three local coaches were engaged in small-groups under two projects, to enhance mutual learning across the workplaces. The small groups scheduled their first meetings to be held prior to the next network meeting, in order to prepare preliminary project plans.

Phase 3: analysing the development challenges and needs of workplace projects

The first of the meetings we called 'networkshops' took place in August 2007. The in-house developers had an intermediate task assignment to work on concrete project plans and collect the first set of mirror data from the workplace. This learning task tuned the in-house developers into seeking a developmental object through their project. Thus, the in-house developers from the occupational safety and environmental health organisation worked on the current problems and history of meeting procedures. In another example, the project plan was based on the change in mental healthcare based on which housing services for the rehabilitation of young patients with multiple problems were needed, instead of services provided for chronic mental health patients. Mirror material was collected by some of the participants based on small-scale surveys among staff, the results of which they intended to present in forthcoming staff member workshops.

Regarding community creation, the introduction of the Development Radar model was crucial to this phase (see Figure 1). The radar tool enabled the charting of the phases of learning on workplace and other levels of activity: the local coaching, networkshop and extended networkshop (including managers) levels. We experienced this episode as an important local innovation that enhanced the co-configurative activity of the community network (see Toiviainen & Kerosuo 2009; Toiviainen et al. 2009).

Phase 4: modelling the objects of development and questioning the networkshop activity

The Forum of In-house Development proceeded in September 2007. The in-house developers now had to model the contradictions and development challenges involved in their projects. They simultaneously started to model the object of development. However, the modelling task was experienced as difficult and some members questioned the learning task by refusing to do it. When discussing these difficulties, the in-house developers demanded special training in developmental methods in order to be able to use the methods and tools effectively. Others pointed out that the learning tasks provided by the researchers and development tasks given under local coaching had not been adjusted to each other. It was suggested that local coaching and the networkshop be better integrated.

Despite these difficulties, the in-house developers began to reflect on the objects of development in their work activity. The originally ideological object of the network community, which had previously been concretised through workplace needs, gave way to the achievement of workplace-level expansion as a result of modelling.

For instance, it transpired that the obvious need to develop new meeting procedures required more profound reflection on the basic task of occupational safety and environmental health. In the employment office, the object of change involved expanding from the development of a local organisation to that of regional services. The historical analysis of this organisation's development and its objects in each phase of development enabled the in-house developers to envisage the direction of change.

Phase 5: implementation of new tools for planning workplace development

In October, Development Radar was used as a tool for charting the phases of each project (Toiviainen & Kerosuo 2009). We called this sequence of workshop discussion the 'Radar Round'. The use of this tool for in-house development opened up new horizons on the object of development. The participants realised that development often means returning to the phases already implemented in their projects. One in-house developer considered the pendulum between the steps as involving 'a risk, or a wish, or desire to turn back' during the project, as the pendulum broadened their perspectives on development. Further, one developer considered the radar round itself useful because "it provides us with a mirror on one's own project" and informs us of which phase other projects had reached, since "the rhythm of development differs" in each project.

After the Radar round, the data collection methods and the creation of the mirror were commented on in detail. The in-house developers took turns to tell others about their experiences and the status of their project. Others presented comments and questions. For instance, one in-house developer referred to the use of historical analysis in the project. She concluded that the model of activity system (triangle model) was useful in the summary of developmental tensions and contradictions. A second developer reported on the outcomes of a group interview. A third told about how they were planning to use its results in a staff meeting. Thus, even this brief discussion revealed a variety of uses of the developmental tools offered in the networkshop.

The intermediate learning task undertaken in October involved planning development workshops at workplaces. Plans were analysed in small groups based on peer-to-peer guidance. The group work activated the participants to comment on each others' projects and encourage each other to proceed with workplace plans. For instance, the developers working on the local employment office presented the method of mirror data collection, in which staff members performed the data gathering. In the ensuing discussion, other in-house developers asked whether they were planning to obtain customer views in their project work, how they planned the working groups and what kind of new visions were raised during the project meetings.

Phase 6: modelling the present phase of the project: multi-faceted experiences of experimentation

We can discern the beginning of the sixth phase at the turn of 2007–2008, when the participants gradually proceeded with their projects in the workplace, whereby more and more workers became involved in the in-house development activity. It was characteristic of this phase that the projects proceeded according to different time scales. The participants in the project on reformatory youth work had already conducted one pilot case and a second was planned. The developers reflected that they were very close to their future model of activity, according to which the personal development plan would become a tool in their activity, instead of being a formal rule nobody really used. Another developer reported that their project was stuck because staff members had other things, such as discussions on salaries, on their minds.

The experimentation and piloting phase brought to light the variation in the implementation of the projects across workplaces. Variation may also reflect the fact that performing long-term developmental cycles is a demanding task, the success of which depends on many contextual issues in workplaces, not only the

skills of the developers. Basic models for DWR and Development Radar were used by virtually all participants, whereas a new task assignment concerning the preparation of mirror material activated only one workplace. The radar-tool and another tool termed Implementation Platform were used in updating the workplace projects phase in February, 2008. This implementation platform provided space for making notes on project achievements and outcomes in each phase. The phases were defined according to the expansive learning cycle.

Phase 7: evaluation and implementation of project outcomes

The managers of the participating workplaces and the members of the steering group of the learning network were invited to an extended networkshop in April, 2008. This workshop had the objective of presenting the objects, outcomes and future challenges of workplace projects, obtaining comments from the management, and evaluating the method of project-based development used within the network community.

In-house developers presented the outcomes of their projects. For instance, a developer from the local occupational safety and health environment office explained how they had developed new procedures for meetings and internal communication. She used the model of an activity system to present the current tensions and challenges involved in their project. They had future plans to create a follow-up project with a team of 4–5 developers representing different parts of the county. Another in-house developer from the mental health organisation presented a rehabilitation plan and entrance form created in their project for mental health customers.

Three participating management representatives were satisfied with the project outcomes at their workplaces. For instance, the manager of the local employment and economic office felt that in-house developers had provided important support in their change process. The manager of the mental health organisation also considered the project outcomes impressive. She felt that the contribution of the in-house developers supported her managerial work.

In-house developers evaluated that the methods and developmental tools implemented in the forum had supported their work as in-house developers at workplaces. The developers of reformatory youth work considered the use of the mirror data a turning point in their process. Developers within the mental health organisations deemed the model of an activity system useful for them. They had also learned a great deal from their partner project in local coaching.

In the concluding discussions, some participants paid attention to the role of management in development processes. One participant wanted to expand the model to small firm development. In particular, she considered the new tools for project work useful for companies.

The evaluation phase was concluded by a 'learning workshop' in which the participants reflected on their individual learning processes. The results of this workshop have been published elsewhere (Syrjälä 2009; Toiviainen & Kerosuo 2009) and are not included in this article, the focus being on the level of network learning.

Summary and conclusions

The findings of our study indicate that the co-configuration of the object, the implementation of new tools and the creation of a network community are intertwined and co-evolving within the regional learning network. In what way, if any, can co-configuration and learning within a network be understood and demonstrated by analysing the construction of the object, the implementation of tools and the articulations of the learning community? We argue that it is meaningful to analyse each of these in order to obtain insights into learning in networks. Thus, the transformation of the object of learning, in-house development, from a general idea to the most specific set of challenges, was accompanied by an enriching constellation of tools from existing models, which became available to new models in context. Furthermore, alongside these developments, the community was moving from a general commitment to the notion of heterogeneity. The main findings are summarised in Table 1.

From the table, we want to highlight the following three points. First, at the outset, the network community gave the object of the network definitions and interpretations that were characteristically *ideological* in nature. Through the adoption of developmental methods, concepts, and tools, as well as new ideas of network learning, the ideological object gradually changed to an object closely connected to the diffuse *developmental needs of the workplaces*. Concrete plans for workplace projects, modelling the object of activity and experimenting with the model expanded the 'ideological object' and the developmental object of activity into a *future model* of activity in workplace projects and, for us researchers, a future model of the network learning community.

Secondly, many in-house developers joined the network community to learn new methods and tools for workplace development. *Basic methods and tools of DWR* were implemented in the earliest phase of the network community. Implementation of the DWR tools was quite easy to begin with, but putting them to full use

Table 1. Main findings of the study.

Phase of analysis		Object of development	Tools and concepts of development	Network Community articulations
1	Enrolment to Forum of In-house Development	'Ideological object' Regional development and well-being as a general motive for the network	DWR tools: Model of activity system and cycle of expansive learning considered useful for depicting the activity of a workplace and its network relationships	Profit or human based value of the network community to the region and workplaces
2	Starting the Forum of In-house Development	Idea of a workplace project, preliminary definitions of developmental needs in work-places	Tools needed for the workplace development created together in the network community	New methods and tools for workplace development, plans for the forum as an articulation of a community
3	Analysing development challenges and needs of work-place projects	Object-orientation through the design of concrete project plans for workplace projects	'Mirror data' collected from work activity to be developed through in-house developers' interventions	The levels of learning in the network community visualised in Developmental Radar
4	Modelling objects of development in workplace projects and questioning the networkshop activity	Expansion of the 'ideological object' towards concrete objects of development on the level of workplaces	Contradiction, developmental challenge, historical analysis	Questioning the methods of the Forum as counteracting workplace projects
5	Implementation of new tools for planning workplace development	New horizons of the developmental object and learning dynamics through 'Radar Round'	Development Radar, historical analysis, triangle model, 'mirror data' collection methods	Peer-to-peer guidance
6	Modelling the present phase of the project: experiences of experimentation	Future model of activity in workplace units	Experimentation, basic models of DWR, 'Developmental Radar', 'Implementation Platform', workplace specific tools	Notion of the hetero-geneity of community: projects proceeding according to different time scales, variation across workplaces in the implementation of the projects
7	Evaluation and implementation of project outcomes	Evaluation of the objects, outcomes, and future challenges of workplace projects	Triangle model, tension, experimen-tation, workplace specific tools, and procedures	Collectively shared appreciation of Forum as a new type of community with learning potential

was demanding. A turning point in tool-use emerged when some in-house developers *questioned the task of modelling* with DRW concepts and demanded special training in developmental methods. This questioning coincided with the introduction of a *new model, Development Radar*, embedded in the context of the Forum. After this turning point, the tools were taken into genuine use as *instruments*. Their use diversified in workplace development and the network community rather than minimally fulfilling the assignments given in the performance of intermediate tasks.

The third point we would like to make is that networks are considered a challenging context for learning and learning research. We argue that abiding by the social network formation and trust are not enough. *The co-configuration of the network, from its ideal state and tentative commitment to task definitions, into a vibrant and heterogeneous learning community, took time and effort on various levels.* Interestingly, questioning the tools did not lead to the questioning of the network community. The Developmental Radar tool enabled the charting of the various levels of learning, which was even an empowering notion for many participants, highlighting their own responsibility and agency with respect to in-house development. The value of learning in the network was clearly assessed and acknowledged in the final extended workshop, where the in-house developers presented their project outcomes to workplace managers.

Discussion

Beyond the immediate outcomes of this analysis, we would like to discuss some future perspectives on the learning network of South Savo. These points are three in number, as follows: following developments at workplaces after the Forum work, designing future plans for the regional learning network and discussing the wider applicability of the Forum model.

First, in order to obtain a deeper insight into change and learning at workplace level, we had the opportunity for a follow-up study carried out between January and June 2010 by Anu Kajamaa, a doctoral student at the University of Helsinki. The follow-up study retrospectively investigated the consequences of the two forums and the sustainability and diffusion of innovative ideas created within them. It addressed selected workplaces and, moreover, included a comparative setting between three participant organisations involved in the Forum of In-house Development and three participant companies participating in the Forum of Management Networking.

Secondly, the future prospects of the learning network of South Savo were outlined in a collaborative workshop in February 2010, to which the supervisory

board and the project coordinator invited some of the main actors in regional development, such as the Regional Council of South Savo, the Ruralia Institute of the University of Helsinki, and the federations of municipalities of the cities of Savonlinna and Mikkeli. The aim of the workshop was to plan how the models developed by the learning network thus far might best be consolidated, financed and offered to workplaces and companies.

Concerning the Forum for In-house Development, it was agreed that the management level would have to be deliberately integrated into the developmental processes guided by the internal worker-developers. In fact, this principle was written into the learning network's initial plan. In practice, the Forum of In-house Development and the Forum of Management Networking did not succeed in building a shared object bridging these two. This notion made future integration even more important.

As an outcome of the workshop, a delegation from the supervisory board was formed that met the management of the Regional Council of South Savo, and the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment.

The representatives from each participating organisation committed themselves to seeking financial resources, by means of which the future development of the learning network will be implemented as outlined in the workshop. These positive signals imply that learning innovations are acknowledged as a contribution to the regional improvement needs discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Finally, the learning network case reported here provides one example of societal experiments that involve a great deal of effort, perseverance and investment by the participants. The question of the dissemination and generalisation of outcomes and practices within new contexts is therefore unavoidable. Drawing on the CHAT-based approach, our answer tends to emphasise the role of tools as mediators of new practices in new contexts. Rather than defining a proper application of the Forum of In-house Development, we would encourage other workplace developers to take the tools and models into use, even if only partially embedded within practices comparable to ours.
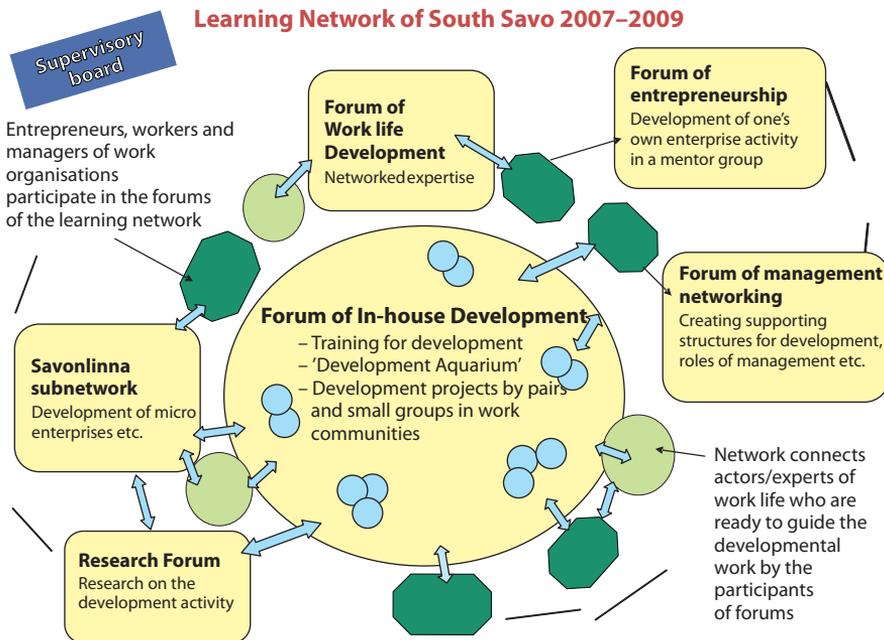
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Learning Network of South Savo

The objective of the Learning Network in South Savo was to enhance new networked models of sustainable worker-based learning and development, for both workplaces and the region.

Learning Network of South Savo 2007–2009

Supervisory board

Entrepreneurs, workers and managers of work organisations participate in the forums of the learning network

Forum of Work life Development
Networked expertise

Forum of entrepreneurship
Development of one's own enterprise activity in a mentor group

Forum of management networking
Creating supporting structures for development, roles of management etc.

Forum of In-house Development
– Training for development
– 'Development Aquarium'
– Development projects by pairs and small groups in work communities

Savonlinna subnetwork
Development of micro enterprises etc.

Research Forum
Research on the development activity

Network connects actors/experts of work life who are ready to guide the developmental work by the participants of forums

The network was composed of five forums located in the City of Mikkeli and a sub-network hosted by the City of Savonlinna. The idea behind the *Forum of In-house Development* was to seek knowledge of current development challenges at workplaces. Another aim was to learn new network-based development methods from a group of internal change agents from six workplaces in South Savo. The *Forum of Management Networking* focused on the management's role in worker-based development. This forum worked towards enhancing management network learning. The *Forum of Entrepreneurship* was established for the management of small-firm managers and as a forum for peer-to-peer discussions. The *Forum of Work Life Development* involved a network of experts in the field. The *Research Forum* was founded to enable and

support research on network development and learning within the project. The purpose of the *Savonlinna sub-network* was to develop working life among small-scale entrepreneurs, in partnership with the local unit of the University of Applied Sciences. From among its active members, the network had appointed a Steering Group – a Supervisory Board – and a Working Group.

Main actors of the network were managers, internal change agents and local entrepreneurs from organisations and workplaces, in areas including occupational health, industrial safety, employment agencies, environmental agency, mental health work, reformatory youth work and SMEs. The expert group included researchers from the University of Helsinki, lecturers from the University of Eastern Finland and the Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences, the Anttolanhovi Research and Rehabilitation Center, the Small Business Center in Mikkeli, the Regional Federation of Enterprises in South Savo and various consultants.

Open and integrated peer-learning spaces in municipal development

Robert Arnkil and Timo Spangar

In this article, we present the experiences and results of *a peer-learning network* – PEERS. This network experimented with peer-learning 'spaces' in order to promote the dissemination of good practices within and between municipalities in Finland. PEERS was executed in 2007–2010 as a collaboration between research institutions, the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities and a group of municipalities. The core of PEERS was a journey through dialogical multi-actor and multi-perspective workshops, whose content consisted of topical practices and themes for Finnish municipalities.

Keywords: action research, dialogical workshop, learning network, learning space, municipality, peer learning.

Dialogical workshops have been developed through a variety of theoretical and practical approaches. The work conducted in PEERS (*Vertaiset* in Finnish) belongs to a broad family of dialogical *work conferences*, and owes much to this family in terms of its ideas and methods (Bunker & Alban 1997). At the same time, something unexpected occurred in PEERS, appearing to tap into an interesting period of ongoing change in the Nordic municipalities, themselves an important part of Nordic welfare societies.

The key learning result of PEERS was an integrated and structured concept of peer-learning workshops as a 'learning space'. In interesting ways, this learning space enables the spanning of certain time-space-activity mode dichotomies. Overcoming these dichotomies can enhance learning across practices and promote multi-actor engagement – while also providing a space in which to address the fragmentation, compartmentalisation and turbulence taking place in local government. The concept of an open and integrated learning space developed through PEERS, falls between spontaneous everyday learning in the workplace and science-driven 'evidence-based' learning. For its part, this helps to bridge the gap between practical development and research. During PEERS, these learning spaces were nicknamed *puimala* in Finnish, which translates as *threshing barn* in

English, a metaphor for spaces in which "the husk is separated from the grain",[1] i.e. a learning space for the joint discovery of something new and useful.

A backdrop to PEERS is formed by the ongoing change in local government in all Nordic countries, especially Finland, Denmark and Norway. The crucial issue for Finnish working life in general, and the municipalities in particular, is to achieve a new level of sustainable productivity. This is due to a constellation of interlinked strategic challenges, the most important of which are the steep ageing of Finnish society, combined with high dependence on global competitiveness and a future characterised by a limited supply of workforce. This puts tremendous pressure on local government – the key supplier of social, health and educational services. A recent forecast of the Finnish economy and labour markets for the period up to 2025 (Honkatukia 2010) pointed out that Finland would need 120,000 new workers in social and health services alone (plus replacements for those entering retirement).[2] There is no way Finland can respond to this challenge solely through recruitment. Innovations are required resolving the way in which services are actually provided and in determining what citizens can do for themselves. To address this complex task, social and organisational (as well as or combined with technical) innovations are needed. These are often referred to as *good practices*.

However, a wealth of domestic and international research and evaluation points to the fact that, despite considerable productivity potential in developing and disseminating good practices, good practices do not travel well and are often poorly, if at all, rooted in everyday practices. Since, in many cases, little is known about effectual mechanisms within complex social and organisational innovations, the levers necessary to realising productivity potential are ignored or underestimated (Arnkil 2008a; Conklin 2006; Pawson 2007; Seppälä-Järvelä & Karjalainen 2006).

In the critical reviews and feasibility studies (Arnkil et al. 2007) leading up to PEERS, we discovered that the discussion and concept of good (or, indeed,

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1   *Puimala* (threshing barn) and *puiminen* (the verb 'threshing') are used frequently in Finnish everyday language to connote a thoroughgoing conversation ("lets thresh this out"), without any aggressive or negative meaning (such as beating). The words 'threshing barn' and to 'thresh' do not have the same connotations in English, however. Perhaps Finland is closer to being an agricultural society, while Great Britain, as the forerunner of industrialisation, has already become alienated from such concepts and metaphors! We ask the reader to indulge us in our naming the dialogic workshops held through PEERS *puimala*. In much in the same way, Nonaka and Nishiguchi (2001) refer to a special integrated learning space as *ba* in Japanese, inviting us to challenge our previous conceptions.

2   Translated into the labour markets of large European countries like Great Britain, Germany or France, this would mean a requirement for over a million employees in the social and health sector.

best) practices, is dominated by a rather simplistic and linear understanding of practices, treating them more or less as a 'commodity' to be created, stored and disseminated. This seriously limits the possibility of understanding the true complexity of practices and the complex local learning process needed in order to transmit, implement and sustain them. At best, descriptions of good practices are like condensed theatrical scripts. In order to breathe life into the script, it has to be cast, rehearsed, performed and experienced – i.e. brought to life in a new local context.

In the critical review, we also argued that there are paradoxes of *time* concerning the concept of good practices. Evidence of the real impact (and the learning cycle) of a (new) practice takes years, and more often than not, decades to emerge, but the pressure to implement action is here and now. So who will wait for real evidence on, say, the virtues of a principal-agent model, or introducing competition and contracting to local government? In real life, 'quasi-evidenced' practices are simply tried out *carpe diem*, in the form of everyday and short-cycle learning. It then becomes a question of the quality of this short-cycle learning – and whether it is ever linked to long-term, 'evidence-based' learning. In sum, the reality of learning about practices seems to defy linear time-concepts (Arnkil 2008b; Pedersen 2009), while calling for new ones.

The key learning concept in the case of PEERS was built around *peers* and *peer learning*. By peers and peer learning, we refer to a perspective in which the actors and their varying positions are regarded on an equal footing – as equally important – as a resource in relation to the solution or development to be discovered. The focus of peer learning is learning from those who are in a 'similar situation', rather than being on 'teaching'. Peer learning is characterised by an active and participative understanding of the 'learner' and the personal nature of the learning process (Boud et al. 1999). The concept of peer learning is thus linked to the tradition of learning theories, which view learning results as dependent on social factors, like the interaction between actors, rather than, say, the methods used (Kiviat 2004).

Responding to the challenge: excerpts from the PEERS journey

The PEERS journey

In PEERS, the learning journey progressed first and foremost via the learning spaces provided by multi-perspective and multi-actor workshops. The process was coordinated by a core group consisting of a research team, a team from the

Association of Local and Regional Authorities and six representatives of various municipalities. There was also a steering group with representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Finance, The Work Environment Fund, the Workplace Development Programme TYKES (financing the PEERS learning network) and the Association of Local and Regional Authorities.

The participants in the PEERS learning journey consisted of four main groups: (1) the research team and the research community, (2) the Team from the Association of Local and Regional Authorities and experts from the organisation, (3) municipalities participating in the workshops as practice examples and as participants, and (4) other stakeholders such as experts on public administration and working life, people from ministries, citizens' associations and clients, citizens and people from other learning networks.

Within a time-span of around three years, four big national workshops, with around 100 participants were arranged, as well as five local and group workshops, involving around 10–30 people. In addition to this, normal working group meetings were held. The workshop process included (in some instances) pre-workshop dialogue over the Internet, a face-to-face workshop (sometimes with real-time virtual participation), and post-workshop feedback and dialogue over the Internet.

The workshops 'threshed' out a set of topical themes and practices, chosen in the network discussions. In discussions held with different actors and stakeholders on the potential themes, it was deemed important to identify relevant themes
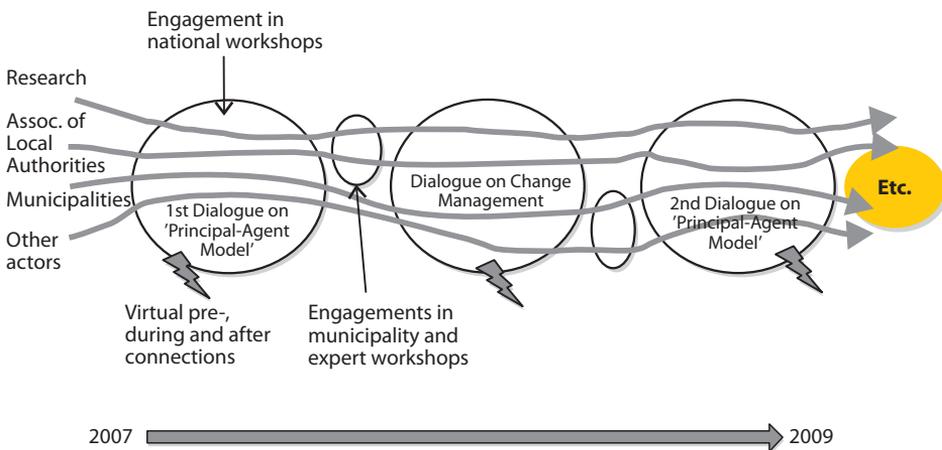

Figure 1. The journeys conducted within PEERS.

and complex challenges concerning the transparency, contradictions and incompleteness of good practices. Key themes concerned explorative experiences of principal-agent models, strategic change, personnel participation and open and early cross-sectoral collaboration (involving, in particular, social, health and educational services within municipalities). All themes tied in with the strategic challenge of enhancing sustainable productivity in municipalities. These workshops – both large and small – provided learning and connection spaces for the various groups, engaging them in the journey and connecting them to each other (Figure 1).

Puimala – workshop for connections

Within PEERS, a set of workshops were arranged around the theme of, and practical examples involving, the implementation of the principal-agent model in municipal services.[3] Representatives of the municipalities who had either implemented, or were interested in, the model, were invited. So too were representatives from ministries, alongside experts and members of citizen associations. The principal-agent model was not treated as a *self-evident example* of good practice, but an *important initiative*, which needs to be critically explored.

As a practical example put forward for discussion, a 'veteran municipality' experienced in implementing the model was invited to send a multi-actor team A, with 'voices' representing political decision making, senior management, middle-management, front-line services, horizontal cooperation and unions. Another team from another city just embarking on the implementation of the model, peer team B, was invited to comment and reflect on the experiences of A. We have termed this type of vertical-horizontal team a 360-degree team, or 360-degree 'microcosm'.[4]

Members of both teams were asked in advance to 'tell their stories' of the 'winding road' of implementation in a short, personal way. These stories were posted on the Internet for all participants to read prior to the workshop. In addition, basic information on the model and the implementation were posted beforehand.

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3   By principal-agent model, we refer to the contract models being developed in the public sector, in the wake of New Public Management by Ferlie et al. (2007) and Lane (2003).

4   The 360-degree concept has been used in management feedback (Lepsinger & Lucia 1997), in which the manager receives feedback from below, above and from his/her peers. We use this term to denote a set of vertical and horizontal actors and their connections.

Stepping into the workshop room, you found yourself sitting in nested circles. Quiet music was playing in the background and a set of comfortable chairs, a table, and some flowers were located near the centre. You were entering something more reminiscent of a living room than a traditional auditorium.

A very brief recap of the main features of the respective sample models was given at the beginning, scrupulously avoiding 'death by PowerPoint'. The teams were then interviewed by a facilitator, with the others as the audience. This facilitator asked the first team members to reflect on their experiences – what were the goals, highlights and pitfalls? In particular, the facilitator was interested in how the different stakeholders related to each other during the implementation, both vertically and horizontally. The floor was then briefly thrown open to reactions from the audience. Then, the facilitator turned to team B and asked in what way their experience was similar or different to what they had heard team A saying. Again, reactions from the audience were requested by the facilitator. A third group, a group of experts, was interviewed by the facilitator, who asked for reactions on what they had heard during the day in comparison to their experience of implementing the principal-agent model. The final word was given to team A on what they took home from the day. Notes were made of the day and sent to all participants immediately afterwards.

A key idea in the *puimala* workshops was that, instead of *individuals* telling about the example, a 360-degree *team* was invited from the municipalities, a 'microcosm' of vertical and horizontal connections, to represent the complexity of the model's real-life implementation. These 'microcosms', or examples, were then interviewed by a facilitator in front of the audience. The core idea was to conjure up – even in an incomplete way – some key aspects of the real-life complexity, negotiations and connections needed to embed the model in a local context. Thus, everybody in the room was invited to consider how such complexity compares to their own experience and contexts. Another idea was that, when the team returned home, they would be enriched by the ideas, to which they had been exposed, on how to improve their vertical and horizontal connections.

The above was a typical, but very condensed, description of a *puimala*. In many others, with more a front-line service focus, actual clients and citizens were invited, rather than just associations. Also, in some workshops, real-time virtual participation was offered via the Internet. However, on the basis of the above example, we should now summarise some of the *puimala* concept's key characteristics in Table 1.

Table 1. Key characteristics of the puimala concept.

Implementation	Key ideas
Implementation stories based on the examples could be read on the Internet prior to the workshop	Storytelling to enhance the psycho-social connection to the subject in hand
Teams representing various horizontal and vertical perspectives, or 'voices', were interviewed based on the examples	Inviting 360-degree 'microcosms' to represent the complexity of the implementation, in order to enhance the listeners' ability to relate, connect, reflect and further implement the ideas given
The examples represented 'veterans' and 'beginners' (and very different perspectives among the audience)	Presenting the possibility to project different degrees of experience and time onto the examples
People were seated in nested circles, the space was like a 'living-room'; there were flowers, music and pictures	The 'space' gave the message that this is 'different' (vis-à-vis a routine conference…), you are welcome, we are equal, we are 'peers', we are related, there is time and peace enough…all in pursuit of enhancing engagement and dialogue
Basic information on the principal-agent model was posted beforehand, with only a brief recap given in the workshops	The emphasis is on presence, 'here and now', we are here to connect, to listen, to learn from each other
A facilitator interviewed the 'voices' and invited the listeners to join in. The same procedure was followed for the other examples and 'voices'.	Speaking and listening were separated, providing neutrality and equal use of time, in order to enhance articulation and dialogue
Notes were taken and distributed immediately afterwards to the participants (and posted on the Internet for everybody's comments)	The processing of what was heard, and the invitation for further comments, was supported
In some workshops, pre-real-time and post-virtual participation was arranged	Presence and reality were understood as an integrated whole, a physical, psychological, social and virtual whole
Based on the theme of the principal-agent model, a series of interlinked workshops was arranged, with the points made and results of each workshop feeding into the next one	Achieving greater depth and accumulation within the process

Interpreting the discoveries made through PEERS

Puimala as an open and integrative space for peer learning

Thus, several key dimensions of *puimala* were identified. Unlike the traditional seminar concept, a *puimala* simultaneously addresses the key dimensions of good design for learning spaces, and even for dialogical workshops. This makes the *puimala* a unique constellation for peer learning. It integrates the content – the topical themes of good practices within the municipalities, the mode of action (speaking, listening, storytelling) and the space (its physical and mental qualities) – into a single holistic process. As a dialogical space, *puimala* integrates the physical and virtual presence occurring simultaneously in both worlds. It is a form of presence where both 'on-site' and 'on-line' participation are enabled.

Bringing the participants into the same physical, real-time presence enables the mutual experiencing of things. Although managers, experts and front-line workers have different individual experiences, *puimala* enables a personal sense of the dynamics of the dialogical experience. By implication, the participants find it easier to transform the lessons they learn from one another into their own contexts.

The *puimala* concept and practice is a structured, integrated approach to building up peer learning spaces. In comparison with several other learning space concepts (e.g. Block 2008; Engeström et al. 1999; Gibson 1986; Gustavsen 1986; 2002; Nonaka at al. 2008; Shotter 1993; Virkkunen et al. 2001; Wenger 1998) the *puimala* concept seems to elaborate and explicate several of the 'good practices' for designing learning spaces present in those concepts. As a concept and dialogical workshop practice, *puimala* seems to constitute an integrative and consistently structured approach to peer learning. In this respect, it is distinguished from other approaches within the 'dialogical family'.

It places more emphasis than Gustavsen's (2002) democratic dialogue – to which it is highly indebted – on the presence of all relevant participants at critical moments and on the teams as the basic units, or 'microcosms'.[5] Furthermore, although implicitly present in the other approaches, the 360-degree constellation, the role of the facilitator, the mix of action modes as well as the 'real' and virtual (*puimala* as a 'hybrid space'), seem to have a stronger conceptual position in the *puimala* concept.

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5   This does not mean that the workshops were never split into working groups, or that the concept could not be used in other than 360-degree team dialogues. The point here is that the *puimala* concept emphasises *being present in the dialogue, where something is discovered*. It represents a completely different experience from being told in hindsight – as in working-group feedback – of what was discovered.

Several characateristics of this type of dialogical workshop appear to lend them-selves to further elaboration. At best, *puimala* is able to overcome and go beyond some critical dualisms such as 'general v. local', 'personal v. general', 'individual v. community', 'leadership v. operative level', 'outside v. inside perspectives', 'past-present-future', 'talking and doing/making things together', 'the physical structure of the learning space and the inner meaningfulness of the space'. As a dialogical workshop, *puimala* does not necessarily solve these problems, but it provides a space in which new 'attractors' of openness and integrity can emerge. In the case of today's Finnish municipalities, where fragmentation and time pressure are prevalent, these features of *puimala* are more than welcome. The *puimala* concept and practice also seem sufficiently flexible, as well as capable of modification, in order to play a role in improving the municipalities' resources as they face the rapidly growing challenges posed by their operating environments. *Puimala* can be described as an *open and integrated peer learning space* and visualised as follows (Figure 2).

Puimala seems to create a new kind of developmental context that might be termed an *ecological approach* to developmental work. Through the dialogical process, the 'new ecology' of *puimala* opens up new opportunities for participants
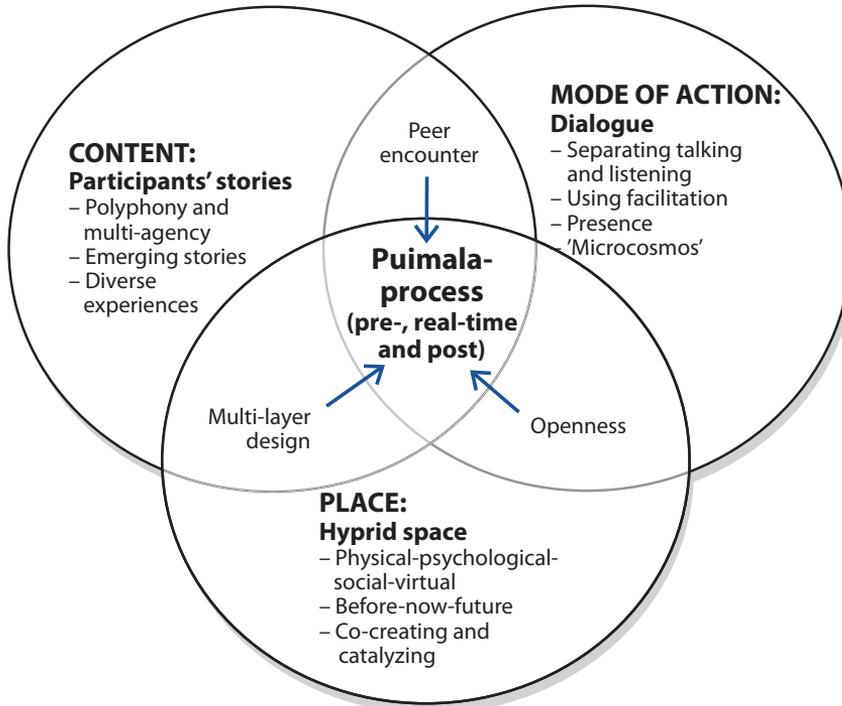

Figure 2. Puimala as an open and integrated peer-learning space (Arnkil et al. 2010).

to create new connections. The new connections established within *puimalas* act as catalysts for the further development and 'dissemination' of good practices. Good practices are context-driven and socially constructed. They must be 're-invented' for use in another context (Moravec 2009). In metaphorical terms, good practices must be 'unzipped' (from the 'zipped/packed' form in which they are presented or documented) to reveal their full diversity and contextuality, in order to be re-interpreted, re-practiced and re-presented.

Positioning PEERS in action research

The *puimala* process provided us with some novel perspectives on the methodology and development of the concept, within a turbulent and swaying context. We found ourselves asking about the relationship between the development work we were doing and the knowledge creation process. During the last few years, the issue of 'development v. research' has been the subject of lively debate within the action research paradigm. Maurer and Githens (2010) have recently identified a new strand of action research, 'dialogic action research' (the 'conventional' and 'critical action research' being the other two strands), based on which the goals of the process enhance mutual understanding and learning, as well as practical solutions.

We would prefer to term our approach 'integrative-dialogical (ID) action research' since this resonates with Maurer's and Githens' argument, based on dialogical processes as the key element. On the other hand, the *puimala* concept developed into an integrative whole, where the bottom line is the balance and presence of the different elements as a prerequisite for the successful development of the participants in the process. Johansson and Lindhult (2008) have identified the various dimensions of action research and the responses for each of them in terms of the 'pragmatic orientation' and 'critical orientation' of action research. The *puimala* concept seems to have some characteristics of its own in relation to the dimensions identified by Johansson and Lindhult.

With respect to the integrative-dialogical approach, we assert that *the goal* of the 'effort' is to catalyse connections. In the context of local government development, this means that *puimala* provided participants with new connections to link with. These new connections bring new resources, adding value by providing either new methods or systems for action. They can be either material or non-material (Cox 2000; Koivisto 2006; Latour 2005).

By implication, in the integrative-dialogical approach, the *action focus* moves to enhancing dialogical spaces in order to catalyse new connections. A successful *puimala* process led to new knowledge on the themes considered in each conference.

Table 2. Positioning the integrative-dialogical approach.

	Pragmatic orientation	Integrative-dialogical	Critical orientation
Purpose	Improving workability of human praxis	Catalyse connections	Emancipation
Action focus	Experimental, cooperation	Organising dialogical spaces for enhancing collaborative knowledge creation	Resistance, liberation
Orientation to power	Practical agreement	Presence of power/ power as part of a dialogue/power within a dialogue	Conflict is acknowledged
Role of researcher/ related knowledge	Closeness, practical knowledge	Changing positions, 'swaying'	Distance, reflective knowledge
Research focus	Action, dialogue	Co-evolvement, learning by making/ new knowledge through emergent collaboration	Reflection
Development focus	Experiential learning, learning by doing	Engagement of multi-actor ('microcosm') teams	Consciousness raising, reflexivity
Type of dialogue	Cooperative, action orientation	Promoting openness to new connections	Promoting openness to the other
Situation	Fragmentation, compartment-alisation	Complex situations	Asymmetrical power relations, invisible restricting structures
Integration of learning space elements		From a learning space to a space of connection and engagement	
The role of the 'meso-social'		A key feature in ID: providing connecting via 'meso-social' spaces	

Note: Modified from Johansson and Lindhult 2008.

Based on the ID approach, *power structures* are, on the one hand, acknowledged through a 360-degree constellation of participants. On the other, during the dialogues in *puimala*, the leaders constitute only an equal voice with the others; they are also peers with regard to joint 'problem solving'.

The role of the researcher, in the ID scheme, is not in the either/or position in relation to practical or reflective knowledge. There are occasions when the researchers must get very close to, or even intimate with, the 'target', bringing in practical solutions rather than merely providing scaffolds (Gustavsen 2002). On other occasions, the action researcher should be at a distance in order to enable critical knowledge creation and to avoid becoming lost in the participatory position. The researcher role therefore continually oscillates.

Within the ID, the *development focus* is on the engagement process of multi-actor teams. Thus, it is less about an individual-context relationship, neither is it sociological. The *puimala* process can perhaps best be characterised as 'micro-sociological' (Garfinkel 1999).

Regarding the *type of the dialogue,* the ID approach promotes openness to new connections by enhancing the openness to others that Johansson and Lindhult (2008) deem a characteristic of critical orientation within the action research.

With respect to the nature of the *situation, puimala* focuses on the complexity of the current local government situation in the Nordic municipalities. The ID approach aims to address the complexity of current social phenomena.

As an addition to Johansson's and Lindhults' original table, we would like to add two dimensions that seem crucially important to the *puimala* point of view. First, since the goal of the effort is now viewed as catalysing connections, the ID approach seems to move from the concept of learning spaces towards spaces fostering connections and engagements. It is obvious that spaces fostering connections and engagements include learning processes as key elements, particularly peer learning. A positive outcome for the participating teams is defined in terms of how catalysing and fruitful the connections established were, rather than the new things the teams learned. However, the role of learning and peer learning, especially in relation to establishing new connections and engagements, is a theme requiring more thoroughgoing, future study.

Secondly, the *puimala* concept and practices address the role of 'social mediation' in developmental work within the municipalities. In this respect, it seems to be in line with several recent studies of local government development in Finland (e.g. Airaksinen 2009; Strandman 2009), i.e. it seems to address the 'meso-level' of social mediation processes. In many respects, *puimala* is 'in-between' (between 'macro' and 'micro', between 'strategic' and 'operative', between 'management' and 'front-line'). It moulds mutual social interaction and communication among players, thus making interaction processes more transparent. Pawson (2008) has

argued that 'meso-processes' are now the decisive factor in social transformation in general.

Discussion

Local authorities are complex organisations and actors. As such they are responsible for highly complex tasks. This is particularly true of Nordic municipalities, which are among the most autonomous local authorities in the world, with one of the most comprehensive sets of responsibilities. The first success story lay in building comprehensive welfare services, with a strong division of labour among professionals. This success story has been exhausted and new solutions, comprising new constellations between the public, private and third sectors are being sought, in the search for greater effectiveness and productivity. These challenges are typically being addressed through a plethora of development projects, to the point of overload and development fatigue. At the end of a project, results, tacit knowledge and networks often evaporate – only for new projects to emerge addressing the same problems. All of this only adds to the level of turmoil and complexity.

It seems that, in such an environment, in the *puimala* workshops, the possibility to obtain a rapid holistic view of the message from various actors, linked vertically and horizontally in attempts to solve diverse practical problems, is well received by professionals and citizens in municipalities. At best, the workshop has helped people achieve a better understanding of the 'inner working' of practices and has served to open up new connections for further improvement.

As a learning network, the PEERS journey was mainly structured around the design, preparation, running of and reflection on workshops. One could say that the learning journey was a collective co-creation project, where each and every participant engaged in experimenting with workshop design. They did so while also learning about the possibilities in their own work and collaboration – in decision making, management, front-line services and citizens' networks – to promote connections and engagement for better results. In this sense, *puimala* is a candidate for becoming a continually co-developed, network-management tool.

To be sure, the *puimala* workshop is by no means a conclusive 'antidote' to the fragmentation and development fatigue plaguing local government. Even taking account of the positive response to the concept by municipalities, many questions remain open. We still know little about what actually occurs in the workshops and how to take this further in terms of providing a space for integration, openness and dialogue. The virtual possibilities were only touched upon. We know little about the further evolution and sustainability of dialogic action in everyday

work within municipalities *after* the workshop experiences. Here, the experience provided by PEERS remained limited and the evolution of connections should be explored further. We are also still engaged in interpreting and connecting our discoveries to the ongoing theoretical discussion on dialogical action research and learning networks.

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PEERS – Learning Network for the Dissemination of Good Practices in Municipalities

The goal of the PEERS was to develop infrastructure with various interactive tools to facilitate dissemination of good practices within municipal organisations.

In PEERS, the learning journey progressed first and foremost via the learning spaces provided by multi-perspective and multi-actor workshops.

The participants in the PEERS learning journey consisted of four main groups: (1) the research team and the research community, (2) the team from the Association of Local and Regional Authorities and experts from the organisation, (3) municipalities participating in the workshops as practice examples and as participants (4) other stakeholders such as experts on public administration and working life, people from ministries, citizens' associations and clients, citizens and people from other learning networks.

Within a time-span of around three years, four big 'national' workshops, with around 100 participants were arranged, as well as five local and group workshops, involving around 10–30 people. In addition to this, normal working group meetings were held.

The key learning result of PEERS was an integrated and structured concept of peer-learning workshops as a 'learning space'. In interesting ways, this learning space enables the spanning of certain time-space-activity mode dichotomies, Overcoming these dichotomies can enhance learning across practices and promote multi-actor engagement – while also providing a space in which to address the fragmentation, compartmentalisation and turbulence taking place in local government. The concept of an open and integrated learning space developed through PEERS, falls between spontaneous everyday learning in the workplace and science-driven 'evidence-based' learning. For its part, this helps to bridge the gap between practical development and research.

The key learning concept in the case of PEERS was built around *peers* and *peer learning*. By peers and peer learning, we refer to a perspective in which the actors and their varying positions are regarded on an equal footing – as equally important – as a resource in relation to the solution or development to be discovered.
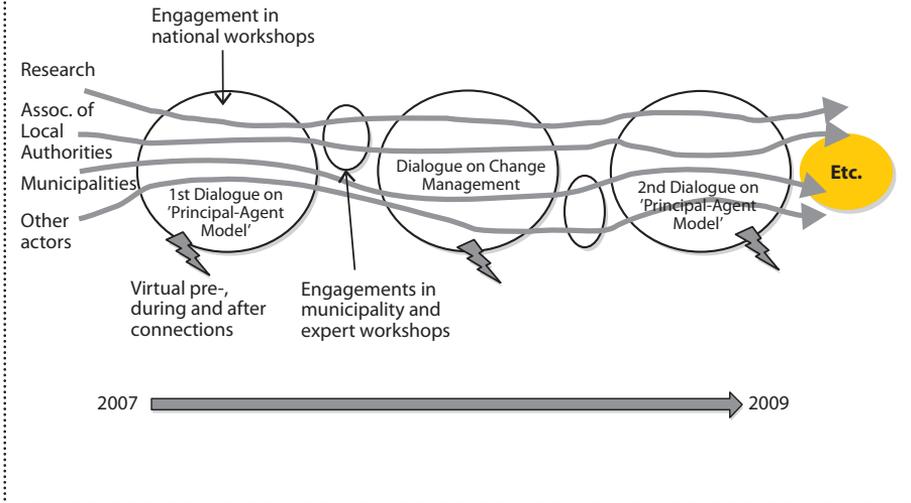
Research-assisted development of reward systems and well-being of employees

Kiisa Hulkko-Nyman, Anu Hakonen, Johanna Maaniemi, Elina Moisio, Minna Nylander and Christina Sweins

Our paper examines how a research-assisted development approach was applied, within the Poppi learning network, to the development of reward systems aimed at enhancing employee well-being. Having rarely been studied, the well-being effects of reward systems provide a fruitful focus for a learning network. We describe the challenges of employee well-being, and the actions taken in the participating organisations to meet those challenges. Baseline analyses revealed several challenges concerning reward systems and well-being relating to organisations, work and existing reward systems. Recommendations included the development of diverse elements within the total reward. Research-assisted development proved useful within the learning network.

Keywords: Research-assisted development, reward system, well-being.

The purpose of the Poppi learning network was to learn how to develop reward systems to render them more effective, both in terms of employee well-being and organisational performance. A *reward system* includes 1) the rewards that are offered to employees in an organisation, 2) the principles and procedures used in allocating the rewards, and 3) the procedures of reward system development (Vartiainen et al. 1998). Reward systems are closely linked to managerial processes and organisational strategies. For this reason, they are complex objects of development. Developing such complex objects can particularly benefit from collaborative learning within a network – learning from others and utilising research. In the absence of comprehensive knowledge of the connection between reward systems and well-being, the complexity of our learning or development object is further increased.

"Learning networks are networks whose purpose is to learn" (Knight 2002, 435; Knight & Pye 2005, 372). Learning in networks can occur on multiple levels, for example, within or by the network (Knight 2002, 428). By network learning, Knight (2002, 428) means "learning by a group of organisations as a group". The main distinction with organisational learning lies in the fact that network

learning occurs through the interaction of groups of firms (ibid.). In our case, network learning occurs when participating organisations learn new concepts related to, for example, total rewards, through interaction in network meetings. Our approach to promoting network learning was research-assisted development.

In the first chapter, we describe the general context of the Poppi Learning network. We also discuss why the learning network was deemed a potential method of promoting the development of more effective reward systems within the context of Finnish working life. In the second chapter, we discuss the object of learning within the Poppi learning network: effective reward systems. The effects of reward systems are discussed in the light of earlier literature; special attention being devoted to the rarely studied well-being effects of reward systems. In the third chapter, we describe the reward systems developed in the sub-networks. In the fourth chapter, we describe how research-assisted development was utilised in practice within the learning network. With the help of conceptualisation, baseline analyses, and follow-up studies, we describe how research-assisted development was promoted in participating organisations. We unfold well-being related findings, using baseline analyses conducted within four sub-networks, and describe how the findings enabled the focusing of development efforts. Finally, in the discussion chapter, we review the potential and pitfalls of the research-assisted development of reward systems, in enhancing employee well-being within the context of a learning network.

Context of the Poppi learning network for rewarding

In this chapter, we first describe the aims and organisation of the network, including the utilisation of research-assisted development therein. Next, we discuss how the context of Finnish working life influences the reward systems used in organisations and the challenges met in developing such systems.

The aims and organisation of the Poppi learning network

The aim of Poppi learning network for rewarding (2004–2009) was to promote the competitiveness of Finnish workplaces by providing a platform (network) for theoretically and practically justified reward system development. More specifically, we aimed at developing effective reward systems with positive effects both on employee well-being and organisational performance or productivity. In this way, we aimed to promote competitiveness in a sustainable manner.

Within the learning network, we developed reward systems in the ICT sector, publishing sector, municipal sector, amongst third sector elderly care organisations, and in the case of small and medium-sized enterprises in general. The

learning network was coordinated by the Helsinki University of Technology Research Programme of Rewarding (now Aalto University School of Science and Technology). Altogether, 109 organisations participated in the learning network during 2004–2009. Furthermore, employers' and employees' organisations participated in the network's steering and results dissemination. This article focuses on reward system development performed in four sub-networks, with the help of a research-assisted development approach (Figure 1). In addition, there was a fifth network dedicated to reward system development in small and medium sized organisations. Because the organisation of this fifth network differed from the others in several respects, it is not discussed in this article.
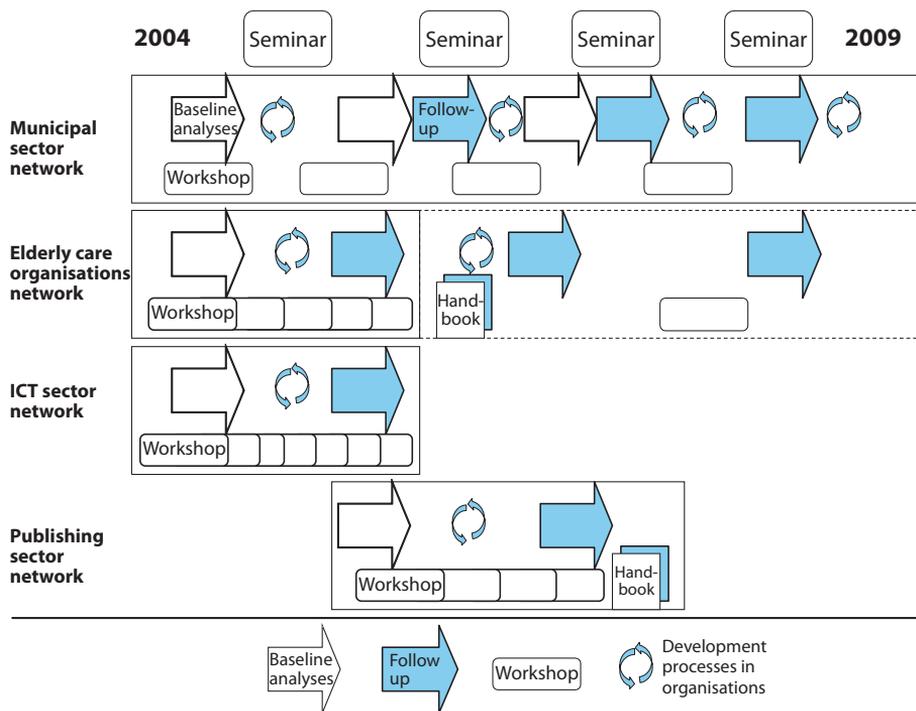

Figure 1. Four sub-networks of Poppi learning network 2004–2009.

The sub-networks were organised in a way expected to prove helpful to each of the sectors, while promoting the advancement of the participants' goals. Overarching characteristics included the survey of all participating organisations at the beginning of the project as a baseline analyses and a follow-up after the development processes. Part of the network activities took place in workshops or seminars organised by researchers. Typically, one to four representatives of each organisation were present at the workshops. The majority of the development work was done within the participating organisations, by a development group consisting of management and employee representatives.

Initially, we expected the participating organisations to benefit from developing reward systems within the learning network in several ways. Firstly, we hoped to provide them with easy access to the relevant information via the workshops, researchers and web pages. Secondly, we provided an organised framework for development processes and the follow-up of, and feedback on, development work. Furthermore, we suggested a total rewards approach as a concept and aimed at a shared understanding of what makes reward systems effective. Thirdly, we expected the reciprocal learning taking place within the network to be useful. The participating organisations had the opportunity to learn from other organisations within the same sub-network and from other sub-networks, for instance via seminars and workshops. Fourthly, the organisations would obtain support from employers' and employees' associations during the lifetime of the network (e.g. 'legitimatisation' of developed practices).

Research-assisted development approach of the network

In this article, we focus on one aspect of the Poppi learning network approach. We wished to organise the network in a way that promoted network learning, via research-assisted development, within participating organisations. By research-assisted development of workplaces, we mean development that, as Alasoini describes (2005, 45),

- Utilises existing conceptualisations to describe the early state of aspects central to the goals of development.
- Utilises concepts or models to construct research problems or hypotheses that are tested critically during the development process.
- Utilises critical examination to create concepts and models.

In practice, the research-assisted development of the learning network was supported by three specific methods: conceptualisation, baseline analyses and follow-up analyses. At the beginning of the sub-networks' establishment, we *conceptualised total rewards* and knowledge of effective reward systems in workshop presentations and discussions. Here, both international research and that conducted within the Poppi learning network and its predecessors were utilised. This was done to build a common understanding among participants and to provide a starting point and framework for development work. At this point, participatory development methods and factors influencing perceived reward system fairness were discussed. Second, we conducted *baseline analyses* in each of the work organisations participating in the network. These analyses included employee questionnaires and interviews on diverse organisational leadership, well-being and reward system perceptions. The analyses were used in discussing the organisation's situation and development needs at the beginning of the

development process, while the results were used as the basis for organisation-specific development suggestions. Furthermore, the baseline analyses results were used in network meetings as a means of learning from each other. Later, during the *follow-up* phase, another status evaluation was performed in most of the organisations, with feedback being gathered on the success of the development endeavours. Follow-up feedback was used within the organisations to decide upon future development needs and within network meetings to enhance network learning.

In this article, we discuss the findings of the baseline analyses. We thereby seek to illustrate how research-assisted development was applied in the learning network and how well it suited the goal of developing reward systems directed at the enhancement of well-being. We describe the findings of baseline analyses concerning well-being challenges and the actions taken, based on the analyses, within the organisations.

Finnish working life forming the use of the reward systems and challenges encountered in their use

Finnish working life in general faces significant challenges in, for example, an ageing workforce and labour shortages (e.g. Ministry of Labour report on workforce 2025). The same trend holds true for the majority of EU countries (e.g. Von Nordheim 2003). At the same time, the global financial crisis and competition are setting continuous challenges for the competitiveness of organisations operating from Finland. Attractive and effective reward systems form part of potential solutions to enhancing organisational competitiveness.

The Finnish labour market system is characterised by strong labour market organisations, including tripartite cooperation between the government, employer associations and trade unions. There is a tradition of centralised collective agreements, but with a trend towards a greater emphasis on company-level decisions. Employers are striving to shift the emphasis towards individual companies and workplaces. Regulation of the labour market in Finland is based on labour legislation and collective agreements. Nearly all collective agreements are branch-specific. Currently, most Finnish trade unions seem to be in favour of both performance-based pay and results-oriented pay systems (Hulkko & Vartiainen 2007).

When discussing pay systems, Finnish working life must be divided between the public and private sectors. The entire public sector has pay schemes based on job evaluation and performance appraisal. This is the result of a major public sector pay reform in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium. The

aim was to improve the public sector's competitiveness on the labour market, i.e. its attractiveness to potential employees. In addition to basic pay, an effort was made to implement results-oriented pay systems. Pay practices in the private sector differ from those of the public sector in many ways. Various industries each have their own collective agreements. Furthermore, higher ranking employees are usually not subject to collective agreements. Thus, private sector pay systems vary more by industry and employee group than those of the public sector.

Total rewards in the Finnish context

The reward systems used in Finnish organisations can best be presented with the help of the total rewards concept. Total rewards include financial as well as non-financial rewards (e.g. Manus & Graham 2003). Milkovich and Newman (2005) use the concept of 'total returns' and divide returns into two major categories: 1) total compensation, including direct pay and incentives as well as indirect compensation in the form of benefits, and 2) relational returns, such as learning opportunities, challenging work, employment security and recognition. Our model of total rewards corresponds to the Milkovich and Newman model (2005), but includes the reward elements typically used in Finnish organisations (Figure 2). The model roughly distinguishes between the monetary rewards on the upper part of the picture from the non-monetary rewards in the lower part. The Helsinki University of Technology model is widely used in Finnish private and
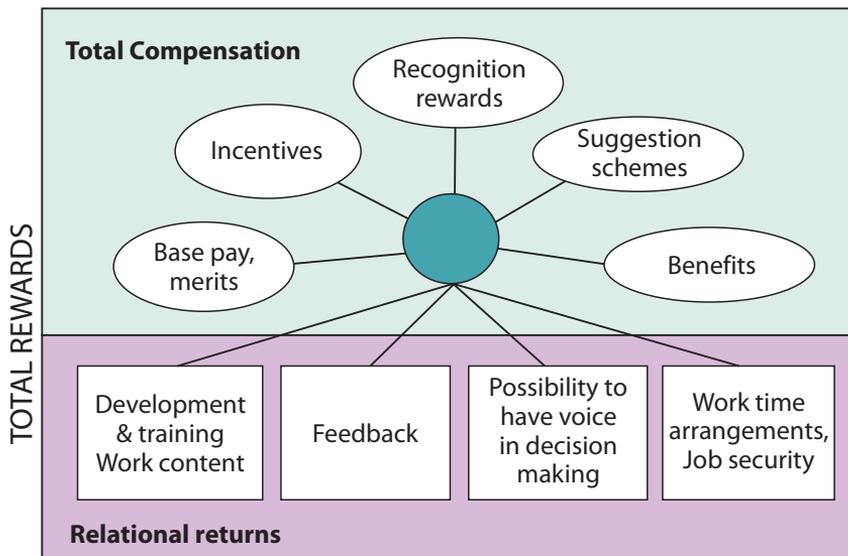

Figure 2. Total rewards model (inner figure from Hakonen 1996 and Vartiainen et al. 1998; outer boxes from Milkovich & Newman 2005).

public sector organisations, as well as employer associations and trade unions. This is due to the model's practicality in describing total rewards within Finnish organisations, the result of more than a decade of active work in this area.

Monetary rewards under this model (Figure 2) include base pay, monetary incentives and employee benefits. Base pay is typically defined by collective agreements and often comprises two main pay bases: job and task requirements, and competences and performance. Job and task requirements often form the larger part of base pay and are determined, for example, by job evaluation techniques. The second pay component is influenced by personal competencies and performance. In many cases, for example, an annual review discussion method is used to determine individual pay. Incentives such as results-oriented pay are usually decided at organisational level and pay for results and work outcomes in the form of a cash bonus. In the Finnish context, employee benefits can either be taxable or tax-free for the employee. Taxed benefits are items such as telephones, cars or housing. Tax-free benefits, such as healthcare and exercise services, are offered to the entire personnel of an organisation. Recognition rewards and suggestion schemes are distinguished from other incentive systems by their specific nature. Recognition rewards are typically given without foreknowledge of targets, as one-off events. On the other hand, suggestion schemes are often regulated through system documentation. Monetary awards can be achieved through initiatives improving, for example, production quality.

Under this model, non-monetary rewards (Figure 2) include a range of elements which are effective through their potential to motivate. The first element comprises diverse work and development related issues: training possibilities, development possibilities and the actual content of the work. The second clusters feedback from work with other elements contributing to the feeling of being appreciated. The third element consists of possibilities to participate in decision-making and employees' being heard. In a sense, the fourth element includes the framework of employment: job security and work time arrangements.

Reward systems' effects on employee well-being

In their many forms, reward systems can have multiple effects in organisations at individual, group and organisational level. Many studies of reward system effectiveness are carried out based in the study of one type of reward, for example, performance-based or results-oriented pay, and certain types of effect such as performance (e.g. Jenkins et al. 1998). Total reward systems are seen as one way of both attracting new employees and supporting employee well-being in the workplace, while promoting organisational effectiveness (e.g. Heneman & Judge

2000; Hulkko et al. 2006; Muse et al. 2008). Armstrong and Stephens (2005, 15) claim that total rewards have a greater impact on individual and organisational level than single reward practices, since the effects of different types of reward are combined. Total rewards should also be more appealing to individuals and individual needs could be more flexibly met.

Next, the object of development in the Poppi learning network, namely reward systems that enhance well-being, is discussed. Many indicators for well-being at work exist, including the absence of harmful stress and psychological or physical symptoms, positive feelings towards one's work or organisation, such as motivation or organisational commitment, and a positive energised feeling at work, for example, engagement in one's work. Relatively little is known about the relationship between total rewards and physical well-being at work, the absence of stress, or having a positive, energised feeling at work. However, many well-being effects can be generated via pay or reward satisfaction, which has been heavily researched. Thus, aiming for reward systems with which employees are satisfied is essential, if the goal is employee well-being.

Previous research implies that we can expect *commitment effects* from various kinds of rewards. Pay satisfaction can lead to stronger commitment (Miceli & Mulvey 2000), and fewer withdrawal cognitions and behaviours (Williams et al. 2006). Connections have been discovered between satisfaction and intrinsic and (to a lesser extent) extrinsic rewards (O'Driscoll & Randall 1999), and between the perceived value of work-life benefits and higher affective commitment (Muse et al. 2008). De Gieter et al. (2008) found that satisfaction with psychological rewards had a greater influence on turnover intention, job satisfaction and affective commitment than satisfaction with pay level in non-profit organisations.

Diverse reward systems, or more probably reward system satisfaction, have also been linked to *work engagement*. Work engagement is 'a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption' (Schaufeli et al. 2002, 74). There is some evidence that satisfaction with financial rewards, performance feedback and challenging work have a positive relationship with work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that job resources, including performance feedback, affect work engagement. In their study of health care social workers, Siefert et al. (1991) found that, for example, the perceived high challenge presented by the job and high satisfaction with the financial rewards (pay, security and fringe benefits) were significant predictors of a sense of personal accomplishment, which can be viewed as the equivalent to engagement. Hulkko-Nyman et al. (2008) found that the perception of challenging work was associated with vigour and the perception

of one's work being appreciated was associated with dedication among elderly care workers in Finland.

If we look at the 'opposite' of work engagement, we arrive at the concept of *stress*. The Karasek (1998) model of job demands and control explains stress (very generally put) as an outcome of high demands and low employee control. For instance, flexible scheduling of work can have a positive effect on stress reduction (Reynolds & Shapiro 1991). Maslach and Leiter (1997; 2008) also mention the rewards imbalance among the list of imbalances affecting burnout and engagement as the positive opposite of burnout. Rewards are imbalanced if a person feels they are not properly rewarded either psychologically (e.g. recognition) or monetarily. Siefert et al. (1991) found that a low level of challenge and low satisfaction with financial rewards were significant predictors of depersonalisation, an element of burnout.

Furthermore, a relationship has been discovered between well-being and several procedural elements of rewarding and well-being. First, the experienced fairness of reward procedures is connected to employee well-being. Overall, experiences of unfairness at work are connected with ill-being (e.g. Elovainio et al. 2004) and experiences of pay fairness, for example, with organisational commitment and job satisfaction (e.g. Williams et al. 2006). Second, participation in decision-making also contributes to experienced fairness, i.e. the possibility to participate in decision-making reduces stress (e.g. Lawson et al. 2009). It is also connected to greater satisfaction among employees with development outcomes (e.g. Greenberg & Folger 1983).

In sum, the literature implies that various forms of reward system perceived as 'good' may have positive effects on well-being at work, either by reducing negative elements or increasing the positive input. Behind the actual reward systems, there are important procedural issues that partly determine system outcomes: in particular, procedural justice and participatory development are of interest in the context of developing total rewards that support employee well-being. These were also promoted as part of research-assisted reward system development.

Reward systems developed in the Poppi learning network

Each sub-network of the Poppi learning network was designed to answer the development needs of the sector and/or the specific development needs of the participating organisations. Foci of development and the reasons for their selection within each of the sub-networks are described next.

The focus of development in the municipal sector network was results-oriented pay systems, which reflected the state of public sector pay system reform aimed at enhancing public sector competitiveness as an employer. Although results-oriented pay systems were a goal of the sector, relatively few municipalities had experience of implementing them. Only approximately 5% of municipal employees were subject to results-oriented pay systems when the network was initialised in 2004. More development work was therefore needed in support of both the sector's goal of wider implementation and the participating organisations' goals of successful implementation. A total of 49 units from ten organisations participated in the network. Some were developing results-oriented pay systems for the first time, while others aimed to improve the existing systems and broaden their use to new units.

The publishing sector network consisted of three work organisations and employers' and employees' associations. It focused on developing person-based pay systems within the participating organisations. Such systems had not previously been part of the sector's pay system. There was a relatively new collective sector agreement, which set some guidelines for performance-based pay. However, this was not used in full due to a lack of good practices. The negotiating parties on both the employers' and employees' sides were engaged in promoting the development of performance-based pay and thus the learning network. Another reason for selecting performance-based pay for development lay in major changes in the publishing sector, due for instance to digital media usage, having created more competition for skilled employees. There was thus a need for managerial practices enhancing competitiveness. The main objective of introducing performance-based pay was to increase the motivational effects of the pay system at individual level: when employees know how performance influences pay, they are able to improve the related aspects of their work. That is, the pay system was intended to communicate and clarify the kind of performance expected from employees. A clearer link between pay and performance was consequently supposed to increase pay satisfaction and occupational well-being in general.

The ICT sector network consisted of four participating companies and one consultancy. These organisations were small or medium sized and worked on, for example, designing web services, gaming and software products. Organisations within the network developed both procedures for pay rises and results-oriented pay systems viewed as essential in supporting the business goals of the organisations. The ICT sector was a growing and rapidly developing sector in a turbulent business environment. The relevant labour market had also been turbulent, switching from fierce competition for competent people to periods of layoffs. There was a collective labour agreement for setting minimum wages. This was based

on job levels. Most companies were paying above the minimum rate. However, collective pay rises on all salaries did have a substantial impact on pay budgets and reduced opportunities to use performance-based pay. All four participating organisations were relatively young companies; they had all recently appointed their first HR managers. Thus, they did not have many established HR or reward systems. A common objective for all of them was to support growth and business goals by developing a reward policy and new competitive reward practices, such as bonus plans and pay rise procedures.

The elderly care sector network consisted of five work organisations and the Central Union for the Welfare of the Aged. This sector faced challenges in attracting new employees and retaining good ones. It was perceived to be a low wage sector, particularly when the requirements of the work were taken into consideration. At the same time, the organisations' financial resources were limited. Thus, the network adopted a total rewards approach, with each of the organisations developing the reward elements they viewed as good starting points. Due to the organisations' small size, they did not employ any HR managers. This made the learning network a promising way of developing both reward practices and other HR processes.

Findings on research-assisted development of reward systems promoting employee well-being

In general, within all of the sub-networks we aimed to promote development practices positively connected to well-being. First of all, we recommended a highly participative method of reward system development for each of the network organisations (Hulkko et al. 2006). These participative methods included the surveying of employee perceptions about the state of the organisation and reward systems, and forming a participative development group for reward system development. Participation in decision making should, as such, promote well-being at work (e.g. Lawson et al. 2009). Second, the overt goal of reward systems was that they would be perceived as fair. Perceived fairness at work is also acknowledged as being related to well-being indicators at work (e.g. Elovainio et al. 2004). Fairness can be promoted, for example, by focusing on the pay setting procedures (procedural fairness e.g. Leventhal 1980). Fairness and its promotion in practice was one of the key areas of network meeting presentations.

As part of the research-assisted development approach, we conducted baseline analyses on participating organisations. These analyses were designed to describe the overall state of the organisations' leadership, reward systems and employee well-being, as well as identifying development needs. The analyses

provided extensive information for use within each individual organisation and in network meetings. Since the focus of this article is on how research assisted development of reward systems was used in enhancing employee well-being, we will next describe how the connection between the baseline analyses' findings and well-being guided development within the four sub-networks.

Challenges identified in the baseline analyses and recommended actions

Next, we will examine the challenges concerning well-being identified through the baseline analyses, and what actions were taken in the four sub-networks. The data in this article is based on the organisation-specific baseline analyses reports. It should be noted that the objectives of the baseline analyses were somewhat different within different sub-networks, which is also reflected in the challenges identified. In the elderly care sector network and the ICT network, the baseline analyses aimed to describe the overall state of the organisation and reward practices, while identifying development areas. The aim of the baseline analyses of the municipal sector network and the publishing sector network was to identify the development needs of results-oriented and performance-oriented pay systems. Thus, we do not wish to compare the challenges identified in different sub-networks, but to identify and discuss various challenges related to well-being and the solutions found.

The networks for the elderly care and ICT sectors shared some challenges connected to *restructuring the organisation and organisational changes,* i.e. mergers and privatisation. At the same time, the objectives of the work were unclear, as were the challenges concerning individual workload. These challenges can all be viewed as being related to smallish organisations in change situations. Uncertainty, unclear targets and workload are all directly linked to employee well-being or rather ill-being (e.g. Karasek 1998). Several actions were suggested, from the development of management practices to that of working time arrangements and job rotation. Furthermore, there was a *lack of performance feedback* in both networks. With respect to unclear targets, our recommendations to the organisations included the use of performance appraisal discussions, meeting practices, and recognition or results-oriented rewards.

Inadequate possibilities to participate and have an influence on decision making were identified as a challenge in three of the sub-networks: the municipal sector network, elderly care sector network and ICT sector network. As already mentioned, poor possibilities to influence decision making are connected to ill-being at work. Recommended actions varied within the separate networks. Those for

the municipal sector network were focused on how to enhance participation when actually developing the results-oriented pay systems. In the elderly care sector, there were several recommendations – some organisations were encouraged to develop their meeting practices, some to hold development discussions in which individuals could express their aspirations and ideas, and in which they could be heard, while for others the creation of suggestion schemes, or embarking on participative work-time planning, was suggested.

The analyses of the elderly care sector network also uncovered *challenges in the organisational climate*, especially with respect to cooperation. Diverse actions were taken, including new meeting routines to enhance understanding, job rotation to enhance cooperation, recreational meetings and rewards for achieving common goals. As seen here, some of the recommendations were the same as in previous challenges. For example, meeting routines could be used for enhancing information flow, increasing the possibility to participate and enhancing the cooperation and organisational climate.

The challenges identified in the existing reward systems included experiences of *unfairness in, for example, pay setting.* This was particularly observed in the municipal sector network, the ICT sector network and the publishing sector network. Many types of actions were taken to enhance the fairness of pay setting processes within these networks, for example, by training supervisors and creating transparent and clearer rules. In addition, the criteria and measurements by which bonuses or pay were allocated were subject to development.

There were *unclear links between performance and rewards* within the municipal sector network and the publishing sector network. Actions recommended and also taken included the construction of a reward strategy and more communication on the performance–reward link to all employees. Furthermore, the link between the reward system and other managerial procedures was found to be weak, especially in the publishing sector network. Performance appraisal discussions were therefore developed to bring other management systems and reward systems closer together.

In the municipal sector network, yet another challenge lay in the fact that in some organisations the results-oriented *pay system was perceived as more of a 'pressuring' element* than a positive, motivating one. Organisations were recommended to engage more in thorough communication of the idea behind results-oriented pay, and in developing their bonus criteria to include measures related to work quality and employee well-being, in addition to work quantity.

Discussion

Our aim was to describe how a research-assisted development approach was applied, within the Poppi learning network, to the development of reward systems enhancing employee well-being. Developing reward systems was viewed as a suitable object for the learning network approach, due to the complexity of reward systems as part of an organisation's other systems. Furthermore, the link between reward systems and employee well-being has rarely been studied. For this reason, it was expected that the research-assisted approach and reciprocal learning would be particularly useful from the very beginning. Learning results were studied from the perspective of the challenges to employee well-being discovered in participating organisations, through research-assisted development methods. They were also evaluated from the perspective of what was done accordingly, during the development process.

We utilised three methods as part of research-assisted development: conceptualisation of total rewards and effective reward systems, baseline analyses and follow-up analyses. As part of conceptualisation, we stressed the importance of employee participation in reward system development and the possibilities of promoting fairness in reward system design. These recommendations were issued to all participating organisations. For example, this led to the formation of participative workgroups for reward system development (Hulkko et al. 2006). Participation in reward system design was evaluated as affecting employee satisfaction with reward systems (ibid.).

The main data used in this article consisted of baseline analyses reports, in which employee well-being related challenges were identified and recommendations made. Research-assisted development proved useful in identifying organisation-specific challenges, making recommendations and enhancing learning between organisations on this topic.

In summary, the main challenges in employee well-being differed somewhat between the four sub-networks studied. The identified challenges depended not only on the situation within the sub-network sector or organisation, but also on the aim of the baseline analyses (overall situation or specific reward system development). Challenges included more general aspects, such as organisational changes leading to uncertainty and stress, unclear goals, work characteristics and workload, lack of possibilities to participate, organisational climate and lack of feedback. Recommendations on how to answer the general challenges included all elements of the total reward systems. These involved general topics such as the development of management practices and roles, as well as suitable meeting

practices to enhance information flow and employee participation. There was a clear emphasis on non-monetary rewards for use in enhancing employee well-being. Specific reward systems were also designed to meet challenges, such as suggestion schemes for enhancing participation, development discussions for increased feedback and making the performance–reward link clearer, increasing employee benefits for health promotion, and implementing results-oriented pay systems in order to enhance common goals and cooperation. Specific challenges concerning existing reward systems, or reward systems to be developed, included, for example, perceived unfairness, lack of connection between performance and reward, and the ideology behind results-oriented pay being deemed unsuitable to the context. Recommendations on how to enhance employee well-being were accordingly related to improving the processes and structures of monetary reward systems.

Research-assisted development of the learning network enhanced learning in other organisations, for example when the results of baseline analyses were discussed in network meetings. For example, the organisations found that other organisations were facing similar challenges. More importantly, they shared their solutions to meeting those challenges in network meetings (Hulkko et al. 2006). Furthermore, the organisations were able to profit from the experiences of organisations in other sub-networks. Well-being related challenges faced by reward systems, and the possible solutions, appear to be highly generic in part, and in part highly context-sensitive (e.g. industry). This supported our expectation that learning networks would be suitable for developing complex and interconnected targets, such as reward systems.

Research-assisted development in the learning network also enhanced individual organisations' learning, in terms of identifying challenges and possible solutions via reward system development. Many recommendations given to organisations at the baseline analysis phase were also executed by the development groups and within organisations. Their outcomes could therefore be studied in the follow-up analyses.

Theoretically, actions taken to meet the challenges identified in organisations should lead to enhanced employee well-being. First, the reward systems were developed in a participative manner, within development groups and by utilising employee surveys and interviews. Second, some new reward systems were specifically developed in order to enhance employee influence (e.g. suggestion schemes), feedback (e.g. performance appraisal discussions), or employee physical well-being (e.g. benefits). Third, reward system processes were developed to enhance well-being by, for example, providing fair procedures, a better link

between performance and pay, and better feedback. Some evidence of enhanced employee well-being was also found in follow-up analyses, for example when employees perceived that new rewards systems were having a positive effect on well-being. The results of follow-up analyses are not included in this article. However, an interesting path for future research would be to follow up on progress in employee well-being in organisations engaged in the development of reward systems through learning networks.

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Poppi – Learning Network for Rewarding

The Poppi learning network (2004–2009) was established in order to learn how to make reward systems more effective, both in terms of employee well-being and organisational performance. This network consisted of five sub-networks divided between different sectors: the ICT sector, the publishing sector, the municipal sector, the third sector (elderly care organisations), and small and medium-sized enterprises in general. The learning network was coordinated under the Helsinki University of Technology (now Aalto University School of Science) Research Programme on Rewarding. A total of 11 researchers worked within the network. During 2004–2009, some 109 organisations participated in the learning network. In addition, employers' and employees' organisations participated in the network's steering and result dissemination. The participants and collaborators are portrayed in the figure below.
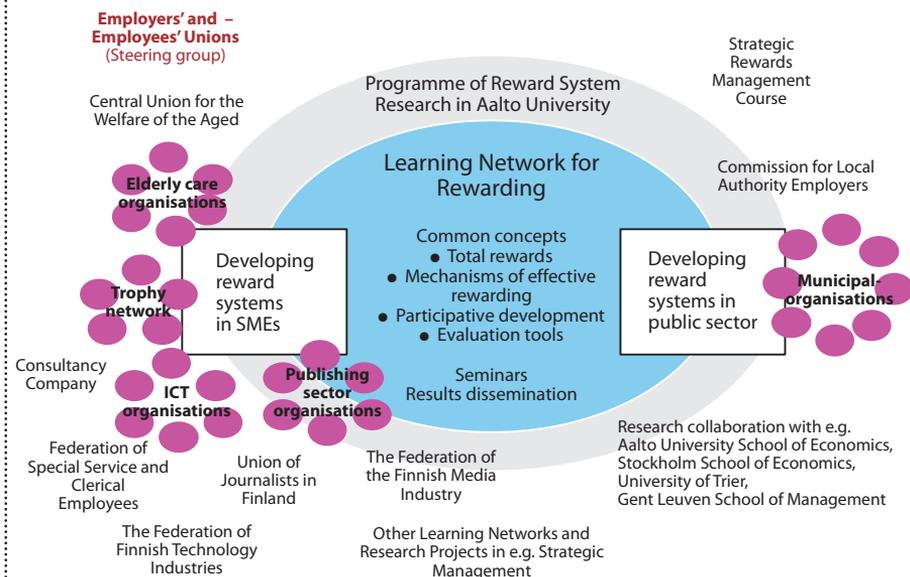
The sub-networks were organised in such a way as to help each of the sectors, and in addition to advance participants' goals. Overarching characteristics included surveying the participating organisations at the beginning of the project, using a baseline analysis, with a follow-up conducted after the development processes. Some network activities took place in workshops or seminars organised by the researchers. Between one and four representatives from each organisation were typically present at the workshops. The majority of development work was carried out within the participating organisations, by a development group consisting of management and employee representatives. These organisations developed strategic performance-based pay systems, incentive systems and total rewards systems. In addition, reward allocation processes were rendered fair. The general outcomes of the learning network were disseminated in seminars, on web pages, and in handbooks and articles.

Letting go in the context of organisational renewal

Terhi Takanen

Letting go of ways of thinking and acting that are not any more useful shows up as important in renewal processes. In this article, I will explore letting go as a theme that emerged in the learning network in which I am/was a participant. Letting go could be seen at the core of the renewal of both organisational culture and the self. My intention is to review who let go, how letting go was facilitated, and what was 'let go' in practical manner. Moreover, I will analyse why the phenomenon of letting go became such a central aspect of our practices as participants strove to renewal the organisational culture of organisations and to formulate the culture of a learning network.

Keywords: co-creating, enabling empowerment, letting go, orientation, renewal, theory U, transformation.

Learning networks, whose goal is to promote well-being and efficiency in working life, are seen as arenas for renewal and learning in this paper. Within a learning network dedicated to an empowering organisational culture (later called Empowerment through Enabling (EE) network), renewal touches upon all participants as individuals, as well as their jointly created organisational culture and the cultures of the constituent/affiliated organisations. The network is based on 'power with' attitude, where renewal starts from the participants themselves. I use here the concept of 'renewal', not 'transformation', to underline the practical moment-to-moment and not-controllable nature of renewal that starts from the participants themselves. As Antonacopoulou et al. (2005, 8) underline, "rather than decided and implemented from the top, as punctuated and grandiose event, organizational change emerges continually and in an unpredictable way out of ongoing practices".

C. Otto Scharmer (2007) makes a general distinction between three waves of the theory of change. This distinction makes it possible to present a notion of the transformation discourse related to our approach. According to Scharmer (2007), change is generally promoted through the development of organisational structures and procedures. The key idea underlying this first wave is that of rationalisation through faith in structural and process development, which are seen to deliver the desired change. Among other factors, the second wave includes learning organisation theories, which alongside structures and processes

emphasise the renewal of collective mental models. According to these theories, learning and change will not take place without a change in ways of thinking and mental models. Models and theories focusing simultaneously on the transformation of culture, identity and the self are placed in the third wave. In these theories and models, attention shifts from individual organisations to networks as living ecosystems whose constituent elements have the ability to learn together. This approach and the perception of change held by a learning network dedicated to an EE approach and a CoCreativeProcess (CCP) approach (Takanen 2005) can be seen to belong to the third wave, where change signifies renewal of both the self and the culture in question.

In this article, I present an initial understanding of how a concept belonging to the third wave change theories – letting go – could be studied in a practical manner. Behind this is a general question of how renewal is manifested within a learning network focussing on the renewal of culture, identity and the self. In this sense, I propose that letting go can be explored as a core phenomenon, enabling reflection on its significance to renewal.

This article aims to describe, analyse and reflect on letting go, which has emerged as a key phenomenon within the renewal process of multi-member learning networks. When referring to the members of a learning network, I mean both the developers and staff from participating organisations. I am also one of the developers. I will look at the phenomenon of letting go as it was expressed by participants and by me in our everyday actions.

I propose that letting go can be viewed in different ways and here I'm referring to it 1) as 'part' of a renewal process and 2) as an orientation connected to practices. The latter way is also indispensable to the process of letting go. I underline that letting go could be deeply connected to our way of experiencing, interpreting and acting. This way of being and acting I have termed as 'letting go orientation'. I begin with four questions suitable for approaching developmental approach or professional praxis: how, why, what and who, as introduced by Räsänen (2007). However, I have applied these questions in a way that may differ from his interpretation.

First, I will present the context of the learning network: I will briefly describe the organisation in which the learning network originated, as well as the approach to enabling empowerment that was used and developed in the network. This will place the environment in which the theme of letting go emerged within a wider context. Later, I will explore the phenomenon of letting go, asking who let go, what was let go of, how was letting go facilitated, and why letting go became a

core phenomenon. In this section, I will draw attention to the observation that letting go is, in a way, an organic orientation built into practices in our network. As an attitude, letting go enables renewal while questioning ordinary or self-evident conceptions of reality. At the end, I will consider how the theme of letting go is linked to theories and models of organisational renewal. In conclusion, I will outline what further questions arise from considering letting go as an orientation and how they might be researched on the basis of the directions opened up by participatory action research and practice-based theory.

'Empowering Finland' as the initiator organisation

The EE network was created in order "to enable empowering organisational cultures". There was no strict conceptualization what actors meant by organisational culture. Organisational culture was understood as ways of acting, thinking and being in organisational context. Culture was seen something that people construct and re-product in their everyday actions. The network originated in the persistent work of enthusiastic developers within the Empowering Finland organisation, a national non-profit organisation dedicated to encourage and support the formation of a more humane and empowering culture across society. This organisation was responsible for the project's administration. Emerging practices in the learning network enabled the renewal of organisational cultures in a way that also allowed all participants to transform themselves in an open way while being stimulated by their various organisational environments.

In 2006, Empowering Finland described its purpose on its web pages thus: "to enable the sustainable success of society through joy of living, empowerment and a culture that emphasises human dignity". In the organisation's web pages, empowerment was then defined as follows:

> "Empowerment is an ongoing process for both the individual and society. Through the process of empowerment, an individual can identify, create and channel his or her resources in an ethical and socially responsible way that promotes well-being. The core of a community's empowerment process is based on strengthening the individual's internal sense of empowerment, which, in turn, is best promoted by communal methods: by supporting the resources, creativity, sense of control and readiness for renewal of individual people."

People within the organisation strive to influence society and, in particular, working life in a direction that is "more sustainable and respectful of human dignity". Juha Siitonen (1999, 59), one of the founders of the organisation, has argued in his dissertation on the professional growth and internal feeling of power that

"empowerment is not a permanent state". According to Siitonen, "empowerment can, however, be supported by subtle and facilitating actions, such as openness, freedom to act, encouragement and working towards security, trust and equality" (ibid., 10).

Empowerment as enabling – as emerging approach

EE is first and foremost an emerging, only yet partly expressed, approach in Finland. It underlines the importance of collaborative work as to empowerment and creating a culture of participation and co-creation. These practitioners have an intention towards shared professional practices and various methods developed in customer work. They have a shared strong ethical value base. The EE approach grew out of a close relationship between the abovementioned theory of empowerment (Siitonen 1999) and the CCP approach (Takanen 2005; 2008). In the future, it will be potentially constructed as a professional praxis, which could be seen as a developmental approach. CCP can be viewed as a holistic developmental approach, which is close to empowerment as enabling. However, there are some key differences that I could not elaborate here. Both are ongoing, emerging approaches, but the EE approach is not expressed yet so that you can see how close to each other these approaches really are. The CCP approach is better documented (Takanen 2005; Takanen & Petrow 2010). There are currently 20 professional practitioners using this approach, and over thousand participants have participated in CCP in their organisations.

The concept of transformation or renewal is crucial in the EE approach. In the following, I try to give a picture, where the EE approach is located in the field of transformational discourses. Because this question is not yet explored by practitioners of the EE approach from a theoretical perspective, this is purely my own interpretation. I examine it in terms of its relationship with the spectrum of transformative change and transformative learning theories (Hendersson 2002). Transformative learning theories emphasise individual change, while transformative change theories focus on organisational change. There are also theories that encompass both (ibid., 186). According to Hendersson, the key difference lies in whether it is the internal process, i.e. the transition, that is the object of attention, or whether the focus is on external change. In practice, theories emphasising transition focus on individual learning and development, whereas theories emphasising external change focus on organisational change.

Transformative learning theorists like Mezirow view critical reflection as a key component of change (ibid.), since this enables change in points of view and openness in individual growth. They examine change from the perspective of

individual learning and development (ibid., 186). The EE approach is trying to look at both the individual and the organisational aspect together. However, from the point of view of the EE approach, mere critical reflection, combined with action, is not sufficient for renewal.

Alongside reflection and action experiments, empowerment through enabling and, specifically, the CCP approach, highlights the significance of being present (Kabat-Zinn 1990; Takanen 2005), letting go (Depraz et al. 2003; Scharmer 2007; Senge et al. 2005; Takanen 2005) and the appreciation of different ways of knowing (Heron 1996; Reason & Bradbury 2006). The last one means that experiential (Heron & Reason 2006, 144), physical, intuitive and emotional knowing are all utilised alongside propositional knowing (Takanen 2008).

In the EE approach, the focus is on the 'internal' renewal of both individuals and communities, taking place concurrently with 'external' change. Actually they are not internal and external but involving processes that are manifesting themselves in everyday practices. This approach contains the assumption of 'power with' (Park 2006, 90): actors must have the opportunity to make a genuine impact and participate in the ongoing co-creation of reality. This differs markedly from 'power over' thinking, where power is wielded over others, i.e. hierarchically (ibid.). It also contains the assumption of 'power from within', which is the starting point for creating something together. An internal feeling of power (Siitonen 1999) strengthens one's capacity to make use of opportunities together (Takanen 2005). There is an intention to enable to construct human agency within an organisation through enabling leadership; leadership is shared with all members of organisations, and it stems from several centres/groups of actors (Takanen & Petrow 2010). This requires enabling structures, and it is part of a renewal process to construct enabling leadership together: it takes time and letting go of earlier assumptions and practices of leadership.

The EE approach aims to facilitate emergent processes of renewal both within and between individuals, communities/networks and their customers. Such an approach tries to challenge the dominant, rational-linear view of personal and organisational development and tries to give actors the possibility to construct new roles at the centre of their own renewal. Obviously, it is a long process to take responsibility for one's own renewal, and to become a subject in this sense. It also includes the empowerment facilitator as a full-fledged participant who undergoes learning and growth processes alongside other participants. It thus disassembles the traditional roles of consultant and customer by giving the former the role of a partner in co-creation, so that the 'customer' means the entire organisation, not just the bosses. This approach does not starting from the

top down, but emerges from various centres when enabling facilitating works. It could potentially expand linear thinking about change into a more spiralling, organic process. Its baseline differs from mainstream change theories in its worldview and in its perception of organisations, including the people who live in them, within a global environment. It challenges us to be aware of the responsibility we have over the thoughts, emotions and actions that we co-create (see e.g. Takanen & Petrow 2010).

How theme of letting go introduced itself?

Next, I will examine the phenomenon of letting go as it emerged in the everyday activities of the learning network. Early on, developers saw that the growth of both individuals and the community lay at the core of the organisational culture of our learning network and that this core was interlinked to all of our other goals. The purpose of our activities would best be described as emancipatory and practical. In the organisational case studies, for example, the idea was not just to renew practices: rather, it was to initiate a comprehensive renewal of the organisational culture, with the growth of both the individual and the community as focal points. This vision was introduced by the empowerment facilitators, who were at first the most active members of the network, and by the organisations that had chosen this approach.

A team of five active developers formed the core of the network; all of them were also participants in a shared growth team. This team aimed to grow together as professionals and persons, in order to become facilitators of empowerment. I was the co-creative coach and facilitator of this team. I used the CCP methodology (Takanen 2005), developed in renewal processes in organisations. CCP has four core processes: becoming aware, letting go, connecting to essence and practicing. The theory of empowerment (Siitonen 1999) and the model of becoming aware (Depraz et al. 2003) constitute some of the influential background theories behind this approach. Within this framework, letting go refers to the intuitive process of release that occurs on the levels of thought, emotion and action. The purpose of the letting go phase is to create space for being in the moment, so that a new orientation towards our everyday activities can emerge. In practice, activities of the growth team consisted of jointly creating and working towards an understanding of what it means to be a facilitator, and what the core competences of a facilitator are.

In the organisational case in which I was the facilitator-researcher, from the very beginning this viewpoint of letting go formed part of the way we worked. Although I placed no particular emphasis on it, it became a key feature: participants felt that letting go, in particular, was a departure from the development activities

to which they had become accustomed. It was interesting to note how 'composting' emerged as a metaphor for renewing where letting go was a key. Participants' drawing depicting the organisational culture's renewal was created, within which a man called *Oikosäärinen* ('Stretchylegs'), himself underground, was enjoying a delicious, huge carrot. The carrot had grown in rich soil composted from earlier materials. Here, it is worth stressing that the human character, too, was underground. This could be interpreted to mean that not only actions but also people were subject to composting. The huge carrot signifies the succulent and tasty foods created through composting. Something will emerge as a replacement, something that is nutritious and can be enjoyed with relaxed attitude.

At the same time, the learning network's other organisational case had arrived at a very similar organic perception of the significance of letting go. In the growth team discussions of the organisational culture forum, these experiences, shared by both participants from organisations and the developers, got a very encouraging shared insight: composting as letting go is a natural process at the very core of all renewal. The metaphor contained an abundance of knowledge linked to deep and intuitive experience. It is possible to see composting as an image of the whole renewal, transformational process. One process in it is letting go.

In the CCP approach, the phase of letting go involves the concrete, spontaneous identification of the thoughts, emotions and ways of working from which we want to free ourselves. This could be described as experiential reflection with a focus on intuition. The aim here is to suspend the attempts of an analytical and critical mind and to arrive at the premature conclusion that letting go of something is too difficult, or even impossible. Instead, the search for opportunities for letting go is encouraged in a comprehensive way. This is combined with stopping, which suspends the onset of the natural attitude (Depraz et al. 2003), and physical exercises (yoga and asahi postures) which divert our attention from the level of the mind towards physical awareness. The natural attitude means our habitual way of seeing and acting, which is directed to the outside world, and which is mostly unconscious and could inhibit renewal.

Practical experiences with CCP have helped me understand that letting go is creating a new relation to my 'own' or collective habitual patterns. It changes the way of experiencing and feeling. Letting go is a process, where habitual practices (and inside them ways of experiencing) become visible and do not anymore have so much power to us. The question is not letting go of some object, but giving experience to re-organise by itself. This happens when there is acceptance to look consciously at your habits, and not judge them (good or bad) but give them space and look at them from distance.

A second interesting metaphor was created after a dialogue retreat for the public sector, within a group of leaders reflecting on management and leadership in government administration. The dialogue retreat was a two-day CCP workshop, where participants could stop, meditate and have dialogue about opportunities for the renewal of the public sector. Group members seeking more comprehensive leadership compared the transfer process to weaving a rag rug. Management and leadership should be shared to a larger extent, including at the group level: this practical approach to leadership was described as jointly weaving a rag rug. To me, this metaphor contains the theme of letting go: there is a readiness to move away from hierarchic, siloed leadership towards a more genuine and human-oriented approach. This signifies letting go of the need for power and control. A rag rug was described as something that is traditional but at the same time new and human-oriented. Although the group was not, as such, asked to describe letting go of something, this was built into their task, which required them to describe a sought-after renewal within public sector leadership.

Experiencing letting go as a natural and meaningful process

Due to the similarity of the participants' basic values, there was no need to formulate extensive arguments for why letting go was felt so important within our network. To the participants from different organisations, practical arguments were more meaningful than philosophical considerations or rational-sounding arguments. For the facilitators, on the other hand, letting go was so self-evident that it was barely discussed at all.

The simplest explanation for why letting go is essential was heard from the facilitators: "letting go creates room for things that are new". As a facilitator, my own practical and somewhat more specific explanation was usually: "on the level of thoughts, emotions and actions, we need to let go of what is blocking us or what no longer works. This is about a new kind of relationship to your habitual ways of thinking and acting." So, it is nothing that you force yourself to get rid of, but it is about giving space for 're-organising' a process where relationship could change.

It is by no means self-evident that letting go of something would, by default, feel natural and meaningful. It is therefore interesting that both individual and communal letting go was felt and considered so meaningful within the context of this network. Was this caused by the way people understood letting go, and if so, what does this signify?

These examples of metaphors for letting go give a picture of renewal as an organic process. I draw a conclusion that because 'the new' and 'the old' are not

viewed as opposites, understanding the meaningfulness of letting go of things from the past, becomes easier. Another explanation may be that people were tired of continuous organisational development and learning. It does feel good not to have to continuously learn new things, but rather to have the possibility of letting go, even of something very concrete. These were the types of comments heard during corridor conversations. In my own organisational case within the public sector, people were also encouraged to concretely let go of some of their tasks and to make suggestions regarding communal work tasks that they could do without.

On the one hand, a broader explanation for the way letting go was experienced as a natural and important phenomenon that could be found in the fact that the network shared values which emphasise the significance of life and human dignity. For example, the network focused on respect for human dignity, responsibility and mindfulness. From the very start, participants were drawn into the network because of their sufficiently similar values. On the other hand, decisions for an organisation to join the network were mostly made by managers (and not jointly by the workplace community); these managers, however, were often also leaders in their working communities, and valued people in a wider sense than merely as exploitable resources. Since this was the approach that they respected, they had also selected facilitators who valued human dignity and emphasised spiritual growth in support of the renewal of their organisations.

What did the learning network let go and who were the people involved?

Next, I will examine the question of what, exactly, participants of the learning network let go of. I underline here that even it is possible to say what someone let go, *it is not the question of objects that one let go of.* It is a question of new kind of relationship to your own and collective ways of thinking and acting, where you are not any more identified with them. Instances of letting go could be viewed both by theme and by actor. I will approach this issue from the point of view of the actor, as this will highlight opportunities for letting go that are related specifically to the actors and their roles. Furthermore, I will examine what the developer-facilitators and the participants from the organisations feel they have let go during their participation in the learning network. For this analysis, I will utilise the project's final report, the participants' reflections on their own growth, discussions that took place in various forums, and one organisation's documentation of instances of letting go.

A key point is that letting go has touched upon all network participants, from facilitators to organisational representatives. This is linked to the basic assump-

tion of the empowerment as enabling approach: that each person can grow and develop – and let go. Co-creating an empowerment-enabling network culture has also created a space for shared discussions, even on difficult topics. As renewal gains momentum, many issues that were previously not discussed are brought into the dialogue, and obsolescent ways of thinking and working that exist within organisational cultures now become accepted subjects of reflection.

What did the organisations let go of?

Participants in each of the network's four organisations experienced letting go as part of their renewal. However, only one of these cases documented occurrences of letting go. Here I will draw from the case, where I was the action researcher and facilitator. I believe that the results can nonetheless be generalised to the other cases, given that in several dialogue forums, the representatives of other organisations expressed similar interpretations, although letting go was not a systematic intention to the same extent.

The organisation under review here is the personnel department of the Ministry of Finance, which also serves as the Office for the Government as Employer representing the government as a whole in negotiations with government employees. The Office has a lengthy history and its customer base consists of other government agencies. One of the challenges we faced in this case was letting go of the need for control, which was reflected in many of the interpretations given below. Because the organisation was accustomed to carefully-planned developmental programmes based on rational argumentation, an emergent, process-like and to a large extent intuitive renewal process forced them to let go of this attitude. The practice of orientation was challenging for some. As eyes were closed during the exercise, participants had to let go of social control, for example. Participants were also challenged to examine and describe their feelings, emotions and attitudes. Initially, this was in direct conflict with the experts' perception of what constitutes professional conduct. They were used to debating matters from their own points of view and with a closed mindset, bypassing any emotional experiences as irrelevant and unprofessional.

The occurrences of letting go that will be presented next are connected to extensive changes in organisational culture that took place over the course of 3.5 years. Interpretations were made by everyone in the Office during their renewal day. It is good to notice that expressing what I and we have let go is difficult. This comes partly from language: we have to express something that is not really an object. Interpretations have been divided into six subcategories based on the results of previous renewal processes.

Interaction – what we have let go of
- the separation between one's real identity and one's identity at work
- the culture of command and working alone
- self-centredness

Relationship and customers or partners – what we have let go of
- fear of making mistakes and forced solutions
- the compulsion to be right
- thinking on behalf of others (customers)
- overly independent or narrow definitions of added value in customer relationships

Leadership and structures – what we have let go of
- the belief that information is received top-down
- the belief that only certain people have useful insights
- strong boundaries between units
- hierarchies between groups of personnel

Ways of knowing – what we have let go of
- thinking on behalf of others
- thinking that is narrowed down to the level of a single unit

Renewal skills – what we have to let go of
- the sensation of "I can do it all" (now: acceptance of incompleteness)
- regarding one's own world view as the only correct one
- associating certain background factors (age, education, background) with capability for renewal

Identity as an expert and the identity of the organisation – what we have let go of
- territorial thinking and withholding information
- thinking that only a select few have expertise
- staying silent

The people in this organisation were able to identify and make use of several occurrences of letting go. Their interpretative approach stems from over three years of experience in participatory and co-creative working methods and shared reflection. The resulting interpretations are never unconditional claims, stating, for example, that all territorial boundaries have disappeared. Rather than being statements of total change, they represent what, according to personal experience, is the direction in which change is taking place. Participants understand

letting go as practice that is not 'something to get ready' but mostly an attitude to practice letting go because there is no end in it.

These opportunities for letting go were not consciously pre-selected at the beginning of the process as the types of thinking or working to be let go. Opportunities for letting go arose through an emergent process when people worked renewing themselves and their collective ways of acting. It would be interesting to observe how the change in the quality of interaction has influenced all other opportunities for letting go. My preliminary research results for this case show that the change from a strong debating culture towards more co-creative and reflective interaction has had a significant enabling influence on letting go and renewal, i.e. letting go of controlling.

According to one manager and in-house facilitator, the most significant example of letting go in the context of everyday work has been the shift towards "*more openly organised and flexible practices of working together*". The earlier method of making rationally sounding plans for everything beforehand and working very much in line with the views of managers is now disappearing in some areas. For this participant, such practices, constrained by hierarchy and based on already known and given knowledge, have to a large extent been let go of, and "*this has given rise to new ways of being innovative and making an impact*".

To me, all of these jointly identified occurrences of letting go (see above) show that the organisation has succeeded in suspending its way of interpreting reality as a given. Letting go has been practicing in open attitudes, enabling letting go of 'thoughts, assumptions and actions' which participants felt that didn't work anymore. This, specifically, is the most significant act of letting go: the ability to suspend our ordinary ways of experiencing and observing, leaving space for the creation of a new kind of reality. In this way, new ways of experiencing and observing emerge, and we have the opportunity to renew our working life practices.

What did participants on the growth path towards becoming empowerment facilitators let go of?

When analysing the learning reflections of the five empowerment facilitators (the growth team), two collective themes emerge: 1) acceptance of one's own incompleteness (letting go the ideal of perfectness) and 2) the shift from participatory coaching towards the facilitation of co-creation (letting go participatory coaching and its mindset and methods).

As discussed to some extent within the team, the themes of letting go are built into these areas. Accepting incompleteness in oneself as well as in others has been a significant step in the professional development of every facilitator. This has strong links to the value base and high ideals embedded in our practices. During our long collaboration, we were repeatedly faced with the problem that we interpret the realisation of our values in different ways and consequently must endure repeated disappointments. At first, the disappointments were nearly always related to other people, but we later learned to identify how we ourselves contributed to them.

Within the team, the significance of incompleteness was often discussed and it was challenging us. As a facilitator, my intention was to learn to accept incompleteness, which also meant that I was on a par with everyone else in the learning process. Expressing our own vulnerability and even incompetence encouraged us to start accepting incompleteness. Letting go perfectionism and 'being a good person' meant practicing acceptance.

The challenges of accepting incompleteness were centrally connected to the way in which we understood our role as experts in renewal. Many experienced a shift from displaying their own expertise towards methods that were more enabling. Some described this shift as a transition from answer- or goal-oriented coaching towards the facilitation of co-creation.

The relationship between the facilitator and the organisation – time to let go of the conventional customer-consultant set-up?

In some of the organisation-facilitator relationships, an important shared learning process involved insights into co-creating the customer-consultant relationship. This could be described as a shift from a conventional customer-consultant relationship towards a shared growth partnership. We let go of the narrow definition of our cooperation, and became aware of the fact that the nature of cooperation should be discussed with the customer at the beginning of the process. This particular way of understanding a cooperative relationship was influenced, amongst other things, by the characteristics of the EE approach. It is by its nature a process of growth, where the results cannot be predicted and success greatly depends on the commitment of the people in the customer organisation. In Finland, when a contract is made with a consultant it is common to define clear, expected results, and to hold the consultant responsible for their achievement.

As an example, I will elaborate on the relationship between the abovementioned personnel department and myself (my company). At the very beginning, I ex-

pressed the view that we were not dealing with an ordinary process with results that could be defined beforehand and measured using the applicable gauges. I emphasised the emergent quality of the process and the fact that success depended on all participants. My role was to facilitate the process. This understanding was written into our contract, and thus underpinned the process from the very beginning.

In practice, however, the conventional customer-consultant mindset became apparent in the fact that no process owner, with whom learning could have taken place through ongoing discussions during the process, could be located within the organisation. Participants within the organisation did not see the need for a process owner, because they saw me responsible as the facilitator. We had, however, built a support team that served this function. Nevertheless, I felt the need to have someone fill the role of an in-house facilitator, observing the status of our project from that vantage point. I also believed that this would improve our chances of continuing the process after the project itself was completed. Together we did, in fact, find a solution to this. Afterwards the process owner, i.e. our partner in growth, described the process and results as follows: "This renewal was not possible just by using the CCP methodology. It was also the different kind of co-creative relationship between facilitator and us that has enabled the transformational shift in culture. Without this kind of a relationship, we would never have experienced the shift that we did experience."

Towards the end of the project, the facilitators embarked on a fruitful discussion on the ways in which the particular characteristics of this type of cooperative relationship could be expressed at the very beginning of the process, so that, through shared experiences, both facilitators of empowerment and participants from customer organisations, could gradually became co-creative growth partners. This led to the idea of applying co-creative principles at the outset of project planning. Accordingly, following discussions with the customer organisation, the facilitator does not simply make an offer to the organisation, but rather suggests a shared co-creative process which is based on learning together. A key component in a relationship of this nature is the ethical principle of enhancing the customer's own competence for renewal, i.e. in an ideal case, minimising the need for outside support in the future. This goal is achieved by training in-house facilitators in the course of the process of renewing the organisation's organisational culture. In this way, the relationship can be free of dependency. In a growth partnership, both sides are involved in the process as individuals, making the partnership a professional relationship on a personal level rather than merely a polite business relationship. This requires moral responsibility from the facilitator, as well as continuous reflection and an understanding of his/her own professional role.

How was letting go facilitated?

Facilitators in this network understand that letting go is always a spontaneous act, but it can be enabled by specific facilitation. This kind of facilitation can encourage the process by holding space and creating openings for letting go. Actually, I have got an insight that it is *not about what facilitator does, but what she/he doesn't*. This is strongly connected to an ability of being present, i.e. how the facilitator could be present in the moment and enable it for the others too.

Because the phenomenon of letting go became central only halfway through the process, the network had not considered how the process might be facilitated. However, several of our work methods appeared, by their very nature, to facilitate letting go. Some were linked to the CCP approach, which emphasises letting go. Many other methods used by the facilitators, although not necessarily developed with the objective of facilitating letting go, had the unintended effect of supporting letting go. The explicit use of these methods for the purpose of facilitating letting go has not yet been documented. The various learning forums had different possibilities of identifying opportunities for letting go. In at least three activities, namely, the developers' growth team, the renewal of the organisational culture of the Office for the Government as Employer and the dialogue group for the public sector (which all utilised CCP as a facilitator), facilitating letting go was already an in-built process.

Practices that create spaces for gradual letting go spread throughout the network, as the same people participated in various forums and utilised an open, dialogue-based approach. The most common practices supporting letting go were questions related to letting go, methods that activated various ways of knowing, and mindfulness exercises. The acceptance of incompleteness and mistakes created an atmosphere in which it was possible to let go. The theme of letting go was later included as a specific skill of an empowerment facilitator: how we as facilitators could create such an atmosphere and practices that enable letting go.

The growth team made the observation that letting go does not occur simply through analytical reflection followed by a change in action. The mental tendency to be critical about what one can and cannot let go of was viewed as a particular challenge. Often, this tendency involves long-established practices that consequently have become intertwined with emotions and personal identity. It was essential for participants to learn that letting go would take place gradually and in a non-linear way, through pausing to reflect on one's action either after or, preferably, during the action. Such reflection leads to an awareness of how one's own attitude, thoughts, emotions and actions influence the way in which a given situation and interpretations about it builds up.

While noting that the process of letting go cannot be meaningfully separated from the processes of empowerment or co-creation, I will not examine these approaches here in more detail. Next, I will describe some of the working methods that play a key role in facilitating letting go. Most of these practices or experimental methods are connected to mindfulness exercises (Kabat-Zinn et al. 2002). As we could see here, it is not about active facilitation, *but giving space to letting go happen*. This needs normally facilitation which is very gentle and not-judging.

Strengthening different ways of knowing

All of the learning network forums utilised a diverse range of methods, although the focus was on dialogue-based methods. To some extent, the significance of different ways of knowing (Heron 1996) came to be appreciated only in the course learning network activities. Here, different ways of knowing refer to propositional, experiential, representational and practical knowledge (ibid.). In expert organisations, propositional knowledge is often dominant and expressed through debates and rational argumentation. Valuing experiential knowledge (e.g. expressing one's own feelings and intuitions) alongside propositional knowledge (debating 'facts') became a key feature of the learning network's practices. In the forums, discussions dealt almost exclusively with experiential and practical knowledge. This was, I believe, a manifestation of the user-centred nature of the process: our baseline consisted of the experiences and needs that were important to the participants. This focus created opportunities for bringing out the less precise, tacit knowledge and emotional information which is more difficult to formulate. To me, this was evidence of the impact of letting go: it enabled participants to introduce unfinished and sensitive ways of knowing to the project at hand. In a very concrete way, it also let go of 'certain knowledge', which is a common feature of many expert organisations as well as conventional professional development. Such certainty can become a hindrance to learning and innovating.

Asking questions and wondering together

Wondering is open perceiving and allowing look at different layers in phenomena and appreciating them. By its very nature, asking questions instead of already knowing the answers contains an aspect of letting go. Asking question as open attitude provides a release from the role of the one who knows, thus enabling new learning. Some of the participating organisations described their desire for development as a wish to learn to question, rather than to know. For expert organisations, with their traditionally all-knowing role, this has been a true growth challenge.

Asking questions and wondering are the basic skills of an empowerment facilitator, but at the same time they constitute an attitude to life that embodies a continuous openness to processes of which we are part. First and foremost, the purpose of questioning is to emancipate. All participants are encouraged to ask open-ended questions, which has in fact turned out to be a very natural way of sharing and learning together within a dialogue-based network. Asking questions was utilised in the closing reflections of some sessions and projects, but also, in some cases, while the work was still ongoing. In its simplest form, the question was: "What can I/we let go of?"

Orientation – suspending conventional ways of experiencing and observing

During the shared growth process and the organisational case described above, we regularly utilised the so-called orientation process, which I facilitated. This could be viewed as a meta-level method, as it laid the basis for a completely different way of experiencing and observing. It enabled participants to suspend conventional ways of perceiving reality. It could help to be present in this moment-to-moment reality.

Orientation consisted of a moment of structured, silent pause, during which we sat still and directed our conscious attention away from our current activities, steering it inward towards our breathing and our experience. The facilitator guided people to shift their attention from the 'outer' to the 'inner', to their own breathing. After this, various guidance methods were used: these included, for example, becoming aware of one's own inner space and processes (thinking, feeling etc.).

From the point of view of our everyday experience, the practice of orientation enabled us to become aware of our busy habitual mode of being. It also enabled us to identify thoughts, associations, bodily experiences and emotions present at that moment. Becoming aware of these then allowed us to see the way in which they affected our ability to be present in our experience at that moment.

Depraz et al. (2003) have studied the process of becoming aware and its three phases using a psycho-phenomenological approach. From this point of view, the practice of orientation can be seen as a technique that promotes the process of becoming aware. According to these authors, the first phase of becoming aware occurs when habitual (or 'natural') attitudes towards reality are suspended; in the second phase, attention is directed 'from the outer to the inner'; and in the third phase, our own experience is accepted or let go. The process of becoming aware can be actualised through various techniques, including the abovemen-

tioned orientation. Depraz et al. suggest that the Buddhist vispasana meditation, which shares some characteristics with the practice of orientation, is one of these techniques.

Any techniques that facilitate change in our attitudes involve practical challenges, which will also influence the quality of our knowing. People must be able to let go of the social control we normally practise in groups: we must take the risk of entering into uncertain territory, where we will be seen in a different light. For beginners, it is not possible to suspend conventional modes of perception or to direct attention to the inner world while they are active. They must first pause. This is due to the fact that activities engulf our attention, distracting its re-direction towards our inner life. However, with practice this skill can be gradually developed: an experienced practitioner can engage in suspension in the middle of an activity and be simultaneously aware of both (ibid., 35–36).

The significance of orientation in enabling letting go is linked to open orientation, which it facilitates. Orientation of this type is in itself liberating: it distances us from our own attitudes and ways of interpretation and makes a space for choosing our reactions.

The body interview method

We sense our bodies as body-sense of situations, the interactional whole-body by which we orient and know what we are doing (Gendlin 1992, 352). What is body's way of living its situations, tells us many stories. I was unintentionally developing the body interview method in the course of the CoCreativeProcess. Later, I understood its character as an interview method in hindsight through discussions with Eeva Anttila, Professor of Dance at Aalto University School of Art and Design.

In two different groups, we experimented with what we would later dub the body interview. The first of these experiments was conducted at the Office for the Government as Employer, where, based on our three years of cooperation, we created tableaus of sound and movement while self-reflecting and assessing the renewal process.

The second experiment was conducted at a dialogue retreat attended by ten leaders or decision-makers from the public sector. As part of the two-day CCP, we experimented with body interviews during the letting go phase. I first requested people to discuss, in groups of three, what they viewed as opportunities for letting go within their workplace culture and, specifically, in leadership in state government. Next, I asked them to create a physical gesture that would represent

some of the opportunities for letting go, and a second gesture to describe the transition from what was before to a more liberated state.

One of the groups portrayed tunnel vision by placing their hands over their faces in the shape of a tunnel, and then opening up their hands, thus opening up their range of vision. Every member of the group, including myself, made these gestures before explaining what we meant by them. The experience was very powerful: it is surprising how some gestures feel so familiar and yet strong through bodily sensation. We felt as if existing, stagnant practices had been activated right at that moment, bringing with them many memories of real-life situations. It was easy for everyone to recognise the opportunities for letting go described by others in this group.

In our experience, the significance of the body is fundamental for letting go, as the connection between the mind and the body affects everything we do. The body will react to stress, for example, by tensing up. Acknowledging the state of the body facilitates the recognition of emotions.

Why did the theme of letting go become central to the network?

So far, I have explored who let go, what they let go of, and how letting go was facilitated. Why, then, did the theme of letting go become central to the network? We can search for the answer practically, starting with the participants, characteristics and values of our network.

In the network, people from various backgrounds come together and share their experiences. The goal is to learn together. In this case, both the participants from the various organisations and developer-facilitators were more inclined towards working alone than together. The culture, which encouraged learning and growing together, accommodated different points of view. The network understood renewal as a process of growth that affects both the individual and the community. Dialogical working methods allowed various voices to be heard and this enables letting go by making space to different views. They expressed both differences and similarities. In practice, it was also significant that most of the forums applied the CCP approach, which contains letting go as an in-built process. The emergence of the theme of letting go was also enabled by the network's open and safe atmosphere and methods based on dialogue and co-creation.

Of particular interest was the way in which insights into letting go evolved in the network. At first, it was understood as a practical act of letting go or releas-

ing something which is no longer useful. The organisational representatives, however, explained that their experiences of letting go were organic. They felt that there was no 'old is bad, new is good' dichotomy, familiar from many other professional development projects. Instead, they believed that all that had taken place in the past was significant and justified in its time, and that composting it was natural. This was thus not a case of throwing something away, but of re-employing something that had already done its duty as the nutritious soil in which something new could grow.

While writing this article, I began to understand in a more conscious way why letting go featured in so many ways in our activities. The answer to this question seemed first and foremost to be related to the orientation that facilitates letting go, which was the tacit principle underlying our approach. Through such an orientation, participants were able to suspend or create gaps in their conventional and habitual agentic orientation towards action, thereby renewing existing practices. This open orientation concerned our way of knowing and learning together, as well as our willingness to open up continuously to what is present in each moment. I got this insight while reading up on client-centred and experiential psychotherapy, where the therapist takes up this space between knowing and not-knowing (Vanaerschot 1990). To be able to attune himself empathically to the client's world, the therapist aims to open up to everything that the client says. Letting go is connected to not-knowing in the way that letting go of controlling and knowing-attitude helps us to connect not-knowing attitude, which helps you let go.

One difference between psychotherapy practice and the letting go that took place in our network lies in the mutuality of the state between knowing and not-knowing, and in the way this state is facilitated for everyone. This does not only concern the orientation of the expert, or in our case the facilitator; rather, it represents an opportunity offered to all participants.

There is also an interesting connection between letting go and Buddhist philosophy (see also Depraz et al. 2003). In Buddhism, letting go is connected to the calm and clear acceptance of what is happening. In this state, as we no longer desire anything, our awareness is expanded. Understanding thrives through letting go. Letting go equals moments of freedom, openness and ease.

This state of acceptance, also described as an active state of letting go, is similar to what cognitive scientist Depraz et al. (2003) discovered in empirical research on the cyclical aspects of becoming aware (see above on 'becoming aware'). It is a state of expectancy in which expectations have also been let go. In this sense,

it can be thought of as an attitude. In such an expectant state of non-expectancy, there is room for discoveries that depart from the habitual patterns of everyday life.

To me this attitude of non-attachment, with its links to Buddhist philosophy, bears a strong resemblance to the key characteristic of our network, i.e. the orientation of letting go. The significance of mindfulness skills and of being in the moment has been prominent in the various discussions and practices conducted by our network.

Letting go: its significance to the renewal of organisations and networks

I propose that letting go as an orientation is needed in organisational renewal, because we are part of ongoing re-organising processes in everyday life. Reorganising beliefs and ways of acting could be seen as a letting go process, which is possible if you have letting go orientation. Potential to grow is not there where we sense that we know and control things. It is an uncomfortable zone where you need to let go of controlling habits and open new possibilities. Simpson and French (2006, 246) propose that there is "the need to develop ways to work as much with our ignorance as with our knowing, and to let go of the sense – sometimes the illusion – that we do what we are doing". They underline that current focus on information and knowledge has led to seeing ignorance as something that you have to get rid of as quickly as possible. However, letting go sense of knowing and accepting ignorance could be also seen as a space where transformative power lies.

Letting go is deeply connected to open and present moment-to-moment way of experiencing, interpreting and acting. In this sense, I propose that an orientation that enables letting go is a prerequisite for letting go as a renewal process. As suggested by Scharmer (2007) in different terms, changing one's starting point – one's consciousness – is a requirement for transformation. However, here starting point seems to be an individual. Scharmer discusses the necessity of changing the structure of attention from 'downloading old habits' to not reacting. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), it is possible to alter a habitual orientation into a more open orientation. Habitual orientation is not downloading but acting habitual ways with iterations. So there are two differences to Scharmer's way to conceptualize change and its possibilities. First, the question of orientation is seen not from the perspective of individual consciousness as Scharmer argues, but in the way of perceiving and acting that is part of social practices. Some practice allows a way to experience better than another one. Normally we are not

conscious about this. Secondly, habitual action is seen iterative, not as downloading or reacting. It could be that Scharmer does not mean downloading literally, but he uses it as a metaphor. However, it points to something mechanic and something that is always the same. Seeing habitual action iterative is essential if we try to understand renewal as an ongoing, organic process, in which the 'old' is composting into 'new' and they are not as opposites.

Earlier research has not directly discussed letting go within the fields of organisational and network research. There is an abundance of research on letting go as an attitude or skill within discussions related to therapeutic practices or Buddhist philosophy but it is not yet connected to organisational transformation. The whole issue of letting go seems to be underexplored in organisational renewal context. Both transformative change theories and transformative learning theories ignore this issue. This is partly due to the fact that the mainstream management and change discourse approaches organisational transformation and learning from a very different angle. From this angle, organisational transformation is often seen as something controllable and rational that could be done by planning and implementing. Theory U is an exception to these change theories: letting go as a process phase and an ability is part of this model (Scharmer 2007; Senge et al. 2005). There are still few empirical findings of letting go as a core for renewal. It should be also noted that in U theory, the focus is on transforming capitalism rather than on an in-depth micro-level analysis of the renewal process.

Theory U contains principles, practices and processes that differ greatly from one another in terms of the structure of our attention. In their book, Senge et al. (2005) outline a short presentation of Theory U and discuss the ability to be open to what is emergent; they also recommend meditation exercises aimed at nonattachment (a concept that originates in Buddhist philosophy). According to them, "*continuous letting go allows us to be in the moment*". This means letting go of our own expectations in order to be able to open up to what is present in the moment. Our own expectations will then not define what we perceive or do not perceive (ibid., 96–99). As stated above, our experiences resonate with this notions but I'm conceptualizing this phenomenon from the practice-based theory.

In some of its graphs, Theory U includes letting go as an interim phase, but in most cases it is omitted. In the glossary section of the book, the ability to let go is defined as follows: "*the capacity to let go of your old self and old identities and intentions in order to create an open space for your emerging or authentic Self to manifest*" (Scharmer 2007, 467). Scharmer does allude to the ability to let go by explaining its meaning in the following way: "*suspend* your Voice of Judgement, VOJ, *reverse* your cynical view of a situation, VOC, and *overcome* your fear,

VOF, of letting go of your old self". I find here similarities with our empirical cases. To me it looks that all these three are embedded, for example, in practices of expert organisations. There are ways of experiencing where fear makes people reduce themselves cynical and judging.

Theory U theory refers to letting go through a metaphor: "let go of your old self and stuff that must die" (ibid., 399–400). Scharmer explains that this means letting go of everything that is inessential. As we could see, there is a challenge how to express and understand letting go. There is an important question of what these means concretely, how it could happen, how such an ability is developed, or could it be developed, and how it could be developed or facilitated. These are questions that call for participative empirical research but also different kind of not-fixing conceptualizations that help us understand them more deeply. I see here an opportunity to reconceptualise what is renewal and organisation. For example, if you understand renewal as an ongoing process of organising and transcend dualism, it is possible to go deeper into what letting go is.

Conclusions and reflections: could letting go be an orientation that is in itself renewal in action?

In this article, I have described letting go as an orientation and a process arose from everyday activities in this learning network. Actually, this kind of orientation is not a state of mind, but being present in the moment-to-moment in the way which itself is changing all the time. So, letting go is open orientation, which is a way of being in constant flux. There is no organisation but a moment-to-moment re-organising process, in which people are performing their activities.

I have also examined who let go, what was let go of, and how letting go was facilitated. I concluded with the question: why did letting go become such a central phenomenon? On the one hand, letting go emerged as a process of letting go of dysfunctional ways of thinking and acting; on the other, it arose from an orientation to let go, which, in turn, stems from certain values and practices that form the basis of the 'empowerment through enabling' approach. This article could only grasp the surface of letting go, but hopefully highlights why this phenomenon is interesting in renewal processes.

Despite its limitations, this article is an attempt to outline the phenomenon of letting go within the context of renewal activities in this learning network. What I found interesting in the case of our learning network was the way in which letting go revealed itself to be an in-built orientation of our learning network activities, emerging from a shared value base and also using the CCP approach.

It was expressed as an open orientation, unfolding in the moment, with greater focus on questioning than knowing. In our network, letting go was perceived as an experientially organic process, as expressed by the composting metaphor.

Letting go as an orientation, is an experiential process, which can be examined using various complementary methods. In this article, I have examined the phenomenon above all through the roles of participant and facilitator, and to some extent through the role of a participatory action researcher. This brought the context and the life-world of the participants to the foreground, as letting go was examined as an orientation on which practices were based. It is essential to capture in an open way, on the one hand, how the participants experienced letting go and, on the other hand, what its significance was in terms of the renewal of organisational culture. In my view, the organisational case of the Office of the Government as Employer highlights this significance: letting go was a key to transformational shift.

Letting go could be seen as a core of both personal and organisational renewal which are actually part of the same process. However, it is too narrow to only look at letting go from the perspective of renewal. For example, in CCP, there is first the 'becoming aware' phase which enables letting go. Transformational learning theorists have underlined critical reflection in transformation. As Mezirow have argued, reflection about assumptions makes possible to transform (Hendersson 2002). However, becoming aware is not critical reflection but reflection where you express, feel and sense where you are now: how you see, perceive, feel the situation. This act of embracing what is here and how I construct it makes it possible what to let go. There is much need for critical reflection; reflection, which helps connect not only assumptions, but emotions and feelings that are constructed in our habitual ways of perceiving and acting.

Opening the discussion on the significance of letting go as both process and an orientation towards renewal, is linked to theories of renewal, where the focus is on the renewal of both individuals and communities, specifically from the point of view of orientation or consciousness shift. However, it is not the question of transforming our orientation but also of creating practices where this orientation is already built in.

Earlier, I made the observation that individuals and communities often identified very similar opportunities for letting go: this could steer us towards understanding that there are no separate individual and collective processes. They cannot and should not be kept strictly apart but seen as together. Practice-based theories go beyond the dichotomies of individual-community and subject-object: the way in

which practices find their form cannot be explained from the viewpoint of either the individual or the community, but rather as something arising from the relationship between the two (e.g. Simpson 2009). In this sense, approaches based on the practice-based theory (Emirbayer & Mische 1998; Holland et al. 1998; Simpson 2009) could offer an interesting point of entry to the way organisational practices are renewed, i.e. what aspects of observing and experiencing are let go of. There are grounds for assuming that changing the way people act is insufficient for changing a practice: change or transition is also needed in the related ways of experiencing and observing (e.g. Emirbayer & Mische 1998). This interpretation resonates with renewal practices that aim, amongst other things, to influence the orientation that directs our perceptions and experiences.

As a topic for further study, I propose understanding letting go as an orientation which is itself renewal in action. On other words, letting go is a kind of renewal process that is going on moment-to-moment as a gesture of becoming aware and letting go. This kind of conceptualizing makes it possible to look it in a way that transcends the subject-object dichotomy. It could make possible to perceive and understand the essence of letting go. There is a potential to renewal. It could be also fruitful to examine how a habitual orientation (Emirbayer & Mische 1998) and an orientation that enables letting go can be observed in practices, moment by moment, as we strive for organisational culture renewal. What kinds of transformational practices enable the transition from a habitual orientation toward an orientation that is open and facilitates letting go?

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Empowerment through Enabling Network

The Empowering Finland organisation was founded in 2006 with the aim of encouraging society towards empowerment-enabling renewal. Network participants include people with various educational backgrounds.

The network facilitates the renewal and empowerment of both individuals and the organisational cultures. People are seen to be in possession of potential that can be tapped in circumstances that facilitate empowerment. Through the process of empowerment, the ability to utilise knowledge and skills on various levels is opened up, alongside the ability to discover and channel enthusiasm-based energy in a more aware and responsible way in one's own as well as shared activities. Empowered individuals and communities are creative and capable of renewal: this is a prerequisite for success in a continuously evolving world.

Members of the Empowering Finland network renew the organisational cultures as well as all citizens' opportunities to participate in shared creativity. Through accrued experiences and observations, they create new models, practices and methods. The network facilitates creative experiments and learning as well as the sharing and re-combining of knowledge into larger service entities, visions and models. During 2008–2010, the network co-created a learning network project for Empowerment through Enabling, funded by TYKES, with the following objectives:

1. Achieving a deeper understanding of the underlying principles and processes of empowerment
2. Embodying the methods, working cultures and ways of thinking of the network participants, organisations and the network itself.
3. Developing and combining, through a joint effort, the methods, procedures, tools and models that can be assessed, shared and used in the development of empowerment-enabling work, and organisational and leadership cultures
4. Exploring the impact of the various methods, procedures and tools as well as manifestations of empowerment.
5. Shaping the network into a creative team that embodies an empowerment-enabling culture, and the principles of trust and warmth, within the network.
6. Creating a comprehensive, people-oriented model for renewal

The learning network project for Empowerment through Enabling consisted of five main forums for encounters and learning:

- Learning forum for enabling leadership
- Learning forum for service industry entrepreneurs, i.e. the facilitators of empowerment (growth team)
- Learning forum for organisation-specific learning, research and development processes, and inter-organisational forums for encounters and learning.
- Learning forum for researchers and developers
- Forums for encounters related to open dialogue groups and seminars
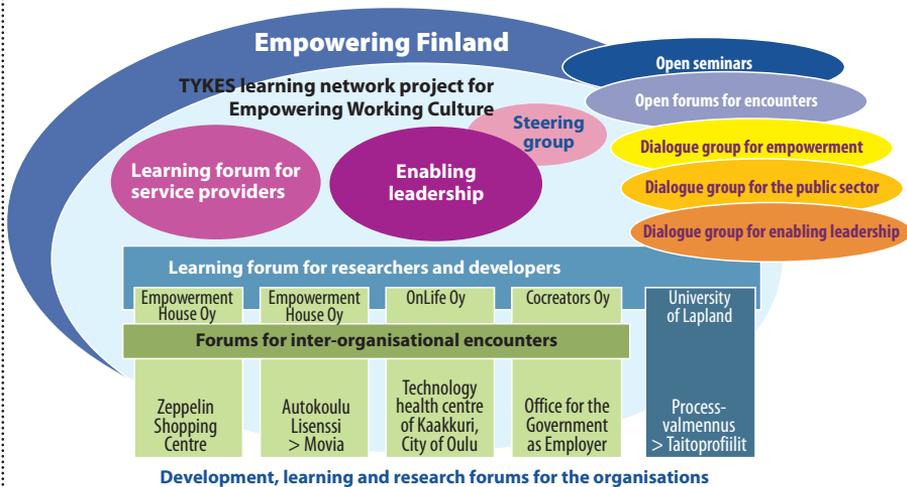
The various competence areas of the network participants include consultation in work community development and strategic leadership, coaching, facilitation, mentoring, research, training and management. The active service providers/developers of the learning network project included Arto Helin (Empowerment House), Helena Rantala (Kideal), Juha Siitonen (Empowerment House), Raimo Siurua (Onlife) and Terhi Takanen (CoCreators).

Organisation-specific learning forums explore and develop together four empowerment-enabling processes that facilitate learning, research and renewal in working cultures. The project's partner organisations were Autokoulu Lisenssi, now named Movia (Oulu), the Kaakkuri health centre in the city of Oulu (Oulu), the Office for the Government as Employer (Helsinki) and the Zeppelin Shopping Centre (Kempele). Development work was supported by thesis and dissertation writers.

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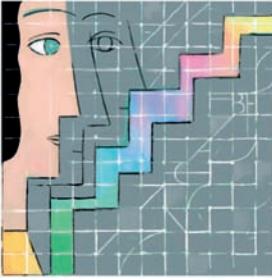
**Tuomo Alasoini
Maarit Lahtonen
Nuppu Rouhiainen
Christina Sweins
Kiisa Hulkko-Nyman
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(eds.)**

Linking Theory and Pra

Learning Networks at the S
of Workplace Innovation

This book examines learning networks as a vehicle for producing and disseminating workplace innovations, by drawing together the experiences of learning network projects funded by the Finnish Workplace Development Programme TYKES, between 2004 and 2010. How do learning networks function in practice? Can they become a valid tool in enhancing the social effectiveness of programmes for the development of working life? The book describes learning network activities through concrete examples, focusing on the kinds of interactive forums, enabling co-creation, utilised by the projects, while also presenting their more general results and conclusions.

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