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SMART UPBRINGING

CO-CREATING CULTURAL CHANGE

THROUGH FUTURE FORMING RESEARCH

Doctoral thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Thesis for the Degree of
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ABSTRACT

A number of the welfare assignments allocated to the municipalities require new and better methods of execution. There is an imbalance between the services provided and the needs of the citizens. This applies, among other things, to the guaranteed provision of welfare for all children and adolescents. This thesis describes the development of relational (collective and social) practices in Re municipality's work on upbringing. Based on a jointly devised vision and identified values, hundreds of employees, children, adolescents and their parents have taken part in co-creating upbringing environments where everyone thrives, and in which all members take responsibility for each other.

This research project is based on *future forming research* (FFR). FFR as a research approach paves the way for a new mindset regarding how to conduct research. FFR is tasked with changing behavioural patterns (practices) rather than describing the world as it is. In the process to change behavioural patterns within the work on upbringing, this research project has been executed in collaboration with a group of teachers, social- and healthcare workers (co-researchers) in the municipality.

The thesis demonstrates how the development of new practices in the work on upbringing is enabled by replacing a discourse formerly focusing on the individual and problems with new understandings that focus on opportunities and a sense of community. *The Dream Class* and the *SMART Upbringing Language* are examples of new collaborative practices developed by means of the research collaboration. These are practices in which teachers at schools and kindergartens involve the children as co-creators of their own upbringing environments. During the research project, a new concept has also been developed, demonstrating how employees who work in a municipality or in organisations with responsibility for children and adolescents can be involved in reflective processes (doing in action) so that they can innovate their own practices from a future perspective.

The collaborative research has also contributed towards the creation of new hybrid meeting places and new types of organisations, allowing the involvement of citizens, voluntary organisations, businesses etc. in new types of relational processes introduced to ensure the welfare of children and adolescents in the municipality.

Keywords: SMART Upbringing, children's wellbeing, future forming research, social construction, appreciative inquiry, performative social science, transforming inquiries, relational welfare, social change, social innovation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Chapter 1: Background

This research project recounts the development of a set of new practices for working with children and youth in the municipality Re, Norway. This is the main point of this PhD study. The project has been tasked with contributing to extending a behavioural repertoire of resources amongst a large group of varied professionals who work in Re municipality. In other words, this thesis will not only show how the new practices came about, but will address also 'the how' of spreading the newly emerging practices among many more groups of people who are assigned the task of offering assistance in bringing up youth.

The main reason for sharing this development in the form of this thesis lies in the 'complex simplicity' of the practices themselves. The paradoxical nature of assisting youngsters in 'growing up wisely' makes it extremely hard to do well in bringing up children and assisting those who do. Given the worldwide, generic nature of this quandary, and my firm belief in the availability of means to resolve it, made me committed to 'show the world' how to go about it, the result of which is written up in this thesis; the process was not as easy as foreseen: an extra reason for me to spend time on sharing my experiences as one of the innovators and co-creators of what has amounted in Norway, thus far, to a movement, and what deserves, as my thesis (and numerous other, piecemeal) publications, a wider audience.

This action-research type of PhD study was started as a result of a long-term collaboration between myself and Re municipality's managers and employees working on improving the upbringing environments for children and adolescents.

In this very first chapter, I describe the background of the research project, the purpose of the study and its subtopics. In the final part of the chapter, I provide a reading guide for those wishing to read (parts of) this entire thesis.

1.1 Complex Challenges for Welfare

Norway's municipalities have an important task to provide welfare for their citizens. Some of these welfare tasks are technical in character, for example building a road or a school. These tasks can be executed by obtaining evidence-based knowledge, developing a plan and implementing measures to generate a (in advance) defined result. Other tasks are more complex in character – in other words, it is not possible to identify one clear answer to how to go about the task, or whether the task can be executed well. The latter, intangible tasks will be continuous in character and have to be executed in constantly changing conditions (Dawes et al., 2009; Hoppe, 2010; Pestoff, 2018; Rittel & Webber, 1973).

The authorities' capacity to safeguard the citizens during a change in circumstances, in uncertain times and during crises, is suboptimal (Selloni, 2017). Selloni (2017) points out that the lack of ability to solve welfare-related challenges well is in itself the source of a number of new problems. The debate regarding welfare reform is often inadequate. Such debates have mostly revolved around the issue of costs. Cottam (2011) points out that the deeper causes of the problems are seldom discussed. The need for welfare reforms equally relates to culture, system functionality and human relationships (Cottam, 2011).

The development of the most current welfare services in Europe is based on an industrial mindset. The production of welfare takes place within the services, and the "product" is then offered to the users. Zamagni (2014) refers to this as a two-sided welfare paradigm. In the context of a school, the system teaches, and the pupils learn (Gergen, 2010). In addition, production standardisation seems to require extensive bureaucracy.

Failure to satisfactorily solve the welfare challenges can result in opposition and social movements initiated by undesired citizens. The initiatives to create social change within citizens' welfare can, however, take place via other forms of collective activism than protesting against problems (Selloni, 2017). Initiatives to create social change in the way the public authorities solve welfare challenges can also take place from within the services responsible for citizens' welfare

(Moulaert, MacCallum & Hillier, 2014). Employees may, for example, assume the role of activists or enthusiasts behind grassroots-initiated change processes (Manzini, 2015). This research project helps explore and produce such a grassroots-based change initiative. It is this initiative (practice) that has been named SMART Upbringing. The grassroots initiative emerged in Re municipality in 2006-2010. This PhD project was also initiated in the same period.

1.2 Start-up of the Research as a Collaborative Process

I have used a relational constructionist perspective to describe how this research project emerged (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Instead of writing some heroic tales of what I have done as a researcher, I have chosen to write a narrative about how this research has been conducted as a collaborative process. In doing so, this initial chapter is at the same time laying out the very basic values that underpin the research approach. Further, the idea to start this research project was not solely my own. Neither was the research requisitioned by any other party. I found that the best way to explain the story behind the research initiative is to describe several collaborative relationships that formed between myself and numerous people working with upbringing in Re municipality more than 15 years ago (see Table 1, for chronology, as a shortcut).

During the period from 2002 to 2005, I worked with quality improvements as a consultant for the kindergartens in the municipality. From 2005 to 2009, I worked as a consultant for the municipality on organisational development and management training within the school sector. In my role as a consultant, I focused on eliminating the authority inherent in this role and other managerial roles in order to help promote more *democratic participation* in the change work. I describe this role in more detail below, as it embodies my commitment and associated values, that I have incorporated into the work on the very research project.

In 2005, I was asked to take charge of the process of organisational development at the largest primary school in Re municipality. It is, in particular, the relations and relational collaboration that developed between me and the managers and teachers at this school, which contributed to the start-up

of this research project. The methodology on which I have chosen to draw in the work on

organisational development is based on Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) shows how optimal decisions can be made via collective processes that

include all employees, partners, etc. in an organisation (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

In the work to lead organisational development processes based on AI, the responsibility for

managing the processes is distributed to a collective of teachers and managers (Hauger, Højland &

Kongsbak, 2008). Within this group, there is one teacher who became one of my most important

partners for this PhD project. His name is *Vidar Bugge-Hansen*. There were many ways in which the

relational interaction between us two, the class team with which he worked, our relationships with the

managers at the school, the children in the classrooms and their parents contributed to the

implementation of this research project (Hauger, Bugge-Hansen, Paulsen & Thorkildsen, 2018).

During the autumn of 2006, Vidar Bugge-Hansen started telling a story about how he and the

team of teachers with which he worked, had implemented processes to allow the pupils more

opportunities to participate in class. Based on elements from AI, the pupils were involved in processes

in which they all were assigned responsibility for their relationships with each other and the group of

which they were a part. Metaphorically speaking, this change can also be described as a change from

everyone taking responsibility for themselves to everyone working for each other (Gergen, 2010). In

retrospect, I would describe what I experienced in these classes as the practice of what Cottam (2011)

call *relational welfare[1]*. It implies, in practice, the reinforcement and re-establishment of disrupted

and impaired relationships among pupils, between teachers and pupils and among the teachers in the

team (Gergen, 2010).

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[1] The concept of "relational welfare", developed by Cottam (2011) represents a model where services build on relationships, and where the users of the services become its designers and producers in co-operation with the professionals.

The story of the ´innovation´ that emerged in this class is provided in chapter 3 of this thesis. Meeting Vidar, listening to his story and my own experiences (as a consultant) in the classes for which he was responsible were, personally, radical experiences. I decided to explore the potential found within this innovation, in collaboration with Vidar, and this gave rise to this research project. I gradually changed my role from a consultant to a social researcher. In addition to my work as a consultant, I also have experienced academia and action research, first-hand (Hauger, 2002). My aim was to assume the role of a researcher without impairing the relationships involved. I chose my task as not to describe what was occurring from the outside (which is the most common role social scientists tend to furth), but rather to contribute to reinforcing the implemented social change relating to work on upbringing in the Re municipality.

1.3 Future Forming Research

This research project draws upon future forming research as an alternative approach to research (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Gergen, 1999; Gergen, 2014). Research based on a future forming perspective can be described as a "possibility science" that challenges the cultural conventions (Cooperrider 2017, p. 91). The primary goal for this form of research is social change (McNamee, 2020), and new knowledge as a secondary yet equally important goal.

The academic field of future forming research focuses primarily on the opportunities inherent in the development of new practices – where practices based on a fragmented mindset (individual orientation etc.) are replaced by practices based on social constructionism and relational mindsets. Gergen (1999; 2010; 2014) points out that several such relational practices have been developed within areas such as therapy, education and organisational development. Examples of such practices are solution-focused therapy (de Shazer, 1994), narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990) and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). At a meta-level, social constructionism has paved the way for the development of practices that emphasise the social significance of meaning. People create meaning together, and meaning and action are closely interlinked (Gergen, Gergen &

Ness, 2019). Social constructionism also contributes new ideas and a language that can be applied to develop dialogue-based and collaborative practices (Gergen & Ness, 2016).

Gergen (2014) writes that future forming research (FFR) can give birth to the (re-)construction of relational practices in several other areas. This can be achieved in several ways. However, Gergen emphasises one method: When new relational practices are established, these can act as a platform allowing the emergence of other new practices. It is the future forming potential of such new (relational) practices that *future forming research* can help trigger. Gergen (2014, p. 298) expresses this as follows:

"If such practices can be illuminated in terms of this potential, a new consciousness may be germinated. New and more potent practices may be stimulated. In certain respects, then, the present offering may serve as a mid-wife to a movement in the making. A voice may be given to an otherwise unarticulated sensibility, thus giving form and function to future undertaking."

This research project helps give a voice to the emergence of new relational practices in the work on upbringing in Re municipality. There is reason to believe that the development of such new relational practices in the work on upbringing may have an influence that spreads beyond the local contexts in which they develop. This is where the opportunities for transfer from such research can be found. A practice that develops in a local context can be transferred and implemented in other contexts. The development of new relational practices can lay the foundations for the development of new hybrid practices. According to Gergen (2014), research can thus help develop new practices and contribute to cumulative knowledge.

The majority of the professional practices implemented in the work on upbringing feature fragmentation and individualised methods of working (Gergen, 2010). Learning involves developing more efficient, and/ or effective, individuals. Tests are used to uncover whether the pupils have learned what the school wants them to learn. However, what would happen if we develop a culture

that is tasked with reinforcing relations? We should for a moment imagine that when children are lonely, are bullied, lack the motivation to learn or behave aggressively, this can be seen as an expression of a breach in relations or having relations dominated by inequality. Such human conditions represent a significant opportunity to involve all those in a group to take responsibility for ensuring that everyone of them thrives within the relations of which they are a part.

One important task for this research project is to give birth to the development of new relational practices in the work on upbringing. It is in relational interaction between the AI-based relational management practice and other (individualised) practices at Kirkevoll primary school that new type of practices was "born", forming the foundations for this research project. I have illustrated this relational interaction in figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1 Interaction between AI as a relational, future forming management practice and professional helping practices.
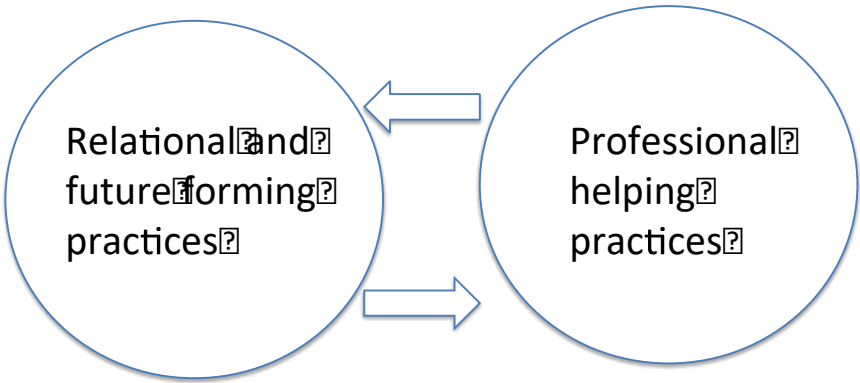
The circle on the left in the figure symbolises the implemented organisational development process based on AI. I have chosen to call this practice a *relational* and *future forming practice*. The approach is not only based on collaborative decision-making, but also processes to develop the organisation desired by the managers and employees (Cooperrider, 2017). The AI-based development work, for which I was responsible at Kirkevoll school (2005-2009), comprised all teachers and managers at the school. Several different practices were also in use simultaneously at the school. The teachers had their (educational) practice in the classrooms, the after-school care employees had their practices and there were different types of preventive practices at the school. I have chosen to describe these as "modern practices". This terminology is used with reference to Giddens (1990), who points out that one important characteristic of a modern society is the establishment of expert systems. Expert systems are characterised by a dualism, in which one (the expert) provides services based on expert knowledge, and the other receives the services (users, pupils, clients etc.). Expert systems de-emphasise the significance of personal relations to the advantage of more general (context-independent) roles. The knowledge form that informs expert systems is science (McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

In the presentation of the research process (see chapter 3), I explain that I became aware of the birth of new (relational) practices at Kirkevoll school in a slightly coincidental way. The new developing practices were performed by a group of fifth-grade teachers. These four teachers, instead of using their own expert knowledge to solve a conflict, prevent loneliness, and "create a peaceful atmosphere in the classroom" (secular practice), were involving the pupils to explore what sort of class they wanted to have. These teachers' preventive practice, based on an approach of problem-solving, became the basis for what we later named at future forming practice, as a part of 'my' AI process at the school. This new form of "world-making" in the classroom was subsequently named *The Dream Class* (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2015; Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020).

It was not possible to predict the potential of, or within, these new practices until the research work started. Neither was it possible to create a design for how to conduct research into the "origins" and explore the "potential" before the research work had started. For us, the only way to identify and

realise the potential within this prospective innovation was via an (equal) collaborative process with those who were involved in the development of the new practices. Moreover, the research had to take place from "within" (Shotter, 2014, p. 101). This implies a dialogical approach to research in which all parties involved contribute (equally) to the development of new knowledge and in that process transform the practices for the better.

1.4 What Brought Me to This Research Project?

In many ways, my pursuit of this research study has been inspired by a unique interest in how work on learning and knowledge development in organisations can take place in ways that promote inclusion, counteract unnecessary hierarchy, and in which people can work together to create the organisations and communities they genuinely dream about. The political starting point – the desire to contribute towards the creation of positive change and a fairer society – prompted me to learn about action research and action learning in the early 1990s. I was particularly attracted by the democratic, creative and pragmatic character of this research. I am intrigued by the fact that this type of research is not something to which others are often exposed, and something you perform together with others.

In the early 1990s, I experimented with the use of various forms of participatory action research, including Participatory Learning and Action (Chambers, 1997), together with children and adolescents, together with drug addicts, prisoners etc. (Hauger, 2000). My aim was to create social improvements together with those who would be utilising the changes. This was very educational and an important part of my education within action research. At the end of the 1990s, I became aware of other traditions and theoretical approaches to action research that I felt had an even more liberating potential for the work on social change than those which I had experienced before. These new theories were Gergen's (1982) theories of generative research and the ways in which attempts had been made to convert these theories into practice via the action research tradition of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

I qualified as a teacher and sociologist, and my career has alternated between academia and other (more) practical professions. I have worked as a teacher and with action research at the University of South-Eastern Norway. I was involved, for example, in establishing and teaching a study in Appreciative Inquiry (2011-2016) at Buskerud and Vestfold University College in Norway (Høgskolen i Buskerud og Vestfold, 2015). I have also worked with the use of AI as an approach to organisational development as a consultant (Hauger, 2005; Hauger, Luth-Hansen & Rolfsen, 2006). The original interest I had in this thesis was to sustainable change processes based on AI; something many AI critics have pointed towards (Bushe, 2012, Fitzgerald, Oliver & Hoxsey, 2010).

When I started the work on organisational development at Kirkevoll school, in 2005, there had been little research on how AI-based change processes could be made sustainable (Cooperrider & Avital, 2004). I had learned from other research that organisations appear to have an inherent tendency to move towards a (undynamic) status quo (Schein, 1987). This is true both with organisations that have experienced problems, and organisations that have developed a vitality that differs from the norm (Cameron, 2003). When I started the AI-based development work at Kirkevoll school, I gained the opportunity to research how this change process could be made lasting.

However, before I got started on the research, my original research interest changed. I became fascinated by the commitment of the teachers at the school to create better, fairer upbringing environments for the children and adolescents. This was a commitment to which I could associate. Yet, the most significant factor for my desire to start the research project was the potential I could perceive in the innovation (later named) ˊThe Dream Classˊ created in one of the grades at the school (Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020). Instead of viewing the innovation *The Dream class* as a part of AI-based development work, I chose to view *The Dream class* as the upstart of new hybrid change practices. My research interest in this thesis is to bring about what these practices *could be*. The research initiated to inquiry into the generative potentials of these new practices took place as a collaboration between several new partners (co-researchers) in the Re municipality (see below).

1.5 Re Municipality, and Practitioners in the Field of Upbringing as Co-researchers

This research has been conducted as a collaborative research project in Re municipality. The group of people with whom I have collaborated on this research has grown gradually as new innovative practices for the work on upbringing start to spread to new schools and new municipal services.

The municipality had five primary schools and a lower secondary school. It also had nine kindergartens (two of which were private). The municipality was founded in 2002 when Våle and Ramnes municipalities merged and had around 9,300 citizens. As of January 2020, Re municipality was merged with Tønsberg municipality – an urban municipality around four times as large as Re.

As noted before, my first steps in this research project, one of the teachers (Vidar Bugge-Hansen) was at the forefront of the development of the innovation *The Dream class*. Vidar has been a partner (co-researcher) for the research from 2006 until today (August 2020). Eventually, the team of teachers he worked with (four in 2009), and the students they were responsible for (45) were also involved as co-researchers.

The innovation *The Dream class* was an inspiration for a wider spread of the transformative change process in the services that work with children and young people in the Re municipality. In 2011 a project was established in the municipality named "SMART Upbringing". This project included services such as the child welfare service, the family centre, the health clinics, and the educational psychological service (PPT) in the municipality. Vidar Bugge-Hansen (2018) describes the background of the project as follows:

> "In Re municipality in the region of Vestfold, a large and unique development process was implemented in 2011 comprising the entire sector for upbringing work. The project was named SMART Upbringing. One objective was that all children and adolescents shall have an environment for upbringing where they have the opportunity to exploit their full potential. To uncover what is required for individual children, individual adults, a department in a

kindergarten, a class at school, or a family (SMART child welfare) to function optimally, a

strength-based perspective is applied in addition to participatory methods. The strength-based

action research model AI – Appreciative Inquiry –is applied to the work on developing the

individual school, kindergarten or family, in addition to the moral component in ART –

Aggression Replacement Training".

In the quote above, Vidar tells the story of how transformative development work that had its

origins at Kirkevoll school in the municipality now includes employees, managers, children, and their

parents in a total of 17 services.

To deal with the increasing complexity of the initiated change processes and in the research, I

collaborated with the head of the companies in children and young people to create a *research

group* in the Re municipality consisting of employees and managers from various services. This group

was created in 2015 (provisionally) and permanently in 2016 (12 members), and named the *internal

research group*. This group met regularly once a month during the period from when it was

established in spring 2015 until June 2019. The group was made up of colleagues who worked in

kindergartens (kindergarten teachers), schools, health clinics, the child welfare service, the

educational psychological service (PPT) and the SMART Upbringing project.

Table 1.1 Members of the internal research group in Re municapility from June 2016 to June 2019[2].

Elisabeth Paulsen, Cand mag in sociology	Manager, services for Children and Adolescents
Vidar Bugge-Hansen, teacher	Project manager, SMART Upbringing
Irene Linnestad, kindergarten teacher	Manager, Linnestad kindergarten
Siri Schmidt, / community nurse	Manager, community nurse service
Tina Feyling, family therapist	Project manager, SMART child welfare services
Karina Prynmo Heimestøl, educationalist	Manager, after school care service at Kirkevoll school
Anne Gry Kaldager, teacher	Principal, Røråstoppen primary school
Anita Karlsen, kindergarten teacher	Manager, Brår kindergarten
Henrik Arnesen, teacher	Manager, SMART upringing project
Lars Tore Carlsen, psychologist	Municipal psychologist
Are Thorkildsen, sociologist	Project employee, SMART Upbringing project
Bjørn Hauger, sociologist	Project employee, SMART Upbringing project

In the spring of 2015, the chief municipal executive's management group (four persons) was appointed as the ´control group´ for the collaborative research. Since 2015, we have held regular meetings with the head of municipal affairs for upbringing regarding the research (approximately once a month). We have also had other meetings with the chief municipal executive's management group regarding the research.

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[2] All members of this research group have agreed to use their names and pictures in the photos in this thesis.

1.6 Objectives of the Research Project

Based on the selected approach for this research and dialogues with my co-resarchers in the internal research group in Re, we agreed upon two objectives for the research:

(1) Develop new knowledge and create social change for the upbringing work in Re municipality, which can contribute to the development of more inclusive and life-promoting upbringing environments for children and adolescents.

(2) Develop practices that can be utilised in the work on upbringing in other municipalities and practitioners in the field of upbringing.

The first objective is based on the local needs in Re municipality. This objective was developed in collaboration with my colleagues in the central research group and was supported by the municipal management (by funds). This objective is also in line with my wishes and with the underlying philosophy for future forming research. The primary task of such research is to contribute to creating social change (Gergen 2014; McNamee, 2020). The second objective for the research refers to what this research may contribute to a "more extensive community". Based on the background and purpose of the research project, the following goals for the research project were developed by me in dialogue with members of the internal research group in 2016-2017:

1. Develop my (Bjørns´) competencies as a practitioner and researcher for knowledge development and social change, based on the principle of future forming research.

2. Create desired improvements in the upbringing environments for children and adolescents in Re municipality.

3. Increased competency in Re municipality to promote lasting future forming change processes.

4. Contribute towards making the implemented SMART Upbringing development work sustainable.

5. Expand the arsenal of relational resources that can be exploited in the work to create increased wellbeing for children and adolescents.

6. Develop knowledge that can be included in dialogue with and enrich the professional field regarding relational research and future forming research.

1.7 Presentation of the Research Questions

One important task for this thesis is to contribute towards strengthening the transformative processes and the work on social change, promoted by the SMART Upbringing development work. The three research questions underlying this research project are:

1) *How can people collaborate to develop practices within local upbringing work that contributes to the inclusion of all children and adolescents, and that triggers hope, involvement, and joy?*

2) *How can future forming research contribute towards keeping the SMART Upbringing development work open and generative?*

3) *What kind of new organisations and new types of organising are required to support the development of valued practices for upbringing work?*

Question number (1) uses the terminology "how can we together ....". The use of the word "people" is with reference to the continuous dialogue between my co-researchers, the readers of this text, myself and various representations of organisations who want to get involved in the development work. This is a process-oriented and emergent research project, implying that we (my co-researchers and I) are not able to determine in advance who will be involved.

These three questions we have developed shall also help direct attention away from fact-finding and towards discussions that ensure that all those involved in the development work, my colleagues, parents, children, adolescents etc. "pay attention to their own relationships", for example their own practice, the implemented development work, their own colleagues and the children and adolescents (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 56). One important purpose behind asking these questions in such a way is to contribute towards discussions that make people interested in collaborating and getting involved in the development work.

In this research project, I have chosen to use the word *upbringing* ("oppvekst" in Norwegian) when talking about how the local services, and this research project, contributes to the wellbeing and welfare of the children. Referring to Alvesson and Deetz (2009), the concept of upbringing is developed *with* the co-researchers and local community members. Alvesson and Deetz (2009) distinguish between research concepts brought to the research interaction by the researcher (elite a priori) and research concepts developed in collaboration with everyday people (local emergent). Central to the local emergent pole is the situated nature of the research ´enterprise´. According to Alvesson and Deetz, conceptual systems of the researchers seeks generality. Focusing on local concepts lead more to the "development of practical knowledge" or "wisdom of knowing-how" (2009, p. 31).

1.8 A Research Process in Six Stages

The research approach on which this project is based is designed as *a future forming type of research* (Gergen, 2014; McNamee, 2020). This form of inquiry centers social transformation, where I, as a researcher, have been engaged in with different groups of co-researchers to co-create desired and useful transformation in the work of upbringing in Re municipality (McNamee 2020).

Figure 1.2 My visualisation of the research process, defined as a movement in six stages.

Startup of the research (2005-2006 spring)

The transformative development work emerge at Kirkevoll skole, Re kommune

| AI process initiated | ART project under development |

Collaboration on research. Dream class (2006 autumn- 2009)

HYBRIDIZATION. Merging of ART og AI. (Co-research)

| AI process is continued | The project Dream class |

Establishment of the project SMART oppvekst (2010-2014)

The project SMART opp-vekst developed

| SMART language are further developed | The AI study |

Narrative investigations of development work (2015)

A study of the transformative development work is initiated. (Narrative inquiry)

| The october-conference | Construction of organization-narrative |

Collaborative research in the Internal Research Group (2016-2017)

Collaborative research in internal research group

| Conference on the work in SMART | Establishment of Trainer Education |

Exploring new forms of organization (2018-spring 2019)

SMART Center for Social Innovation is established

| Development of the SMART Center for Social Innovation | Establishment of the SMART festival |

I chose to prepare an abstract of this story using a flow chart. The flow chart (figure 1.2) is my consolidated and visualised presentation of the entire research process.

The chart is made up of six large boxes, interlinked with arrows. Each box relates to a certain period (stage) in this collaborative research work. Some of the episodes are long (four years), while others are (relatively) short (one year). The text in each of the "large" boxes is my description of what I see as the important activities in each of the six stages. Two smaller "boxes" have also been drawn below each of the large boxes. The small boxes are used to visualise important "sub-activities" or sub-processes in each stage.

Stage 1 (2015). Tells my reconstruction of the process-story of how the AI organisational development process at Kirkevoll school was performed.

Stage 2 (2006-2009) tells the story of how I, together with teachers, pupils and their parents (co-researchers) started to study the new practices that were under development in The Dream class. This involved studying what kind of (performative) impact the development work known as The Dream class had on the teachers, pupils and parents involved (Hauger, 2015). The research conducted during the first stage (boxes 1 and 2) has in particular drawn upon narrative inquiries (Gill, 2001), supported by qualitative interviews (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2003), field notes, images and various documents from the process.

Stage 3 (2010-2014). During this stage, Re municipality implemented a project to discover how the uplifting experiences gained from the development work at Kirkevoll school could be utilised for all work on upbringing. The municipal council unanimously adopted (in 2011) a resolution to support the implementation of a five-year project: SMART Upbringing. In this stage of the research, I was exploring what this project *might be*.

26

Stage 4 (2015) involved how we performed the research related to SMART Upbringing during the first year after I was employed by the municipality[3]. I started this work by studying five examples of new and promising practices under development in the work by the municipal services on upbringing. I applied narrative inquiry for these studies (Gill, 2001) together with methods taken from art (graphic visualisation etc.). The purpose of these five studies was to develop knowledge (narratives etc.) about what kind of upbringing environments and upbringing practice we *wanted to create*. During this period, I also designed a method (inspired by art) for studying and reinforcing the conversations about the implemented transformative processes in all the municipal services. More than 100 employees and managers were involved in co-creating a fictional narrative about the implemented development work. During this stage, we also organised the first internal conference regarding SMART Upbringing. 70 participants attended the conference. Chapter 4 provides a description of how the research was conducted during this stage.

Stage 5 (2016-2017): In the spring of 2016, an important change took place in how the research was performed. During this stage, I discovered a tendency for antagonisation (we-you relationships) in the research and development work. I, therefore, decided to make important changes to how the research was conducted. Ethics were assigned a central position in the research. Ethical principles for the research were identified, and the research was developed towards a more polyphonic (multiple voices) method. During this stage, I established close collaboration with a group of practitioners (co-researchers) working on the research. This group was named "*the internal research group*". The group met in total 29 times throughout the three-year period (June 2016 – June 2019). Our collaboration allowed us to develop our own local model for relational reflection, inspired by Norwegian psychiatrist Tom Andersen's (1991) concept of reflective team. Our method was named *Appreciative Reflective Team* (Hauger et al., 2018). The use of this designed method allowed

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[3] In the first year (2015), I was employed in a 20 percent position. From the autumn of 2016, I was employed in a 75% position, and from 2018 the position increased to 100%.

all the colleagues in the internal research group the opportunity to work on the research and knowledge development from their different professional practices. The story of this "ethical turnaround" in the research and how the research was conducted in the internal research group constitutes a central part of chapter 5.

Stage 6 (2018 – 2019). The SMART Upbringing project was completed in 2017. One important task for the implemented research has been to search for generative opportunities for ensuring that the implemented transformative processes could last once the project was completed. Having gained access to new theories (e.g. from the academic field on social innovation), we started to explore the opportunities for developing infrastructures, organisations and new forms of organisation of the development work, which could help ensure a lasting development of the innovative aspects of the development work. One result of this process is the establishment of the SMART centre for social innovation, adopted by the municipal council in December 2017.

The research became an important part of the work at the centre. During this period, we also established a training programme and new researcher community named Train the Trainer education (start-up November 2017) and a SMART festival. Over a period of two years, more than 60 colleagues from Re and Tønsberg municipalities have taken this educational programme and researcher training. Chapter 6 contains a description of how we worked on this research as a group.

1.9 Reading Guide for the Thesis

The research is based on future forming research. One important premise underlying such research is not to claim that there is only one way in which to represent "reality" or the facts of a case. A research report may be written in multiple ways (Weatherall, 2019). Gergen and Gergen (2012, p. 25) argue that, for example, it is not necessary to use a formalised language that is utilised by a certain discipline.

This research draws upon a *performative research tradition* (Haseman, 2006; Jones, 2017). Photographs, graphic illustrations and drawings accompany the current thesis. Such visualised texts are partly used to provide the reader of the thesis with an insight into the new cultures that are under development. There is a saying that a picture paints a thousand words. Images and other visual texts used in this thesis allow the reader to more easily form his or her own opinions on what is presented and, in certain parts of the thesis, I have chosen to use images to create a closer link between the reader and the people who are involved in these change processes. The thesis contains, for example, photographs showing how employees of a local child welfare service use play during a home visit (see photographs 6.1 and 6.2), and how teachers orchestrate the interaction between the pupils dominated by "relational beauty" (see photograph 7.3).

Future forming research allows me (and my colleagues) commitment, values and passion to take the *co-leading* role in the research (Gergen, 2014). The purpose of the research is to create social change for work on upbringing, for example by developing new forms of practices, new forms of relationships, new forms of organisation that can bring more colour to the children's lives. For this to succeed, we are reliant on the willing involvement of colleagues, managers, politicians, children, adolescents and their parents. The traditional welfare services normally have a two-sided paradigm, where the services and professionals offer their services and the citizens receive the services (Selloni, 2017). In this thesis, I show (for example) how new forms of collaborative practices and new forms of social life emerge and are developed. These new forms of practices and social life are impossible to describe in full of just words. I, therefore, prefer to emphasise the impact they have on those who experience the new ways of being together. Feelings, sensations, and dissemination of experiences based on empathetic participation (experience-based knowledge) are also emphasised.

Writing a PhD thesis can be defined as a formative process (Weatherall, 2018). Such a process requires the author (myself) to show he or she is qualified to work as a researcher within a specific research tradition. As my research work has been conducted within a relational research paradigm, the way in which I write this thesis should reflect this.

This thesis contains three main parts in addition to this introductory chapter. These are:

Chapter 2 contains a presentation of the theory of science in the research project, the type of research approach upon which the study draws, and the role played by theory (and different theories) in the research and the thesis. In this chapter, I also explain how I have chosen to apply the future forming research paradigm in the project, and the perspectives and methods upon which this thesis draws. In the last part of Chapter 2, I explain how the research quality can be assessed and the actions I have taken to ensure that the research is of sufficiently academic quality.

Chapters 3 to 6 contain a presentation of the research story. This constitutes the exegesis in my thesis. The *exegesis* is defined as a story about how the creative research has been performed (Bolt, 2007). In this presentation, I attempt to highlight (make transparent) the choices I have made during the gradual development of the research, and how I have worked with my colleagues in conducting the research (the six stages). It is my hope that the reader of this thesis will gain an insight into the assessments that have underpinned the reasons behind many of the opportunities we have followed up (or rejected) throughout the research process. The exegesis, therefore, contains numerous extracts from my reflection notes and supplementary (incl. contradictory) observations from my co-researchers.

Chapters 7-8: The final two chapters contain a presentation of the research results. Chapter 7 contains the presentation of five different practical results (output). Chapter 8 provide an account of the contribution this PhD research makes to theoretical knowledge advancement. This contribution is related to theories of *Appreciative Inquiry* (Bushe, 2013; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). In this concluding chapter, I will also raise questions about how the change processes based on SMART Upbringing will be continued after this research project is completed, possible limitations with the study and issues that warrant further research.

Chapter 2: Theory of Science and Research Approach

In this chapter, I aim to explain the type of research approach upon which the study draws, and the role played by theory in the research and the thesis. The thesis´ epistemological stance is social constructionism (Gergen, 2009; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Moreover, project choices have been made on the basis of the purpose of the study: To contribute new knowledge, new types of practice, etc. that may help generate more viable lives for children and adolescents growing up. Both social constructionism and future forming research represent a view of research that allows links to be formed between research and the real work to generate social change, while all the people involved in the research explicitly are invited to co-create the change (McNamee, 2020).

This chapter has five parts. In the first part, I present *future forming research* (FFR). I show how this idea is incorporated in social constructionism or a relational research world (Raboin, Uhlig, & McNamee, 2013). The task for such type of research is not to describe the world, but to change a part of it. With such a purpose, the research should draw upon multiple ways of presenting what we want to create (Gergen, 2014). For the purposes of my PhD-thesis research, I have chosen to draw upon a so-called performative research perspective (Gergen & Gergen, 2012; Jones, 2017). Such a perspective allows for the utilisation of art and resources from our own daily lives (playing etc.) when working on the research. The features of such a perspective and how I aimed to utilise them are described in part two of this chapter. In part two, I elaborate my views on theory and the type of theory I have chosen to draw upon in this research thesis. When it comes to creating social change, all kind of theories, models and practices have the potential to inform the meaning-making process of how things *could be* (McNamee, 2004).

In the last parts of this chapter (part three and four), I explain the kind of epistemological understanding (view of knowledge) that underlies the research (part three), the methods I have utilised in the research (part four) and my observations of what I see as research quality in this study (part five).

2.1 Future Forming Research

In the article *From Mirroring to World-Making: Research as Future Forming* published by Kenneth Gergen in 2014, he claims that the debate that has been ongoing between researchers within different research traditions has opened the door to the formulation of an alternative view on social science research. In addition to the interpretive (qualitative) and explanatory (quantitative) research world, there is an argument for the existence of a third, distinct research world; the relational (Raboin, Uhlig & McNamee, 2013). The purpose of relational research is not to develop knowledge that represents the world, but primarily to change the world (McNamee, 2014).

In his article, Gergen (2014) indicates a new direction for how such (relational) research can be carried out in practice, but also how it has its foundations in the theory of science. He explains that if the purpose of research is to improve the world, the starting point for the research and the researcher has to be finding an answer to the question of what kind of world we want to create. He claims that such research places the researcher's own values and work to create social improvements at the core of the research.

For more than 50 years, social science researchers and natural science researchers have debated what constitutes research. In his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* from 1962, Thomas Kuhn questioned the prevailing view of what science was and how science develops. The prevailing view of what constitutes science always originates from a paradigm, according to Kuhn (1970). During the initial phase of research history, a view emerged of what should constitute science in a paradigmatic understanding that is referred to as *scientific inquiry*. This research paradigm is based on an assumption that there is an objective world (assumption of ontology). Moreover, it is assumed that it is possible to develop scientific (objective) knowledge about what actually exists by use of scientific methods (knowing what).

Scientific inquiry has been used for many years as a synonym for a social type of academic research as well (Alvesson & Skjøldberg, 2009). Woolgar (1996) makes use of the concept of a handed-down view of science to describe this research tradition. Correspondingly, Kuhn (1962) uses

the concept of normal science. However, when research creates results (etc.) that cannot be explained in a prevailing paradigm, this may lay the foundations for the development of a new research paradigm.

A qualitative research tradition has, with time, been established as a separate research paradigm. Qualitative research originates from anthropology and sociology, and is developed by social science researchers who identified the need to develop knowledge allowing us to understand each other (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) or the meaning of phenomena (for example phenomenological studies of loneliness). Qualitative research studies things in "their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 5). Irrespective of the underlying purpose of research (development of an understanding of each other) and the assumptions of what constitutes knowledge (for example, personal experiences), the task of any researcher is to develop (empirical) material that represents phenomena in the world.

Gergen (2014) writes that if the task of the research is to explore the "path" (process) towards a desired future, then the generative (unseen) opportunities for achieving this cannot (fully) be explored through qualitative and quantitative analyses. Such research requires a different landscape. Gergen (2014, p. 294) put this as follows:

"Metaphorically speaking, what if we closed our eyes and began to imagine the worlds of our hopes? What if we replaced the persistent rush to establish 'what is the case' and began to ask, 'what kind of world could we build'? This would be to place the researcher's values in the forefront of his/her activities."

Gergen's (2014, p. 294) main point is that *future forming research* involves creating what the researcher wants the world to be. In his own words:

"Given a valued vision of the possible, the challenge for research would be to explore how such a possibility could be realized. The aim of research would not be to illuminate what is, but to create what is to become. Herein lies the essence of a future forming orientation to research."

Gergen (1982) has been involved in the development of many of the assumptions on which the development of this research concept is based, via a number of scientific articles and books. One of these assumptions is that all social research has a historical context. When research helps index the world, based on its own (historically generated) academic traditions, these sciences simultaneously play a part in conserving the social life in the world as it is.

A Research Approach Based on Social Constructionism

Future forming research is informed by the social constructionist theory of science (Gergen, 2014; McNamee & Hosking, 2012;). The ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions in this meta-theory differ distinctly from the meta-theories that inform quantitative and qualitative research. The Social constructionist theory of science does not deny that there may be an objectively or subjectively perceived world. However, there is the assumption that it is not possible to distinguish well between the one person observing the world and the world that is observed. Gergen (2014) uses the metaphor of research as a mirror to explain this. According to Gergen (1999), scientific inquiry is based on an assumption that (the individual) researcher can observe the world as it actually is by using scientific methods. However, the perspectives on which this kind of research is based, the questions asked by the researcher etc. will imply that the researcher's mirror will reflect certain aspects of reality, while other aspects will be in the background (not reflected).

Gergen (2014) points out that future forming research will be a type of process-oriented research. According to McNamee and Hosking (2012), relational research could be done with minimal structure but with the ability to grasp what unfolds. How a research process unfolds in a

changing and moving landscape can only be summarised once the research has been completed and the social object of investigations has the roles as co-researchers as well.

Researchers communicate their findings via the medium of language. There is only some correspondence between the words we use and the world about which the words are used. These links have to be made meaningful within local communities. Gergen (1999) writes that language can never be private. Language is developed socially. The world that surrounds us is therefore relationally created. It is only possible for us to see, and discover, that for which we have a language to describe. This does not imply that social constructionism negates the claim that objective or subjective knowledge of the world can be developed. That which is negated is that the objective and the subjective world only can and/ or be explained in one way. Relational research invites the researcher to have an open mind to a pluralistic view of the world and opens up inquiries ´as-is´ kind of studies.

When determining what kind of knowledge can be developed about the world, social constructionism indicates that knowledge shall be understood as *communal knowledge* (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). This implies that knowledge is both developed in and via local discourse (or: culture). Wittgenstein's (1953) metaphor of *the language-game* is frequently used to explain the definition of this view of knowledge. If you want to play chess, you need both a set of pieces, a chess board, two players, a table and a set of rules. The word chess, and an understanding of what chess is, cannot be developed by means of a semantic explanation. It is only possible to understand what chess is via what Wittgenstein refers to as a grammatical understanding of the language. This refers to what occurs when a game of chess is played. The grammar shows how all the elements are interlinked; you learn about the function of the pieces by playing the game. Rules have to be made meaningful. It is not possible to use your own private rules for chess.

My decision to use the metaphor of games for this research is based on my experience that if a new practice is to be incorporated into work on upbringing, it is not sufficient to "discover" new ways of working ("new game"). The new practice has to be seen as meaningful by those organisations where they are to be incorporated. If the rules underlying daily interaction with children and

adolescents are predominated by a defensive paradigm (problem identification and solving), it is uncertain whether a new innovative practice will take root unless the entire group agrees that this makes sense. The method I used to create changes in meaning within the local groups while simultaneously developing new innovations is an important subject in the first substantive chapter. That chapter (chapter 3) describes the start-up of the research and development work, SMART Upbringing.

Research based on a relational paradigm does not involve discovering what is. Knowledge development processes in that paradigm require the development of knowledge about what *might be* (the new game, or new ways of playing). In order to uncover the answers to what this might be, the researcher requires certain markers to identify or develop "the new". According to Frank (2005), heterogeneity and variations may be two such markers. The purpose of studies based on a relational perspective is not to develop knowledge of what typical, but what unfolds in a non-typical way. Instead of using the concept of uncovering, it may be more appropriate to use the concept of generativity about what emerges by means of such studies.

Table 2.1 (below) provides a summary of several important divides between the three research worlds described. According to Raboin, Uhlig and McNamee (2013), the text in each column shows what makes the different research traditions consistent. The table should not be interpreted as stating that some of these traditions imply a more correct view on what research is and how research should be conducted. From a relational research point of view, the diagnostic and interpretive research world is also of value.

Table 2.1 Understanding of what makes the research consistent and inconsistent in different research worlds. From Raboin, Uhlig and McNamee (2013, p. 11).

Research World One Diagnostic	Research World Two Interpretive	Research world Three Process-oriented
Prove	Understand	Continiuos Change
Observe	Describe/interpret	Co-create
Researcher/Subject	Researcher/Participant	Co-researchers
True or False	In-Depth-Descriptions/Situated Meanings	Generate New Meaning
Discoverable Truth and Cauce/Effect Mechanism	Contextualized Knowledge/ Multiple Realities	Generate New Realities
Statically Valid	Authentic to Participants	Locally Useful
Gereralizable and Repeatable	Possible Transferable	Local & Historical/ Co-Evolving
Discover Truth	Expand Insigth	Generate Possibilities

If all research can be legitimised on its own premises, the question is what outcome does the research produce, and (for example) for whom the research is of value (Gergen, 2014). This opens the door to a pragmatic and reflexive approach to research. This involves ensuring that all voices can be heard and working on research in a way that involves my co-researchers (etc.) in solutions based on

our shared and preferred perspectives and values. The specific methods I applied to achieve this is presented in detail in chapter 4 of this thesis.

Relational Processes Among Actants

Many constructionist writings give language the central role as a medium in social change. (McName & Hosking, 2012). But both human and non-human actors can contribute to, and are products of reality construction processes. Quoting McNamee & Hosking (2012, p. 38): "This emphasis on language shifts attention away from the dualistic distinctions and characterizations that (apparently) describe an external with properties".

To give more emphasis to the role of no-human actors in my constructivist discourse I have chosen to include Latour's (1996; 2007) Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to talk about how relational realities are constructed. According to Latour (1996), anything that could make a difference in social life is defined as an actor. In this research project, the ANT theory has helped me in my research work as it shows how different actors such as physical meeting places, processes, physical tools etc. can be included as important resources in the research work. One of Latour's (2008) hypotheses is that modernity forces us to think in separate spheres. By linking human and non-human actors in new ways (or that do not normally belong together), new hybrid realities and innovations may emerge.

ANT is described as a theory about "the making" as opposed to "ready-made science" and technology. ANT theories are based on what Latour describes as an alternative root metaphor for describing social essences. According to Latour (1996), "surface" is a frequently used metaphor. In figure 2.1, surface has been drawn as a circle. Based on such a metaphor, an organisation can be described by putting into words everything that is inside the circle, e.g., who is employed, what is done etc. in an organisation. The circle (a) both frames and delimits who belongs to the entity, for example, the persons who work at the school.

Another metaphor used to describe social "essences" is the tree (b). This metaphor can be perceived more as a network-like understanding of a social system. Development, movement, change all originate from an activity or actor. An alternative metaphor to these two metaphors is (c) filaments or rhizomes, according to Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) system of concepts. I associate such

filaments with the roots in a mangrove forest. If you study this root system, where the roots from different trees intertwine in a complex network, it is not possible to see where the root system starts or ends.

Figure 2.1 Three different metaphors to describe social essences, based on Latour (1996).
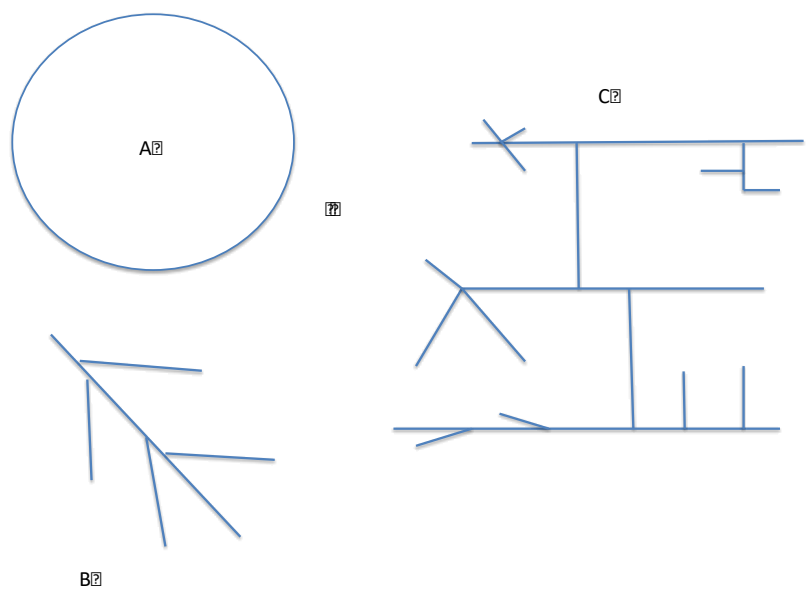
Filaments are used as a metaphor to counteract the claim that chronological and linear processes determine how something will be. Development is possible in all parts of the system and can be used to show how the researcher can relate to a different practice and to the system to be studied in a "non-hierarchical way". With the filament metaphor (c), the research can only be seen as one of several activities or actors that affect what happens, which is unpredictable to some extent.

In what Law (2004) refers to as the Euro-American research traditions, it is assumed that the party active in a research process is the researcher. Moreover, it is assumed that there is only one change initiative (the subject) and that the phenomenon (object) to be changed is passive and universal. According to Law (2004), the assumption that the phenomenon is universal implies that everything that surrounds the object is, in general, the same. In the presentation of my research, it is easy to assign it such an ethnocentric position – that it is I and "my" research that is the subject and that the aspects I studied are passive (objects). Latour's (2007) ANT theory indicates that there are many subjects that simultaneously affect each other and that will change in relation to who takes the initiative and the fact that the surroundings are constantly changing.

Future Forming Research and the Performative Mode of Expression in Social Sciences

Gergen (2014) links the development of future forming research to a performative mode of expression in social sciences. The performative approach to research has wide and varied roots, is described in relatively different ways and has different names within different research traditions. Within social sciences, the concept of *performative social sciences research is used* also by Roberts (2008). See also Gergen and Gergen (2012) and Jones (2017). Within art-related research (and media research), the concepts of *performative research* (Haseman, 2006) and *practice-led research are being used* (Smith & Dean, 2009).

The emergence of performative social science research has important aspects in terms of the theory of science (philosophy) and theory in addition to practical aspects. The philosophical aspects of this research approach are associated in particular with Austin's (1962) *speech act theory*. With his theory, Austin shows how words may be a social action in themselves, as with the example below: The doctor tells you in words that you are ill, and these words have an effect on you, afford you new rights in society (sickness benefit etc.), and the words assign a new role to be exercised; the role of being ill. The doctor's words will have this social function irrespective of whether you actually are ill, in medical terms. Austin (1962) distinguishes between *constative* and *performative* statements. The constative statements attempt to create accordance between the words used and the world to which the

words refer. The performative statements have an impact in the world. They do not describe things. The constative statements have a performative effect. All statements have some form of effect in that they can trigger a thought, a feeling or create an association (Dahl, 2019).

According to Jones (2017), Norman Denzin (2001) was the first person to use the concept of *performative social science research*. At the start of the new millennium, Denzin had started to reconstruct the qualitative research interview. Instead of using this as a method to collect information, he developed an interview that aimed to "enact reality". He referred to this type of interview as a performative interview (Denzin, 2001). The interview is a way of "writing the world, a way of bringing the world into play". Denzin (2001, p. 24) envisioned how such an interview method could be used to promote the opportunities for people to be who they wanted to be when meeting others. He wrote in an article about what motivated him to reconstruct the qualitative interview, as follows:

> "I imagine a world where race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexual orientation intersect; a
> world where language and performance empower, and humans can become who they wish to
> be, free of prejudice, repression and discrimination."

Denzin (2001) would like to see research contributing to the development of a world where people can be who they want to be, in harmony with their different sexual identities, ethnic origins, age, etc. This would only be possible if we meet each other with ethnic empathy and empowerment (Denzin, 2001). As researchers, we are a part of moral societies, he writes.

Creating a feeling of equality and empathy (here and now) is today formulated as an essential task for performative research. Jones (2017) makes use of the concept of *relational aesthetics* to describe this aspect of performative research. The Relational Aesthetic concept was initially introduced by Borriaud (2002). One key aspect of this principle is the desire to reduce the distance (and eliminate separation) between people by promoting a more sensitive and intuitive method of communication. Applying relational aesthetic as a principle in performative research, (Jones 2017, p. 3) involves ensuring that "inter-human exchanges become aesthetic objects in and of themselves". Jones goes on to write that "co-operation, co-production and collaboration become things of aesthetic

beauty. There is not necessarily an 'object' in the traditional sense of art, but rather a time, a space and a gathering, creating a transitory, participant community."

Jones (2017) argues that the use of relational aesthetics should represent a starting point for performative research. Given that such research should be cooperative, the research must be able to create meeting places, and ways of being together where everyone feels equal.

For my research project, I have experimented with the development of various methods (and meeting places) in which colleagues, children, adolescents and their parents were met (and invited) as aesthetic entities and in which we co-created relations that created aesthetic beauty. Some of these methods are described below in this chapter.

The Use of Art to Explore and Report New Forms of Social Life

Another important predominant feature of performative social science research is that it draws upon art and elements from daily life when exploring and reporting from social life. Kip Jones (2017) writes that this research approach is often referred to as "Arts-based Research". In his words (Jones, 2017, p. 2):

> "It is a fusion of both, creating a new model where tools from the Arts and Humanities are explored for their utility in enriching the ways in which Social Science subjects might be researched and/or disseminated or communicated to various communities".

> Performative research draws upon typical tools based on art such as photography, video, drawings, graphical illustrations (visual art) and performance of music, theatre, dance, role play, etc. (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). Other elements from individuals' daily life or professional practices may also be included as (new) elements in order to explore new forms of social life or report from research. Meals could, for example, be included as a new element to mediate (and explore) how vital relations can be established between people who (otherwise) are in conflict. The variety of methods for describing reality opens the door to the performative (Gergen, 2014).

There are several reasons for including art and elements from daily life in the exploration of new forms of social life with my research. Firstly, a performative approach allows me to exploit a large number of different resources to create what Haseman (2019) describes as "movement in the making". The role of *future forming research* is to create a movement towards what we wish to be (Gergen, 2014). However, it is not possible to predict what the new aspects *might be*. Also, Bolt (2009, p. 31) writes that knowledge of what is new cannot be found "out there". Experiments using new elements (art, processes, material etc.) in our own practice will allow us to start coordinating our activities with (each) other in *new* ways. Instead of repeating the same (the cultural patterns), people in a local community can perform a practice with a difference. Doing so can result in new (materialised) experiences that can lay the foundations for the development of articulated knowledge (Bolt, 2016).

Another feature of performative research is the use of some form of dramaturgical theory. Within social constructionist philosophy, Wittgenstein's theories about the language game are often used as an example of such theory. The function of language is to coordinate human actions. Other discursive theories upon which performative social science research draws are non-representational theory (Thrift, 2007) and Latour's actor-network theory (Latour, 2007). Gergen and Gergen (2012) present a quote from the world of Shakespeare, in which the author expresses that everything that happens in the world takes place on different stages where men and women are actors. Within sociology, Goffman (1959) has pioneered the development of such theories regarding social life. He uses theatre as a metaphor to describe how daily life occurs.

When theatre is used as a metaphor in order to understand social life (Goffman, 1959), special attention is paid to the fact that the (often hidden) manuscript informing us how to behave (as teachers, managers etc.) is to a large extent created socially, and thereby open to change. We can therefore choose to develop new 'manuscripts' for how we (for example) wish to behave together in the classroom. We can choose to create roles that allow us more room to manoeuvre, and new rules that we want to form the basis for social life. In a performative perspective, the socially created conventions are assigned an additional status as carriers of rationality (Bava, 2014). This is in contrast

to more cognitively oriented research, which views rationality as a cognitive process occurring especially in the individual's mind (McNamee, 2014).

Another important reason for the use of a performative approach to research is that it has the capacity to contribute towards both democratising and humanising research. When we allow elements from our own professional practice or everyday life or the use of methods that are familiar to us (oral stories, drawings, photos etc.), it increases the possibility of involving more non-academics in the research (Anderson, 2014). This may occur both via the involvement of children, adolescents and their parents as co-researchers and via research conducted *by* practitioners. For the purpose of my research, my co-researchers and I have, for example, exploited various forms of visual art (wall paintings) to mediate the participation of children, adolescents (and their) parents in the research. We have also made use of drawings to put into words "bodily" experiences and to include the voices of the children, adolescents and our colleagues in new ways.

We have used photographs as images, for example, to document new forms of practice within the child welfare service (and new forms of family life). These images are also used in order to create closer relations with our colleagues in the research. This form of (visual) representation (Gergen & Gergen, 2012) is an indication that by extending the opportunities for representation, it is also possible to increase solidarity with children and adolescents who have difficulties and to promote a desire to get involved in order to create social improvements with and for them.

There is one important kind of practical condition for the use of a performative approach. If the researcher is to draw upon elements from art and dramaturgy while doing research, he or she needs to take on other roles and master other skills in addition to those required to conduct the traditional social research.

In this part of the chapter, I have presented what research might look like within the constructionist meta-theory. As I have outlined, social constructions are very much focused on relational processes. There are versions of social construction that are pure language-based, where constructions go through terms as storytelling, conversations, and discourse (McNamee & Hosking,

2012). In this thesis, the construction processes also include construction on practices, processes, and events. This point will be returned to in my exegesis (chapter 3-6) and the presenting of the results from this research (chapter 7).

2.2 The Role Played by the Theories in the Research and Thesis

Theories utilised in my research project and in the thesis have a slightly different role than in conventional research. Gergen (2014) writes that when theories are used within qualitative and quantitative research, they have a mirror-like function. They are used to reflect reality as it is. He goes on to write that the task of research with such research traditions will be to integrate or synthesise finds with several associated theories (adjust the mirror) and offer society an "account of the world from which useful applications can be derived" (2014, p. 304).

As indicated earlier, Gergen (2014) does not reject the concept of using theory in this way, but argues against the idea that the world demands to be mirrored via the application of just one theory (in one way). Inspired by Gergen, I have decided to use theories in a pragmatic and generative way for my research. A range of theories can help ensure that the research explores different aspects of the reality being studied, and can thus help the researcher(s) identify a range of actions. In a future forming perspective, all theories will be of use. It is the capacity of theories to solve tasks and challenges faced by the research that should determine which theories should be used. No theories can be claimed as more correct or better than others.

McNamee (2004) argues that research based on social constructionism should assume a *promiscuous* position in relation to theory. By this, she suggests that researchers and practitioners cannot merely choose between theories, but also have the possibility to choose what aspects of the different theories they want to use in their practice. She bases this argument on the fact that change processes based on social constructionism are built upon a relational perspective. A relational perspective involves assuming a position of dialogue concerning the world around you. In dialogues (assuming Bakhtin's (1981) definition of the word), there will never be a transfer (copy) of everything

one person tells another person. The participants in a dialogue build upon what they feel is meaningful. Those elements they feel are meaningful are, in turn, based on the context in which the dialogue takes place. According to McNamee (2004), this should also be the practitioner's approach to theory. It is the (changed) tasks we face that should determine which theories may be appropriate to draw upon, and what aspects of theories we want to extract and how we combine various theories.

For the purpose of this study, I have in particular drawn upon three theories in addition to the social constructionist theory of science (McNamee & Hosking, 2012), Gergen's theories about future forming research (Gergen 2014) and a performative research perspective (Jones, 2017). These are: Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; 1995), theories relating to transformative dialogues (Gergen, McNamee & Barret, 2001) and Actor-Network-Theory (Latour, 1996; 2007). Each of these theories is described below.

Appreciative inquiry: Theories relating to future forming organisational development

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an approach to social change based on social constructionism. Cooperrider in cooperation with his supervisor, Suresh Srivastva, developed the first theories of this change strategy (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

AI is described as a *generative theory building method* for the collaborative construction of reality" (Cooperrider, 2017, p. 82). The reason for describing the theories as generative is that AI implies a new method of carrying out studies "that open our future to new possibilities and better worlds" (Cooperrider, 2017, p. 84). This is explained in more detail in the article from 1987 (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p. 110):

> "Theories gain their generative capacity by extending visions that expand to the realm of the possible. As a general proposition, it might be said that theories designed to empower organized social systems will tend to have a greater enlightenment effect than theories of human constraint."

In line with social constructionist theory, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is based on the assumption that it is the locally constructed conventions in an organisation that inform how people

collaborate and solve their tasks (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). In order to achieve a fundamental change in the way an organisation functions, a fundamental change is also required in these assumptions (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The two researchers claimed that if the purpose of the research is to develop knowledge in order to increase the ability to imagine a desired future, this should take place via the use of new root metaphors for the research. In the ground-breaking article, *Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life* from 1987, the authors introduce two such metaphors; "miracle of life" and "mystery of social existence" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Thirty years later (2017), Cooperrider writes that AI, as an approach to research and (simultaneous) organisational change, is constructed on the basis of these metaphors. Studies conducted to create more vital organisations via the use of AI take place by means of a series of cycles of action research processes. In the English language, the terms used are definition, discovery, dream, design and delivery (or destiny) for these different research cycles (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

Such a process is initiated when the organisation chooses a life-giving focus (definition). A life-giving focus is a focus on those situations where the organisation has an optimal function in terms of how people interact, how a change process works, or the results generated. This type of focus is referred to as affirmative focus (McNamee & Hosking, 2012) or positive lens (Golden-Biddle & Dutton, 2012). One important assumption underlying AI as a future forming change strategy is that the generative potential (also) can be detected in what is "current" (Cooperrider, 2017, p. 84), or in other words, what is happening "here and now". On the other hand, however, if such a (vital) lens is not utilised, it is not a foregone conclusion that the generative potential is detected. Studies of these generative potentials are carried out during the discovery phase.

By means of processes in which employees and managers are involved in exploring the generative potential found in what is current, the participants are engaged in creating a dream about how they want the organisation to be, and in processes to design the organisation in line with these dreams.

The dialogues that take place between the participants involved in these processes result in the formation of new (local) organisational theories that inform the practice and development of new organisational design (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

The theories regarding the organisational development strategy AI, and AI's process model, have both inspired and informed my research work in a number of ways. Firstly, AI has been my preferred approach to working with organisational development as a consultant (Hauger et al. 2008). In the following chapter, I describe how I performed this change strategy at the largest primary school in Re municipality during the period from 2005 to 2009, and I argue in this chapter that this helped develop internal competencies in (and understanding of) the use of *future forming research* in the organisation. Furthermore, I applied a positive lens to explore the generative potential in the SMART work in the "here and now experiences" that had already been made with the SMART Upbringing development work during the initial phase of the research (see chapter 4).

One of the key characteristics of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is the use of unconditionally positive questions, "appreciative ways of knowing, appreciative interchange and ways of relating, and appreciative ways of designing" (Cooperrider, 2017, p. 84). McNamee and Hosking (2012) write that it is this (valuing) focus that triggers the transformative potential in a development process based on AI. Recognising that all persons involved in a change process have important experiences and resources that can be activated in the process may help transform the relationships between those involved (managers, employees, researchers, co-researchers etc.) and various forms of knowledge (Andersen, 2014).

One of the tasks in a research process based on AI is to identify and activate the organisation's (and the people's) strengths in a change process (Reed, 2007). Strengths are used as a common term to denote the resources that create life for the system when functioning optimally. The purpose here is to use these strengths in order to transform the organisation in such a way that you continuously get the best out of the employees and partners (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). A jazz band is often used as a metaphor for such "mature" organisations (Barrett, 2012). The members

of a jazz band bring out the best in each other. Nobody talks about what someone did wrong, but they work on what was discordant in a way that makes it harmonious. The band has one common basic comp or melodic rhythm. This can be compared to an organisation's value base. Once this basic rhythm or signature melody has been established in a piece of music, you can create new melodies within the melody or transform the old melody into something new. This is also how learning organisations are thought to work. In such organisations, it is the empowered employees who independently take the initiative to develop the organisation in the desired direction.

When I was given the opportunity to work with research related to the implemented development work for SMART Upbringing, I fully aimed to utilise AI as my research methodology (collaborative action research). I decided to abandon this idea for several reasons. Firstly, it would assign precedence to my perspectives and "my" change methodology. Secondly, the complexity of the development process requires methods and approaches to be adapted to the changes that take place during the process. I also recognised the need to incorporate working methods for the research that was open to reflection, criticism and reflexivity. As a result, the research methodology I chose shall be described as emergent (Bava, 2014).

The Theory of Transformative Dialogues

Another important theory upon which I have drawn in the research work is the theory of *transformative dialogues* (Gergen, McNamee & Barret, 2001; McNamee, 2007). *Future forming research* places ethics at the forefront of the research (Gergen, 2014). In many ways, this theory has become an important ethical lens in the research.

At the start of 2016, I discovered tendencies whereby both the research and the performance of SMART Upbringing (also) took place in ways that were in the process of creating "we – them" (power-over) relations. With these theories, I had access to a lens to detect this and knowledge resources (to a great extent) to correct such a development (see chapter 5).

The theory of transformative dialogues has been developed via contributions from Mary and Kenneth Gergen, Sheila McNamee and Frank Barrett. The first article presenting these theories was

titled *Towards a Vocabulary of Transformative Dialogue* (Gergen, et al.,2001). In it, the authors write that transformative dialogues "may be viewed as any form of interchange that succeeds in transforming a relationship between those committed to otherwise separate and antagonistic realities (and their related practices) to one in which common and solidifying realities are under construction" (Gergen, et al. 2001, p. 698).

The theory addresses an important challenge faced by our modern world: How to avoid ending up in irreconcilable conflicts when we live in a world dominated by an increasing extent of division, with associated differing opinions and contrasts. On the other hand, the theory raises issues involving how to realise the opportunities inherent in exploiting differences of opinion, the diversity of life forms etc. as a resource to create new social realities that are perceived as satisfactory for all members in a diverse society (Gergen, Gergen & Barrett, 2004; Drimie, Hamann, Manderson & Mlondobozi, 2018). This theory has been an important source of inspiration for my work on this study and the ongoing change work. The theory provides an insight into why research from within must be understood as dialogic. It provides knowledge (and knowledge resources) about how such dialogues can be organised in a way to increase the probability that those who (for example) are involved in a development work actually want to work together.

The theories relating to transformative dialogue are based on a social constructionist approach to dialogues (Gergen et al., 2001). The focus is on how the dialogues affect what occurs between the people, and how the dialogues are performed. I draw upon Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogue to explain the relational character of dialogue. According to Bakhtin (referred to by Shotter, 1993), communication is not about transferring some ideas from one person to another person's mind, "but, it is a process in which people, who occupy different 'positions' in a discourse, attempt to influence each other's behaviour in some way."

Once central concept utilised by Bakhtin (1981) to explain how dialogue can be understood as a relational process is the term *statement*. This refers to opinions stated in a specific context. The person talking perhaps has something he wants to say, but the context informs him of what he can say.

Bakhtin's (1981) theories of dialogue do not focus on the sentences transmitted, but the opportunities that are found in interpreting the situation, and what is said in new ways. According to Bakhtin, there is room for manoeuvre between what is said and what can be said, and between what is interpreted and what can be interpreted. A statement is a transmitted message based on an interpreted context.

In many ways, it is this relational elbow room that the theories of transformative dialogues attempt to exploit. With reference to Bakhtin, we can claim that there is always the opportunity to carry out dialogues in different ways.

The theories of transformative dialogue focus on the effect dialogues have on the persons and groups involved in the conversations. In the theories, a line is drawn between two different effects these dialogues may have. These are a dysfunctional effect or a generative effect on the actors. The theories also identify two characteristics of conversations that have a destructive function. The first relates to what is referred to as a negative movement in the dialogues (Gergen et al., 2004). One example of this is when one person blames or criticises another person. In this context, criticism must not be understood as disagreement with another person or disagreement with opinions presented by a group. Criticism shall be understood as a monologic presentation of one person's own views, and the lack of ability to assume the perspective of another person, take a nuanced approach to the opinions of others or allow yourself to doubt your own views. The second characteristic is described as conversations dominated by individual blame (Gergen et al.,2004).

The transformative dialogue theory has identified a number of dialogical moves that can be used to solve conflicts and restore trust between groups (Gergen et al., 2001, p. 22). Such dialogical resources may be to change conversations dominated by assigning blame into conversations that focus on relational responsibility, and to change conversations dominated by generalisation into conversations that allow for personal voice and stories.

Other resources highlighted are to move the conversations in a direction that allows for exploration of those values or ideas that underly one's own and other persons' opinions (affirming the other) and by incorporating self-reflexivity in the processes (Gergen et al. 2004).

51

During the development work, we have benefited from these theories in situations where antagonistic tendencies are about to emerge or have emerged in the ongoing development work (the construction processes). The theories provided me with a language with which to recognise aspects of my (and our) practice, in which individuals were assigned blame or where we behaved in a monologic manner in relation to other persons who had differing opinions. We attempted, to the best of our abilities, to change such a monologic practice by means of self-reflection etc. I provide more information on this in chapter 5.

However, the greatest benefit provided by these theories, perhaps, relates to how we have implemented a system of concepts and suggested dialogical resources that can be used directly in the research work: How differences in background, the division of the services that are responsible for children and adolescents into a number of different services (17), a diversity of professional groups, a diversity of families, groups of children etc. can represent a resource that helps facilitate cooperation in order to create new relational realities (Gergen et al., 2004).

2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology can be defined as the study of, and a negotiated consensus on, the way knowledge is developed (Moulaert & Van Dyck, 2013). What then are the epistemological observations that form the basis for future forming research? Gergen (2014, p. 296) writes that a change in the research from "mirroring" to "making" requires a profound shift "in the conception of knowledge". What this shift comprises can be described in different ways. Research based on social constructionism builds upon a relational view of knowledge. This implies a shift from the assumption that knowledge about the world can be expressed by means of subjective and objective knowledge, which is split into subject and object realms (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 278). This view maintains that both subject (researcher) and object (the world) mutually affect each other (Rasmussen, 2017, p. 31).

Gergen (2014) makes reference to a view of knowledge that draws upon Aristotle's concept of *knowledge through praxis*. While the theory is assigned the task of developing true knowledge,

"knowledge through praxis is achieved through and represented within ongoing action" Gergen (2014, p. 295). Heidegger's (1977) concept of *praxical knowing* can also be used as a reference to knowledge that emerges via the researcher's interaction with the objects (and people) that surround us. This concept provides a philosophical framework upon which to understand human *knowledge as emergent*, according to Barrett (2009, p. 6).

Reason and Bradbury (2008) use the concept of *participatory world view* to describe the relational character of research. They developed this concept to describe how different forms of knowledge are utilised and make up an interaction within the context of the research. These action researchers have developed a theory involving epistemology (how we know) that implies an extension of the common knowledge forms within academia. The most important academic form of knowledge is described with the concept *propositional knowing*. Propositional knowing originates from our experiences but is expressed as an intellectual form of knowledge conveyed in theses or theories (Rasmussen, 2017, p. 33).

Heron and Reason (2008) mention, in their theories of extending epistemology, three additional forms of knowledge that I would claim are particularly relevant for research based on future forming research. These are experiential knowing, presentational knowing, practical knowing in addition to propositional knowing.

According to Heron and Reason (2008), experiential knowing is the simplest form of knowledge that we gain from direct (physical) experience of the world. This knowledge is also described as silent or pre-verbal. This form of knowledge can also be described with reference to sociologist Merleau-Ponty (1962). He argues that all articulated knowledge about the world is based on our physical interactions with the world.

The way in which experiential knowing is made available to others is, in particular, via use of presentational knowing. According to Heron and Reason (2008, p. 372), presentational knowing is the most basic method of conveying such experiences. Presentational knowing involves transforming experiential knowing into a form that can be communicated. This may take place via storytelling,

music, drawings, images, dance etc. Presentational knowing can also be used within different creative professions to create symbolic representations of what might be. An architect draws a house, a building etc. This drawing is used as the starting point for coordination of the work involved in constructing something, which might be completely new types of houses. The architect's drawing combines recognised forms and elements with new "fictitious" (imaginary) elements that are desired. An engineer does the same.

In my work with future forming social research, in this research project, my co-researchers and I have developed texts that link empirical experience with fiction (hybrid text), lyrical poetry, graphical presentations, images and drawings to create *new symbolic presentations* of how we want things to be.

The third (extended) form of knowledge in Heron and Reason's (2008) extended epistemology is practical knowing. This is knowledge that is described as "knowing how". Such knowledge produces skills. The skills to be developed may be how to perform future forming research, how to complete a reflective team process, or how a dialogue conference shall be conducted.

The task of future forming research is "making". The product of "making" may be material (artefacts), new forms of material practice, new forms of relations etc. This implies that practical knowing has priority through this form of research (Gergen, 2014; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Above, I have pointed out that skills in facilitating the performance of the culture in new ways, the use of new (performative) methods etc. are important parts of the research. In part, I have used the research to develop my skills in creating direction, using methods etc. based on the ethical ideals and values of the research. This development of skills has been highlighted as an explicit value in the research work and in the work to perform new desired cultures.

Propositional knowing is the fourth form of knowledge involved in Heron and Reason's (2008) epistemology. Propositional knowing is that which we acknowledge from established research paradigms as scientific knowledge. During this study, I have

drawn upon this form of knowledge by using various theories when performing the research. Academic knowledge has also informed my work as an agent of change. According to Cook and Brown (1999), when scientific knowledge is used as a tool to know about and be included in a situated interaction with the social and physical world, this can initiate a "generative dance". It is this type of generative effect I have tried to produce with this study.

One important question to be answered by the research is how (local) knowledge developed within the local context can be utilised (made generalisable) for other contexts (propositional knowing). According to Bolt (2007), this is possible in a number of ways. She suggests that this may take place via the development of reflective writing (exegesis) in which our local experiences are related to different academic contexts. During the research period, I have developed and published several such academic texts in which knowledge developed via the research is integrated into dialogue with a professional field relating to public health, the professional field of Appreciative Inquiry and the professional field of social innovation (Hauger, 2018; Hauger et al., 2018; Hauger, Bugge-Hansen, Paulsen & Thorkildsen, 2018; Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020).

In Heron and Reason's (2008) theories of an extended epistemology, it is emphasised that research aiming to create social change must both draw upon all forms of knowledge: Experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical, and utilise these in an integrated manner. In chapter 8 in this thesis, where I review the quality of the conducted research this point will be returned to.

2.4 Use of Methods in the Research Project

Research based on social constructionism does view research as a relational process. This paradigm rather privileges such a perspective, methods do not have any inherent meaning. With such research, it is how we use (practice) the methods that is key. According to McNamee and Hosking (2012, p. 46), the choice and use of various methods must be assessed on the basis of the researcher's (my) meta-theoretical assumptions and the purpose of the study. The purpose of research based on future forming research is e.g., to develop knowledge of what *might be* (Gergen, 2014). In this study I have

chosen to draw upon various methods from qualitative research, art and performative research. I will go on to describe the methods below.

Narrative Inquiry

Gill (2001) shows how narrative inquiries can be utilised to create a direction for systemic change under way. The article describes a three-dimensional process for how this can be performed. These are development of personal narratives, recreating the stories into joint stories and extension of the conversations regarding the joint stories.

Development of the *personal stories may occur* via dialogical processes between a facilitator (for example, myself) and several *close* persons who are involved in the development work. The stories may, for example, be developed by means of a narrative interview. These interviews may subsequently be supplemented with field notes, photographs and other written texts that are available. Based on these studies, the researcher is able to develop a written or oral story. This is the first phase (and dimension) in a narrative inquiry (Gill, 2001). With my research, this procedure has been utilised in many different contexts. During one phase of the research (see chapter 4), I made active use of this method to develop (my) personal narrative from the ongoing development work in different sections of the services.

During the second phase, the *individual stories are transformed into joint stories.* According to Gill (2001), this implies inviting others to explore the personal stories. This will bring new perspectives to the personal stories. During the work on this research, the development of my co-researchers' and my own stories took place via various dialogical processes in the internal research group (see chapter 5) and in research groups in the Instructor Education Programme (see chapter 6). One way of performing this is for co-researchers to share personal narratives from their own practice with other colleagues in a facilitated group process. Once a personal story has been presented, the colleagues are involved in reflexive conversations about what they have heard, new elements can be added to the story and the group jointly explores how the story can be further developed. This allows

the personal stories that have been shared to also become joint stories. The processes of exploring the personal stories help make them meaningful for a group (Gill, 2001).

During the third phase, the conversations about the "joint stories" are extended. For the purpose of my research, the story of the first innovation in the SMART work, now named The Dream Class (see chapter 3) developed initially as a personal narrative. Subsequently, many close colleagues became involved in developing this narrative. The narrative has been presented at different meetings and courses, at which colleagues etc. have been involved in new dialogical processes regarding the narrative. One question that is relevant to ask in these (extended) dialogues is how the narrated stories being developed could be related to their lives. During the research project, we have worked systematically to develop personal narratives from the ongoing development work using processes that follow these three phases.

Gill's concept for narrative inquiries can also be applied as the starting point for conversations that result in support for a direction for the development work, and an increased understanding of the type of changes desired during the process. In chapter 4, I show how I have utilised narrative interviews in this way.

Different Methods for Reflexivity

From a perspective based on social constructionism, reflexivity can be seen as an ethical process in the research, according to Simon (2014, p. 21). This ethical process can take place at many levels via the use of different methods. Firstly, the reflexive processes can take place in the form of inner dialogue for the researchers, while performing various research activities. This form of reflection will have the nature of self-guidance, driven by a desire to coordinate with others in an ethical manner. Typical questions the researcher (myself) may ask him/herself are: What possible consequences do my actions have for me, for the others and those (if applicable) who are not present? What choices am I overlooking? What voices are not being heard? How can I promote my views, theories and professional perspective in a non-dogmatic way?

Gergen (1999) emphasises that self-reflection involves questioning your own opinions. "If we reflect on our opinions, we may find a different voice inside ourselves," he writes. He links the potential for self-reflection to our ability to be multiple beings. We all have inside us traces of numerous relational conversations with others, and are therefore able to speak with many different voices.

In this thesis, I show how my research practice at decisive situations of the research has drawn upon my ability for self-reflection (Marshall, 2016). I have been made aware, for example, of how important the ability for self-reflection has been in the daily performance of my research work via access to theory (Gergen et al. 2001; Marshall, 2016; McNamee 2007).

Another form of reflexivity takes place via dialogue with others. Simon and Schard (2014) describe this as *relational reflection*. This type of reflection is something that occurs between people. During my research, I have developed a number of methods for relational reflection. One key concept I have utilised to describe these methods is polyphony (Bakhtin, 1981;1986; Shotter, 2010). Examples of such methods are the *circle map* (chapter 5), the *appreciative reflective team* (chapter 5) and the *performed, learned, wondered* method (chapter 6). These are methods I have applied partly to prevent my voice from becoming dominant in the development of the research and partly to utilise a diverse range of voices, perspectives, experiences etc. as a resource with which to explore (new) generative opportunities and to promote innovations in our (different) practices.

The appreciative reflective team is a method that allows all my colleagues in the internal research group equal opportunities to develop the research from their local practices, lead the work on knowledge development from each other's practices and choose their own method with which they are comfortable to report from the research (see chapter 5). The concept, inspired by the Norwegian professor and psychiatrist Tom Andersen (1991), is described in different articles that we have published (Hauger et al., 2018; Hauger et al., 2020).

The development and utilisation of such (polyphonic) methods took a key position in the research from the autumn of 2016. Given the fact that one important knowledge-based interest during

this study has been to inspire the ability to imagine what might be, these methods are constructed in such a way that the reflective processes target the next thing we can do or that we can achieve (Cooperrider, 2017).

Table 2.2 Three forms of reflexivity, with related, selected methods, utilised in the research.

Different forms of reflexivity	Certain characteristics of the different forms of reflexivity	Methods utilised in this thesis´ research
Self-reflection (Gergen, 2010; Marshall, 2017)	A form of awareness practice, and self-guidance based on the wish to coordinate with others in an ethical manner	The use of "pause" and inner dialogue when performing the research on your own practice, "here and now". Keeping a reflection log. Conversational reflections with colleagues, texts (literature etc.) Used at all stages of the research.
Relational reflexivity (Simon & Chard, 2014)	Reflection with colleagues about how we can further develop the research collaboration etc. in a way that authorises practices and practitioners, and boosts the willingness to cooperate. It flips learning about to learning with.	Use of polyphonic methods; circle map, appreciative reflective team, the performed, learned, wondered method. Used particularly during the final stages of the research (see chapters 5 and 6).
Discursive reflection (Alvesson & Deetz, 2009; McNamee & Hosking, 2012)	Involves reflecting on how the researcher's affiliation with a discursive community affords special privileges in relation to the views, values, or roles inherent in this community.	By shifting between different theoretical perspectives; positive lens and critical lens etc. (see chapters 3, 4 and 6).

A third perspective (or level) of reflexivity is that which Alvesson and Deetz (2009) and McNamee (2014) describe as *discursive reflection*. This form of reflection involves reflecting on how

the researcher's affiliation with a discursive community affords special privileges in relation to the views, values, or roles inherent in this community.

Reflection on how various discourses assign power to certain groups, while other persons and groups are silenced, is a specific subject addressed in social constructionism research (McNamee, 2014). McNamee (2014) writes that those who have access to the dominant (privileged) discourse are seen as rational, correct, normal. Those who do not make use of this discourse are at risk of being marginalised. Critical theory also aims to promote a form of reflection that challenges an institutionalised mindset and understanding of the world (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

In my narrative of the research work, I will show how I started to note that the research was being performed in a monologic manner, and what I did to change this during the process of the research.

Performative Methods

In Gergen's theories for *future forming research,* performative social research is specifically defined as the use of tools from art and (daily) human activities (Jones, 2017). Table 2.3 provides an overview of different performative methods utilised in this study. The way in which the methods have been utilised (performed) is presented in the sequence in which they were adopted during the study. Research based on future forming research can make the move from mirroring the world to making. It is the use of performative methods in particular that allows this to be carried out in more diverse and direct ways via the research (Gergen, 2014).

In this study, I have for example utilised for the first time performative methods, primarily aiming to contribute to "human well-being" (Gergen, 2014, p. 287). Playing and performative interviews (Denzin, 2001) are perhaps the clearest examples of such methods (see chapter 6). The establishment of a SMART festival, where music, dance, games etc. are included as important elements for creating a community dominated by caring (and equality) can also be seen as such a "method" (see chapter 6).

Table 2.3 Different performative methods used in the study.

Performative methods	Used in the study	Purpose (specific)
Own material **practice** (Bolt, 2009). The researcher in the role of bricoleur (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) and facilitator (Gergen & Gergen 2012).	My practice as a consultant (AI practitioner), researcher and teacher (see chapters 3, 5 and 6) Performance of new practice in child welfare service (chapter 6)	- New ways of performing the culture in which your own practice is integrated. - Providing those involved with physical experiences of/training in the introduction of new culture. - Communicating experience from the research.
Visual methods (Gray & Malins, 2004); Photographs, drawings, graphic illustration, video.	Included as method together with other methods (multi-method) in different parts of the study.	- Creating proximity to persons involved and factual field (humanisation/promoting solidarity). - Visualised complex ideas and experiences. - Creating visual support for processes.
Storytelling (Kurtz, 2014)	Used as method for sharing experience and learning in pairs, groups and at larger events throughout the study.	- Giving a voice to all participants. - Communicating (new) values, (new) assumptions and personal experiences with (new) reality.
Performative interview (Denzin, 2001)	Used as a method in all learning groups established throughout the study (see, for example, chapter 6)	Creating proximity and experience of equality between participants "here and now".

Research based on future forming research is also tasked with creating direct changes in the culture of which the research is a part (Gergen, 2014). In order to illustrate what I mean by this, I borrow Bolt's (2007) concept, *material practice*. Practice can be seen as the performance of culture. This performance shall be understood as an interactive process that is carried out (coordinated) in interaction with other actors, physical artefacts and inherited rituals (etc.). If a researcher wants to change their own material practice, they can involve new elements from their own daily life, art, new methods or develop a new manuscript for the performance of their own roles or (rehearsing) a new ritual (for example, "greeting"). When a researcher (my colleagues or myself) want to explore the use of new forms of direction in their own practice, the researcher needs to have facilitation skills (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). With more than 15 years of experience as a consultant and AI practitioner, I have developed broad experience of facilitating learning processes in small and large groups. I have been able to apply these facilitation skills during the performance of many of the methods upon which this study draws.

The visual methods are often used in combination with other methods. These are methods such as photographs, graphic visualisation and drawings. I have therefore decided to use the concept "multi-methods" to describe many of the methods I have used in this study (Haseman, 2006). In situations where I have applied *reflexive methods*, for example, the appreciative reflective team method (Hauger et al. 2018), I have also used graphic illustrations as a visual support for the performance of the method. In situations where I have used the qualitative method of *appreciative interview*, I (also) combined this with the use of tables and drawings. These visual methods are thus used (e.g.) to create an *emotional commitment* for developing practices within the local upbringing work that could contribute to the inclusion of all the children and adolescents, and trigger involvement, and joy.

I would like to briefly present an example of such a method, as it has played such a central role in the exploration of new forms of social relations and social life for the SMART Upbringing work. The method has been named "SMART card" and was developed by two colleagues (co-researchers) who have played key roles in the development work in Re municipality (Våge & Bugge-

Hansen, 2012). The SMART cards comprise a system of concepts, developed as playing cards, to help

mediate conversations with children and between children. A total of 20 "playing cards" have now

been developed. Most of the terms on the playing cards originate from an academic terminology

involving positive social actions developed by Salomon (Salomon & Salte, 2008), in combination

with terminology about strengths developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004).

Photograph 2.1 Children in one of the kindergartens in Re municipality, showing a poster they have
drawn of the strength, SMART collaboration. The child in the photograph explains how they practice
collaboration on a daily basis.

The SMART cards are used in different ways. A number of books have been created to show

different ways this can be done (Iversen & Bugge-Hansen 2017; Iversen & Bugge-Hansen, 2018;

Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2012; Våge & Bugge-Hansen 2013). One central method presented in these

books is how children can be involved in exploring and discussing all the positive aspects of social

life. Each book comprises around 30 different stories from the daily lives of the children when in

kindergarten, at school, leisure time and at home. All the stories present different social settings in

which the main characters are faced with moral dilemmas. By means of dialogical processes that draw

upon the system of concepts on the playing cards, the children are involved in exploring how these dilemmas can be solved in socially appreciated ways.

2.5 Research Quality

Now, I would like to address the quality of the study. The task for future forming research is not to collect data about reality as it is (truth) or is experienced. This research targets the creation of social changes and transformations (McNamee, 2020). The criteria that must be applied to assess the quality of this form of research must therefore be different than those applied to conventional (qualitative and quantitative) research (Barrett, 2007; Bradbury & Reason, 2006; Haseman 2006).

Over the past few years, there has been a movement within the academic fields involved in relational research, moving towards the development of quality criteria that are more consistent with this research tradition (McNamee & Hosking 2012; Raboin, Uhlig & McNamee, 2013). One important change in relation to these new dialogues about what applies in terms of quality for relational research is a move of attention from the "quality of the data" to assessing the function of the research (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p. 343). In my opinion, this is in harmony with the aim of *future forming research*, where the research is utilised to create immediate and direct effects for the local community where the research is directed to (McNamee, 2020).

Bradbury and Reason (2008) suggest five *broad points* that could form the starting point for an assessment of relational research. These are; the quality of relational practices, practical outcomes for the participants (utility value), extended ways of knowing, a worthwhile purpose and enduring consequences.

These points bring relational processes into centre stage for the discussions of research quality (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. xv). Hence, these points, with their corresponding quality markers, are particularly compatible in the assessment of research rooted in a *future forming research paradigm.*

1. Quality as Relational Practice

Quality as a relational practice is the first of the five points I want to include in the assessment of the quality of the research for this study. According to Bradbury and Reason (2006, p. 344), this point pays particular attention to the quality of the relations between the people involved in the research. This quality element mainly relates to the ethical aspects of the research. Research based on future forming research places ethics at the forefront of the research (McNamee, 2020). Important quality markers that can relate to this issue include power. One ideal in the research based on social constructionism is to contribute towards the transformation of power-over relations into power-together relations (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). This implies that I, as the researcher, must not behave in a manner that implies assuming the role of an expert in relation to the other participants, or that certain ways of knowing are made more correct or important than others (Anderson, 2014).

Other important quality markers are whether people are "energized and empowered" by their involvement, and whether the research helps maximise (or delimit) the opportunities for participation (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p. 344). I have reflected extensively on these relational aspects of the research during this study. During the initial phase of the research, I noticed that I was about to assume the role of an expert in relation to my colleagues in the internal research group. I also noted trends emerging for new we-they relations (power-over) through the research (see chapter 5). In my thesis, I show how I worked to change my practice and the way in which the research was performed. By allowing the research to develop in ways that allowed my colleagues to bring in their expertise, processes of empowerment and vitalisation were initiated within the group of my co-researchers.

2. Quality as a Reflexive-Practical Outcome

Quality as a *reflexive-practical outcome* is the second criterion with which one may highlight the quality of relational research. Key quality markers related to this point are the extent to which those involved in the research can make use of the knowledge developed and the extent to which the research helps create results that are perceived as useful. My choice of the concept of *reflexive-practical outcome* is based on the fact that utilising knowledge from the research does not occur

mechanically. These are also relational processes in which the participants involved actively select elements from the research they feel are relevant, and processes for opinion-forming where local groups agree on which proposed solutions (produced via the research) are seen as appropriate.

With research based on *future forming research*, there is an emphasis on the development of pragmatic knowledge and practical know-how. To the extent that those involved in the research process (myself included) change their mindset, practice, or behaviour daily, then such a (reflexive) outcome has been achieved. The utility value of the study is highlighted as one of the most important quality criteria within performative research (Haseman, 2006). For this study, I would claim that I have good documentation of having achieved a major reflexive-practical outcome from the research. This is expressed in many ways. I will provide a few examples below. New and more life-giving ways of discussing children and adolescents, and having conversations with children and adolescents, have occurred. This is mediated via a language of strengths. This new form for dialogue, have been adopted within almost all the (17) services working with children in Re municipality, and in a lot of (more than 50) services in other municipalities in Norway. Furthermore, a number of practical concepts (4) have been developed for involving children and adolescents as co-creators of their own environments for upbringing. Aesthetics (for example, via play) and conversations have been included as new elements in the practice for upbringing by the services rendered via action type of research carried out.

3. Quality as Plurality of Knowing

Quality as plurality of knowing is the fourth quality topic highlighted by Bradbury and Reason (2006). Previously in this chapter, I have shown how this research, in line with the ideals from *future forming research*, draw upon an extended epistemology (Heron and Reason, 2008).

Important quality markers addressed within this field are whether the research has been performed with *conceptual-theoretical integrity* (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p. 347), and whether the research has contributed to extending the participants' way of "knowing" and being in the world (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p. 348). The third marker highlighted in this field is whether we (I) have

been congruent when selecting methods. This implies whether the methods have been selected and utilised in a way that reflects the intention of the selected research approach (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p. 349).

In relation to the quality marker of *conceptual-theoretical integrity* in this research, one particular concern is the ability to take the step from exploring what has occurred to exploring what we want to happen. I have, for example, attempted to achieve this by means of the types of research questions selected and the future and process-oriented nature of the research. Bradbury and Reason's (2006) decision to emphasise *plurality of knowing* is an indication that research aiming to develop knowledge "from within" an ongoing change process must draw upon many different types of knowledge.

One quality criterion for the research is the ability to be included in dialogue with established professional practices and different research traditions outside the context of the research. This has taken place, for example, by publishing material for national health authorities (Hauger, 2018) and by publishing two articles in a journal for AI practitioners (Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020. Hauger et al., 2020).

Performative research also emphasises utilising methods and working methods that promote our "passions, hopes and dreams for the future" (Gergen & Gergen, 2012, p. 54). In order to strengthen and develop this affective involvement in the research, I have actively adopted various forms of storytelling, visualisation (photographs, graphic visualisation) and performative studies (Denzin, 2001).

4. Engaging in Significant Work

Engaging in significant work is the fourth quality topic highlighted by Bradbury and Reason (2006). One important quality marker addressed under this topic is whether the research has contributed to drawing attention to factors that are (socially) important to change, or contributed to promoting the opportunities for living our lives in a way that is desired. This is a question of research that can place

endorsing values in the foreground. Bradbury and Reason (2006, p. 348) write that this implies research that demands "the values we hold and the value of the world in which we engage".

I would claim that this study has contributed to the development of a new awareness of the importance of providing for children's fundamental (social) needs in those upbringing areas where children spend time every day. I would also argue that the way in which the research (over time) has been performed has allowed my co-researchers (and myself) to engage in the research in areas that have safeguarded the significant personal values of those involved (Gergen & Gergen, 2012).

Another important quality marker highlighted under this topic is whether the research allows people and social groups the opportunity to achieve a more self-directed development. My thesis includes several examples showing that the research (with time) was organised in a way that contributed to the above. One such example is how my co-researchers in the local welfare initiative working in new partnership with the parents, new uplifting family lives was generated (see chapter 6).

5. Emergent Inquiry Towards Enduring Consequences

Emergent inquiry towards enduring consequences is the final quality topic highlighted. Relational research focuses on enduring processes. If transformative change processes (changes from within) are to endure, new structures need to be established that allow people to meet. McNamee and Hosking (2012) point out that it is also important to allow dialogues (and meeting places) that enable participants to get involved from "without". In this research, this could relate to involving citizens and voluntary organisations. The research has contributed towards the development of new (hybrid) meeting places where actors can gather who would normally not meet each other, and where they can collaborate in relation to upbringing (Manzini, 2015; Selloni, 2017). We established a festival in 2018. The research has also helped establish new structures in which participants are recruited to the work on the ongoing changes, including a specific training programme and a SMART centre for social innovation.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the chosen research approach for this research; Future forming research (FFR). Then I explain how I have chosen to use FFR for this research. To contribute to organisations' cultural changes that can provide more viable lives for adolescents in Re municipality. Based on such a purpose, this research has chosen to draw on multiple ways of expressing what we want to create, including performative ways of knowing and utilization of art. This chapter also presents two theories that I have chosen to draw on in this research: *Appreciative inquiry* (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987*)* and the *Theory of transformative dialogue* (Gergen, McNamee & Barret, 2001). These theories were chosen because they bring insight into how transformative change processes (change from within) can take place. At the end of this thesis, I will adress my contributions to one of these theories.

In the second part of this chapter, I have explained the epistemological understanding that underlies the research and what sort of methods I have utilized. To describe my co-researchers' and my way of developing and utilizing various methods in the research, I have referred to Denzin and Lincoln's (2003) concept, bricoleur. A bricoleur is a researcher who borrows methods from various professional fields and merges them in new ways. In my role as bricoleur, I also have chosen to draw upon various methods from qualitative research, including narrative studies (Gill, 2001) and reflexive research methods (Finlay, 2012; Marshall, 2017; Simon & Shard, 2014).

Chapter 3: The Making of SMART Upbringing

In this chapter, I will present my report on how AI was introduced as a future forming practice in Norway (by myself in 2005) and implemented at Kirkevoll school, the largest primary school in the Re municipality. With my thesis, I aim to illustrate how the performance of this AI process resulted in a discursive shift, for the work on upbringing, at this school. Further, I will illustrate how ´my AI process´ laid the foundations for the innovation *The Dream class*. This innovation is later described as a new concept for how children can work in partnership with their teachers to co-create their own classroom environments (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2015; Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020). The chapter shows that the primary drivers behind the innovation were a group of teachers from Kirkevoll school.

The chapter goes on to explain how the studies of the innovation *The Dream class* also contributed to the development of ´SMART Upbringing ´.

3.1 Preliminary Observations

Change processes based on social constructionism are often referred to as performed action (Hosking, 2004). Attention is not paid primarily to the thought processes of the practitioner, but how the interactive action processes are performed (Gergen, 2009).

Below, I provide a brief presentation of how the start-up of the AI process was performed in the school. I will explain several methods of organising development work, the use of several key tools, methods and processes. One of the reasons behind my emphasis on the above is that many of these new actions, and the mediating artefacts, have played a role in the formation of new supplementary actions, and new patterns of behaviour, at the school.

Figure 3.1 The chronology of *The Dream class* research process (2005-2009).

Introduction of AI as
future forming
practice, Kirkevoll
school

First inquiry into the
Dreamclass I
prospect

Practicing
appreciative
interviews by
all staff
members

Start of the
"Dreamclass"
- action
research

Evaluation
of the
Dream class,
using a
positive lens

Autumn
2005

Spring
2006

Autumn 2006

November 2006

Spring 2009
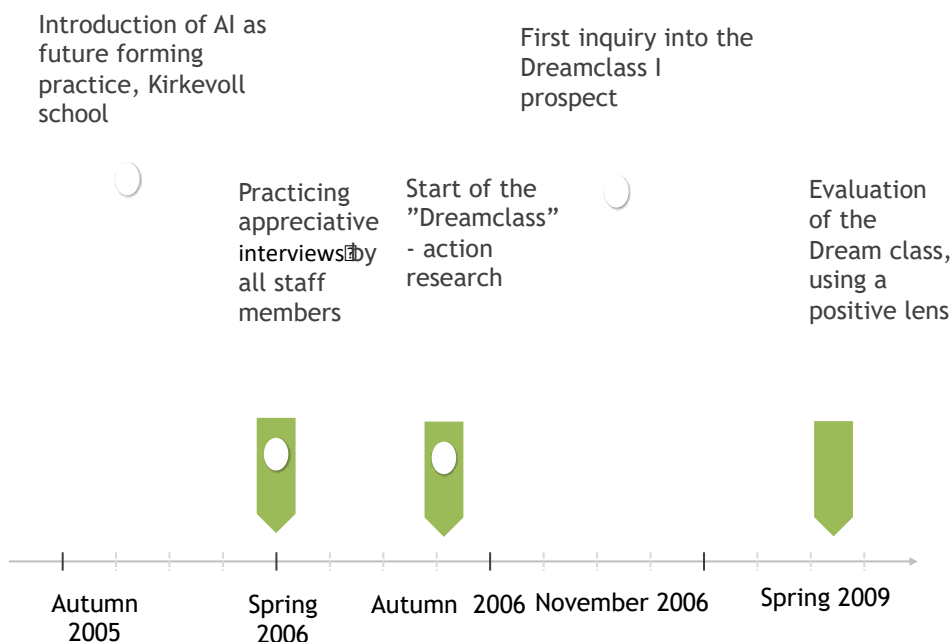
Utilising AI in a process of change allows me to direct the course of the process. Instead of a retrospective study of what has already been performed, the attention in an AI process is on what the employees and managers want to happen. AI can therefore be seen as future forming research (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Employees and managers, by means of cycles of action research, are allowed to participate in re-creating the organisation in line with the values and future visions created jointly throughout the research process (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1995; Hauger et al., 2008). During this initial phase of the AI-based organisational development process, my role was to introduce AI to the school and contribute to the organisation and planning of the work (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The following is a quote from a reflection note I wrote about the start-up of the process:

"In 2005, I was invited to work with the personnel at the largest of four primary schools in the municipality. The headmaster wanted to develop a vision for the school and, consequently, develop a "we school" with a culture whereby everyone contributed to making each other better and in which everyone – both employees and pupils – were allowed to unleash their full potential. The headmaster also requested an extensive contribution-based process using Appreciative Inquiry. Different personnel were appointed to a team, representing every department at the school (after school care, special education, the youngest classes etc.), and assigned the task of taking charge of the development work. The process of developing a vision for the school started in line with the principles for an AI process, with appreciation. Every member of staff was assigned the task of studying when the school was at its best function-wise, with lively micro-situations permeated with enjoyment, commitment and the urge to learn within the relational cooperation among personnel, with parents or with the children.

As with all other theories, AI is an artefact that requires persons to study their own experiences, the relationships of which they are a part and the organisation where they work, through a specific perspective. AI can be defined as a perspective or lens that initially studies that which is generative, invigorative and important to appreciate in actions already performed, and in the results generated (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Golden-Biddle & Dutton, 2012). It is also possible that by studying all those aspects that work well and are hoped for, the resulting images help simultaneously create the organisation. By having both employees and managers repeatedly conducting research into those situations where they are most successful at work, in cooperation with the personnel and the pupils, a climate that promotes innovative thinking emerges." (My own reflection notes, 3 April 2015)

Development work based on AI does not imply searching for that which is most correct or true, but does prioritise certain values in the organisation's work on what the members "want to

happen", and what occurs when development work is based on these values. It is the new practice on which the development work is based (new types of questions, conversations, processes) that determines what kinds of opinions emerge. Opinions are by-products of our actions (Hosking & McNamee, 2006).

New opinions on the value of participation are created by new methods of practising participation; new opinions on the value of appreciation are created by new methods of practising appreciation. New opinions on colleagues, children and organisations are created by practising such types of new forms of conversation.

Participation is at the core of all work on planning and all processes involving studies (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1995). Management of development work is assigned to a core group (team) responsible for the management of the process. The core group at Kirkevoll school was set up by the management team at the school (three persons), three teacher representatives (one each from grades 1-4, grades 5-7 and grades 8-10), the head of a base for disabled pupils and the head of the after school care scheme. The core group held around three to four meetings each half year (over a period of four years). The meetings lasted from a half day to two hours. I was assigned the task of chairing the core group meetings. The meetings were utilised for training in the AI process, and to plan and evaluate the process of organisational development.

Before starting the AI-based development work at the school as an external consultant, I had a meeting with management to verify whether they were willing to allow this value (participation) to permeate the way work was organised and the way the action research processes was performed. We subsequently prepared a meeting with all the employees to present the idea of an organisational development process based on AI. I emphasised two aspects in particular during my presentation of how this type of development work can be organised, and they were positively welcomed.

These two were the importance of appreciation and positive focus. It is important to stress that development work shall *not* be implemented because the school "has problems" or is a "problem".

Development work shall be implemented because there is the potential to develop a school where everyone has the opportunity to thrive more.

3.2 Performance of Appreciative Processes

In this section of my thesis, I tell my story about the start-up of the innovative development work, *SMART Upbringing*. With the story below, I will attempt to illustrate how this development work can be perceived as a result of a fusion (and re-formation) of two separate development processes at the school. The first process was an organisational development process based on AI. The second process involved working on implementing a programme at school to improve the social skills and moral reasoning skills of children and adolescents. This programme is provided with Aggression Replacement Training (Glick & Goldstein, 1987), and I will provide more information on this later in this chapter.

One of the resources that I introduced to the AI training course for the core group at the school was the use of a visualised artefact of the first three phases of the AI process model. I learned this method from O'Dell (2005), and I named the artefact AI-tree and Strength-tree (Hauger et al., 2008).

The tree is a metaphor that can be used to describe organisations as centres of life. When humans are at their most lively, this creates a vital social system. This is translated into a tree metaphor. The tree would have a large and powerful crown, strong branches, trunk and roots. When organisations are permeated by conflict and numerous relations where one person has power over others, the organisation and relationships (the tree) will wither. The AI tree can be used as a method to find the focus point for a development process: Outside the trunk, we make a note of common aspirations for a development process. On the roots, we make a note of the (constructed) factors that are present when the persons and the organisation are at their most vital, and on the crown of the tree, we make a note of the persons' dreams.

Figure 3.2 The AI tree. Visual design of the first three phases of the AI process model, using a tree as a metaphor.

The AI-Tree

What new positive things can happen when we achieve what we want?

What we want to achieve.

The reasons why we have achieved this earlier.
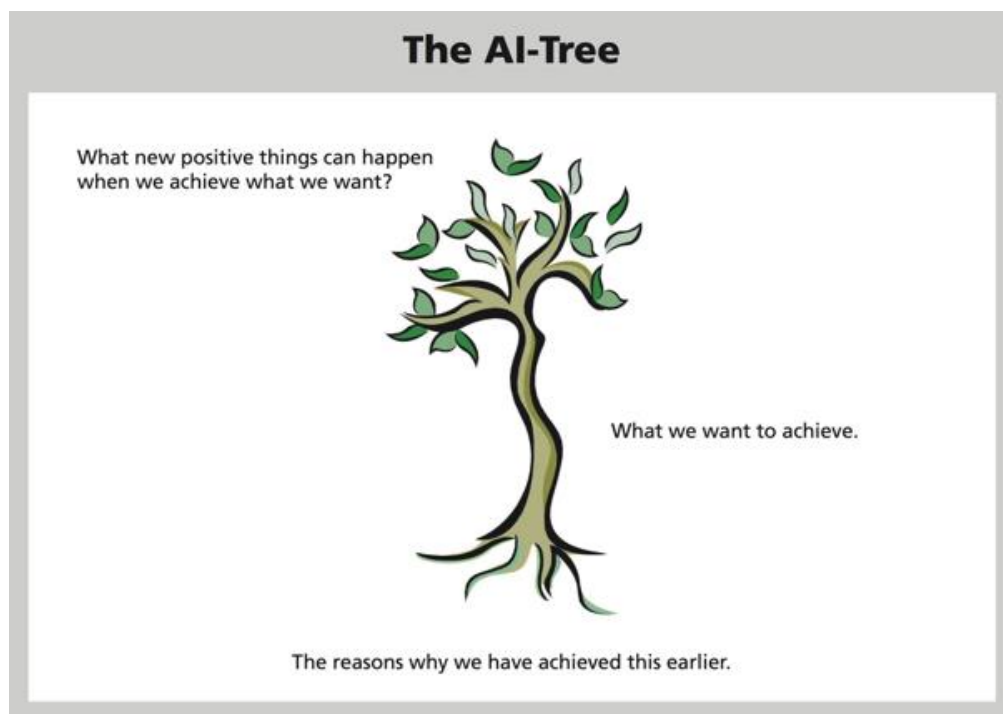
Figure 3.2 presents a graphic design of the AI tree, which I ordered in 2005. The reason why this artefact is presented is that it has been assigned very central significance in the SMART process, and in the innovative work leading up to the development of *SMART upbringing*. The tree will reappear in many different variations in this report. The ´strength tree´ has gradually become one of the key artefacts for this development process that simultaneously develops the organization and the professionals: both with a strength-based set of values were shared. These values were held deeply among the group that started this process.

Working with change processes with this type of positive lens perspective represents a 180-degree turnaround from a change process based on a problem-solving approach. Cooperrider and Avital (2004) mention the principle that the potential to construct a better world lies in expanding the

relationships in which the individual and organisation play a part. There are in particular two relational (developmental) directions that can help increase the capacity to create desired changes, as highlighted by the authors (Cooperrider & Avital, 2004). One involves increasing the ability to recognise everything that is of value around us. The second involves increasing the ability to create and sustain good relations with other people. By increasing this capacity of appreciation, and relational connection, it is possible to gain access to additional resources a change process can capitalize on.

During the first year (autumn of 2005 and spring of 2006), the staff at Kirkevoll school (about 45 persons) as well the leader group (4) were involved in frequent conversations about what they valued in their organisation and each other's practices when they were performing at their best. These processes were utilised to systematically explore what could be valued in everyone's practices, for all employees and in the school where they work. The conversations were held across departments, involving persons who do not normally work together on a daily basis.

Practising the Appreciative Interview

One important method in the start-up of the AI process is the use of an appreciative *distributed* interview (Hauger et al., 2008). The term ´distributed´ interview implies that I developed the first interview, printed it, and distributed it to the organisation. Subsequently, the roles for how such an AI interview is conducted are now briefly reviewed. Employees and managers sit in pre-assigned groups of six to eight people. Each group has one member of the core group, who is designated the role of facilitating the processes in their groups. After reviewing how the interviews are to be performed, the persons are divided into pairs, and they interview each other. The interview is conducted twice. Firstly, person A interviews person B then person B interviews person A. The same printed interview form is used in both interviews. After everyone has interviewed each other (two times 20 minutes), the stories that have been constructed via the interviews are shared in separate learning groups. The person who interviewed person A briefly recounts valued issues learned from the interview with person A. This process takes around one hour, and, by the end, everyone has shared his or her experiences. Subsequently, the stories from the groups are retold in front of the entire group.

The appreciative interview I developed via this organisational development process is based on Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2003) and the author´s principles regarding generative questions. According to Cooperrider et al. (2003), such questions have two parts:

Part A. The questions must invite the respondent to tell a story based on specific experiences in a way that can help the storyteller learn from the past.

Part B. This part of the questions should help the interviewee to look past what has already occurred and imagine the best opportunities for the future.

After I had developed the first AI interview (used in pair), it was printed and used during the start-up meeting for the organisational development process among the staff (August 2005). The introduction to the interview is an opportunity to highlight the significance of "being for others", as the starting point and as something that takes the lead in creating subject-subject relationships (Hosking, 2004).

Appreciative interviews are a way to practice or perform appreciation. The questions asked and the process design allow all persons to be involved in achieving their own bodily, emotional and practical experiences (knowing how) of the concept. The use of a distributed AI-interview also gives everyone the opportunity to enter the role of "AI researcher", and everyone will have the opportunity to be interviewed during the research process (for an example of a *distributed* appreciative interview, see Appendix B).

In the course of my five years working with development at Kirkevoll school, this method of conversation was utilised numerous times during various types of meetings with all the schools' stakeholders involved. Today (2020), appreciation has been pinpointed as one of the five most important principles intended to accompany a SMART practice (more on this in Chapter 5).

During my first year at Kirkevoll school, all staff members held appreciative interviews with many colleagues with whom they normally did not work (more than ten). Employees at the school interviewed personnel from the after-school care scheme, staff working with the youngest pupils

interviewed colleagues working with the oldest pupils etc. Some of the stories that are presented below in this chapter are constructed by means of such relational activities.

3.3 Discursive Shifts

With a change process based on AI, the entire organisation is equipped with a relational and ´positive lens´. According to Golden-Biddle and Dutton (2012), this means having an explicit focus on understanding what elements in a change process that fosters beneficial outcomes associated with social change. This means "keeping a particular eye on what are the processes and states which open up, build strengthen, facilitate and enable social change" (Golden-Biddle &Dutton 2012, p.5). The authors point further on that" application of a positive lens is intentionally an appreciative scholarly stance".

A number of different parties have indicated that an appreciative approach to change can help generate a shift in self-perception, individual views on own practice and the organisation for which you work. Many of the daily challenges described by the teachers involve "commotion in the classroom", "conflicts with pupils", "relationships that drain your energy" and (at times) "classes that drain your energy".

Through the new lens, the focus is on what is good (the half-full glass) and what creates life between people. With time, the teacher starts to expect to use the new lens in the glasses they wear when interacting with children. Our aim is to search for what is positive and to facilitate positive interaction among the children and between the children and adults. During the meetings we had with the personnel, we asked to hear relevant stories from the employees. As the process continued, more and more teachers started to act in line with the new expectations. Below is an example presented during a staff meeting at the school:

> *"We had received a lot of complaints about the behaviour of one boy in seventh grade. The complaints stated that he was bossy and made insulting comments about his classmates both during breaks and in class. He's quite loud in class, shouts things out and seldom waits for his turn. I discussed his behaviour with him during a meeting, and told him off, but we kept*

receiving the same complaints. We also noticed that he was excluded by the other pupils

during some breaks. Nothing was helping, and I found it very upsetting. So, I decided to play

on his strengths. I gave him a lot of praise and recognition. His strengths are that he is

helpful and does what he is asked to do. With time, this had a positive result." (My own

reflection notes, 7 February 2007).

The first part of the story shows how the teacher's actions are triggered by a defensive

mindset. The turning point in the story comes when the teacher decides to approach the pupil from a

different perspective (positive and relational lens). She decides to look for the "pupil's strengths". The

story shows how the pupil's positive qualities emerge the moment the teacher starts to look for them.

The teacher discovers that the boy is helpful, and she gives him a lot of praise for such actions.

Photograph 3.1 My photo of the ´we-you´ drawing created by my colleague Vidar Bugge-Hansen.
To the right of the top drawing is written: "YOU" ("DERE" in Norwegian). To belong to the
lowered drawing is written: "WE" ("VI" in Norwegian)At the bottom is a question: How can we
together ...?

Simultaneously, the story shows how the boy *becomes* more helpful. The boy *is* not "one way

or another". The way he is approached in a specific situation (relation) determines how he becomes.

The pupil starts to increasingly comply with the teacher's requests. The teacher, on the other hand,

continues to search for new opportunities to allow the boy to utilise his strengths in relational

interactions, so that he can become his "best self". With reference to Gergen (2010), it is safe to claim

that there is a change in the relational process between teacher and pupil, from a degenerative to a generative process, where the "former is destructive and obstructs joint action", and the latter is a catalyst and "an injection of vitality into the relations".

It is through such a process that a discursive shift is generated among the personnel. The conversations about daily events are framed in a dialogue in which the focus is on what works. The shift takes place not only among the employees, but also in their work with the pupils. Theories involving design-driven innovation assume that it is not until such a radical change of approach occurs among a group (of teachers here) that a driving force emerges to develop and integrate new ideas and proposed solutions (Verganti & Dell 'era, 2015).

3.4 Parallel Development Processes

When I first started working on the organisational development processes, I was not aware that a separate development process had been implemented at the school. In 2004, the decision was made for all the schools in Re municipality to implement Aggression Replacement Training (ART) as a programme for developing social skills and preventing aggressive behaviour among the pupils. ART is described as an educational programme conducted in small groups of children. Group-based initiatives are conducted to teach children how to control anger, develop social skills and use moral reasoning (Goldstein & Glick, 1987). Model 3.1 (below) describes the two implemented initiatives for change.

Before starting work as a consultant at the school, I had little knowledge of ART as a methodology for change. On first hearing about the methodology, my view was that it, in many ways, was in stark contrast to AI. In my mind, the aim of this method was to "change" others (children), based on medical terminology (behavioural problems etc.). With such a mindset, it was therefore possible that I would have refrained from exploring or visiting this "landscape". I felt that this was something I did not want to relate to.

Table 3.1 Two implemented change initiatives at Kirkevoll school in the period 2004-2010.

Change processes based on Aggression Replacement Training (ART)	Change processes based on Appreciative Inquiry (AI)
Start-up in 2004-. The aim of the development work was to reduce aggressive behaviour in children and prevent conflicts between pupils in the classroom.	Start-up in 2005-. The aim of the development work was to trigger the potential of managers and employees and to create a school where all members of staff want to come to work.
ART was introduced as a target area for preventive work (children and adolescents) in all schools and kindergartens in the municipality in 2004.	Very few employees at the school knew what AI was before this organisational development process started.
The purpose of this was for all teachers to learn ART and for individual schools to offer ART to pupils (ART groups).	
	The development work involved the entire staff at the school.
The development work involved the entire educational staff of the school.	
	In 2006, a management training programme was introduced, based on AI, for all school managers in the municipality.
Several ART instructors received training via the Diakonhjemmet College and via internal training initiatives in the municipality.	
	AI-based development processes were initiated at all schools in Re during the period 2007-2009.
Separate instructor training courses/networks were established in order to implement ART in the entire municipality.	

The following quote is from a retrospective reflection note about my experiences from the organisational development process:

> "I have to admit that the first time I heard about ART, I was sceptical. ART is based on many elements that are found in a defensive paradigm and risk approach. The programme targets those who display negative behaviour, or are at risk of developing such behaviour. The

programme is based on certain limited problems that you work with and not the 'whole child'
and the child's resources. The programme is also based on elements of behavioural thinking
that use positive reinforcement when children demonstrate 'the right behaviour'." (My own
reflection notes, April 2006)

One important aim of research based on social constructionism is that it should also help
"educate" the researcher, and allow transformation during the actual process of which the research is a
part (Douglas & Carless, 2013). This, in many ways, is what occurs during this part of the process.
When, despite my initial (negative) reaction, I chose to approach the stories from this development
process (ART) with an open mind and, with time, with increasing curiosity, this helped change my
practice, my relations with the ART process, my relationships with a number of the employees at the
school and the ongoing development work.

Text Box 3.2 My colleague Vidar Bugge-Hansen's (2018) description of ART.

ART is a programme for training social skills. It is a multi-modal programme that targets action
(social skills), emotions (anger management training) and thoughts (moral reasoning), and was
developed in the United States by Arnold Goldstein, Barry Glick and John Gibbs (1998-2000).
Social skills training consists of 40 social skills for kindergarten, 60 skills for primary school and
50 skills for lower/upper secondary school and adults. The anger management training programme
was initially developed by Eva Feindler. The programme focuses on three factors:

1. Physiological responses – Identifying external anger triggers, a person's own anger signals
   and applying techniques to subdue their anger.
2. Cognitive processes – Helping participants identify irrational thought patterns and replace
   them with a more normalised understanding of the situation.

Behavioural responses – Establishing new prosocial skills that can replace previous behavioural
patterns.

I learned that the teacher who was responsible for the ART process at the school (Vidar) was just as sceptical about "my" theories and "my" change strategies (AI). Vidar told me that he failed to see how the initiated AI-based development work could create something of value either for him or the pupils during the first year he was involved in 'my' AI-process. There was, therefore, the distinct possibility that the AI-based and ART-based work on change would develop as separate processes. This was not the case. Over the course of three years (2006-2009), we started to see a merging of these processes and the networks of actors involved. It is the way in which these merging processes took place that contributed to the development of the innovation(s) subsequently named *SMART Upbringing*.

Passage Points

In 2005, various development processes were being conducted at Kirkevoll school. During the first year when the processes co-existed, they took place in two separate fields. This co-existence could have continued. In retrospect, there are a number of points where I had the opportunity to be curious about the work with ART. These arose in what I choose to call a number of *passage points* (Callon, 1986). I associate the term passage points (in my mind) with the position of duty-free shops in airports. All passengers departing or arriving by air to/from abroad have to pass through the duty-free shop. These shops have a lot of products on exhibit, special offers to attract customers and advertising. Passing through the duty-free shop represents an opportunity to explore the offers or buy some products. Naturally, it is possible to walk through this passage point without buying anything or reading any of the offers. Used metaphorically, we can say that we also have a number of passage points with the people we meet at work or during a development process. These people may also be interested in making us aware of what they are doing and want to invite us to get involved. Invitations of this type could involve sharing stories. It is not sufficient to be told what these people we meet want to do or hope to achieve in order for it to occur, writes Latour (1992). The decisive issue is what the people who are listening do about what they have heard.

The first passage points I would like to refer to were of the following type: I heard that there is a lot of involvement around the ART work, I chose to listen to it, asked questions and confirmed

what I think is positive. I found that I have not assumed a superior position to the work, rejected it or downplayed its importance. However, I had not understood the significant uplifting opportunities that this development work was in the process of realising. This involved e.g., the major commitment triggered by the process towards creating improvements for children and adolescents – the emphasis on practical knowledge (rather than theoretical) in the change work, methods for involving children and adolescents in moral reasoning, the emphasis on play as a method for creating social inclusion, the emphasis on training to incorporate socially appropriate behaviour.

For me, the first passage point – the moment when I really began to hear about the ART work – occurred during the AI meetings with personnel. This is where I heard the enthusiastic stories about working with ART. At one of the AI meetings with staff in the spring of 2007, this story involving work with ART in the fifth grade was narrated:

> *"We were getting towards the end of a 30-hour class in the fifth grade. We were about to carry out the last training sessions in anger management. The question I asked the group was: What do you get angry about now? What do you do when you get really angry now? They thought hard about this before answering, one after the other, that they had not been angry for a long time. Why is that? I've learned so much with ART that I don't get that angry anymore.*

> *During a teacher-pupil discussion some time later with one of the pupils, I asked: How do you feel about your own behaviour now? He took some time to think about his answer, then said: I think I've gotten a lot better now. What's gotten better then? I don't get so angry and I don't fool around as much.*

> *Why is that? ART – I have learned a lot and can see that it works*"[4].

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[4] Minutes prepared by Kirkevoll school. Dated 12 April 2007

How did I react to stories from the work with ART? I was curious about the above story and other narratives about this development process. I was happy to see others succeed and about the great commitment teachers were showing with this work. The way the story was told, and the stories recounted about pupils and teachers who succeed in achieving important changes awakened my curiosity even more, but I was not quite able to be very enthusiastic about it. In a reflection note prepared after I had been told this story, I wrote:

> *"Through the lens of my social constructionist glasses, it's easy to imagine that there's nothing necessarily wrong with the pupils, and rather that pupils who are seen as problematic live in a culture where their behaviour is unacceptable or inappropriate). At the same time, those pupils who do not fit into the prevailing norm culture found at school and in society will experience problems. Pupils who are 'norm-breakers' will be at risk of social exclusion both at school and among their friends.*

> *It is, therefore, safe to claim that we have to work both with preventing problems that occur as a result of today's norm system, while at the same time working to transform this norm system."* (My own reflection notes, 7 February 2007).

Development work based on AI is designed so that all voices in a group are heard. This opens the door to new forms of relationships with each other. My views on ART started to change. I also noted how my "sceptical ART colleague" (Vidar) in the core group started to change his views on AI. His views changed more rapidly than mine. As early as the autumn of 2006, he had started to experiment, in collaboration with the team of teachers with which he worked, on how they could incorporate AI in their classes. They had been testing this out quietly, without making any announcement. The first time I heard about how this team of teachers had started experimenting with a combination of AI and ART in new ways in the classroom was in October 2006.

I can recall the situation as if it were yesterday. I was in a meeting with the core group at Kirkevoll school. I can still remember where we were all sitting, who was in the room and some of

what was said. In a reflection note, the incident is described as follows, and I will go on to tell you what happened below.

> *"We'd just started the meeting in the core group. I had written a suggestion for the agenda on the flip board in the small meeting room at the school. Everyone in the core group was present, except for one person. This person is Vidar, the ART instructor and representative for the lower secondary level, in the core group. We decide to start the meeting without him. Just as we are about to start, Vidar comes bursting into the meeting, red in the face. Before we even get to say hello, he exclaims: 'There's been an amazing change in my class'…"*
> (Own reflection note, 22 October 2006).

3.5 Transformations of the Class Environment in Two Fifth-Grade Classes

When Vidar "stormed in" to our meeting, he had come straight from his own classes. What had excited him so much was the major changes that had taken place in the class environment that autumn. He described how the team of teachers with which he worked and who was responsible for both fifth-grade classes at the school, had decided to experiment with how they could use AI in combination with ART to create a class environment where all the pupils could thrive. He explained how they had painted a huge AI tree on one of the classrooms walls, and involved the pupils in processes to explore situations where the class was at its best, and all the pupils were happy together.

I heard how elements from ART were used in the AI processes, and that elements from AI were used in the ART work. Pupils who were in ART groups were involved in AI-based processes to identify the social skills where they wanted to improve. And when AI was utilised to co-create a positive class environment, elements from e.g., social skills training from ART were utilised. One example was that they wrote that teasing was not allowed on the pineapple "fruit". The following is a quote from my reflection note

"The children are involved in performative practice... learning by doing; using art forms... testing by playing.....

Once the dream had been created, the pupils decided (by vote) what dreams they should try to realise. During the autumn, they had worked on three of the dreams, according to Vidar. If one of the dream goals was not to tease each other, the teachers led a process where the pupils exchanged ideas about what they could do to understand why teasing could happen (for example, someone wanting to show off). How did teasing affect the person being teased (moral reasoning from ART), how the pupils wanted things to be (everyone to feel included), what to do when teasing happens (speak out, ask others to stop).

Once the pupils had come up with suggestions for what they could do to replace and stop the teasing, or replace this 'behaviour' with something better, role play was used to test how the new suggestions worked. When they had discovered a suggestion that both the pupils and teachers felt was successful, the task was then to train in 'performing' the new actions.

An evaluation was applied to discover whether the class was close to achieving its goal, or whether the goal had been reached. This was also performed using an ART method. A finger evaluation was carried out once a week. The pupils were asked to put their heads on the desk and close their eyes. Then they were asked to show on a scale of 1-10 how close they were to their goal. If a pupil put 10 fingers into the air, this showed that he or she felt that there was no more teasing.

The class had agreed that when all the pupils put up eight fingers (or more), then they had achieved their goal." (My own reflection notes, 14 November 2006).

On the day that Vidar burst into the meeting, the class had just performed this type of evaluation. Vidar told us how the class had reached their third goal. The point that Vidar thought was "amazing" was the pupils' evaluations. This evaluation was confirmation of what the teachers

themselves had experienced. We were informed that the class environment had been transformed. When evaluating the last goal, they had been working on, all the pupils had raised at least eight fingers.

Combination of Two Actor Networks

The immediate and long-term effect of what Vidar told us is huge. Once again, I draw upon Latour (1987), who says that the determining factor for the future development of the story is what the persons who are told the story do with what they have heard. My first response was to ask Vidar if I could join him in the classroom and have a look at the tree they had created and the fruit they had drawn. Below are two of the photographs I took that day.

The tree they had painted was about one to one and a half metres tall. The drawing of the pineapple fruit was hanging in the corridor outside the classroom. Once the class had chosen a fruit, it was drawn and hung up on a large poster (about 1 x 2 metres, I would think) out in the corridor. The poster with the pineapple and the goal written on it is a "reminder", if I were to refer to the conceptual language in ART. This reminder can be described as a physical actor (actant) that interacts with other artefacts and actors to create the desired changes (Latour, 1987).

Photograph 3.2 My photograph from November 2006 of the AI-tree painted in the classroom.
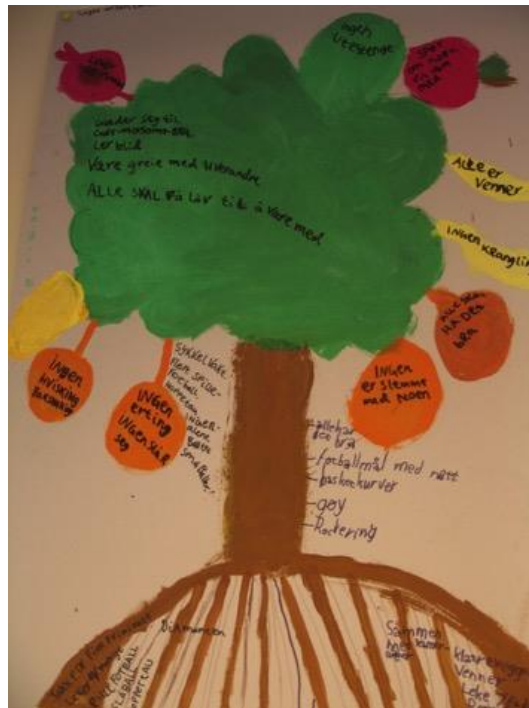
The developments taking place in these two classes, in my mind, represent a process where two actor-networks are combined. The first was an actant network of AI. The second network was an actant network of ART. Each network has its own theories, methods, associated persons and professional environments. Vidar and his team of teachers had managed to bring these actor-networks together. To quote Degelsegger and Kesselring (2012, p. 63), one of the key characteristics of innovation processes is that they "involve new entities or new combinations of entities". They go on to write that the term "translation" can be used to describe such processes. The term "translation" originates from the theories of Latour (2007, p. 108). He describes this as a "relation that does not support causality but includes two mediators into co-existence". According to Degelsegger and Kesselring (2012), the result of such processes is more a sum of the components.

Photograph 3.2 My photograph from November 2006 of one of the fruits on the AI tree that was created by the pupils in the class. The words on the fruit say, "do not tease each other". During this initial phase of using AI in the classroom, many of the goals were written down as something to prevent.

I have chosen to describe the organisational development process initiated at the school as a network of actors and actants that can be exploited for this kind of development work. The actants may be various theories, methods, persons, professional environments etc. Key methods in an AI-based change process are the 5D process model, appreciative interview and roadmap (Hauger et al. 2008; 2008; Sjong, 2015). With ART, a set of training tasks and methods have been developed in order to exercise anger management and develop social skills.

When these networks of methods are combined, something new is created. One of the innovations that emerged from the fact that these actant networks were combined at Kirkevoll school is the concept of ´The Dream class´. ´The Dream class´ can be described as an innovative concept where the action research tradition of AI, and ART was combined in working with children in a school context. This new concept can be described as an innovative way of working with class environment development.

What had even greater significance for the further development work is the innovations that emerged via ´The Dream class´ and the organisational development process at Kirkevoll school

(2005-2010) developed further to a completely new agent network in the Re municipality. A new project implemented in 2010 brought together the actant network based on ART in the municipality with the actant network based on AI, to form a new joint actant network, named *SMART Upbringing*.

3.6 Construction of New Social Facts

When development work is performed with an emergent (or forward-thinking perspective), it is not possible to predict the outcome (Bava, 2014). The ´new´ practice can only function as social facts once it has been constructed. What follows was: 1) After Vidar told his story about what was developing in his class in autumn 2006 – I started to inquiry into The Dream class project. I wanted to learn more from how this action research, like a type of change work, involving children, was done. Over the three years (2006-2009), there was a dialogical process between myself and Vidar about the development work (later named) in his classes. Many of these conversations happened when I met Vidar in the core group meetings (once a month). In this period, I also visited the classroom and took field notes from our meetings, supplemented with photos.

2) In the spring of 2009, when I was about to finish my work as a consultant at Kirkevoll school, I asked Vidar if we could summarise (evaluate) some of the lessons learned from the development work that had occurred in the class over these three years. During this period, the teacher team (2006-2009) had conducted two major cycles of AI-based action research processes together with the pupils. One cycle was named "The Dream Class", and the second cycle "Dream Teaching" (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2015). Also, they had innovated the method of performing ART work. I compiled a design proposal for a simple research program, as follows:

1. AI-based focus group conversation with the team of teachers who had worked in the class from the time when the pupils were in fifth grade to seventh grade (last year in primary school)
2. AI interview with Vidar.
3. Focus group conversations with parents, pupils in the class and Vidar.

One important assumption supporting AI is that positive questions are particularly productive in eliciting new information and exploring new methods (Reed, 2007). The investigations were conducted in May 2009. I have chosen to include the stories told by the children and their parents. Vidar gave me a list of pupils and parents who he "knew" had something to tell. We had agreed on this beforehand. My aim with this evaluation was not to create a true image of what had occurred, but to develop knowledge of the potential with this method of working. The persons invited could help us put into words the latent opportunities found in the way in which the team of teachers had been working.

The Voices of Children and Their Parents

Below, I have chosen to include the voices of the children in the class and their parents. The text is taken from a memorandum that I wrote immediately after I had held the focus group discussions. This empirical material is the result of the interactive process we had during this meeting, where my questions and discourse for the conversation impacted what kind of stories were told. One of the reasons why I have chosen to give this text so much space is because of the performative effect these stories had on me, and how these conversations formed the basis for creating "social facts" about the innovative development work in the two classes. The conversations with the children were constructed, and conveyed, as follows:

> *"I was very curious about how the pupils and their parents felt about the implemented development work, and how drawing on their experiences could help signal the potential within the model being developed.*
>
> *We, therefore, invited a group of pupils and parents to focus group conversations about the development work that had been carried out in the class. One of the mothers said;*
>
> *'It has been very significant for my child. For the class environment. It has also had great significance for us. When I'm tired, it's not always easy to (do the right thing). When my son started school, he was seen as a troublemaker. Everyone was scared in case they met him in the changing rooms. The boys in the class have now learned to get to know him in a new way.*

Everyone in the classroom is seen and heard now. There is no doubt that it has been important for the class'.

Another mother explained how the children:

'... learn so much in the ART groups. My son is really interested in the anger management techniques. I can see how he has improved and can now consider his own behaviour and think things through: Why did I get angry? He thinks things through at home, including how he behaves towards his siblings. They are better now at looking after each other. He has such a short temper. In the past, when someone laughed, he thought they were laughing at him. He couldn't stand making a mistake. If he did, the walls around him came crashing down, and the roof would fall on his head.

My son was extremely sad. Nobody wanted to be his friend. Nobody called him, or came round'.

One of the other mothers followed up with her experiences: 'My son has taken 'all the courses', she said.

'He now knows how to put his feelings into words. He can tell us how he is feeling. He's much better at explaining how he feels inside. He has learnt that there are always two sides to a story. The pupils have learned how to give praise, how to start a conversation. They have become more patient. They know what to do if they get angry. They are better at putting their feelings into words. They've also learned how to get over silly issues. They are much better at getting a grip on themselves. Normally, we would hear them saying: Guess what that idiot did. Now, the (pupils) are always positive. It's really nice to see. Their eyes have been opened, and they can now see the positive things. They really see it!

He's learned now to see – how the things he says to others can hurt them. At the same time, the other children have learned to get to know my son in a different way.'

Many of the parents claim that their children have now learned how to interact more constructively with other children, teachers and parents, and that this has helped them achieve both a positive development in life and a positive development in identity. In the words of one of the girls: 'I'm tired of fighting and being upset. I can see the consequences of that. It wasn't fun to be told to leave the classroom', she explained. After a break, she continued, 'I can't understand how the teachers put up with it. I threw a chair at a teacher'.

After pausing to think, she said: 'I knew I didn't want to be that person. When I start lower secondary school, nobody will know me. I can have a fresh start there. I can be the happy girl I want to be...'

The stories also show that there has been a positive development in the class environment. In the words of one of the boys:

'Three years ago, the class was divided into three groups. One group was the girls and me,' he said. 'We played in the woods, while the other boys were on the football pitch. There was another group. They just ran around. They weren't part of the class environment. They weren't part of the cool gang.'

I asked how things were now. One of the girls replied:

'Now it's more like we can play with whom we want. After we'd been working for some time on giving compliments ... there was one day I was walking up the stairs to school. One of the cool girls said to me: Your hair looks great, and I like your trousers. The girl talking wanted to specify: This was one of the cool girls talking to me. She was actually talking to me. I was proud. I was happy for the rest of the day.

Before, if were divided up into groups, small cliques would form within the groups. Now, everyone can work with everyone.'

One of the boys added: 'Now, we can talk to anyone we want. You are always welcome. Before, we were more scared to show who we really were. You had to have this or that to be accepted. You could be excluded from a group, because you weren't cool enough.'

The pupils also explained that it was not just the pupils who had changed: 'The teachers were challenged too', explained one pupil. 'They also had things they had to work on, for example:

- *Getting to class on time*

- *Taking out the balls*

- *Allowing the pupils to change places (whom they sit beside) often.'*

She continued:

'We can really notice that the teachers have been in training. When we tell the teachers something, they really listen. You feel respected. We're working on something. Teachers are working on something. It was good.'

When the pupils were asked to explain what contributed to the positive changes, they talked about the development of a more appreciative way of talking to each other, spending time together. One of the pupils said:

'We show more respect for each other. We don't comment on everything that's wrong anymore. We talk a lot less behind each other's backs now. If anybody does talk behind someone's back, then somebody else will always speak up. We have constant reminders of this because the skills are right there on huge posters in the classroom. When you enter the classroom, you can see a lovely fruit. It's been drawn. It looks nice. All the colours... That we drew. It really has an impact. The fact that it's a drawing, it's much better than the ART poster. That's really boring.'

The pupils explained how they are allowed to choose what they work with on the project. 'We reach our targets quicker because we get to choose them', they said. 'It's also easier to work with

the fruits', said one of the girls. 'On one of the fruits on the tree, it said don't tease. This was drawn like a pear.'

I remember the fruit that said 'give each other compliments', said another pupil. 'Before, we would only give compliments to the friends you had in your gang. One of the skills we had to learn was to give compliments. When you give a compliment now, you feel proud. We're also better at saying thank you.'

I asked the question: 'What can others learn from you?' The spontaneous reply was: 'Celebrations. We get to vote on how to celebrate. Should we watch a movie? Do we want juice? Something to eat when watching the movie? This motivates us more.'

'Our last celebration was two weeks ago. We celebrated that there was much less talking behind backs in the class. These fruits have helped create a feeling of solidarity. We've been the ones to think up what to do to create solidarity.' (My own reflection notes, 9 June 2006).

As you are reading this, you are probably thinking that I am not a neutral intermediary. I am recounting all this from a standpoint coloured by values. I have allowed myself to be affected by what I have heard. I would like to remind you that the important purpose of this study is to demonstrate the power performance and performative research can have for social life. When optimal, performative research can help deconstruct knowledge that has been handed down and reconstruct new forms of life. The story of how AI has been practised with innovative methods over these three years is a story of handed down knowledge about the class and the handed down knowledge the pupils had about each other, and how this was transformed (Douglas & Carless, 2013).

The evaluation of the development work allowed us to achieve a jointly constructed story that we could share. Today (2019), this story is known as The Dream class and is used to explain what SMART work involves (what changes we want to achieve) and to mobilise support for the process. The development work performed in these two classes is now (in retrospect) seen as the first social innovation with this development work. Looking back (2018), when Vidar Bugge-Hansen (2018, p. 11) puts it all into words, he is generous towards me and the role I played in the story:

97

"The first innovation was inspired by Bjørn's human resources work at Kirkevoll school. The idea and the initial thoughts arrived when we ourselves experienced how positive and not least useful AI was for the personnel group. Why not try translating the mindset and methods and apply them to children and adolescents, and give them access to tools and methods that promote involvement and that can provide a focus on strengths for daily social gatherings? So, we started to experiment. The first social innovation was The Dream Class. We worked together with the pupils to translate the AI process into a language and a structure they felt was meaningful. The academic and social results were very positive. Looking back, I've spent a lot of time thinking about what it was that triggered the idea and that created so much energy that the pupils and employees were able to sustain the process and work so hard on it over several years.

We started out with a very difficult class with a lot of competition, cliques and gangs, and with several individual pupils who had major social and academic problems. Our work with the class was predominated by a focus on problems. We approached these problems with the sole aim of solving them as best we could. As teachers, we felt that we had the solution and tried to tell the pupils what they should do. We created rules with consequences, but the pupils did not feel they meant anything to them.

We began to realise that our focus point was not producing the intended results. We had pushed so hard with our rules that they only resulted in even more conflict and opposition, even from the parents. We had to change our perspective, move from focusing on problems to focusing on strengths. We had to change our mindset from believing that the teachers knew what was best for the pupils. We had to create processes where the pupils got involved in finding the best solutions. We needed to recognise that the pupils represented a vast untapped resource instead of focusing on 'difficult ones'. When everyone pulls on the same end of a rope, there are very few limits to what can be created."

I would like to highlight one important aspect in this story of innovation, and that is that it took many years from the time the innovative development work was performed until a new concept

was developed, named and made available to others. The book describing "the concept" of The Dream class was published in 2015, explaining how such a development process can be performed (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2015). In the autumn of 2018, Vidar invited me to join him in creating a course about The Dream class. We held the first pilot course together in April 2019. I have contributed to the development and distribution of this concept with knowledge-based texts explaining how the Dream Class concept can help generate new knowledge (knowing that) about how the action research tradition of AI and participatory action research etc. can be performed together.

Today (2020), when I discuss these events with Vidar, he says that the fact that I chose to spend my free time (unpaid consultation hours) on carrying out this evaluation was of major significance for his continued involvement. He says that he felt recognised, appreciated and that what happened in the class was important. That was also my intention. Vidar Bugge-Hansen (2018, p. 12) says the following:

> *"The ability of the headmaster and my colleagues to show an interest and curiosity in what was happening inspired me and gave me the courage to talk about it and demonstrate it. We were asked critical questions that gave us a lot to think about. Bjørn demonstrated significant appreciation by inviting the pupils and employees as lecturers to present The Dream Class at a conference. As a result, we had to sit down and describe step by step and document with photographs what we were creating. Towards the end of the seventh grade, Bjørn held meetings for groups of pupils, parents and employees to study the effect of this method of managing the class."*

This study was performed in part to help empower and reinforce what was at that time a fragile development process. When the school year had come to an end, the "project" would be over, and I wanted to help it continue. However, I had no clear idea about how to achieve this. The impact the study had on myself, on Vidar and on the future development of our relationships, also with many others, has been invaluable.

3.7 Opportunities for Cross-Fertilisation

Based on these reflections, I started to explore the opportunities for achieving what Golden-Biddle and Dutton (2012) refer to as a "cross-fertilisation" between the domain for organisational development and the domain for social change processes. In a reflection note dated 22 October 2016, I wrote the following:

> *"When children are at school, they live their lives in two different universes simultaneously. One universe comprises various organisations such as schools, kindergartens and after school care. In this universe, they assume, and are assigned, the role of pupils (at school). The adults assume and are assigned the role of teachers, nursery school teachers, assistants etc. When applying a different perspective, we can also view the school, kindergarten and after school care as a civil community. This is a community where the children find friends, play, establish different types of relationships with other children of different ages, with adults etc. The pupils may also meet the schoolteachers in the role of fathers in other arenas in the municipality.*
>
> *The municipality can be perceived as a collection of services assigned the task of providing important welfare for citizens. At the same time, schools and kindergartens are also a community. If we view the school as a community, where adults and children have to live together, we face questions of a democratic nature: How do we want the people in the community to live together? Who decides? How do we develop this community together? It is not uncommon to imagine that the community starts outside the school or kindergarten doorstep. We frequently use words such as the civil community (families), local community and local environment. Local communities have residents' associations that collaborate with the municipality. The collaboration between the 'municipality' and the 'residents' association' is then viewed as a collaboration between the municipality as a public institute and the associations as representatives of a civil community.*

The SMART Upbringing *development process has demonstrated that the 'classroom' can also be seen as a joint community where children and adults live together. From this perspective, it is appropriate to ask (the political) question: How do we want to live together? In the context of such a discussion, it is relevant to pay attention to how our behaviour in our professional practice impacts the opportunities for children and adolescents.*

A child's welfare at school not only affects what they can achieve in the role of as a pupil (learning to read etc.) but also the kinds of identities these children develop (clever, kind, difficult) and also how their futures unfold. Children live whole lives. As mothers and fathers, we fervently want our children to be happy and thrive when they are at kindergarten or during after school care.

Problems described using words such as 'bullying', loneliness, problematic behaviour can most probably not be solved by introducing a traditional service-based perspective, where children and parents have passive roles. By studying children's formative years and upbringing and our professional practice in the context of a social discourse, it will be simpler to recognise that the problems encountered by many children and adolescents are generated socially. The solutions can be found in identifying new and improved ways of living together.

With such a (political) perspective, we as researchers can help re-arrange the way in which we approach children, adolescents and their parents. This type of re-organisation has to be based on social values developed within the community of which we are part."

Social change processes represent an academic field that draws upon grassroots, mobilisation and solidarity actions (led by) or in collaboration with underprivileged (or repressed) groups. By viewing our development work from a much wider context, we will be able to identify a vast number of previously unseen opportunities for development work. One of these opportunities comprises involving citizens in more active roles in development work. We started experimenting with this in the spring of 2018. We recruited a group of six parents, who had previously had the role of user

within the child welfare service, and assigned them the new role of experience-based consultants working as partners and involved in the development work. Several of these parents had previously expressed that they "hated" the child welfare service.

Most probably, there is no one solution, perspective, group of professionals or service that can help solve the psychological and social problems described with words such as bullying, loneliness, apprehension, stress, anxiety and depression (Gergen, 2009). In efforts to describe these problems via a psychological perspective, we are on the path to identifying several action-based methods (treatment, medication). An educational approach (learning difficulties and problems concentrating) directs us more towards other action-based methods, whereas a nutrition-based approach targets the importance of a good diet to create improvements (Gergen, 2009). Knowledge developed via traditional research (nutritional research, medical research etc.) is based on an assumption that the world is a finished product (McNamee, 2010), and that via "reliable methods and technique and objectivity, we can discover how things are" (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, s. 4).

In particular, the function (performance) of the scientific language has been the target of post-modern criticism. One by-product of this scientific language is the move towards a language that restricts possible descriptions and explanations of social life (Gergen & Thatchenkerry, 2006). That which is imprecise and inconsistent is phased out to the detriment of stories narrating what is true (objectively). These types of univocal presentations are catastrophic for the world. They undermine the experiences and voices of ordinary people (Gergen & Thatchenkerry, 2006).

One alternative approach to knowledge development and change processes based on fragmentation and division is to attempt to develop knowledge within and regarding *local entities* (Sullivan, 2012). The knowledge required to navigate a complex world – whether you are a farmer, teacher or kindergarten assistant – cannot merely comprise rational know-how. Some of this knowledge is silent (feelings), some take the form of practical know-how (how to chair a parents' meeting), while other knowledge takes the form of abstract know-how (knowledge of grammatical rules). All these forms of knowledge are united into one entity within (for example) a teacher's

practice (Østern & Knudsen, 2019). However, it is not just the teacher's behaviour that determines what occurs in a classroom. The teacher's behaviour has to be coordinated with the way in which the children behave.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter, I have described how Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was introduced as a future forming practice in Norway and implemented at the largest primary school in the municipality. I have illustrated that the methods with which AI was performed, equipped the entire organisation with a relational and positive lens (Dutten & Golden-Biddle, 2012). Through this lens, the conversations about daily events at Kirkevoll school was framed in a dialogue in which the focus was on what works. Over time (2005-2009), the use of an AI discourse and AI methods in the organizational development process at the school resulted in a discursive shift for the work on upbringing. This shift can be described as a shift from pathology (problems) to potentials, and from problem-solving for individuals (individual orientation) to jointly triggering potential.

This chapter also tells, retrospectively, the story of how two different professional perspectives; AI and Aggression Replacement Training were brought together at Kirkevoll school. When these networks of methods are combined in the classroom, the innovation ´The Dream class´ was emerging or being co-created. In the Dream class concept, the pupils are involved in inquiry-driven processes to co-create their classroom environments. I have given insight into how the future forming research started up and performed, and how the studies of this new practice contributed to the development (co-construction) of the innovative development work *SMART Upbringing*.

Chapter 4: Narrative Inquiries About How Work With Children and Adolescents "Might Be"

In this chapter, I will report how I conducted the research during my first year as an employee of Re Municipality (2015). Inspired by Gill's (2001) theories of *narrative inquiry,* I conducted various (non-positivistic) 'experiments' involving my colleagues in constructing personal and "larger" stories about the implemented development work. According to Gill (2001), the dialogues about developing such narratives may simultaneously help facilitate conversations that take development work one step further towards its target. Such inquiry is also viewed as interventions (change work). The act of highlighting local stories gives more "power to" new local methods of working with development and assigns the role of agent to storytellers more clearly for this work (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 52).

In the first part of this chapter, I will lay out how I, together with selected managers and employees in six services with responsibility for children and young people in Re commune, developed new knowledge about what kind of upbringing environments and upbringing practices we wanted to create.

4.1 The First Narrative Inquiry (January to March 2015)

The idea behind the first narrative inquiry was conceived during a meeting with my co-researcher Vidar Bugge-Hansen, who at that time was employed as project manager for SMART Upbringing. Vidar was of the opinion that it was important for me to obtain a wider insight into how SMART Upbringing worked, and the process behind the development work.

Figure 4.1 The chronology of the initial research process in 2015.

A narrative inquiry into the ongoing development process SMART upbringing in 6 services in Re municipality

October conference: using large scale methodology for co-creating a timeline and dream for the development process

Narrative constructing of 3 stories of how the work of upbringing could be

Construction of a fictional organisational narrative of SMART, based on more than 100 brief interviews

January-March, 2015

April - September

15 October, 2015

With research based on social constructionist theory, the "walls" separating normal professional practice and research are thin (Andersen, 2014, p.67). Taking a collaborative-dialogical perspective, "participants mutually inquiry into something that has relevance for them" (Andersen, 2014, p.67). Each participant brings their local knowledge to the process. New and useful knowledge is co-created through processes of dialogue and meaning-making. Knowledge of this type of inquiry is considered as a generative activity, where new knowledge is created. When I visited the different services in the Re municipality, I chose to use Reed´s (2007) appreciative conversations. Such conversations can also be referred to as appreciative interviews (Reed, 2007). These interviews have a focus on what works well in their local context, in an open way of conversational engagement. According to Reed (2007 p. 75), appreciative conversations help to bring out new ideas supporting a direction for change work: "People are more likely to engage in thinking through and acting on change strategies if the process begins with a positive stance".

In a reflection note from this period, I wrote:

"When focusing on what we want to happen, one possible starting point for the reflective processes could be to study areas where the most uplifting examples of new practice are being developed. Lavine (2012) uses the term 'unusual' to describe new (not legitimised) practice. 'Unusual' is a good term as it indicates a working method that implies some form of breach with prevailing conventions. When understood in this way, the act of making an unusual practice into an accepted practice (and thereby usual) will imply that the new practice has to be made meaningful for the larger community of those practising it in our municipality." (Own reflection notes, 12 January 2015).

My co-researcher Vidar and I discussed and agreed upon which organisations I should visit and whom I should talk with. We both agreed that I should visit colleagues who could tell me about how change processes based on SMART worked successfully, and colleagues who could provide stories about the type of valued results that could be generated by the development work. We agreed that I should visit six organisations: Kirkevoll school and its after-school care organisation, Solerød childhood and youth centre, Røråstoppen school, Revetal lower secondary school, Vivestad kindergarten and the Barnehage Sør kindergartens. A total of 12 persons from these organisations had agreed to take part in the first narrative inquiry.

The inspiration for the design of the study came from Gill's (2001) theory about narrative inquiries, the method of narrative interviews taken from the Appreciative Inquiry action research tradition (Reed, 2007) and theories regarding the use of visual methods for the development of narratives to be used to form opinions and learning based on the constructed stories (Kurtz, 2014).

I choose to refer to the narrative method I had constructed as a multi-method. Haseman (2006). I chose to link the appreciate interview method (Reed, 2007) with two visual methods; table and graphic visualisation (see below). Visual methods can be used to create an external (and visual) representation of what has been said. According to Tchimmel (2014), this can make it easier to

explore opportunities together, making the ideas behind a complex development process more meaningful and understandable.

By drawing upon these different traditions, I created the following design for the first interviews with the Barnehage Sør kindergartens.

1. I started the inquiry by performing an appreciative (narrative) interview during which the participants were asked to talk about their most positive experiences (stories) from the development work.

2. Subsequently, my co-researchers were asked to summarise their personal experiences of the implemented development work within their organisations in two different ways. The first method I used for this was a table I had printed (see table 4.1). The meeting participants were to use this table to fill in what they felt were "typical" working methods before the SMART Upbringing project in the "before" column, then what they felt were typical working methods now in the "now" column. The second method was the use of graphical visualisation (Tchimmel, 2012), allowing the participants to both expand on their stories and initiate processes of exploring patterns in their own narrated stories (Gill, 2001).

3. The final part of the surveys was dedicated to exploring important elements and possible patterns visualised by my co-researchers with the table and the graphic presentation.

Below, I will present how I performed this interview with two colleagues (researchers) in ´Barnehage Sør ´ kindergartens. I chose to report from this interview because the way this inquiry was performed increased what I like to call dimensions of engagement (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). By bringing in graphic illustration as a part of the appreciative conversations, I brought in several ways in which my colleagues could express their commitment (expanding the contextual engagement). By dialoguing issues of values in new ways (using a table) I experienced that I and my co-researchers came to care more about what we were saying in this form of conversation (expanding our affective engagement). Based on these uplifting experiences, I decided to use the same type of inquiry in the other services.

Narrative inquiry in ´Barnehage Sør´ kindergartens

Barnehage Sør was a network of municipal kindergartens located in the southern part of the municipality. My colleague Vidar Bugge-Hansen had set up a meeting with two kindergarten managers (co-researchers) to learn how the SMART work was practised in these kindergartens.

I started the meeting by briefly describing the research project I had started on, and the purpose of the meeting. I then conducted an appreciative interview with my colleagues (co-researchers)[5]. Through the AI-interview I asked my colleagues (co-researchers) to share uplifting experiences of the use of "SMART Upbringing" in their kindergartens. As a result, the interview was more similar to what Reed (2009) refers to as an AI conversation, during which my two colleagues (interviewees) could expand upon or supplement what the other had said. After I had conducted this interview, I handed out the printed table. I asked my co-researchers to write a few words and sentences in the left column of the table describing how they typically worked in the kindergartens before the implementation of the SMART Upbringing development process, and words describing how they typically worked "now". It was my hope that the use of this "table" in the reflection

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[5]My co-researcher Vidar helped me to identify people who had been frontrunners for the development process SMART upbringing in these six services. Twelve persons were selected. Most of them had been actively involved in this change work since 2012 (almost three years).

processes about the narrated stories would contribute to what Tchimmel (2012) calls a distillation of important experiences and new insight from the development work.

Once both my colleagues had finished filling out words on the printed table, I asked them to read out loud what they had written. I noted their responses on a table I had drawn on a flip chart (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 The constructed "before/now table" at ´Barnehage Sør´ kindergartens.

Before	Now
We give children answers.	We allow the children to find the answers.
We focus on the upbringing of the children	We view children as more competent.
The children shall learn to show respect for adults.	Everyone shall learn to show respect for each other
Truth exists.	Truth does not exist.
More reprimands of children and here and now consequence.	We care more about each other.
	Employees are more involved throughout work processes.

After I filled out the table on the flip chart sheet (see table 4.1 above), I initiated a new conversation asking my colleagues to reflect on what the "table" showed. With reference to Latour (1997), the flip chart sheet can be described as gaining character as an individual actor in the future processes for forming opinion. Throughout the conversations, which drew upon what was written in the table, I experienced that "we took the conversations to a higher level" (own reflection notes, 2

March 2015). I also felt that the idea behind SMART Upbringing became clearer, the desired effects more evident and that the conversations boosted commitment to the implemented development work (including my own). In the reflection note that I wrote directly after this meeting, I also wrote:

> *"When I listened to what they had written in the tables, my first impression was 'wow, there are major, deep changes happening here'. The condensed and contrasting way of describing the 'before' and 'now' situation made a strong impression on me. I was not prepared for the strong impact of comparing the words that were written on the left and right-hand sides of the table.*

> *My co-researchers told me how the SMART work had helped create more positive expectations for the children, that the children are seen as more competent. As my colleagues described how things were before, they mentioned that it was the adults who gave the children answers, that there was an emphasis on the children being brought up to develop respect for adults. Now, manners were an important concept, I heard. They told me that 'everyone has to learn to respect everyone'.*

> *Before: One of the co-researchers from the kindergarten explained that when the children did not behave the way the adults wanted, they would talk negatively about it and that it was easy to think that the child was at fault. Then they changed perspective. They asked questions: What's working well? The child joined an ART group. The child flourished. The child gained a more positive view of himself, and they changed their view of the child.*

> *After some time, they realised: All those additional resources which were brought in to solve problems, were so unnecessary. The answer was so simple. Instead of telling them what not to do, tell them what they can do. This gives the child alternatives. They explained: 'We know so much about ART and SMART that we can approach the child in a different way. We discussed everything we knew about group dynamics, and searched for those elements we knew worked. As soon as we introduced this, we saw a positive impact. The child approached the others. He no longer needed a special education teacher.*

Before, we used to give the child the answers – putting thoughts into their heads. Now, we are helping, supporting and guiding. We can see other alternatives. We have a completely different mindset. Communication is completely different. We have another way of thinking. Personally, I've changed,' said one of the managers. (Own reflection notes, 2 March 2015).

The purpose of carrying out the inquiry in this way was not to develop true descriptions of the changes under way in the kindergartens. The purpose was to contribute towards making the implemented change processes more meaningful, allowing us together to uncover more differences in the development work and new opportunities for generating changes. My colleagues, for example, explained how they had developed more equal and *horizontal* methods of cooperation between employees and managers (Tangaard & Linneberg, 2019). I will come back to how space can be allowed for more horizontal methods of working together with the children in the kindergarten later on in this chapter.

Another important discovery I made from these conversations was that the work of constructing and creating meaning from the tables made it easier for us to see and talk about the possible gains from the implemented development work. "These discoveries gave me and (many of) my co-researchers a *kick* to boost more involvement in the development work" (Own reflection notes, 2 March 2015). Based on these experiences, I chose to adopt this method in new ways, and on a larger scale, in the research. I will explain how I did this later in this chapter.

Forming Opinion via Graphic Visualisation

All change processes include ups and downs, success and failure. When we attempt to understand SMART Upbringing as a story being developed, it is both important and interesting to know how employees and managers understand their own story of change. When I was carrying out the initial field visits, I asked the participants at meetings to create a graphic illustration of the implemented development work in their own organisation. They all received a blank sheet of paper. I asked them to draw up two axes with a scale from one to 10 on the vertical axis. The top of the scale (10) illustrated

a situation where the conditions for optimal, successful function for the people were present. The bottom of the scale (1) described a situation where these conditions for growth were lacking. The horizontal axis was a time axis, where one on the scale represented 2009 and six on the scale was the current date (January/February 2015).

My 12 colleagues (co-researchers), who came from five different organisations, each drew their graphic illustration. They did so after the interviews and after opinions had been constructed about the development work by means of the "before and now" table. The graphic presentastion below shows how I transferred these graphs from each of the five organisations into one common graph. The graphic illustrations show the same development. The conversations helped construct an image of an "upwards movement", where the lives of those involved were developing in a positive direction.

Figure 4.2 A co-constructed graphic illustration of the development work at five organisations.
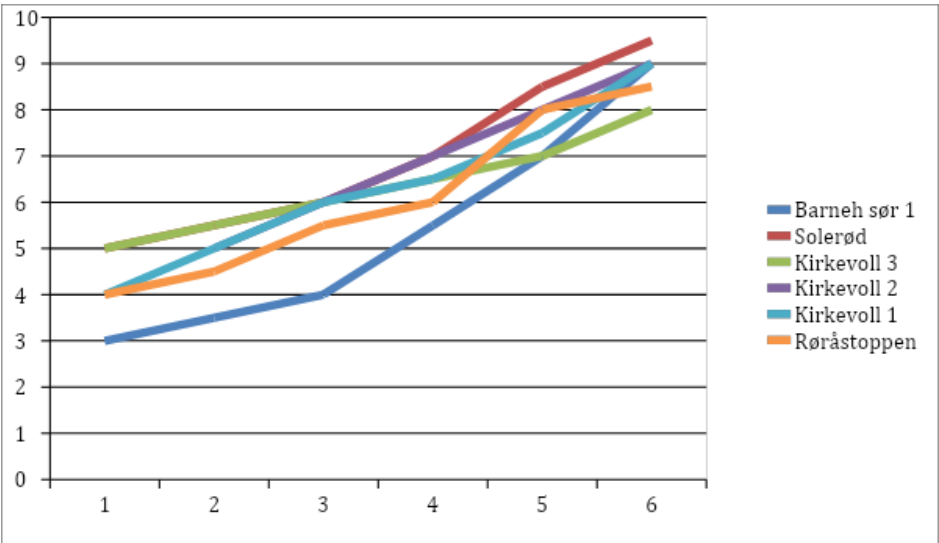
Once again, please note that this does not represent a "true" image of the development. The method has been constructed for a different purpose. The method has been used to extract opinions about the implemented development work. These opinion-forming processes, based on the

constructed graphs, took place during the meetings at the individual organisations and during meetings with my co-researchers working on the SMART Upbringing project. After one such meeting at which I presented the table, I wrote the following in my reflection note:

> *"Use of the table shows how the SMART Upbringing development work takes place from a perspective in which attempts are made to trigger human potential rather than solve problems. I also noted how the conversation we had based on the graph evoked a hope for the future and pride in what is being achieved. Based on Gergen & Gergen (2012), the use of this method helped induce an increased affective (emotional) commitment to the development work. According to Tchimmel (2012), the use of graphic illustrations can boost the forming of opinions. The shape created (curve) can help influence opinions about the significance of what is happening. In our case, the curve points upwards. This is promising."* (Own reflection notes, 2 March 2015)

Neither is it coincidental that the shape of the curve points upwards. The fact that the curves were constructed in this way by all the participants has to be viewed in light of the discourse before the inquiries. At the same time, the curve can be interpreted as showing that (some of) what we want to achieve through the development work – optimal function for the people involved – is seen as meaningful, and that the narrative surveys help to construct an optimism that this can be achieved. According to Cross (2011), this form of visualisation (graphic) can make it easier to envisage the potential results (outcomes) of an implemented development process.

4.2 Construction of More Local Narratives About the Smart Work

One important target when using a positive lens to research the change processes was to search for uplifting examples of new practices and help construct more stories from these practices. My working definition of what this implies (story construction) is inspired by McNamee and Hosking (2012, p. 5), who write that:

- Storytelling is a process by which to construct reality, where the storyteller is a part of the story being told.

- The narrative is jointly created and shall not be understood as an individual, subjective reality.

- The narrative is situated in relation to different local cultural contexts.

- Different surveys may generate different stories.

As with McNamee and Hosking (2012), Kurtz (2014) emphasises the fact that stories are always developed in a perspective, but goes on to claim that it is not only this perspective, but also the storyteller's feelings that affect the elements that are given space in the constructed story (narrative).

During the interviews with the employees and managers at the six organisations, performed from January to March 2015, I was told several stories that I felt were particularly uplifting. These were stories of a change from pathology to potential (McNamee & Hosking, 2012), and of how the children, adolescents and their partners were involved in processes for co-creation of their environments for upbringing. With reference to Camargo-Borges and Rasera (2013), the concept of co-creation can be understood as continuous negotiations of the reality taking place between persons, and innovative ways of "being" and "doing". Looking back over my experiences, it is also appropriate to draw upon Tanggaard and Linneberg (2019 and the term they developed of *horizontal development processes* to describe processes for co-creation with children. Horizontal development processes refer to a practice where children help create something new, through equal (horizontal) contributions along with other actors (adults etc.). Tanggaard and Linneberg (2019) write that in order to achieve this, space must be created where roles, learning and work processes change.

During the interviews I held, three stories in particular about the potential and processes of co-creation attracted my interest (see table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Construction of three different stories about new uplifting practices in the services.

The services:	Innovative practice:
After school care, at Kirkevoll school	**Meetings with the children:** Meetings with the children are an innovative concept that shows how all employees (ten) and all children (160) in "separate after school care" get involved in "horizontal processes" to co-create daily routines (meals, play) where everyone is happy.
Vivestad kindergarten	**Our small garden:** Method of facilitating co-design processes together with young children (Manzini, 2015, p. 158). The garden is used as a metaphor and a visual support (scaffold) for a project where children are given the opportunity to influence day-care from their own perspective.
Solerød childhood and youth centre	**Strength-based operating plans:** The concept shows how all parents, all children at school and staff can be involved in developing (and implementing) operating plans at Solerød centre. Management is carried out by means of relational processes.

These were a story from Vivestad kindergarten, one from the after-school care at Kirkevoll school and one from Solerød childhood and youth centre. When I heard these stories, I thought "wow, I want to learn more about this". All the stories were (in my opinion) about significant transformative changes that were under construction.

I, therefore, chose to go on new research visits to these three organisations. These visits took place in the period from May to August 2015. The methods I used were appreciative conversations (Reed, 2007) in combination with field visits (documented via photos and field notes). The idea behind these research visits was inspired by future forming research (Gergen, 2014) - that, as a researcher, I should get involved in constructing the stories of what I wanted to happen. Below, I will explain how I proceeded to construct one of the stories, and how this story (and similar stories) can be used to expand the *cultural capital* for the implemented development work Bolt (2007).

Construction of the Narrative About "Our Small Garden"

The first example of a new uplifting practice about which I have helped construct a story has been named *Our small garden*. Our small garden can be understood as an educational concept used during

an assembly time for all the children attending the kindergarten department for the youngest children (three years old). I was told that the concept was inspired by the ongoing SMART work in the municipality. Maylen Stensrud, head educationalist in this department, developed the concept.

I was invited in May 2015 to visit the kindergarten for a first-hand experience of how this concept was performed. The research process in this kindergarten was organised as follows: I initially had conversations with the manager (Anita Karlsen) and the educationalists who had been at the forefront of the development work (Maylen). I then joined the children during their assembly time (performance of the concept). We then spent time reflecting together about what I had experienced and learned. I took notes and photos from our conversations and of what I experienced during the assembly time.

During this visit, I discovered numerous parallels between *Our small garden* and the concept of *the Dream class* that I have already described. With the Dream class, a tree was used as a metaphor for the class as a lively social system (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2015). A garden was used as a similar metaphor at Vivestad kindergarten. When working on the Dream class, the teachers at Kirkevoll school had painted a large tree on the classroom wall. The tree was used as a *visual scaffold* for involving the pupils as co-creators of their own classroom environment (Frimann, Hersted & Søbye, 2020; Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020). With the *Our small garden* concept, Maylen had used the "garden" as a visual scaffold for the involvement of the young children in similar processes.

Photograph 4.1 A photograph I took in August 2015 of one of the children sitting in front of the artistic montage in the department for the youngest children: A large mural and sticky "fruits" (apples) and notes (SMART cards).

In a reflection note after the visit, I wrote:

> *"My role as a researcher was to witness what happened. I took notes and photographs. I then constructed the meaning of what I had been involved in together with the educationalist and assistant at the department I had visited. I went on to write a story based on the interviews, observations, photographs and conversations. I sent the story to the kindergarten for approval. I subsequently published the story as a blog article on the SMART Upbringing website. My aim was not to act as an expert by having fragmented analyses of their practice. My intention was rather to contribute to a synthetic knowledge development, where my task was to bring something new, my own delight, a strength-based language etc. to highlight (text and images) something that could develop into a new practice for the services."* (Own reflection note, 22 September 2015)

Below is a small extract from my published essay about Maylens´ development work (Hauger, 2015a).

"It's assembly time for the three-year-olds. Maylen, who is the educationalist in the department, is leading the learning process. Maylen is responsible for educational documentation. The children are sitting around a table. They are to continue working on a project that has been named 'Our small garden'. A number of the scenes from the garden have been hung up on one of the walls in the room. There is a large tree with apples at the crown. There is a flowering meadow, rainbow, cloud, raindrops and (many) suns. The garden is also to have a house, but this hasn't been put on the wall yet.

Today, the children are going to be working on the flowers. Each child is a 'flower in the garden'. This makes me think of life as an organisational metaphor, and the garden as a very good example of such a metaphor. The flowers in the small garden are called strength flowers. During this session, every child receives feedback about a strength that the adults have seen in the child. Before the session, Maylen has observed the children and written a small story for each child. One strength has been selected from each story. During the session, one of the children is told that: 'Your strength is humour'. Maylen goes on to explain what humour is: 'Humour is when we can make ourselves or other people happy. You've done that. You spread joy and laughter in the kindergarten.'

The project is about involving children and adults in discovering and putting into words the strengths, interests and positive qualities of each other and in children's families. A number of apples hang from the crown of the tree, describing what the children and adults like to do. The children's strengths are written on the flowers. The plan is for the house to have photographs and positive descriptions of the families (it had not been finished when I was visiting). The cloud and rainbow symbolise the community in the kindergarten. The cloud has imprints of the children's hands. The cloud may make rain. The raindrops have words describing what the children do not want to happen in the kindergarten: fighting, teasing, falling out. The rainbow symbolises the colourful and beautiful community of which they are a part. Each child has a colour on the rainbow. The rainbow also features the favourite song for all the children (community). This is 'Ba ba black sheep'.

The final element in the garden is the sun. In this garden, each child is a sun for each other. The sun has sun rays. On each sun ray, there is a statement from one of the other children about what they appreciate about each other.

What was perhaps most uplifting to learn about in this project was how the knowledge the adults gained about the children, what they discovered in terms of their strengths and interests, helped shape their actions and the areas where they worked, and the interaction with the children from day to day. Knowing that a child was interested in bats, or tractors, could form the starting point for a learning session on this subject. If the child said, 'I'm bored', the adult could answer: 'Shall we read a book? I know you like to do that.' The children could also be challenged to use creativity, humour and collaborative skills to carry out assigned tasks."

From my perspective, the performance of *Our small garden* showed insight into a practice where the three-year-olds were involved in co-creation processes with the kindergarten educationalist(s). I would like below to refer to Tanggaard and Linneberg's (2019, p.27) explanation of the term *co-creative processes.* In the authors' minds, it is important that co-creation (together with children) is based on a special view of the children, where the children are seen as competent resources, and where the children are involved in *horizontal working processes, where everyone,* including the adults, learn something new. The two researchers point out that, as with theories of relational aesthetics, participation in these processes is inherently of value (Bourriaud, 2002; Tanggaard & Linneberg 2019).

Co-creation involves more than cooperation. It involves new ways of talking together and creativity (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). It involves the right of initiative, and processes where children (also) are met from a subject-based position. Although it is the adults who must assume the moral and ethical responsibility to ensure that the children are happy (asymmetry), there is also the possibility within such a framework to develop new forms of roles, and role distributions between children and adults (Tanggaard & Linneberg 2019, p. 12).

This is what I felt was happening with the *My small garden* project. Maylen met the children at their level (Tanggaard & Linneberg, 2019). I witnessed how she assigned the children the position of actors, and how the entire project was based on the use of a playful approach to exploring (and thereby co-creating) the world of which both the young children and the adults are a part (Our small

garden). The knowledge developed through the process emerged by means of dialogues with the

children, and the developed knowledge gained a form (via the garden as metaphor, painted flowers

etc.) to which both the children and the adults could relate.

Photograph 4.2 A photograph I took in May 2015 of co-researcher Maylen and one of the children in her department, where knowledge development takes place at the children's level. The photograph is a still image of a situation where the child is hanging up a strength card on the "flower" that symbolises her.

There are several reasons why I have chosen to include such a detailed presentation of the

"concept" and my experiences from this visit. *My small garden* is, in my experience, a practice in

development that projects an appraised future that we wanted to create: A community (environment

for upbringing etc.) where the children are seen as competent and can be assigned roles as active

actors in the construction of their daily lives together with the adults, and where contribution and

participation are seen as inherently important values. "This is training in participation and, thus, citizenship", I enthusiastically wrote in my reflection note after the visit (own reflection notes, dated 22 September 2015).

Secondly, I wanted to include real people *into the picture* in my thesis, in the form of text, images, film etc. (Levin, 2011). The driving forces behind the initiated social changes and research collaboration were colleagues such as Maylen and Anita Karlsen (her manager) at Vivestad kindergarten. These two colleagues also became my (future) colleagues in the further development of the research. Anita joined the internal research group (see next chapter), and Maylen joined as a close co-researcher in the Trainer the trainer program (see chapter 6). With this story, I wanted to also show how the SMART work was starting to be performed in more diverse ways. Art was included in a new way as a mediating artefact for the development work. By writing about these experiences (Hauger, 2015b), I wanted to help increase the *cultural capital* that can be made available for development work and research (Bolt, 2009). According to Barbara Bolt (2009, p. 8), cultural capital refers to artefacts and products upon which the research draws, develops and submits for circulation. Possible examples are events, books, methods, performances, movies, and stories. According to Bolt (2009), increasing the available cultural capital in an ongoing change process will be one of the most important contributions from performative research. She also uses the term *embodied* cultural capital to describe the relational resources that emerge through, and will be included in, performative ways of developing knowledge. Examples of such resources may be creative skills, talents, values and pride (Bolt, 2007, p. 8). These relationally generated (aesthetic) resources affect the involvement, collaborative skills and innovative skills of individuals and social communities, for example, in a kindergarten (Sekerka & Fredrickson, 2010).

By writing the narrative of *Our small garden (*Hauger, 2015b*),* I also wanted to highlight how the way SMART work is performed in the services triggers a creative commitment among the employees. At Vivestad kindergarten, this had helped to create innovation for the educational practice. Later that autumn, I had the opportunity to re-visit the kindergarten to ask about their

thoughts involving (the performative) effect of this development work. In my reflection note, I wrote the following:

> *"They told me how the children's group has become closer. They said that the children had been good friends before, but that they are now much clearer about their friendship. They are also better at including each other when playing. Maylen explained that two new children had joined the department after Christmas. 'They were included in play immediately.' I also heard how the children were able to resolve conflicts much more quickly.*
>
> *So, what were the effects of the implemented development work for the staff at Vivestad kindergarten? Based on the conversation I had with Anita (the manager) and Maylen, I noted the following:*
>
> - *Everyone is allowed to do what they are good at.*
>
> - *This has brought more enjoyment to everyday life.*
>
> - *The staff don't get as tired.*
>
> - *They have more energy when dealing with difficult issues.*
>
> - *They care more about each other.*
>
> *I also learned that the colleagues are more interested in each other. 'They ask me, for example, what I'm doing this weekend. When I get back to work on Monday, they remember what I was supposed to do and ask: Did you enjoy your trip to the cabin?' Anita added: 'There is very little sick leave. We come to work even if we're not feeling that good. This also provides a financial gain!'"* (Own reflection notes, 22 September 2015)

Above, I showed how *co-creation* could be used to put into words a new practice that was in development with the children in Vivestad kindergarten (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). The concept of co-creation involves an expansion of the right of initiative, and the opportunity to act in the role of the agent when shaping your own daily life (Tanggaard & Linneberg, 2019). During this

period at Vivestad kindergarten, it also appears that the way in which employees could develop their

practice in roles with expanded "right of initiative" was being tested.

4.3 Other Stories of Co-creation

Throughout the spring and early autumn of 2015, I also explored new practices under development at

Solerød centre and Kirkevoll after school care, together with colleagues in these organisations. These

examples also involve how the local services are in the process of developing new ways of involving

children and their families in processes of co-creation.

Text Box 4.1. Extract from my reflection note on the development of the Strength-based planning
process at Solerød centre, dated 4 November 2015.

*"The first stage of the strength-based planning process at Solerød centre was to study
every aspect that already worked well in the centre and among the people who worked
there. This process started in the core group. After the participants in the core group
had interviewed each other, and shared stories about highlights, research was
performed into what enabled these successes. Research was then performed to study the
future. What could and should be created together when the strengths of the individuals
and the strength of the organisation were present at all times? These descriptions of the
future were used to create the overall goal for the operating plan. The goal was
formulated as follows: Solerød school shall work towards the goal that all children
shall 'have an extra good learning outcome'.*

*Once the core group had created the overall goals for the operating plan, the
systematic work began on the involvement of all employees at the three organisations
(school, after school care and kindergarten), the pupils (initially via the pupil's
council) and the parents (school environment committee and parent's working
committee) in the work to specify the overall goal. This involved separate processes for
the school, the after school care and kindergarten personnel. The same procedural way
of working was adopted. Everyone was involved in conversations about when they are
most successful in their own work, about what it is that enables their own successes,
and what they hoped to achieve together. I was told that the initial process in the large
core group (autumn 2010) 'was somewhat difficult to understand'. They told me that the
concept of an operating plan was something new. They also found that working with
dreams and scales was new. 'But we worked so hard that we gained a better
understanding of what it's all about. We started to see the links and the common
denominator.' 'This has been a period of adaptation,' one of the teachers said. I was
told that the personnel increasingly supported the way the work on the operating plan
was organised. 'The clue to success was not to push anything new onto our colleagues,*

> *but that we dared to focus on what we are good at', said one of the teachers in the core group. He added: 'This is a more secure approach'. The core group agreed upon the direction and route for the development work in meetings. Subsequently, these ideas were introduced to the teams, to see what worked. They told me that the result was that 'the subjects and methods to be used in the development work matured slightly and we could see what worked'."*

Meetings with the children, at Kirkevoll after school care, was a new concept being developed (Hauger, 2015c). The employees worked with co-creative processes with the children at a local after school care centre (around 110 children) in shaping daily activities such as eating and play (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). This concept has now been described with various texts (including photographs) by my co-researcher Karina Heimestøl (2018), who has been at the forefront of developing the concept. *Meetings with the children* has now been shared with numerous after school care schemes in a number of municipalities (www.smartoppvekst.no).

4.4 Construction of a Common Shared Organisational Story

The development of the subsequent research cycles was partly inspired by the uplifting experiences I had with the use of a table as a verbal-visual method, together with a narrative AI interview, when working on constructing opinions and the development of new insights from the ongoing change processes.

In my experience, the use of this multi-method contributed to richer descriptions of the future forming opportunities inherent in the SMART Upbringing development work, and in triggering an *emotional commitment* to the development work among those (we) who were involved in these processes (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). I, therefore, started to think about how I could scale up the use of this narrative multi-method in the research work. With reference to Gill (2001), there is a requirement to uncover methods to safeguard the holistic nature of an ongoing change process, and this should

occur by incorporating the experiences of "all participants in the change process into a unifying narrative" Gill (2001, p. 337). In a reflection note from this period, I wrote:

> *"If I chose to view all the constructed stories from the initial surveys as a mosaic of experiences developed from the inside of the ongoing processes (via dialogues), could the elements from my colleagues' stories be compiled in a meaningful way in a larger constructed story?*
>
> *A narrative has the following simple basic structure: A starting point that describes the situation before, then a plot, i.e., something that initiates a change and finally a description of the new situation that arises as a result of the initiated/triggered plot (Czarniawska, 1998). How the story ends tells us something about what kind of story is being constructed. The story could be about a positive change, or have a happy ending. The story could also end with a notably less happy end result. Many organisational stories are stories of transformation. When someone tells you that when this company (a) did something (b), and the result (c) is different from a, it is a transformative story."* (Own reflection notes, 19 March 2015).

My idea was to construct a transformative story about the SMART Upbringing development work, based on compiling the mosaic of experiences that had been constructed via the narrative surveys. Based on the twelve collected forms (tables), I carried out a simple sorting of the statements. The statements involving the same topic – e.g. descriptions of how management was performed, how the collaboration with parents took place or how the interaction was with the children – were all organised into the same paragraph in the story.

I chose to use all the statements as they were. I only added words to tie the sentences together, and make some of the statements understandable. My purpose was not to construct empirical material about the development work, but to compile the experiences in a way that made it into a fictional story of what we wanted to happen (art as a method) and which could be used to explore the norms

that were being changed. I would like to add here that the fictional story was exclusively based on experiences that were grounded in the practice of the services.

Performance of the fictional organisational narrative

The *fictional story* about the SMART Upbringing development work was presented at a meeting we had with co-researchers with whom I worked closely during the first phase of the research (eventually named the internal research group, see next chapter). Prior to the meeting, I had summarised all the empirical material (statements) in the "before and now" tables from the first "field visits". The story of how we worked in the different services before the start-up of the SMART Upbringing development work was as follows (Hauger et al. 2018, p. 32):

> *"The teaching had been controlled by teachers and textbooks. It followed several systems and patterns. The teaching focused on giving the children answers, teaching them to respect adults and that 'truth exists'. There were more immediate consequences. Staff meetings usually started with one or two critical voices at school. The meetings were always opened by the same people. The discussions about the pupils were predominantly negative. There was more emphasis on the children who created negative attention, and they were disciplined more often with negative words. We concentrated on the behaviour we didn't want. This led to more conflicts and more meetings with parents due to unwanted behaviour. Challenges with individual pupils were more likely to be handed over to a special education teacher. Within the teaching teams, we worked side by side, and plans were more short-term. We put more focus on what was going to happen the next day, and next week. As an organisation, we focused more on problems. The staff were passive recipients, and there was little room for change. I was often the person to provide a solution. As a team, we were less interested in quality than we are now."*

The narrative of the new culture was as follows:

"We've changed the way we see the world. Our expectations for the children are now more positive.

We view the children as more competent. The children are more involved in helping find the answers and solutions. We base our work on their strengths and meet the children with a greater understanding. People ask open questions and there is a higher focus on manners. We talk more about what we want more of, and we pay more attention to the children's development, our development and organisational development. We work on 'eternal' development processes and emphasise dreams. We have a different meeting structure now. The staff meetings always open with a 'positive round'. More people speak up and dare to say what they think. We share positive stories and generally have better communication with each other. There is a lot of activity at the staff meetings. We now feel that we work together with proud colleagues. In the classroom, we work more towards academic and social goals. Everyone shall be seen and heard. We spend more time on reflection, and both the children and the adults are more involved in processes. Inclusion and the participation of children are important. We care more about each other. We spend a lot of time working on presence, acknowledgement and reflection. We're looking for what works, and give positive feedback to parents. When good things happen, we put this into words, and we underline everything that is positive. Good class management is exercised with a lot of involvement and activity. Now, it's the team that's responsible for special education."

The way I and the involved co-researchers worked to make sense of the "before and now" narratives were as follows: First, I handed out the printed text. Everyone at the meeting read it to themselves. Once they had read the text, I asked the participants to form pairs and sit together to discuss the following questions: a) Do they recognise themselves in the stories? b) What can these stories tell us about the ongoing transformations in the services? After everyone had discussed this in pairs, we shared what we had agreed upon with each other (in a group). I wrote in my reflection note (27 May 2015):

"The main essence of what emerges is that the stories are perceived as providing a condensed and good description of the culture that existed before, and of the culture they feel is in the process of being created with the development work. 'This is a paradigm shift,' said one of the colleagues at the meeting. 'The old culture was a top-down culture. As a result, there was also a lot of resistance, both from adults and from children,' one principal reflected. She continued: 'People did not feel they had any decision-making power. There was little hope. Not much development. The old culture did not provide us with a plan for the road ahead. It was a recipe for exclusion!' 'What about the new culture?' I asked. 'The new culture embodies hope, involvement, motivation. It's a democratic culture. It is based on a completely different view of learning. It triggers a lot of resources and provides extensive participation. It's a culture that opens the door to new potential, a culture in which we help each other improve.' This sums up the meeting."

With reference to Gill (2001, p. 338), I argue that the way I had constructed the new narrative made it possible to explore the *emotional and motivational* meanings related to the implemented development work. The response from my colleagues (co-researchers) suggested that the way I had constructed the story evoked pride. One question asked at the meeting was; what would the outcome be if a large number of our colleagues were also involved in similar processes?

Further Work on the Development of the Organisational Narrative

Based on our performative experiences of the effect this story has had on us, we agreed to involve more colleagues and managers in opinion-forming processes in which personal stories were used to construct more "unifying narratives" (Gill, 2001) in a similar way. The way we chose to do this was as follows:

1. Collection of personal narratives via brief appreciative interviews summarised in the "before-now table" from the services where we worked and during meetings of colleagues and managers. Over a four-month period (June-September 2015), these narrative surveys

were performed at seven organisations, one management meeting and a network gathering for the after-school care system. This work was performed by my co-researchers.

2. Based on the collected forms (a total of 102), a new narrative was to be constructed, uniting the elements from all the stories into one common narrative, as I had done before (see above).

3. The newly constructed narrative was to be reported back to the organisations, forming the starting point for new dialogues about the implemented development work SMART Upbringing. Conversations were arranged during which the narratives were used to explore "new patterns" and methods by which the services worked, and how the change process had taken place.

My co-researchers, Vidar Bugge-Hansen and Elisabeth Paulsen, were assigned the task of constructing the organisational narrative based on the new collected (102) forms (see Appendix 1). This new organisational narrative was, in turn, used as a starting point for further reflection by the personnel in the services. What struck me when I looked at this material (102 collected tables), and read the newly constructed narrative (see Appendix 1), was how comprehensive and profound the changes *can become.* But perhaps of equal importance: The material also shows how the services are exploring new forms of relational cooperation between employees and managers, between employees and children involved, adolescents and parents in the services, new types of meetings, and an expansion of what Gill (2001) refers to as *organisational responses* to create increased well-being for children and adolescents.

In Text Box 4.2, I have chosen to include an extract from the constructed "now story" that involves how you *can* work together and *can* achieve this among personnel. When the mosaic of statements from colleagues who work in the different services is compiled like this, it becomes fiction (art). At that point in time (2015), none of the organisations followed that working method. However, the fiction is shaped by experiences that already exist in the world that surrounds us in our communities (Kurtz, 2014). The story of what we want to be (for our personnel) talks about

"committed adults", about "play", about how positive episodes are talked about out loud and that my

colleagues reflect upon what they achieve in "perpetual development processes".

Text Box 4.2 A constructed story of what "can be" for our personnel. Extract from the "now story" constructed by my co-researchers, October 2015, based on 102 completed tables.

> *"There is more room for diversity and participation, creativity, play, innovation. Co-creation among the staff. Good to be at work, good environment despite various problems.*
>
> *Courses during staff meetings. ART games in the HR group.*
>
> *Easier for the adults to collaborate. Adults are much better at seeing the positive sides in each other and themselves. We praise each other, and this transmits to and is reflected in the children. Employees are better at complimenting each other, and it is easy to identify the strengths in each other. Practising/experiencing being assigned a characteristic.*
>
> *Reflecting on what we can achieve. Talking out loud about positive episodes. Good stories are told regularly. We assign more tasks according to strengths. All the staff are involved and work together. Relationship skills have improved/are more visible. Placed on the agenda.*
>
> *Committed adults. More emphasis on what is good in your own life – which is contagious.*
>
> *We work with presence, recognition and reflection. We conduct performance appraisals based on an individual's successes/strengths. Participation democracy and contribution from all. More positive basic attitude places greater emphasis on growth and development. General focus on strengths of the individual and organisation.*
>
> *We have a different meeting structure now. The staff meetings always open with a 'positive round'. More people speak up and dare to say what they think. New and positive information is always requested during meetings. Focus on opportunities.*
>
> *We have improved how we communicate with each other. Good structure and a lot of activity at staff meetings. We now feel that we work together with proud colleagues.*
>
> *More work on competencies. Working on 'perpetual' development processes. Focus on dreams.*
>
> *We care more about each other. Good cooperation between the employees. Motivation has reached a completely different level."*

The material shows (ref. Text Box 4.1) how liveliness can be integrated into a range of facets within the services, and how "power over" relationships can be developed into *power together* relationships at many levels within the services; in the way management is exercised, in the way cooperation occurs among the staff and in the way staff cooperate with children and adolescents.

Czarniawska (1998) points out that stories provide more concrete instructions on how you are expected to perform: Do it this way. Don't do it that way. Moreover, the narratives can also be strong communicators of the preferred new norms, and organisational stories can be used to provide insight into how norms develop or change (Brown, 2009).

4.5 The October Conference 2015

The third research cycle was adopted during a meeting with the internal research group in June 2015. Relational research has the task of contributing to the "domain of opinion" because this domain is particularly constituent for different forms of life; "they will inevitably favour certain actions over others" (Hersted et al. 2020, p. 8).

To date, the reflective and opinion-forming processes involving the SMART work had taken place at meetings in the individual organisations, and at certain management levels in the project and the municipality. We now saw the need to achieve opinion-forming processes across the sectors working with children and adolescents, and across different levels. Together with my co-researchers, we aimed to achieve this by inviting participants to a "mini" AI conference (one day). Our first task was to present this idea for approval to the chief municipal executive and his management group, as they were the persons who would have to issue invitations to such an event. The purpose of the event and the design for the event also had to be developed in dialogue with the management team in the municipality. The research process for this reflection—action task was, therefore, different than for the other two research tasks, and was (roughly) as follows:

Planning: Brainstorming about purpose, objective and design for the conference in the extended research group. We adopted participating methods based on AI to develop a main design for the conference (Hauger et al., 2008). The extended research group formed a smaller group of researchers (planning group) to plan the details of the conference. This was followed by a joint planning/discussion meeting about the conference with the chief municipal executive's management team. Furthermore, the planning group had two meetings to finalise the design of the conference. As part of the preparations for the conference, a team of group leaders was formed to lead the part of the learning/reflection work that would take place in groups at the conference. The planning group rigged the conference room the day before the conference. Together, the four of us who had been responsible for planning the details of the conference were to lead the research processes "in the hall".

Actions: There was a myriad of actions implemented ahead of the conference, and at the conference. All the organisations were asked to complete exhibits showing how they worked with SMART Upbringing. Requesting these exhibits and encouraging the organisations to create them helped implement processes in many of the organisations, in which they had to think about what they had done. Being asked to exhibit may inherently be understood as recognition (action). The decision to have exhibits was made to allow more voices to be heard during the development work. The fact that the chief municipal executive's management team was asked to invite participants to the project, and the chief municipal executive was asked to open the conference and participate in the relational conversations with his employees, also represented an action that would affect the project's further development. The most important actions at the conference, however, were what occurred between the participants: Further research of the norm changes and practical effects of the development work in the individual organisations and on children and adolescents, and further work on creating a common organisational history about SMART Upbringing. In order to allow work on the story in a "large format", we had created a 15-metre roadmap and hung it on one of the walls in the conference room. The participants were to be involved in work where they would add important events that had had an impact on the project's ability to create the results they wanted in their own organisations, and across the organisations.

During the final part of the conference, the participants were involved in processes to shape new images of what they wanted to help create via the project moving forwards (dream), and to start the work towards achieving this. With this interactive process of creating future images, we (also) wanted to make use of visual methods to help the participants explore and describe their ideas (and associated emotional components) in diverse ways (Brown, 2009).

The reflections connected with these actions occurred in all phases of the work to plan the conference; after each of the meetings we held to plan the process, during the conference and in our own meetings in the small and extended research group after the conference (Finlay, 2002). I also summarised some of the qualitative surveys conducted at the conference, and used this as raw material for the reflective processes in the small and extended research group.

Performance of the October Conference 2015

Below, I will present my story on how we performed the research at this conference, starting up with some lines out of my journal:

> *"The date is 13 October 2015. The conference is to be a meeting place for all the services working with SMART Upbringing. There are around 80 people in the hall. Chairs have been set up in semi-circles with six chairs in each semi-circle. When people come into the hall, they can sit where they like. The conference starts with a brief welcome speech by the chief municipal executive. This is followed by an introduction by the project manager for SMART Upbringing. He starts by introducing one of the SMART strengths we need to activate in the work on learning. This strength is courage. Courage is needed to achieve major results in a development process.*
>
> *We are tasked with being courageous – to stand up from our chairs and connect with someone in the room who we do not know. Everyone stands up. Some are a little hesitant – others eager. We are then tasked with sharing experiences with each other. We have to form pairs and talk together. The task is to explain something we are satisfied with having achieved in our own work. After that, we take the person we have got to know to one of the semi-circles*

of chairs. During the ten minutes this exercise lasts, a lot of energy is created in the room. People from the different services start connecting.

The subject of this "SMART meeting" is public mental health work. The initiative for the event originated from the ongoing development work. The participants are attending voluntarily. The chief municipal executive and head of municipal affairs for upbringing work together with the other participants all day. The schedule for the day is organised with learning work in groups, workshops and exhibits. The aim is to discover the experiences of the managers and employees working in the services. I am once again struck by the abundance of resources in the municipality: dedication, knowledge, brave and creative employees. The purpose of the conference is to uncover these experiences, share knowledge, develop knowledge and inspire each other to create upbringing environments and services that enable all children to be happy and achieve their potential." (Own reflection notes, 19 October 2015).

The design we created for this conference was inspired by the Appreciative Inquiry action research tradition (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1995). The innovative element was that this was to be a large-scale event (more than 70 participants), and we, therefore, chose to draw upon the large-scale methodology for AI (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr & Griffin, 2003; Hauger et al., 2008). The participants at the conference were assembled into smaller groups, and the inquiry processes took place alternately in pairs, groups and in plenary.

We had agreed that people could sit where they liked when the conference started, because this would create a feeling of "security". The conference started with a song and welcome speech by the chief municipal executive. We then adopted the method of appreciative interview. The reason for this was to uncover everyone's experiences from the implemented development work and to create a learning climate featuring appreciation (Whitney, 2008). We set aside around 10 minutes for this process. My experience is that this was sufficient for people to get into a positive frame of mind, and

the conference was organised so that everyone was involved in relational conversations at the same time.

Once this action had been performed, each of the participants was tasked with creating a summary of what they believed has been the positive significance of the project implemented for the children they meet in their services, and for employees and managers in their own services. Once everyone had entered the answer to these questions on a form, they shared their descriptions in the groups. With the decision to work with knowledge development in this way, via the use of appreciative interviews in which the participants shared "positive" stories with each other, one of the aims was to trigger what Gergen & Gergen (2012) refer to as an *affective engagement*: Caring about what is being said, and which could help establish a community of caring for each other. In my reflection note, I wrote the following:

> *"Once the conference had started, I asked Elisabeth about her observations: She summarised: 'People are talking freely. People are used to this way of working with learning. No one's sitting alone. Everyone is involved in a dialogue'. At 10.00, I had a chat with my partner Vidar, and asked for his observations. 'That there are so many people taking responsibility as group leaders. The commitment is huge. People know what to expect. They know there will be stories. They know it will involve relations. They know it will involve participation.' Anita added: 'It's great to see how easy it was to promote involvement with the method of dividing people into groups. The group leaders quickly created a feeling of security in all participants. People really got involved.'* (Own reflection notes, 19 October 2015).

Before breaking for lunch, two groups sat down together to share their summaries, and a number of stories were presented to all the participants regarding changes implemented in the services and what had been done to achieve this. Throughout this research session, it became clear to everyone that there had been major positive changes for children and adults in all the organisations represented at the conference. Below is one reflection from my journal:

135

"When we summarised experiences from the conference during research group meetings, this was highlighted as a new and very important 'discovery' mentioned by many participants. Most were aware of the major changes underway in their own organisation, or in their own sector, but it was a surprise to most people that the changes were so deep and extensive in the other sectors. There were very few people working in kindergartens and schools, for example, who was aware of the extensive development work that was underway in the child welfare service and educational-psychological services. These discoveries were reinforced when the conference turned into a mobile exhibition, where the participants could see and hear accounts of how the participants worked with SMART Upbringing in both private and municipal kindergartens, in schools, at the health clinic and in child welfare." (Own reflection notes, 2 November 2015.)

In keeping with the mindset that underlies *future forming research* and AI, we also involved the participants in a process to explore what kind of future we want to create together, and what Gergen (2014) refers to as what might be. We did so by asking the participants to make an imaginary newspaper report three years into the future. What would such a report look like? What did they hope (one of the largest) national newspapers in Norway would write about? What would they photograph? Who would be interviewed? What did they hope to read in the headlines? To create this imagined report, we asked the participants to use art as a method. The groups had access to old journals, coloured sheets and markers and a large poster. By assembling cut-out images from journals, drawing and writing, they were to design (imagined) newspaper articles on a large poster. I have also decided to include a photograph (4.2) from this part of the conference to show an important relational gain generated by a playful way of exploring the future. The hope is that this working method will trigger enjoyment among those involved (Tchimmel, 2012), and will build a positive and enjoyable community.

Photograph 4.3 My photograph from the *October Conference,* 15 October 2015. The participants worked in groups to co-create their dreams for the SMART Upbringing development work by means of art.

By using "art" as a method, we gave the participants access to a different language (visually, etc.) to describe the world that they wanted to help create, and to contribute information that is not easily expressed through (only) written words (Brown, 2009; Gergen & Gergen, 2016).

Meaning Construction Through the Use of a Timeline

The use of storytelling can be an effective way to involve managers and employees in an organisation to negotiate how to understand and create meaning from an implemented development work, and to re-expand this process (Kurtz, 2014). One way to re-expand is by integrating new events, stories and actors into the narrated story. This can be done using visual methods such as a timeline and landscape (Kurtz, 2014).

Before the conference, my research colleague Vidar had created a timeline for the development of SMART Upbringing, as he saw it from "its infancy in 2005" until the day the conference was held (October 2015). The timeline was transferred to a large roll of brown paper about fifteen metres long, which was hung up in the conference hall the day before the conference. The work on developing the story took place via a series of work sessions at the conference. The first

session involved creating a common (and expanded) shared image of the ongoing development work and what we wanted to achieve together. During the next session, the large timeline for the project was presented to the participants at the conference (by my co-researcher Vidar). On the timeline, he had already added a number of important events that he felt had contributed to the development (story) of SMART Upbringing. He informed the participants that this story was, however, incomplete. The timeline was to be filled with all the events and activities that had occurred in their services, or that the individual had initiated and that could complement the story.

Photograph 4.4 A photograph I took during the *October Conference, 15* October 2015. The photograph shows participants at the conference exploring and having dialogues about the timeline of SMART Upbringing development work.

The process then continued in two stages. The first stage was that everyone at the conference[6] was provided with yellow post-it notes and were asked to write down what they felt were important events in their organisation and across the organisations. Once the notes were filled in, everyone had to stick their note in the correct place in the timeline drawn up on the roll of brown paper.

Photograph 4.5 A photograph I took of the "timeline". The photograph shows that the number of yellow post-it notes (activities) posted on the last part of the timeline is on the increase.

After this was completed, all the participants were assigned the task of making a description of what they wanted the project to create in the future, and what would become the further story of SMART Upbringing. These descriptions were first made one by one, and then developed per

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[6] The invitation to attend the conference was sent out to all the services that worked with children and young people in the municipality (around 400 employees). The invitation to participate came from the municipality's management (the councilor). There is reason to assume that the conference recruited (most) participants from services that were positive to the development work SMART upbringing.

organisation. The summaries were presented in plenary, and the posters were subsequently hung up at the end of the timeline (see photograph below).

After the timeline (story) was expanded with a series of new events (post-it notes) and dreams (via posters), everyone was invited to look at the timeline. What new elements (stories) had emerged? How did these new elements (the small stories) fit into the larger narrative? The following quote is from my reflection journal dated 7 November 2015:

> *"The entire wall in the community centre is in use. Everyone is invited to post notes showing important events that have had an impact on what has been achieved with SMART upbringing. When the notes are posted, this visualises something we hadn't thought about: The sea of notes has increased in recent years. In the conversations I had with my colleagues, we interpreted this as a new confirmation that there has been an upward trend and expanding movement (more organisations involved) in the history of the project. It strikes me that such a method (timeline) is also particularly appropriate for exploring and expanding diversity in a development process (Kurtz, 2014)."* (Own reflection notes, 2 November 2015)

At the start of 2016, I had experimented for a year with different ways of performing future forming research. I had chosen to develop this research activity based on what Gergen and Gergen (2012) refer to as an array of "oughts", and where I have allowed myself the space (also) to include my own values and fantasies about a desired future at the foreground of the research.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have described how I conducted my research during my first year as an employee of Re Municipality (2015). I have given insight into how I have worked as a researcher using narrative inquiry (Gill, 2001) *within* the process of SMART upbringing to create a direction for systemic change. The first narrative inquiry that I report on was performed in six different services working with children in Re municipality. The aim of doing these inquiries was to strengthen the sense of

voice and agency to the frontrunners (my co-researchers) of SMART upbringing in these services, and give more power to new methods in the work of upbringing that was under construction.

During this period, I also designed a method (inspired by art) for studying and reinforcing the conversations about the implemented transformative processes in all the municipal services. More than 100 employees and managers have been involved in co-creating a fictional narrative about the implemented development work.

In October 2015, we arranged the first internal conference regarding SMART upbringing. During this conference, more than 70 participants from different services working with children in Re municipality were involved in new dialogical processes about the municipality's change process. By using a large-scale methodology (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr & Griffin, 2003), a timeline and a (largely) shared dream for SMART upbringing in this municipality were constructed.

Chapter 5: Inquiry Into the Ethical Discursive Potential in Research and Development Work

In the two preceding chapters, I have described how SMART upbringing developed into new, innovative practices for working with children and adolescents in Re municipality. The purpose of the action or future forming research was to cultivate the change processes and to generate results that are seen as valuable by those involved.

During the initial phase of the research (2015), I decided to make use of narrative means to boost the vitality and transformative power of the developmental work (Gill 2001; Golden-Biddle & Dutton, 2012; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Through that research approach, I was able to design a research process to identify and co-create new practices within the professional services involved.

In the spring of 2016, I started to notice other stories about the SMART work. Apparently, my positive view of SMART work was not shared by all. The work on positive change processes also appeared to have a darker side (Fitzgerald, Oliver & Hoxsey, 2010). Eager to find value and recognition, it felt simple to ignore these other voices and stories. Some of the services (for example, the child welfare service and the health station) involved saw the development work at that time as *'irrelevant and naive'*. When I realised this, I started to turn my attention to the ethical aspects of the research and the development processes underway. From a social constructionist perspective, ethics imply, e.g., preventing one perspective from dominating and *"facilitating diversity"* (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 106). Gergen's (2014) concept of *future forming research* states that with all research aiming to generate social change, the issue of ethics must not be seen as an individual choice for the researcher, but rather as a collective concern among all participants.

In this chapter, I aim to present the story of what we did for creating the conditions for multiple ways to understand the change process and respond to it (McNamee, 2020). The chapter starts with several examples of what I choose to call monological practice. In this context, monologues are defined as a practice that makes some voices predominant (McNamee, 2020). The ethical counterpart of monologues in relational research is polyphony (Hersted et al., 2020). With

polyphonic research (inspired by Bhaktin, 1984) numerous voices and a diverse range of perceptions are integrated in the research. In this chapter, I aim to explain how we experimented with developing research in this manner. The first example relates to how we utilised a simple method for relational reflection when practising daily project management and how we consequently were able to detect and correct monological behaviour within a planning process.

The two other examples relate to the collaboration within the project's internal research group. Research, based on social constructionism attaches great importance to the meaning of words in the processes of forming opinions. In the autumn of 2016, we also started using physical and visual artefacts in the processes of forming opinions and to facilitate polyphonic conversations during the research. One example of this is the use of circle maps. Circle maps are a visual method of illustrating how different voices and perspectives can be included (and changed) in processes aiming to form an opinion (Hyerle, 1996; Hauger & Sjong, 2017). The use of this method emerged as important support (scaffolding) for the development of a more polyphonic practice with the SMART work.

The third story told in this chapter relates to how we developed our own, local research concept within the internal research group. The name given to this concept was *The Appreciative reflective team* (Hauger et al., 2018). We developed this concept to provide more opportunities for my colleagues (co-researchers) to become involved in the research. The idea behind the development of the concept was inspired by Norwegian professor and psychiatrist, Tom Andersen (1991).

I close this chapter by demonstrating how changes in how I performed the research also produced transformations in the way in which SMART work was understood and performed. I argue that a less dogmatic performance of the SMART upbringing development project was starting to emerge. My colleagues and I in the internal research group identified five ethical principles that we feel must play a dominant role in the change processes.

5.1 Monological Practice in Research and in the Smart Work

At the start of 2016, I had been working for the municipality for one year with responsibility for the implemented research. At that time, I had started to think of myself as an "insider" working together with other insiders (colleagues) on both the research and the ongoing development work. My main interest in the research at that point still related to the ongoing transformation process. I was pleasantly surprised by the scope and power of these processes. My initial reaction was, "Wow, how is this possible?".

Figure 5.1. The chronology of the research process; December 2015 – June 2017.

Upstart dialogic reflection in the day-to-day management of SMART upbringing

Transformation of cooperation in the central research group

Developing and performing Appreciative reflective team to enhance reflectivity and learning

Correcting monological practice in the planning process

Upstart use of polyphonic research methods in the central research group

December 2015   Spring 2016   Autumn 2016   November 2016   Spring 2017

The development work was described as the most comprehensive change process implemented since the municipality had been founded (Re municipality, 2017). The change process was initiated from ´the bottom´ in the professional services. The plans for the development of the project for SMART upbringing had also come about in an untraditional way. All the services in the

municipality with responsibility for children and adolescents had been involved in the AI-like process of developing the project plan (Re municipality, 2017). The project group received more than 500 proposals (Grejs, 2013). At that point in time, the project had major support within the services, and a large number of the employees and managers in the municipal services saw the project as meaningful and valuable (Grejs, 2013).

A summary of a questionnaire conducted by the municipality shows that the results were that "78% agree or fully agree that SMART upbringing has a positive impact on children and adolescents who struggle and have various challenges". Moreover, more than 50% of the employees and managers claimed that "they feel more committed to their work after the introduction of SMART upbringing" and that "a total of 70% feel that the pupils have improved their social skills and are performing better than before within the school's premises" (Grejs, 2013, p. 27).

The implementation of the research work had boosted my commitment to the initiated development project. I also felt that the way in which I performed the research during my first year as an employee of Re municipality (2015) helped reinforce the involvement of many of them in the research. With time, I began to pay attention to other stories narrated about the SMART upbringing development process: These stories showed that not all the municipal services found that the development work was a participatory process. One colleague in the central research group expressed this as follows:

> "The first meetings involving SMART started ten years ago. This got off to a rocky start. Initially, the development work was referred to as ART. We started out on the wrong footing. There was nothing about the process that was familiar. Our reaction was that this was something that only applied to the schools. The project seems to concern only a positive mindset. We struggled with the buzzwords. I heard people saying that it got more and more difficult, e.g. to explain that we were working with SMART in Re. What was I meant to say? That we don't work like that in our field? That we're not part of the process? It felt as if there was a gap between those who were working with SMART and those of us who weren't. This

also turned into a conflict for me as a manager. I chose to join the group of people who didn't understand... People were expected to take a stand in relation to the development project: 'Am I for or against SMART upbringing?' (Own reflection notes, 22 June 2018)

During an evaluation meeting for SMART upbringing in January 2017, one of the business managers in the municipality expressed how many employees felt that the development work was "mandatory" and that many were "fed up of the word SMART". The manager went on to say that "it's important for people to feel that there are many different positive methods of working" (citation from my own reflection notes, 6 January 2017).

By the end of 2015, I had started asking myself whether the research was helping promote a monological practice within the SMART work. The first time I put this concern into words was in a reflection note I wrote on 22 January 2016, as follows:

"Alvesson and Deetz (2009, p. 19) state that basing a development process on one specific perspective can easily lead to the use of rose-tinted glasses, where all the good things in life perfectly support each other. The researcher's job should be to counteract the dominance of prevailing ideologies, objectives, discourses etc. that shape this phenomenon. One relevant question to ask myself is: Is the research on SMART upbringing contributing to silencing critical voices and practices based on other ideals and values?"

Gergen (2014, p. 307) emphasises that *future forming research* should be accompanied by ethics and be moral, within the relational activities performed. Gergen (2014) also states that responsibility for the issue of morality should not be assigned to the researcher individually, but should be a common concern for the groups involved in the research. I, therefore, asked myself the question: How could we perform the research so that it promotes a collective responsibility for ethics and morality for both the research and the development work? McNamee writes (2020, p. 20) that this requires triggering an *ethical discursive potential in the research.* Below, I will explain what this means and how I started to explore how our research could help expand such potential.

5.2 How to Expand the Ethical Discursive Potential of the Research?

McNamee (2020) indicates that future forming research takes place as a collaboration with various actors to create a targeted future and generate valuable results. In her view, such research is ethical when it expands the number of discourses held, and which inspires co-researchers to commit to the research. Processes should be designed in ways that allow various views to be expressed (McNamee, 2020). This may help prevent hard (power-over) relationships from emerging in the research. Hersted et al. (2020, p. 8) use the term polyphony (inspired by Bakhtin, 1984) to describe research that aims to merge many different voices and perspectives during its process.

In the spring of 2016, we started exploring how research can be developed in a more polyphonic (and ethic-discursive) manner (Gergen, 1999). In the following, I will present how we designed and implemented these methods.

Dialogic reflection in the day-to-day management of the SMART upbringing project

In the late autumn of 2015, we started using tools for dialogic reflection during the day-to-day management of the SMART upbringing project. In this context, "we" refers to myself, my two colleagues Vidar Bugge-Hansen (SMART upbringing project manager) and Elisabeth Paulsen (head of the municipal services for children and adolescents). The method we utilised is described below (citation taken from my reflection journal dated 2 February 2016):

> *"On the days when all three of us work together (two to three times a week), we set aside some time for reflection. This may be at the start of the day. Typically, we discuss something that happened the day before, last week etc. as a starting point for the reflective dialogues. We may also allow for dialogic reflections immediately after or before an important meeting or at the end of a working day. The dialogues may be based on minor events, feelings and experiences that have not been processed, or may be used to reflect over what we want to happen."*

The basic model used for all these reflective processes is based on the following template:

1. Everyone had time to think and make notes in their personal logbooks about what was happening and in development in our practice. The time for thinking and making notes was around five minutes.

2. After that, one of us would lead the relational reflective processes. I choose to use the term "relational reflective process" because what is developed from the new insights gained from these reflective processes is not primarily a result of a cognitive process inside our heads, but is the result of knowledge generated by means of the dialogic processes between us. The dialogic processes take place via the use of a controlled round (even though there are only three of us) where we each (in turn) shared what we had written in our logbooks. We then allowed for a more open dialogue where we explore each other's stories and build upon what has been narrated. Typical examples of questions: What events were you involved in yesterday that you want to share with the rest of us? Were you surprised by any of the events that occurred? What events energised you? What events drained you of energy? We then start a more open dialogue where we explored each other's stories and built upon what had been narrated.

One important discovery I made when working with learning via these reflective dialogues was as follows (taken from my research notes dated 12 March 2016):

> *"I do not find it relevant to distinguish between who plays the role of researcher and who plays the role of practitioner. This structure allows us equal opportunities to report various issues that we can start to 'research'. Some of the issues on which we reflect relate to the individual's practice, while at other times we may reflect on our joint practice."*

This reflective method helped me to invite multiple views on what is of concern in the development work, and the way we performed this method promoted curiosity in what each person had to tell (McNamee, 2020).

During the spring of 2016, we also started to reflect on incidents that we felt drained our energy, meetings and development processes that were dominated by defensive attitudes, monologues and degenerative dynamics. I chose to introduce theories involving transformative dialogues as a resource to allow us to identify and put into words factors that drained "life" out of relationships, and as a tool to help us identify and put into words how (genuine) dialogic processes can be used to regenerate trust and the willingness to collaborate following conflicts. The concepts of antagonisation and antagonistic processes were important for us during this period (spring of 2016). These concepts originate from Gergen, McNamee and Barrett (2001) and their theories regarding transformative dialogues (see chapter two). The concept of antagonisation helped us develop an *awareness* of situations in which we meet other persons with monologues.

Below is an account of one such reflective meeting in which we (retrospectively) discovered that we as daily management of the SMART work had noticed that we met colleagues who had a different view than us with monological-thinking, e.g. denying these persons participating in the creation of meaning about how these change processes could be effective (Gergen et al.2004; Shotter, 2014). The example below originates from a process in which we had started the work on planning a major event for the SMART work (festival) for employees and managers working in the Re´s services for children and adolescents. We had prepared a proposal for the design of this event. The following quote is from my reflection journal dated 3 May 2016:

> *"Our proposed design for the SMART festival was presented to the management group for schools and kindergartens. Our proposed design for the conference was 'shelved'. One of my colleagues had attended this meeting and presented the proposal for the conference that we had developed. She explained that the concept 'was shattered'. I asked what had happened. My colleague explained how she felt that the meeting had 'shunned the proposal'.*
>
> *My colleague represented a feeling that the rest of us working on daily management of the project had at that time. The experience of 'losing'. Our proposal for the concept of the conference was based on 'participatory design'. This was what many of the persons at the*

meeting had reacted to. 'This is not what our employees want', they had said. My colleague

who had been at the meeting went on to say:

'I had to face the consequences of my own actions. This was a difficult thought process. How

can we achieve proper co-research and collaboration? It's so difficult when we have different

views of the world. If SMART upbringing is as good as we think it is, then we have to get

everyone to agree. I was tempted to argue or disagree. It's so easy to get annoyed. It's

difficult when others are sceptical, hard to keep an open mind."

Frimann et al. (2020, p. 37) write that research based on *future forming research* involves directing focus on what is being created in a situation. When dialogues are about to cross over to monologues, this can be detected and rectified (future forming) before it occurs. However, this can be difficult to achieve "in the moment".

I have experienced, by means of systematic reflection over the past year, that I (and my close colleagues) have improved our skills in detecting and rectifying situations where our meetings with others have been dominated by monologues. Of perhaps more importance, however, is that we started to think about how we could form meetings etc. during the development work (discourse) in order to increase the probability of differences of opinion, values and criticism being explored rather than countered.

We started exploring how to achieve this during the subsequent meetings scheduled to plan the event. We decided to start the next meeting with a directed conversation in which groups of two persons explore the requirements we have for the event. During this meeting, we decided to consciously explore and be curious about views that differed from our own. After the "new" meeting, we held a reflective discussion. In my reflection journal (28 May) after the meeting, I wrote:

Vidar asked: "What about this meeting? Why is this a good process?" He answered his own

question: "Now that we're planning to arrange this conference, there are a lot of voices to be

heard. It's a good idea to organise a part of the meeting into groups of two persons, who can

have a dialogue about the issues. I was a little surprised by the result," continued my

colleague. "At this meeting, things were calmer, and we were working constructively". Vidar added: "The main issue for us has been not to create antagonism."

I (Bjørn) thought to myself: The concept of antagonising processes is now being used in our discussions. We're now going to include all the voices. It's been important for me to figure out how to achieve this."

Further, I wrote in my journal (1 September 2016), once the festival event had been held, that we had managed to create a concept for the event that was better than the proposal that we (the project management) had developed – and that had been rejected at that time; I continued in my journal: "We are able to listen to differences of opinion and make them productive".

5.3 Transformation of Cooperation in the Central Research Group

When I started the research project with SMART upbringing, my aim was to carry out research by means of collaboration with colleagues. From spring 2015 to spring 2016, Vidar and Elisabeth were my key partners in this research project. In June 2016, we set up an internal research group of 12 persons. These colleagues were from different services of the municipality services and were to act as my co-researchers. This central research group met one full or half working day every month (until June 2016 - June 2017).

Marshall (2016, p. 8) writes that it can be difficult to establish an equal collaboration among co-researchers and that many have naive expectations as to what this entails. The participants in such a collaboration are normally invited based on differing agendas. One such agenda maybe (as in this case) that the initiating researcher aims to write a doctoral thesis about the research. But ´participation´ is potentially a normative ideal to develop mutual commitment on equal terms. The persons invited to join the internal research group had a common interest in playing a part in developing knowledge about the on-going development work for SMART upbringing. However,

because I planned to write a thesis about the research, it seemed natural to me that my research interests had priority.

During the initial meetings with this research group of persons, I therefore spent time on presenting my views on research and how I thought the research should be organised. This in itself is not incorrect, but it does have an impact on power relations in the group; the relationships we established and how we got on together in the project. The way research was conducted in the group carrying out the research collaboration was also a co-construction made by the group; a co-construction of our roles, our relationships and how we moved on. The way in which research is conducted in this group can therefore also be seen as an ethical issue involving the type of social life we are invited to help create. A reflection note that I wrote in October 2016 contains the following:

> *"In the course of the autumn, I'd started growing curious about how I could draw on more voices and a greater diversity of perspectives in the work to reinforce the transformative change processes. I was also growing increasingly curious about how the research could, to a greater extent, help highlight and strengthen the diversity of uplifting new practices being developed by my colleagues in the group. I am also starting to critically question the position I had assumed in the internal group as a person of authority when it came to knowledge about the research. I planned the meetings of the research group, and my interests in the work to develop the research had been predominant."* (Own reflection notes, 9 October 2016)

The idea of making research and development processes more inclusive and generative by including more voices and perspectives is inspired by social constructionism (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). It is assumed that singular study processes based on one understanding of reality will exclude fellowship, theories and practices that are based on other understandings (Law, 2004). The alternative to singularity is polyphony (Bakhtin, 1981). One of the challenges I faced was how to make concepts such as polyphony, genuine dialogue and discursive reflection understandable and practical to use for this development process (Bakhtin, 1981; McNamee, 2020; Shotter, 2014).

Research based on social constructionism normally takes place by means of relational processes based on words, but also drawing upon physical artefacts (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). During the initial phase of the research, I had explored with how visualisation of words on a piece of paper and developing simple graphic figures affect the processes involved in forming an opinion. From my studies of design-related theories, I had learnt that visualisation could be used to make complex ideas easier to communicate (Brown, 2009).

Table 5.1 Overview of the three designed "polyphonic methods" used on reflections.

Developed methods for dialogic reflection	Characteristics of the method	Application (2015-2020)
Method for dialogic reflection	Combines writing in research journals with reflexive dialogues.	Integrated as a part of the day-to-day management of SMART upbringing. (Initially implemented in the late autumn of 2015 and utilised continuously throughout 2016).
Circle maps	Combines text entered in a drawn figure (circle map and table) with controlled reflexive dialogic (research) processes in groups. Designed procedure to use different "voice" and differences of opinions as a productive resource for learning. Method for polyphonic reflection.	Circle maps first implemented by the central research group (in September 2016). Used regularly as a tool for reflection in many of the services' practices (from the spring of 2017), and utilised continuously by the development work (from spring 2017- 2020).
Appreciative reflecting team	Concept for polyphonic knowledge development in our central research group.	The method was developed by means of systematic exploration in the central research group over a period of two years (2017-2018).

I had found the concept of polyphony slightly difficult to comprehend. In other words, the concept (up to the present date) had been a bit "slippery" for me. In the autumn of 2016, however, I ´discovered´ the visual method of using a circle map (Hyerle, 1996) and found that this was a good

way to present the ideas that are fundamental to polyphonic studies; that it is possible to draw upon a wide range of discourses and perspectives during a study, that all voices must be heard and that learning dialogues between the persons involved do feature genuine dialogue. The circle map can be used to visualise these ideas.

Using the Circle Map Method

The first time I used the circle map method during the research was at a meeting of researchers in October 2016. Before going on to illustrate how I used this method at the meeting and what we learned from it, I would like to briefly present the method itself. The circle map is (also) a physical artefact that is drawn on a sheet or poster (see figure 5.2 below). This method was utilised in part to gain experience (and training) in the use of the circle map method in order to allow the inclusion of more voices and perspectives in the development work, and in part to develop new and more opportune (generative) descriptions of the ongoing development work. One important part of the method is the actual drawing of the map, as this can help develop a tactile understanding of this (polyphonic) way of working with learning. I, therefore, chose to emphasise that it was important for the person using the method to draw the circle maps him/herself.

My Performance of the Method

McNamee and Hosking (2012, p. 46) write that no methods have meaning "in and of themselves". The question is how we practice the method. Below is a description of my constructed understanding of the method, followed by a presentation of how we performed it.

Figure 5.2 Graphic illustration of how the circle map can be used to "give a voice" to a diversity of voices and perspectives.
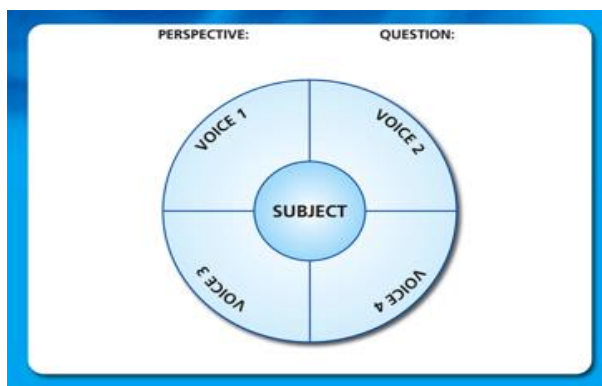
I described my understanding of the method in a reflection note dated 28 September 2016, prior to the meeting of researchers, including the following:

> *The ´map´ consists of an outer frame and two circles (see figure 5.2). The frame in a circle map is used to symbolise that all studies have a context. When using this method for a study, we can point to the frame and ask: What type of context provides the frame for the study? On what assumptions have we based the choice to perform the study according to this method? Why are we asking these questions? What if we ask other questions? Why do we choose this perspective? What if we choose a different perspective?*
>
> *The frame can be used actively throughout a study: We can decide to change perspective, such as switching between a "positive" or "critical lens"; between "my" and "your" perspective. The questions can also be constantly changed. When using a circle map, the participants can be invited to actively change their perspective and questions.*
>
> *The innermost circle in the "map" is used to define the focus point for our studies. The focus point can also be established in other ways. The choice of focus can (and should) also be*

155

subject to dialogue. When holding meetings with our research group, for example, we can
start the meeting by asking an open question: What do you need to focus on now? Or: What is
it important for us to focus on now? Or: If we asked the children, what do you think they
would want us to focus on?

The space between the outer and inner circle of the "map" is used to write down the answers
from the studies as keywords. Imagine a situation where we have decided that we want to
focus on "dialogue" during a meeting. We want to expand our understanding of what
dialogues may be, and explore new opportunities to promote the use of dialogues in our own
practice. We write the word "dialogue" in the inner circle. We then go on to study this, and
each individual has to think about how "I" understand the word. The answers (keywords) are
written in the space between the outer and inner circle. The outer circle and frame field
outside can also be divided into several "slices of pie", where we can write down what we
learn from assuming the perspectives of others in the meeting and learning from their
experiences. We then write down, in the frame field, who owns the understanding of the word,
or in other words, the perspective. One of the "slices of pie" is, as a rule, your own original
perspective. (Own reflection notes, 28 September 2016)

First Trial in the Research Group

The first time I adopted Circle Maps as a research method in the ongoing development work was at a
meeting of the research group in September 2016. My presentation of the method is described in a
reflection note I wrote the day after the meeting, in October 2016:

"I drew the circle map on a large flip chart and started with the frame. I explained the
purpose of the frame, that it is there to remind us that all opinions have to be understood in
light of the historical context in which they have developed. I went on to explain that we have
to write the subject of the research in the innermost circle.

The question I had chosen to test the method was: What is SMART upbringing? The idea was
that instead of assuming that we all had a common understanding of the development work

we had started, everyone was invited to adopt a position in discussions with others that prevented us from representing ourselves in a 'one-dimensional manner'. I then provided a brief explanation of the process, approximately as follows:

The first part of the process to use circle maps involves putting into words what we feel is important and meaningful and writing this on our "slice of pie" in the circle map. The next stage of the process involves making these opinions visible by sharing our notes with another colleague.

All the researchers worked for several minutes independently before responding. After three to four minutes of individual work, my research colleagues formed groups of two and three.

After everyone had shared their circle maps with each other, we carried out a brief plenary discussion after all the responses from the groups had been entered on a joint circle map drawn on a flip chart. The process of summing up the new understanding was performed by a co-researcher.

One by one, the researchers presented their responses to the question by showing and elaborating on the keywords they had written in their circle map. Subsequently, the person listening to the presentation had to provide a response as to what they felt was of value and what could be used to expand their own understanding. These new elements of opinion were then written down as keywords in a new "slice of the pie" in their own circle map, with the name of the person who had presented it to them in the frame field. (Own reflection notes, 14 October 2016)

Photograph 5.1 I took this photograph on 13 October 2016 of the researchers in the internal research group, sitting in groups of two to three and exploring each other's opinions of the development work by using circle maps.

The work involved in exploring and formulating new understandings of the implemented development work via circle maps took place via two new processes. The processes were based on three new questions:

1. In your assessment, what was the typical method of working with SMART upbringing before?

2. In your assessment, what are the features of *the new* method of working with SMART upbringing?

3. If you were to highlight aspects of the SMART upbringing development process, as it is today, that would be of major significance for future positive development, what would these be?

I assumed that changes had taken place (transformations) in the way we worked with development after we had started on the research. This assumption, and the questions asked, will in themselves affect the kinds of opinions formulated via our conversations. The answers to questions 1 and 2 from the groups were written in the text boxes (5.1 and 5.2) below. When summarising (the construction) of what we had co-created that were typical opinions of the previous way we worked

with SMART upbringing (before the research started), one response was that the development work had a strong "social focus". Another response from the research group was that the new methods of working with SMART upbringing were characterised by *appreciation* and that my co-researchers felt they were part of a development process with an emphasis on being "positive role models".

The textbox 5.1 shows that two theories - AI and ART –was highly profiled during the first period working with SMART upbringing. The Text Box (5.1) also describes a development process in the first period with a focus on "the positive", demanding a response, and that way the change work was performed in this period generated opposition.

Text Box 5.1 The internal research group's responses to the question: What are the features of the new method of working with SMART upbringing? Unprioritised list of all responses from the groups.

Social focus. Emphasis on helping those children who are struggling.

Looking for other solutions.

Combines ART and AI. ART is strongest.

We work outside the normal box.

Reflection, creativity and openness.

The work is dominated by appreciation and perseverance.

Emphasis on producing stories of success, boasting.

We practiced praise and specific feedback.

Focus on the positive.

Solutions. Desire for answers.

By acting as role models.

Strong method focus. Structure and methods more closed

Good frames. Space and time

Big words, uncomfortable frustration.

The SMART work also meets opposition.

In the descriptions (construction) of the features of the new working method, a summary shows that the new features are that the development work focuses on preventing antagonisation, placing more emphasis on processes and understanding context. When summarising new processes, *collaboration* and *relations* are highlighted as two new qualities we want to characterise the work.

The summary of the discussion on how the SMART upbringing development process was performed in the first-period shows (textbox 5.1) shows that processes "and methods are closed. The constructed meaning was that the change work was built on a ´fixed notion of procedures´ and a few discursive options (McNamee & Hosking, 2012; McNamee, 2020).

In the descriptions (construction) of the features of the new ways of working with change based on SMART, a summary (textbox 5.2) shows that the new features are that the development work focuses on preventing antagonization, placing more emphasis on processes and understanding context. Textbox 5.2 shows that *collaboration* and *relations* are highlighted as two new qualities that characterize the work as it is today.

Text Box 5.2 The central research group's unprioritised responses to the question: If you were to highlight aspects of the SMART upbringing development process, as it is today, that will be of major significance for future positive development, what would these be?

Focus on how the change processes based on SMART upbringing is performed.

Drawing attention on how to prevent antagonisation between the people and services involved in the SMART upbringing development process.

Emphasis on the importance micro situations can have in creating changes.

Emphasis on contextualisation of development work

Focus more on the strengths of the people and services involved/ strength-based work/characteristics of the SMART upbringing development process.

Work characterised by appreciation and collaboration among involved people and services involved in SMART upbringing development process.

Focus on building relationships among the involved people in SMART upbringing development process.

More emphasis on the importance of involving management in the municipality/ services

Emphasis on experience sharing of new ideas, methods and practices developed by the services/ people involved in the SMART upbringing development process.

In my reflection note written after this meeting (14 October 2016), I wrote the following:

"*At that point in time, I felt that the method circle map was very suitable in processes where the purpose is to formulate new opinions together. Borrowing a concept from Law (2005, p. 156), I have the feeling that we are weaving new opinions and a new understanding of the ongoing development work by using the circle maps. I also feel that the studies triggered a keen commitment among my colleagues in the central research group.*"

However, of equal importance: "I experienced that the circle map could be used to make (for me) the abstract concept of polyphonic studies practical and specific." (Own reflection notes, 14 October 2016).

In my (current) assessment, a circle map can be used in many of the phases of a collaborative research process. Further on in this chapter, I will illustrate how a circle map has been utilised to involve an "audience" (my co-researchers in the central research group etc.) in processes to assess and formulate new opinions regarding knowledge contributed by the implemented research.

5.4 The Appreciative Reflective Team Method

In the autumn of 2017, I had an idea of how the research could be developed in a way that opened the door to allow all my colleagues (11) in the central research group (co-researchers) to also enter the role of researcher in their own practice. The method, named *Appreciative reflective team*, was developed and implemented in our research practice over a period of more than two years (January 2017 to June 2019). Our first description of the method is as follows (Hauger, Arnesen, Carlsen, Feyling, Bugge-Hansen, Kaldager, Karlsen, Linnestad, Paulsen, Prynmo & Scmidt 2018, p. 6):

"The Appreciative reflective team method originates in the work of Norwegian psychiatrist Tom Andersen (1991). The method promotes a way of learning whereby no one person's experiences or opinions are seen as more important than others. We chose to base our work

on Andersen's method in order to promote a democratic and equal method of developing knowledge from everyone's practice. The objective has been to develop a form of research-based knowledge known as reflected knowledge (Alvesson & Deetz, 2009). In brief, the process is as follows: A member of the research group selects a story from a practice (from the SMART upbringing development work) that he/she wants to narrate. The practice story is then narrated to the research group. Once the story has been narrated, the group carries out a structured reflective team process. After this meeting, the storyteller writes a reflection note in which he/she summarises any new insight developed by means of the reflective team process. This note is then subject to new reflective processes in the research group. It is this <u>*entire*</u> *process we have decided to name Appreciative reflective team."*

I had the idea of developing the *Appreciative reflective team* method when at a research seminar organised by the Taos Institute and Vrije University (VUB) in September 2016. The situation was as follows: During the seminar held for PhD students, all the students were assigned the task of presenting their research ideas. Each student had some time to prepare the presentation. We then held a presentation for the other students and our research supervisors. This was followed by a reflective team process. I realised that the professors taking part joined in the dialogic processes with myself and the other students on an equal footing, and this had a strong impression on me. It was, in many ways, a profound discovery.

On returning home from the seminar, I started to reflect on how we could implement a variant of the reflective team as a method to counteract hierarchy and promote dialogue-based development of "my" research. The actually used reflective team method can be traced back to the work of Norwegian psychiatrist Tom Andersen (1991), and is based on the social constructionist assumption that we do not have access to an objective reality. The method was originally used in therapy, aiming to identify solutions to the patient's problems without the therapist having to assume the role of

expert. In more recent years, reflective teams have also been used as a research method within relational research (Hersted & Frimann, 2020).

In the concept we developed, the reflective team process was only one of the elements used within the research process (Hauger et al., 2018). As a starting point for the concept, every member of our local research group would carry out a systematic, inquiry-based development of their own practice. During meetings of the research group, everyone is allowed to present and receive feedback on (minimum) one area of practice under development.

The choice of practice to be presented is made three to four weeks before we explore the generative opportunities within the experiences presented. This is carried out as a reflective team process during a meeting of the central research group.

1. Colleagues, in turn, choose what they wanted the research group paying attention to as emergent new practice in working with SMART upbringing in their daily work/ in their service.

2. Around three hours are allocated in a meeting to carry out a reflective team process, based on the (new) practice presented by one of the colleagues in the group

3. Once the reflective process has been completed, the person who has carried out a reflective process prepares a reflection note based on his or her own experiences from practice.

4. This reflection note is presented to the research group and lays the foundations for a new (around 30 minutes) reflective process.

5. The processes are repeated until everyone in the group has completed the process.

Figure 5.3 Graphic illustration showing the position of the participants during the first part of the reflection process. The red circle marks the physical position of the storyteller. The other participants (research leaders in green, co-researchers in grey) sit in a semicircle listening to the storyteller's story

Over the process of 12 meetings, every member of our research group completed this process (stages 1-5). The others have had the opportunity to explore and co-create new knowledge about the practice under development by our co-researchers. During this period, everyone has also (several times) played the role of leaders of the reflective team processes.

As an insight into the performance of this research, I have chosen to include a personal account from the start-up of a reflective team process (step 2 above). This presentation originates from a note I wrote after a meeting of the internal research group in June 2018.

> *"It was one of the hottest summer days in June. We had scheduled a new meeting of the internal research group, to be held in a cabin in an idyllic location by the sea. The water was sparkling, and the summer holidays were approaching. We started the day with a cup of*

coffee, sitting outside in the warm sun. There isn't even a breath of wind. The only thing to remind us that we're at a meeting is a flip chart we've brought with us. We rig up the flip chart beside a table outdoors, along with some chairs and two stools. This is our meeting room. The most important issue for this meeting is to explore the experiences of a colleague from her practice. This has become a highlight of our research meetings. We're all looking forward to hearing what she has to say. Today, it's Anne Gry's turn to share her experiences with us. Anne Gry is one of the initiators and drivers of the development work. She's had this role since 2005. At that time, she was vice-principal at the Kirkevoll school, where the development work had started. Now, she is the principal at a different primary school in the municipality.

None of us knew what kind of practice story she was going to tell us. The only thing that is certain is that we are to co-create knowledge from her practice during this meeting. We will achieve this by means of a reflective team process. Moreover, we've decided who is to chair the research processes during the meeting. We all take turns to do this. Today, Vidar and Anita have taken responsibility for chairing the process. When the time comes, they will take over responsibility for the meeting. Anne Gry is introduced, warmly. We all clap after she has been introduced. She then tells us about the experiences she wants to share with us. Her story is all about what she has achieved with her personnel at the school where she has been the principal for the past two years.

Below is a photograph illustrating how we worked with the reflective process that day. I took the photograph after Anne Gry had finished her presentation, showing a situation where she was interviewed by the two research colleagues who were responsible for the meeting. I want to include this photograph because it is an expressive illustration of how we (typically) work together during this type of process. As you can see, everyone is active but in slightly different ways. The colleagues in the background of the photograph (outer circle) are eagerly making notes of what is being said. Perhaps they have identified an idea about something they want to apply to their own practice, or something they learn about what has

been said? They know that they will be asked to share their thoughts about what they have

heard later on. (Own reflection notes, 27 June 2016).

Photograph 5.2 taken in June 2018 during a meeting of the ´central research group´ performing the method *Appreciative reflective team*.

When we started testing the reflective team method in our internal research group, I had no idea how many opportunities this would provide for developing the research in an egalitarian manner, and for the development of a fellowship where everyone was happy.

New Constructed Roles

The use of reflective teams as a way to facilitate active participation of fellow researchers in a research process has also been adopted by a number of other researchers in recent years (Hersted & Frimann, 2020). We have decided to construct three different roles in the work on planning and executing the research process. These are *storyteller*, *research leader* and *co-researcher* (Hauger et al., 2018).

Storyteller is a role we constructed for the person who prepares and presents their experiences from practice at the internal research meeting. The use of the word "storyteller" is to remind each

other to use everyday language when sharing experiences, and that stories communicate knowledge that is situational and contextual. Telling stories is also a way of conveying knowledge that affects feelings and promotes a desire among us to get involved in each other's lives.

The storyteller had a special task both ahead of the research meeting (where we planned to carry out a reflective team process), during the meeting and after the meeting. Prior to the meeting, the storyteller had to decide what he or she wanted to focus on in their practice (and thus in the research). This also required thinking about how to present the story and how to allow the other participants to learn from the story. Some chose to supplement the story with physical or digital photographs. The following is a quote from the reflection note one of the colleagues (Anne Gry Kaldager) prepared after having played the role of "storyteller":

> *"I was looking forwards to the presentation, felt confident and happy to show what we have done together over a period of two years at Røråstoppen school. It was a powerful experience to listen to their reflections on my own work and to see how positive and curious the others were – to hear their interest and what aspects of my work they find valuable. It felt like a major recognition – greater than I can put into words."* (Anne Grys reflection note prepared after the research meeting on 14th June 2017).

By drawing on a language of action research, we can claim that entering the role of storyteller is similar to entering the role of first-person action researcher, in which each person creates their version of how their own practice can be developed as a lasting experiment (Marshall, 2017). In Irene's reflection note, she explains what is was like to be in this role:

> *"During preparations, I was more aware than usual of what the kindergarten staff and I were doing. Our practice is not made up of major processes, but numerous small elements that come together. It's good also to be aware of what I'm doing as a manager, what I facilitate, the role played by the rest of the managers and personnel, and what is performed with the children and parents on a daily basis. It generates new reflections and, not least, pride in the*

work conducted every day in the kindergarten. I was nervous about presenting this to the rest of the researchers, but at the same time, it was good to talk about the great work taking place in my kindergarten, among myself and my colleagues. It was a good feeling to stand there and talk about material you own. It's probably only now that I understand how I can specifically contribute in a group of researchers" (Irene Linnestad's reflection note after the research meeting on 27 April 2017)

A reflective team process starts with the storyteller sharing their story based on their own practice, which is to be explored (20 minutes). Subsequently, the storyteller is interviewed. After the interview, the storyteller listens to his/her colleagues' reflections about what they have learned from the storytelling and interview. A discussion then takes place with all the colleagues to summarise what new knowledge has been developed from the research process.

The research leader is another role that we constructed (Hauger et al., 2018). The research leaders (there were always two at a time) were assigned the task of leading the reflective processes. This involved setting up the room where the team processes were held; placing chairs in a circle, making sure the storyteller and the new practice being spoken about were honoured, preparing and carrying out an appreciative interview with the storyteller and chairing the reflective processes. The role of research leader had many similarities with the position I had held in relation to the research collaboration up to that point. I had prepared the meetings, chaired the processes in which we explored each other's experiences and the work on developing knowledge from the implemented research processes. These tasks were now distributed to others. The first time we carried out a reflective team process, I had developed a proposal for how to perform the roles of storyteller and research leader. Subsequently, all the members of the team have taken turns in the role of research leader. I have not played this role more frequently than the other colleagues in the group during this period.

The third role we constructed was that of *co-researcher* (Hauger et al., 2018). The co-researchers were those colleagues who did not have the role of storyteller or research leader at a

meeting. The co-researcher's role was to actively contribute to the work on formulating new knowledge from the stories told and from the interviews. In figures 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5, we have created a graphic illustration, which we have used as a visual support for the reflective processes. The red circle represents the storyteller. The green (two) circles show the position of the research leaders in the process. The grey "round shapes" represent the co-researchers.

However, during the initial stages of the reflective process, the role of co-researcher involves actively listening to what is being narrated. One of the co-researchers (Vidar) prepared a memorandum in which he notes his observations when playing the role of listener and his reflections on the relevance of what he has heard in the "inner circle" to his own practice:

Figure 5.4 Graphical illustration showing the position of participants during the second part of the reflective process. The storyteller sits in the inner circle (red circle) with the research leaders (green circle). The co-researchers sit in a semicircle and listen to the dialogue in the inner circle.

"It's happening here and now. How do I act when I meet you? Small meetings with others can have a massive impact and major ripple effects. For me, the importance of meta-reflection

emerges as a significant force. Our ability to reflect on our own and joint practice with
SMART as a compass is of great importance for the ability to build capacity. It allows each of
us the opportunity to develop their own SMART practice, so that we do not copy each other.
It's not satisfactory just to copy someone." (Hauger et al., 2018, p. 19)

After the meeting, the storyteller writes a set of minutes. These are distributed to the
colleagues in the research group and are subject to a brief reflective process at the next meeting.

We created a visual (graphic) support (scaffold) to highlight and provide an overview of the
reflective team process (figures 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5). These graphic figures show the different roles to be
assumed and how the participants in the different roles are seated in relation to each other during the
reflective process. This type of support can help improve understanding of how such a process can be
executed, and to enable discussions of how changing perspectives and voices can be used when
developing knowledge. The movement between the "inner" and "outer" circles is also to help create a
tactile understanding of the polyphonic method of learning.

Lundby (2005) writes that reflective teams can be understood as an honouring practice. As
such, we have chosen to refer to our method as *Appreciative reflective team*. Based on a social
constructionism perspective, appreciative conduct is valued as it provides participants with resources,
they can use to establish contact with each other and for collaboration and mutual learning (Hosking
& McNamee, 2006). Appreciation involves trying to understand other persons on their own premises.
It involves mutually assuming a position where you want to understand the opinions of others, their
values and morality, without having to agree with them. When all persons in a group adopt such an
appreciative basic attitude, they will be able to learn from and collaborate with each other, even if
they disagree.

Transformations of SMART Work Through the Research

The way in which the internal research group adopted the Appreciate reflective team method can be
seen as a facilitated process in which we helped each other change positions in relation to our own
and others' experiences. Each co-researcher was responsible for identifying aspects of their own

practice they wanted to explore and develop. A number of my colleagues decided to present and reflect on their practice as managers and how this role was transforming. Other colleagues invited us to explore their experiences of developing new concepts, tools and methods for SMART work.

I would argue that the way in which we practised the Appreciate reflective team method helped expand the scope for involvement by my co-researchers in the research project. Below are a few examples to illustrate this. The subjects my colleagues chose to explore were very diverse. Some chose to focus on how their own management practice was developing and changing, others wanted to involve us in dialogues about the experiences of colleagues when testing new forms of cooperation with children, adolescents and their parents in their work with children and adolescents. Several of my colleagues invited us to reflect on more personal life stories: One colleague, for example, chose to share his experiences and what he had learned from living with a life-threatening illness.

All the stories involve the individual's practice or life experiences. There were no rules governing what kind of experience or practice we deemed relevant to the research and the on-going development work. This was left to the individual (storyteller) to decide. As such, it was easier for my co-researchers to bring in their interest, and their expertise, into this research project (McNamee, 2020).

Figure 5.5. Graphical illustration showing the position of participants during the third part of the reflective process. The research leaders (green circle) sit in the inner circle with the co-researchers, and discuss what they have heard. The storyteller (red) sits in the "outer circle" and listens to the dialogue.

There were no rules as to how my colleagues had to report about their practice (or lives). All my colleagues chose to use stories as the main method of sharing experiences. However, most stories were accompanied by photographs, graphic illustrations or drawings (created by themselves or by others).

It is increasingly evident that the new ways in which we developed collaboration for the research also helped transform our understanding of the SMART upbringing development work and how this development work was performed. Below are a few examples: Over time, during the research work, we discovered a new manner of interacting that opened the door to numerous ways in which the development work could be useful, and the type of practice that could be relevant in (better) creating environments for children and adolescents, where everyone is happy. Using Appreciative reflective team made it also easier to try out new experiences on a reflexive basis (Frimann et al., 2020).

My colleagues rapidly introduced this new (more) polyphonic method of SMART work in their services and development work. Elements taken from the Appreciative reflective team method were implemented in the networks at all network meetings for the after-school care scheme from the autumn of 2017. One colleague from the research group received support to implement a variant of this method in a major development project to reinforce playing as a practice in municipal kindergartens (see photograph 5.3 below).

Photograph 5.3 I took this photograph during a meeting of all the employees in the municipal kindergartens in Re municipality in August 2018. A reflective team process had been prepared for 24 participants. The chairs in the middle were used by three storytellers and two researchers from the kindergartens

Another research colleague explained how she used polyphonic processes to trigger commitment for the SMART work among her colleagues who worked in the community nurse organisation.

This was the same organisation where it was felt that SMART was forced upon them and seen by then as not that relevant only a few years ago. The process of prioritising ethics in the research also

started to impact how we understood, talked about and performed the rest of the SMART upbringing development work. I describe this in more detail below.

5.5 Prioritising Ethics and Values During the Development Work

In his article on *future forming research* (FFR), Gergen (2014) points out that the issue of ethics and moral choices is transformed into an issue of the researcher's individual decisions within conventional research. For research that involves changing the society of which the research is a part, the issue of moral choices and ethics should be a *common* concern. The introduction of the Appreciative reflective team method for research leads to the distribution of the (ethical) responsibility we have for each other in the group of researchers – so that each member experiences appreciation of the experiences they choose to share, their views and perspectives.

> *One of the colleagues in the internal research group summarised as follows: "We've built this research fellowship with generosity, security and love". As we were discussing this, he added a fourth word. Openness. I then asked him to elaborate on one of the words he had chosen. He chose to talk about security. He explained how he had established close relationships with us as individuals and as a group. "As we've been working with the Appreciative reflective team method, the stories have grown more and more personal".* (Own reflection notes, 28 June 2019)

The question I asked myself was how we could make the issue of ethics a collective concern for the numerous groups of people involved in the ongoing development processes.

I conceived the idea of how ethics could be made into a collective concern via dialogues with colleagues, reading other texts (theory) and writing my own texts during this period. In the autumn of 2015, I wrote a note reflecting on the major importance of the development of tools in this development work (Hauger, 2015). The development of the note was inspired by theories from Senge and Scharmer (2006), indicating that developing tools are essential for creating transformative

changes in major social systems. If you want people to think differently, give them a tool (Senge &

Scharmer, 2006, p. 198). In the same article, Senge and Scharmer (2006) created a simple model

showing how deep (transformative) changes can take place by moving from adopting new theories

(perspective), via the development of new tools (mediating artefacts), to develop a new practice. The

question that I started asking myself was: What if ethics inform the kind of theories we shall use and

what kind of tools we should develop?

Leading up to the spring of 2016, SMART upbringing had been described as a development

project informed by a few new theories; Aggression Replacement Theory (ART) and Appreciative

Inquiry (AI). The innovative combination and use of these theories in the local services for children

and adolescents have informed the development of a number of new tools. The assumption was that

the use of these tools would reshape practice in these services in the required direction.

If we only prioritised a few theories, it would be more difficult to include colleagues who

wanted to draw upon other theories or tools in their work (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). We,

therefore, had the idea of reshaping Senge and Scharmer's (2008) model by prioritising ethics and

values (rather than theory) in our development model.

When I say "we" here, I am referring to myself and my colleague, Vidar Bugge-Hansen. We

needed to communicate our understanding of SMART upbringing and how this development work is

performed for an educational film we planned to make about SMART. I drew the "Senge-Scharmer

model" on a flip chart and started to reflect on the underlying values and ethics that are the

foundations for the SMART work. "What if we express it like this," my colleague Vidar said: "The

SMART work is based on appreciation; participation, relations-orientation and a resource-oriented

perspective on humanity (focus on strengths)."

We decided to name the model we developed together "the compass" (Hauger and Bugge-

Hansen, 2018). The compass is a metaphor from shipping. When navigating unknown waters, the

crew needs a tool to help them maintain their course towards the destination. Our compass consists of

five ethical principles. These inform us of how we should behave when collaborating with others (drawn as the needle in a compass) as we move towards a future objective.

Figure 5.6 The SMART compass. From Bugge-Hansen and Hauger (2018).
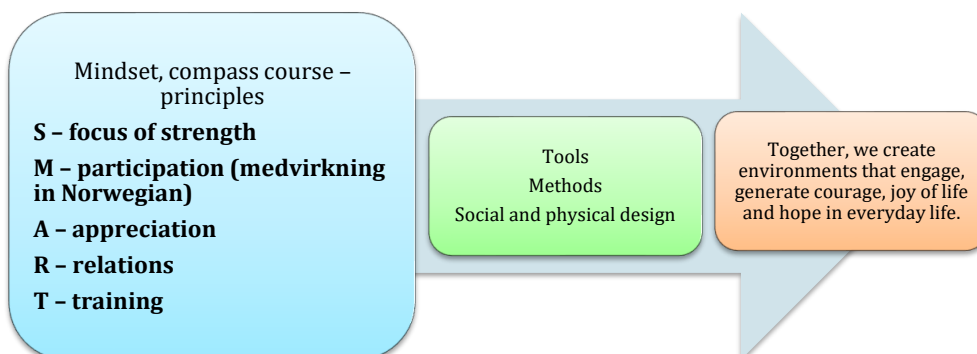
The ethical principles in the "compass" model have priority (ref. the box on the left in figure

5.2) when working to achieve a future objective.

Text Box 5.3 The five ethical principles that form the foundations for SMART work.

From Bugge-Hansen and Hauger (2018).

Strength-based mindset. The words we use to describe each other draw attention to certain aspects of our personalities. We would, for example, have completely different views of one child if one person says that he is tiresome and restless, but another person describes the same child as full of energy and creativity. Our behaviour towards that child will differ depending on the image we have of him. The SMART language helps create new truths about each other. This focus of strength creates engagement and good relationships.

Participation is about having a cooperative attitude. It's not about changing other people, but rather how we can work together to create improvements for everyone involved. Positive, well-meaning advice can often fall on rocky ground or result in opposition, while positive questions can result in reflection and well-reflected decisions. If we are to take participation seriously, we have to allow all voices to be heard.

Appreciation must be experienced by EVERYONE. It is of major importance to be viewed from a positive perspective and be told in words and body language that you are of value. These are micro-skills that can generate upwards or downwards spirals in relations and in the lives of those you are in contact with. Disagreement and different understandings are a source of progress and reflection. By trying to step into another person's shoes and understand their thoughts and how they see the world, you will be able to achieve appreciation and good relations in such situations. There's always something you can learn from others.

Relations have centre stage. Relations involve what takes place between people. When people are together, relations emerge, but the need to feel secure is also present. We often seek out the

familiar, where we feel safe. By allowing relations to take centre stage, we provide the opportunity for everyone to get to know and feel secure in the company of all the other persons in a group. The alternative is a group of people where "we" and "they" relations are dominant, and where cliques and gangs form. When this happens, some of the group members will be inside, while others will be on the outside. Relations must be controlled so that everyone can experience social support, participation and the development of a strong network. With SMART upbringing, we focus on creating relations that feature warmth, joy and commitment.

Training is essential if we are to be able to follow the course on the compass. If we are to

create lasting changes, children, adolescents and adults must train individually and together. Training needs to be repeated frequently and therefore requires a system. We need both basic training and endurance training. One important part of the training is also being allowed to make mistakes and learning from them. We can learn a lot from this. If we view SMART as a compass course, then making mistakes means that we sometimes move off course or have to adapt our course to the ground we are covering. Our objective, hope and dream is that children, adolescents and parents train and work consciously in order to follow the SMART compass course, so that a spark is lit, and the strengths and resources found within children and adolescents are triggered – **training**.

The term *principles* are derived from Latin and can be understood as a set of guidelines you want to follow. Stamps and Lipnack (2004) argue that principles emerge from the repetitive application of theory in practice. Whitney (2008) argues that in order to create a shift from mechanical to life-affirming organisations, a language is needed for how such organisations can be designed. Whitney (2008, p. 340) writes:

> *"The dominant pattern of interaction and relatedness in most organizations today is defined by criticism. [...] The result can be devastating – to the confidence of employees and their willingness to take the risks needed for innovation and integrity within the organization" (Whitney, 2008, p. 340). "Appreciation – valuing of ideas, skills and aspirations – can have just the opposite effect."*

Whitney also highlights the development of relations and the development of relational processes as important for the development of vital organisations. "Relationship refers to the design of relationship among people, and among groups and nature" (Whitney, 2008, p. 357).

In our list of principles, we have chosen to highlight the focus on strength as a separate principle. Historically, organisations have used people to achieve their goals (Whitney, 2008). The

principle involving strengths shifts the attention to the inherent resources that all people have and how these can be cultivated.

By drawing upon language from relational social constructionism, I would argue that these principles lay the foundations for our relational ethics. Our constructed principles shall indicate what we can do to create *generosity* for the people we want to involve in development work and research (Cameron, 2003).

Text Box 5.4 My research colleague Are Thorkildsen's account of his experiences with SMART. Extract from his reflection note from November 2018.

__My meeting with SMART.__ A year and a half ago (spring 2017, my comment), on the way to a football training session with Henrik, the conversation turned to SMART. I said that I was sceptical about the mindset itself, especially the part that was about social (up)construction and positive psychology, where the focus on reality is viewed using a positive lens, and not a clear and clean lens. I was also sceptical about AI and the construction of future images and fictional dreams. If I had learned anything over the past four years with illness, it was to focus on what is close and present, approach it as it is and try to accept and then let go of the things I couldn't do anything about. Don't dream about things in the future, about something I probably wouldn't get to experience, as life is fragile and can cheat you unexpectedly with new trials, so that you end up disappointed. Focus on the small jobs I can actually do something about. Here and now. Taking tiny steps. So, I don't intend to add anything extra or take anything away, push it away or under a carpet. I choose to see it as it is, as best I can, with curiosity and with the mindset of a novice, and with a decisive type of non-judgmental attitude. This includes a completely open and honest approach, featuring acceptance 'for things as they are', showing patience and finally letting go of what I observe and get attached to (rather than rejecting or attracting), having confidence in myself, my relations and the world.

__Observation.__ At the same time, I was willing to give SMART a chance. Henrik gave me the opportunity to observe SMART upbringing. I met people who gave me a warm welcome. After four years out of work, it was good to meet an environment where I actually felt appreciated, for who I am and my situation. In addition to Henrik, I got to know Vidar and Bjørn. They allowed me to decide my own schedule and contribute when I wanted and had the energy for it. I was allowed time and shown understanding and trust in the way these colleagues treated me. After some time, I realised that they weren't just talking about the SMART values, they were living them in real life – and when they met me! During the first meeting, we took turns in describing each other's strengths, using strength cards. It was wonderful to be able to compliment the others by describing their qualities, and to receive feedback on strengths that I displayed in relation to my colleagues. I could see how this helped generate even more security in my relations with my colleagues. This was my first revelation. I had the opportunity to participate in meetings where Bjørn or Vidar facilitated proceedings in such a way that I felt safe, appreciated and dared to relax and let go. I could see how this working method was productive in terms of creativity, but also efficiency when it comes to implementing, executing and achieving new, good solution proposals. I realised that dreams and

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> *future images could play a role after all. Ideas and plans were converted into specific, genuine action. Fantastic! What I saw was a co-creative practise, where everyone is heard and included as genuine participants in creating reconciled positive solutions, with ownership and pride."*

The development of the SMART compass and its five principles places ethics at the forefront of the development work. This newly constructed understanding of the SMART work was subsequently presented in the research group, to our managers and colleagues working in the services. Over the space of a few weeks, the decision was made to base the development work on the new constructed model and the new principles for SMART.

In the *SMART compass* (figure 5.6), we have also formulated a future forming goal for the development work: To generate environments for children and adolescents where they can develop vitality, joy of life and hope for every day. This goal formed the starting point for the development of a new collective question for the SMART upbringing development work. This was formulated in the autumn of 2017, and is as follows:

> *How can we together create environments for children and adolescents that include EVERYONE and that produce hope, commitment and joy?*

The question can be used to invite relevant partners in different local contexts to help find the answer to this ethical question. The use of the word "everyone" emphasises that this is an ethical and moral question. Note also that the word "everyone" is written in capital letters to underline this moral responsibility. If we are to achieve this, the children themselves, their parents, different parts of the support services, politicians and others must also be involved in the development processes. The actions we take to expand the potential to involve more voices and more parties in these study processes is a key subject in the following chapter. This research question has now become the main question in the SMART upbringing development work

Ethics as a Collective Concern in the Development Work

By prioritising (ethical) principles within the development work, we now have the opportunity to make the question of ethics and morals a collective concern (Gergen, 2014). I choose to draw upon concepts such as generosity and caring when describing the ethics, we want to have as the basis for our work for children and adolescents (Cameron, 2003).

Photograph 5.4 My photograph of a poster with the research question, used for a training programme organised by SMART upbringing in November 2017.

Based on the chosen principles, we can involve people in collective reflections of what it means to meet all children with a focus on resources, or what it means to appreciatively approach all colleagues, groups (professional groups, families etc.) with whom we collaborate on a daily basis, particularly those with whom you disagree or who maintain other values than your own. Moreover, we are able to invite persons to discussions about what it means to assume relational responsibility for each other, or how to show care for each other (perform).

Instead of claiming that we, as persons with a central position in the research and development work, know all the answers, the attention is transferred to how we can involve

colleagues in discussions about making the ethical principles meaningful, and how these principles can be translated into actions.

In order to illustrate how we can start performing the SMART work in this way, I would like to provide an example from an evaluation meeting regarding SMART upbringing, held in February 2017. My colleague, Vidar Bugge-Hansen, was chairing the meeting. Attending the meeting were some 50 managers and employees from all the services that are responsible for children and adolescents. Vidar drew the circle map on the flip chart and wrote "focus on strengths" in the inner circle. He then asked the following two questions:

1) What does a focus on strength mean for you in your job, in your organisation?

2) How do you practice this focus?

The process used is similar to the one that I have described before; each person in turn fills in the circle map. The participants then divide into groups of two to discuss, followed by a summary in groups. Table 5.5 contains a list of the responses given.

Text Box 5.5 Responses to the questions: What does focus on strength mean to you? How do you practice this focus? Unprioritised list of all responses.

- To remind them of strengths when met by challenges

- To look for the best in everyone, children, colleagues and guardians

- Conversations

- In general, pay attention to opportunities for others

- Keep improvements in mind at all times. Give each other feedback

- Ask questions about what was best about the class, break etc.

- Conversations with pupils where we explore what works

- Be positive with each other, a lot of praise, attention and recognition, good feedback

- Try to disregard negative actions, unless…

- Approach unwanted behaviour with a "positive" focus, unless…

- Chairing meetings – focus on what's good, share stories

- Ignoring unwanted behaviour, looking for the reason for an action

- Focusing on what works and how to encourage more of this

- Looking for and acknowledging what employees are good at Saying it out loud

- Meeting children in a new way, looking for strengths instead of what they cannot do

- Looking for the good things the children do/can talk about and give praise

- Focus on the children's strengths

- Catch the children red-handed, use this actively in daily situations

- Ask questions and engage when listening

- See each other and what others do well

- See every child, plan and facilitate based on the different needs in the group

- Use the qualities in daily situations, make them specific and understandable

- Allow children to use their strengths in different activities

- Personnel who work with strengths, e.g. in performance appraisals

- A focus on strengths is important because there is a lot of energy to be derived from it. There is a strong focus on challenges during discussions at the family centre.

- Be better at identifying your own strengths and saying them out loud

- Specify what strengths are for children

- Follow the child's initiative, see the individual child

SMART upbringing is performed as a development project, informed by values and ethical principles. When new people are invited into the network, are on a course, the project is presented in different contexts, new stories for SMART upbringing is performed. When presenting, the "compass" model is used as an important part of the story.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have described several examples of what I chose to call monological practice in me and my co-researchers performing of the change processes of SMART upbringing. Monologues were defined as a practice that makes some voices predominant over others. During the spring of 2016, we started to reflect on incidents that we felt drained our energy, meetings, and development processes that were dominated by defensive attitudes and degenerative dynamics. During this period, the concept of antagonization helped us develop an awareness of situations in which we meet other persons with monologues.

Further, the chapter has given insight into how we have collaborated in the internal research group to create multiple ways of understanding, and responding to, the change process SMART upbringing. This chapter provides an overview of three methods we designed to develop our research practice in this direction. *Method for dialogic reflection*, *Circle map*, and *Appreciative reflecting team*. The way these methods were performed helped to expand the array of discourses with which co-researchers could engage in this research. The use of these methods emerged as important support (scaffolding) for the development of a more polyphonic practice with the SMART work. The chapter also tells the story of how I, together with my co-researchers, co-created five ethical principles that we wanted to put at the forefront of the ongoing transformative change processes in Re municipality.

Chapter 6: Playing With Potentials

One important objective of the research project has been to explore the generative potential of the development work. In Chapter 5, I explained how we explored this potential via polyphonic dialogues (conversations) in the internal research group. In this chapter, I will explain how we (more) systematically utilised performative methods such as dramaturgy, art and different experiences from our daily lives as resources for the research and in the work to create social changes (Bolt, 2016; Gergen & Gergen, 2012).

Firstly, in this chapter, I would like to present an example of how performative methods were utilised as a "habit provoking" method for a SMART project in the local child welfare service (Bolt, 2009, p. 135). One of my colleagues in the internal research group, Tina Feyling (family therapist), was the project manager. The chapter shows (for example) how aesthetic methods such as playing, meals, campfires etc. were used to explore how relationships with families can be transformed and how more uplifting family lives can be generated (Feyling, Engstrøm & Holte, 2018).

I then go on in the chapter to explain how I have worked with the research to help make the ongoing change processes (more) sustainable (Agyris & Schøn, 1974). The SMART upbringing project was scheduled for completion in 2017. This was the decision made by the politicians (Re municipality, 2017). The decision was also made to merge Re municipality with Tønsberg municipality with effect from 1 January 2020. I, therefore, decided to get involved in the work to develop various *infrastructures* to help support the ongoing transformation processes. The term "infrastructure" is made here with reference to Daniella Selloni (2017, p. 53). She writes that infrastructure can be seen as an intermediary by which to facilitate contact between various parties, stakeholders, elements and resources.

In this chapter, I aim to explain how the research became a (co-)actor in the process to construct two different organisational structures designed to support the ongoing change processes during this period. One of these structures established was courses in how to facilitate future forming change processes. These courses were named SMART Train the Trainer education, and were

established in November 2017 (Bugge-Hansen & Hauger, 2017). In the space of two years (autumn 2017 to autumn 2019), 67 participants took part in the courses. These people were from the municipal services responsible for children and adolescents in Re and Tønsberg municipalities. In part two of this chapter, I will explain how we held these courses and the role played by the research in the process.

The research project helped to establish a second organisational structure (or actor) that is a separate service with (more) permanent responsibility for continuing the SMART upbringing development work. The new service was named "SMART senter for sosial innovasjon" (SMART centre for social innovation) (Hauger, Bugge-Hansen, Paulsen & Thorkildsen, 2018). The centre was established by means of a unanimous resolution made by the municipal council in December 2017. The final part of this chapter comprises an explanation of how the research has contributed to the establishment and development of this centre.

6.1 Exploration of a New Practice for the Smart Child Welfare Initiative

My decision to pay special attention to the new practice under development for SMART child welfare initiatives can, with reference to Hillier (2013), be described as a strategic navigation in the research. The ongoing transformative processes in the SMART project had, up to that point (autumn 2017), occurred in particular from within the "educational" upbringing services; schools, kindergartens and the after-school care system. In chapter 5, I explained that many of the other services felt the SMART project was "naive" or that it was difficult to see how SMART could be applied outside of the educational context in which it had developed. The emergence of shared experiences (stories) of how a "SMART approach" was utilised from within one of these services made it possible for new negotiations about how the relevance this change work could have in other municipal services (etc.) where the personnel had, to date, been sceptical about the process.

Before going on to explain how I worked on the research in connection with the development work implemented in the SMART child welfare initiative, I would like to explain my colleagues'

reasons and how the SMART child welfare initiative was established. Elisabeth Paulsen (2018, p. 4), the head of the child welfare service in the municipality (and co-researcher in the internal research group etc.), expressed this as follows:

> *"The establishment of the SMART child welfare initiative project was part of the process to innovate our services. The work on the SMART child welfare initiative can be seen as a shift in how we understand and facilitate interaction in the work on child welfare initiatives."*

My colleagues involved in the SMART child welfare initiative (Feyling et al. 2018, p. 11) expressed it as follows:

> *"When we started working on a project description for the SMART child welfare initiative, our goal was to create new ways of providing child welfare services. We experienced an increasing number of children and adolescents who needed comprehensive child welfare services, and we were left feeling that we were not able to provide these children and their families with satisfactory assistance. In our minds, there was a clear need to innovate how we could provide child welfare services. Despite governmental investments in child welfare services in recent years, we felt these were still insufficient to meet the challenges we faced."*

The research related to this development work was partly performed by my colleagues in the internal research group, Tina Feyling, along with her two colleagues on the team (Anne Engstrøm and Mette Holte). My colleagues filmed their practice, kept logs, took photographs and used this material as the starting point for dialogical investigations. I got involved in different ways in the investigations of the new practice being developed for the SMART child welfare initiative. These were for example:

1. Dialogical inquiry of personal narratives shared by my co-researcher Tina Feyling in the development work in the internal research group. During this period, Tina Feyling was the project manager for the SMART child welfare initiative. As methods for the dialogical investigations, Appreciative reflective team and appreciative interview were used.

2. Dialogical inquiry into the personal narratives of *all* the colleagues (three) who were working with the SMART child welfare initiative (Gill, 2001). This took place via a number of meetings, using appreciative reflecting method (Hauger et al., 2008), from the spring of 2017 to the autumn of 2018. The meetings lasted between one to two hours and were mainly facilitated by myself. In March 2018, I also took part in a two-day team meeting together with the team's manager (co-researcher Elisabeth Paulsen) to summarise experiences via the development of written texts. Narrative inquiry and narrative interviews were also utilised to explore the personal experiences via dialogue (Gill, 2001; Reed, 2007).

3. Dialogical and performative inquiry of the narratives and performance of the new practice for a wider audience.

4. This took place, for example, at a course for participants from the municipality's services and external guests in November 2018.

The process of exploring the type of new practice being developed for this initiative took place by means of a number of different co-creative activities. With reference to Shotter (2008), I describe this interaction as "joint action". According to Shotter (2008, p. 37), joint action occurs when meetings with others imply that activities become "intertwined or entangled" with those surrounding them. The development of the new practice being developed for the SMART child welfare initiative can be understood as such an *intertwined* process. This new practice was shaped via dialogical processes with colleagues from SMART upbringing, with families and with other colleagues in the child welfare service (Feyling et al., 2018).

Playing With the Potentials – Together With the Families

I have chosen to entitle this chapter section *Playing with the potentials.* The title is inspired by Mary and Kenneth Gergen's (2012) book about performative research, entitled *Playing with purpose*. This

book explores how performative perspectives can enrich and expand upon the potential within social science.

In this section, I pay special attention to how use of the performative methods as well as art can be utilised to identify new solutions for possible initiatives whereby the municipal services can create more inclusive and life-enhancing environments for children and adolescents. The use of the term *playing with potentials* refers to how playing, art and new creative performances of own practice can provide the participants with experiences of a future full of potential, and where such experiences can transform relationships and social life "here and now" (Sullivan, 2012).

Figure 6.1 The chronology of the research process; spring 2017– November 2018.
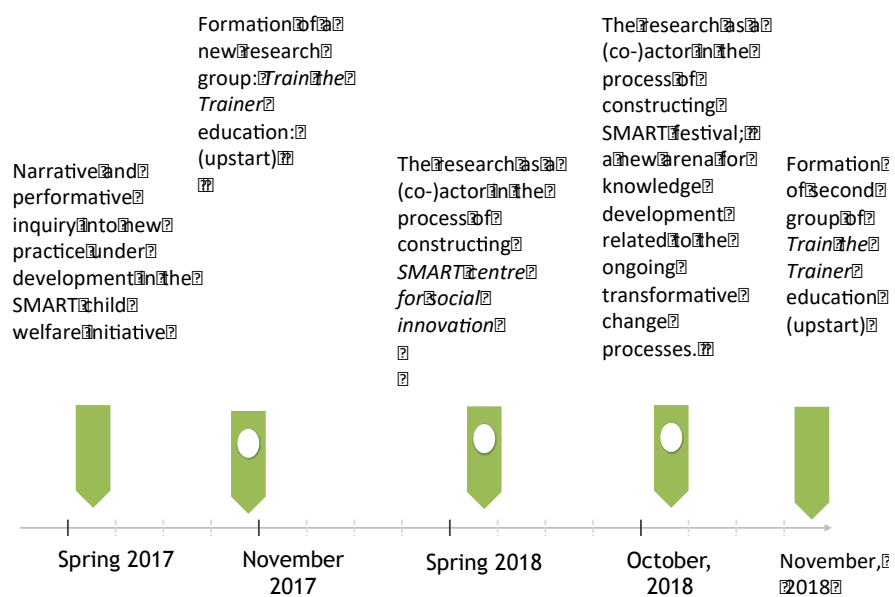
When I heard the persons involved in the SMART child welfare initiative explaining how they experiment with transforming their relationships with the families and dysfunctional family

189

patterns, I was both impressed and inspired. There are many examples of this, but I will mention a few below. The first example is from the first "course" held to share experiences from the development work with an audience (70 people) in November 2018. Colleagues from the municipal service attended the meetings along with six parents in the child welfare service (co-organisers) and guests from services outside the municipality. I wrote the following in my reflection:

> *"I'm attending a course held by SMART barnevernstiltak (child welfare initiative). My colleagues working on the initiative plan to tells us about how they are working and what they are doing to develop what they call a 'power-together' relationship with the parents. They explained how much emphasis they place on their behaviour and their roles during the first meeting with the parents. Tina explained that she introduces herself as follows: 'My name is Tina and I live in Nøtterøy...'*

> *Tina went on to say that she chooses to perform her role in a way which says: 'I hope I can create closeness and can help build a bridge between a family life that is in crisis and my own life. I am interested in learning if there is anything in my story that can be linked to their story. I can, for example, tell them that my family lives far away, that I am divorced and have stepchildren...'*

> *My reaction is that this must be an unusual way for someone working in child welfare to introduce themselves. This form of introduction does not create distance or create an appearance of neutrality cloaked in a professional title.*

> *Mette, Tina's colleague, adds: 'We share power with the families. One way of doing so is to ask the 'users' after a meeting if it is OK for us to have a reflective process. We turn our chairs (away from the parents) and explain that we want to talk about what we have learned and our thoughts about it.' This is a form of reflective team process where the parents listen to the dialogue between the employees in the local child welfare service.*

> *Mette explained that they want to do this so the parents can listen to what they think about the meeting. Normally, such a conversation would take place after the parents had left the*

meeting, they explained. 'We want to show the parents that we recognise that what they are

telling us is difficult. We also want to talk about the strengths of the family and what we

identify as important, supportive, non-verbal communication between mother and father, or

between a father and the child.

When the family assesses the meeting, this is what we get most frequent feedback about. It has

been extremely successful,' concluded Tina."

In my reflection note, 29 November 2018, I wrote the following:

"My colleagues had prepared a carefully considered direction for how to introduce

themselves as subjects (a personal language) with similar life experiences to the families with

which they wanted to start collaborating. They create a direction at the end of the meeting

where they have the opportunity to present what they appreciate from the meeting with the

family, and where they can express that they understand the family's challenges and can put

into words and appreciate the resources the family has brought to the meeting. It is the new

design for the meeting that allows access to new experiences; testing new roles, testing new

methods of meeting. The method used to explore how things might be, in this example, is

applied not via dialogue but via dramaturgy. I also noted that this method of carrying out

research simultaneously has a major transformative effect."

Dramaturgy is a key concept in performative research (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). Different

professional practices draw upon cultural descriptions that show how different roles are to be

performed, the rights of the participants and acceptable standards. The story above provides an insight

into how my colleagues both continued with a practice (a start-up meeting with the family at the

office assigned the initiative) and the performance of various elements in this practice according to

new methods.

New Types of Family Visits

The second story I want to share is about how the child welfare initiative has taken elements from the daily lives of the employees in order to explore how a future and desired family life might appear in families suffering from a crisis. In a reflection note dated 5 September 2018, I wrote:

> *"With the SMART child welfare initiative, home visits are planned together with the family. Play as an activity has, at this time (2017-2018), been introduced as an increasingly important part of the SMART work. We started playing during the research meetings as early as 2016. Play has also become an important part of all SMART events. The SMART child welfare initiative (also) started using play as a part of home visits during this period. One example is the balloon game. The family sits in a ring on the floor (see photographs 6.1 and 6.2 below). Large balloons are inflated, and the family has to cooperate to keep the balloons (1-3) in movement. The colleagues from the child welfare initiative sometimes take part in the game, or they are the game leaders. Other 'methods' they include from their daily lives in the home visits with the family are to 'bring something nice to eat with them' or to take a walk in the forest and have a barbecue."*

My colleagues (Feyling et al., 2018, p. 45) recounted:

> *"Our experiences of playing and activities during home visits are that they can help diffuse any tense atmosphere. They can also help create trust between us and the family, and they provide access to stories that we might not hear otherwise. These stories may be significant for the future change work."*

It is uplifting to read the reflections of my colleagues. They explain that the use of playing helps create new relational resources upon which the change work can draw. Two of the resources highlighted in the above quote are trust and new (hopeful) stories about the family. One important reason for applying aesthetic methods during the research project is that it allows us to explore and

thereby create different forms of social life and explore other proposed solutions than with conventional methods. One father summarised his experiences of the new methods of home visits as follows:

> *"In my mind, this is about getting involved together with the family, and not being so formal, just sitting on the outside and kind of observing. If they do that, they don't really see anything. I think you have to be more human, not just think professionally, but be more like a neighbour who has come to visit. I understand that you have to think professionally, but you don't have to show that on the outside. I think it's a good idea to say yes if you're invited to dinner or for a cup of coffee, or if the children want to show you their doll. Then, you're more part of what's happening. I think the children notice that you are more involved in family life, and this helps them 'loosen up' more and not be so nervous."* (Feyling et al., 2018, p. 45).

In the quote above, the father explains his experiences of when my colleagues performed their practice using new methods. He describes my colleagues as being a "part of what's happening".

Bolt (2016, p. 130) writes that the performative has to be understood in light of its capacity to create movement in mindsets and actions, and thereby help reconfigure conventions from the inside, rather than from the outside of the convention. The story about the new method for home visits also shows how the use of aesthetic methods such as playing can provide the family members with experiences of family life in a future forming perspective.

By taking part in the game, the family generates experiences (here and now) of the future family life they want to create. Sullivan (2009) argues that the use of experiences from the future may change how we understand our current situation, here and now. He writes that such experiences can create elements of comprehensive change; "a break with the past and a future full of creative potentials can be felt" (Sullivan, 2012, p.15).

When the future is explored by performing family life in new ways (playing), this can also create physical memories in a future forming perspective. Larsen and Madsen (2020, p. 66) argue that the *physical gestures* (laughter, smiles etc.) created by play can also provide experiences of how we

want to relate to each other in the future. When future forming research is performed via changes in discourses (performance), this is both productive in itself and can be used as "data" (Bolt, 2016).

My colleagues in the local child welfare initiative have systematically collected "data" on the new forms of practice that are being developed via photographs and stories.

Photographs 6.1 and 6.2 Playing as a new element in home visits. The photograph on the right shows my co-researcher, Tina Feyling, playing a game with a family during a home visit.

Above is a photograph (6.1) showing how one family has made sticky labels showing SMART qualities and stuck these to their child's body. This took place as a playful activity during a home visit. I have chosen these photographs because they are situated with a value (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). The photographs provide more than merely an insight into something that has occurred. I chose the photographs because I hope they will increase the desire to get to know the persons or get involved for the benefit of these families. I have therefore used these photographs at many events when presenting experiences of the development work.

6.2 Building Capacity for Social Transformation

If you want to succeed in creating lasting change with an implemented transformative development project, initiatives have to be introduced to increase capacity to create the desired results. There was a need to allow more colleagues to learn how to apply the new methods and proposed solutions that had emerged via the research. Senge and Scharmer (2006) state that other colleagues must be allowed to have bodily experiences of the new resources that have been developed. We also recognised the need to allow more of our colleagues to develop competencies in facilitating change processes together with children, adolescents and their families. In my mind, therefore, one important task during this research project was to explore how we could build the capacity to work on lasting changes. One generative response to how to achieve this was to establish a specific educational programme. This was established in the autumn of 2017 and was named the Train the Trainer education.

The establishment of the new programme also required the formation of a new research group. The name of the new research group was "Train the Trainer education". While the members of the internal research group had been recruited by means of purposeful selection, participants to the Train the Trainer education research group were recruited via open invitation. All those who worked in municipal services with responsibility for children and adolescents, in addition to colleagues in the municipality with which we were to merge (Tønsberg municipality) were eligible to apply to join the research group. We initially established a limit of 30 participants, but chose to include all 33 who applied in the first year, and all 36 who applied in the second year.

The Train the Trainer education group was not just a research group, but also an educational programme in which the participants gained training in how to facilitate future forming change processes. Many of the concepts we had developed and implemented to facilitate cooperative development processes via the SMART work were included in the educational programme. Manzini (2015, p. 158) makes use of the term "tooling up" to describe strategies for scaling up a development process by providing "non-experts" with training tools to facilitate co-creative processes.

In the presentation below, I have chosen to focus on how we performed the research with this educational programme. First, however, I would like to provide a brief presentation of how we organised this cooperation (the infrastructure).

How to Involve All the Participants in the Research Process?

When I started planning this educational programme with my co-researcher Vidar Bugge-Hansen, our main concern was to ensure that all participants could be involved in the research process.

As the course leader (and in the role as research leader), we wanted the cooperative research to be based on what we had designed as a main question for the research, in relation to the SMART work (during this period):

> *How can we together create upbringing environments that include ALL children and adolescents and that produce hope, involvement and joy?*

This main question was presented at the first meeting we held for the participants at the Train the Trainer education. We had also written the research question on a large banner hanging on the wall in the room we used for all (eight) meetings. In addition, we had also established other important guidelines for the research. In line with the ideals of future forming research, values and ethics were to play a leading role in the work on knowledge development. We also decided that the principles on which our municipality had chosen to base the SMART work (see former chapter) should also form the basis for this research

Table 6.1 Overview of various research methods applied for the Train the Trainer education.

What	How
Methods for individual reflexivity and reflection	By keeping a log and writing reflection notes. This was done by all the participants at the education. Our co-researchers gave time to reflect and write reflecting notes at all the meetings. More than 100 pages of reflection notes have been collected from the participants.
Methods for relational reflection	By means of reflective team processes in combination with tables (Gjort, lært, lurt), circle maps. Appreciative reflective team. Gjort, lært, lurt method and variants of appreciative reflective team processes were both used at all meetings (nine) in processes that included all the participants.
Visualisation methods	Photographs, roadmaps, role play, drawings. All the participants made their own personal roadmaps. More than 60 drawings have been collected.
Appreciative interview	Appreciative interviews performed in pairs and in groups; via the use of distributed interviews (created by us) or via interviews created by the participants. More than 100 AI interviews have been performed (in pairs).
Performative methods	Performative interview; portrait interview, mapping strengths, playing. Using all materials available and that are deemed useful. Playing has been done 2-3 times (5-15 minutes) at all the meetings.

We had also decided that all the participants should work together to research heterogenous groups. The groups were made up of participants from various services and different municipalities. Each group had five to six participants. The educational programme comprised eight meetings and lasted around one year. The first educational programme started in November 2017 and ended in October 2018. The second programme had the same cycle (start-up November 2018, ending October 2019).

Performance of the Train the Trainer Education

Below, I shall provide examples of how we performed the Train the Trainer education. It may seem strange to use the concept of education in relation to the research group we established. However, the use of this concept activates the experiences we have gained from our own schooling; where those who play an active role in communicating knowledge are the "teacher" and those who are to learn are "individuals", and where the lessons to be learned are "true" knowledge and the learning takes place "inside" the students´minds.

Our use of the name *Train the Trainer education* refers to Wittgenstein (1953), who claims that training is required if you want to learn to adopt a new culture, and not just reproduce the old culture. "The teaching of language" is not a matter of explanations, but of practising skills in playing a language game, according to Dahl (2019, p. 13), with reference to Wittgenstein. When children learn how to adopt the culture into which they were born, they have to learn how to perform the words. Different local cultures perform the words "to eat" in different ways. Some cultures use a fork and knife to eat dinner, while other local cultures use their hands.

In the story I presented above, I showed how my colleagues who worked in the local child welfare service had used dramaturgy to explore how future (desired) methods of cooperating with the parents and children could be performed, and a future family life could be experienced.

Inspired by these experiences and academic texts relating to performative research that I had read during this period, "I became interested in how to create a direction for the Train the Trainer education programme that would allow us together to (re-)shape a preferred learning culture and to

learn together from such (embodied) experiences", as I wrote in my reflection note from this period (4 January 2018). I also wrote in the same note:

> *"I also like to keep in mind Gergen's (2014) concept of future forming research, which by drawing upon Latour (1987), can be understood as a science in the making. Latour distinguishes between research and technology that are ready-made and research and research methods that have to be constantly remade. Research based on a relational perspective is process-oriented. This implies, for example, that knowledge and methods developed at a point in time during the process may be included as (new) resources in the continuous research work.*
>
> *Gergen and Gergen (2012) make use of the terminology 'to disrupt' to describe experiences that imply that participants at an event gain an experience that differs from the normal or ordinary. Bolt (2016, p. 135), with reference to Butler (1999), points out that such disruptions can help create social change. These ideas inspired me to think about how we design the educational programme in such a way to challenge common perceptions of an educational programme, and how the participants can take the programme together. How could we provide the participants with experiences of being part of a learning community, in which all members feel recognised, have the opportunity to contribute and show that they care about each other? One of the concerns in performative research is to model and demonstrate how things could be different (Douglas & Carless, 2013)."* (Own reflection note, 4 January 2018).

For the purpose of the start-up meeting, we[7] had jointly prepared a design for how to work with learning, which we hoped would also provide the participants with a *physical experience* of

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[7] I made the plan for the start-up meeting together with my co-researcher Vidar Bugge-Hansen. The methods used at this start-up meeting was presented in a booklet given to all the students at this event (Bugge-Hansen & Hauger, 2018).

"visiting" (co-creating) an appraised future (Jaakonaho & Junttila, 2019). I will describe how we executed this and the experiences of the participants in the educational programme below.

6.3 Playing With Potentials for the Train the Trainer Education

There were 33 participants who had registered for the start-up of the Train the Trainer education in November 2017. 23 of the participants came from Re municipality, and 10 came from Tønsberg municipality. Re municipality was to merge with Tønsberg municipality. All those who became our (new) co-researchers for the educational programme had their professional practice within their municipality´s services responsible for children and adolescents. Most of the participants worked in schools and kindergartens, but there were also participants from the health clinic, child welfare service and the educational psychological service (PPT). Only a few of the participants knew many of the others who had registered for the programme. Some participants did not know any of the others. Most had been exposed to a certain amount of experience of development processes based on SMART or knowledge of the SMART tools (all the colleagues from Re). However, most of the participants (8) from Tønsberg municipality did not have any experience with SMART upbringing.

We had created a direction that allowed us to greet each participant in a way that made them feel welcome. The following is a quote from my reflection note that I wrote immediately after the initial meeting (November 2017):

> "The way we do this is to behave in the same way as when we invite friends to a party in our house. We had made coffee and something to eat for everyone who came to the meeting, and a couple of my colleagues had been assigned special responsibility for welcoming the participants. My colleague Vidar and I, who were assigned the task of facilitating the educational programme, had a short preliminary meeting with six 'selected' participants who would be allocated the role of leaders (facilitators) for their groups during the first part of the day. They were asked to take on primary responsibility for greeting and welcoming the

participants in their groups, and to help facilitate the start-up of the research work in the

groups.

After a brief introduction of the course and how we planned to organise the co-(operation),

we decided to apply a performative method to build caring relationships in pairs, and then in

the groups in which the participants were to work. We called the method we designed for this

process a strength-based portrait interview [see Text Box 6.1 below].

The participants sat down in pairs. They all had access to blank sheets of paper and marker

pens. The instructions were as follows: One person starts by telling a story. The second

person listens to the story and makes notes of what the story says about the positive qualities

of the storyteller. We (also) chose to draw upon art in order to mediate the relational

processes between the participants in new ways. When the colleagues displayed the portraits,

they had made of each other (they were told they could create these in a playful, naive or

childish way), the drawings became a 'fellow player' in what later occurred in the relational

processes. Showing the drawings to each other triggered laughter, joy (see photograph 6.3).

The participants had written on the drawings the positive qualities that were expressed in the

stories they shared with each other." (Own reflection notes, 25 November 2017).

Our intention was to identify ways in which all the colleagues could perform as subjects for each other without reducing each other to a bland "sameness" (Douglas & Carless, 2013, p. 58).

Once the participants had presented their drawings to each other in pairs, we asked all the colleagues to take their own portraits (which their colleague had drawn of them) out "onto the floor" so they could get to know other colleagues. Their task was to greet a new colleague and describe themselves by showing their portrait and talking about the positive qualities that the drawing (with words) attempted to express (see photograph 6.3).

Text Box 6.1 Strength-based portrait interview.

This was performed in the following ways:

1. The group members were divided into pairs and were asked to create a strength-based portrait of each other. This process had four stages. Firstly, each person had to tell a story about "me at my best". The listener had to identify several positive qualities in the storyteller, expressed via the story.
2. They then had to create a "portrait" of each other showing these positive qualities. They had to write down some of the most central positive qualities they had identified in the drawing.
3. Once they had both finished their portraits, they had to hand them over to each other and explain why they had chosen the identified qualities.
4. Once each person had received their portraits and heard the reasons, we gathered all the participants back in the room. Every participant was then tasked with greeting a new colleague and introducing themselves and the portrait they had received.

When reading this, you could justifiably wonder: Why spend so much time on presenting such a small section of a comprehensive research project? I have chosen to do so because performing the research work in this way was also new to me. These new experiences create changes in the way I perform research. This in itself is an important part of the performative research (Douglas & Carless, 2013).

I experienced, for example, that "when my colleagues (and I) have the opportunity to perform our commitment, become emotionally involved in what we are doing, I experience an increased desire to engage in the development work" (from my own reflection note dated 25 November 2017).

I have chosen to present the example above to highlight the opportunities afforded by the research to directly intervene and change small daily conventions and thereby facilitate new forms of social life. With this example of the use of the portrait interview method, we had involved art and play as new elements in the ritual of getting to know each other. In retrospect, what we carried out can be perceived as a method of including what Bourriaud (2002) describes as aesthetic beauty – status

equality, care and the ability to create an increased understanding of each other – into relational

relationships (Jones, 2017).

Photograph 6.3 Use of the portrait interview method to construct relations featuring aesthetic beauty. My photograph from the Train the Trainer education at Havna Hotel, 22 November 2017.

Once the portrait interview exercise had been completed, I sat down at a table where the

participants were discussing what they had experienced. One of the participants in the group said that

she felt that "the task was good". In my research note from the meeting, I summarised the

conversation as follows:

> *"This exercise allowed us to remove ourselves from a job setting... As a result, the relations*
>
> *became more personal and we moved to a personal level, according to one of the group*
>
> *members. I also heard that the act of handing over the portrait they had drawn of each other*
>
> *made the meeting 'more personal'... The drawing was also seen as a gift the participants gave*
>
> *to each other. One of the participants showed (performed) how she had given her portrait to*

the colleague she had drawn. She had said: 'This drawing is for you' and explained how

giving the drawings to each other was nice. One other person in the group said: 'This is a

wider way of getting to know each other'." (Own reflection notes, 25 November 2017)

During the Train the Trainer education programme, we experimented with how playing (as a social practice taken from the daily lives of children) could be utilised to mediate relations that featured equality, and to produce aesthetic qualities such as joy and commitment. There are several reasons why we chose to do this. The act of triggering commitment and joy in social life is something to which practitioners of performative research aim to contribute (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). I have also heard numerous examples (in the internal research group, for example) of how play was utilised to transform upbringing environments featuring "hard" relationships (outsiders) to more equal (soft) relationships.

Photograph 6.4 My photograph of co-researchers playing during the start-up meeting for Train the Trainer education, 23 November 2018.
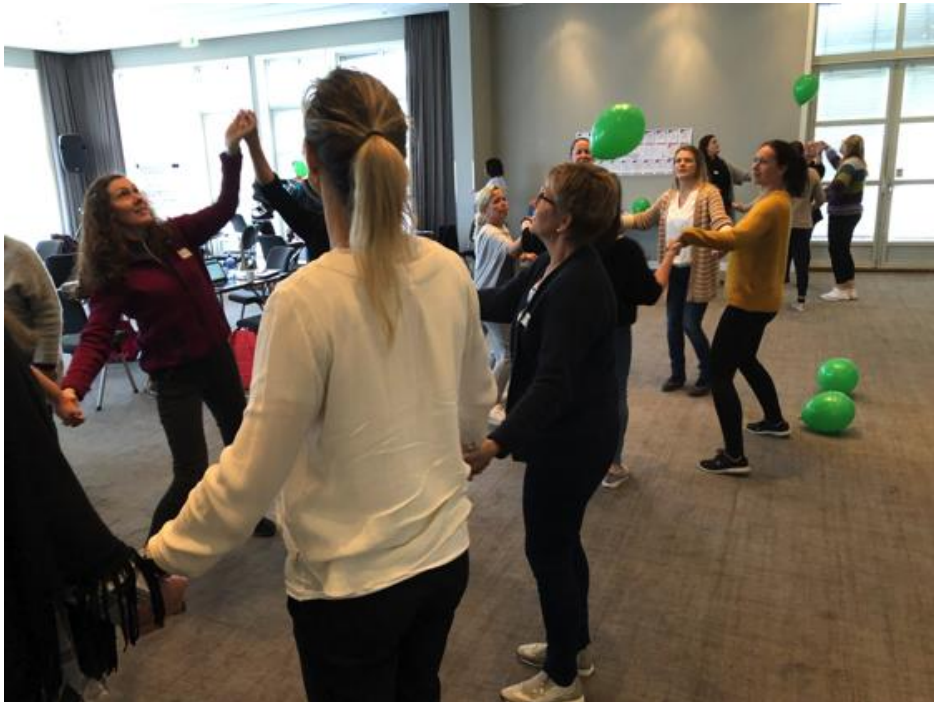
All the Train the Trainer meetings feature various forms of play. Normally, each meeting comprises two to three different games. These are games we found were suitable for groups made up of adults and for groups together with children.

Text Box 6.2 Extract from a practice narrative about a teacher (co-researcher) on the Train the Trainer education programme, facilitating more play.

One other thing we do in my class, which can be a good idea, is to agree on certain games before a break starts. So, for example, I would say: "We've all agreed, in the class and our year, to play together!" While I'm saying this, I point to the class rules that all the pupils have agreed on. "Who do you want to play with? Do you have any ideas about what you can do?" etc. Doing it this way makes it easier for pupils who find a large, complex outdoor area difficult, and challenging to make agreements about playing before break starts. There are, in fact, several of the younger pupils who struggle to find someone to play with. Some find it difficult to ask others to play with them etc. I also spent a few minutes following up on this after the break: "So, you said that you were going to play tag. How did you work together and play? Did you find that many others came up and asked to join? What did you do outside that was fun and enjoyable? etc.

In my class, we play together a lot. When we play together, we laugh together, we are in physical contact with each other, we build an incredibly important we-community in the class. When playing games, we can focus on important aspects such as collaboration, integrity, perseverance, patience, caring, courage, self-confidence, self-control, helpfulness, respect etc. The games I use are ones I know from before and games I have learned during my SMART studies.

This example refers to what Haseman (2006) refers to as direct co-presence experiences from engaging in the research. The co-researchers who took part in the Train the Trainer education program explained that, by discovering the importance of playing, they had started to introduce (more) games in their educational practices with children (see Text Box 6.3). Other research colleagues recounted how they had started to explore how play could be used to develop more vital relationships and fellowship at work; in meetings and for ongoing change processes.

The Performative Effect of Appreciation

I would also like to add an additional example of how we made use of a performative research approach to create immediate effects in "the culture". According to Whitney, there is a predominant pattern for interaction and of "relatedness" in most organisations that feature criticism. She (Whitney, 2008, p. 340) writes that "people who speak out do so at the risk of prompting others, superiors and peers alike, to respond with critical and often personally demeaning comments". This could possibly result in people not daring to take the risk implied in behaving with integrity or for obtaining innovation.

Appreciation may have the opposite effect, according to Whitney (2008, p. 340). The word appreciation involves recognising something in others or in what others have done by expressing (some form of) gratitude for the action and thereby increasing its value that is appreciated (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Everyone strives to be met with appreciation. German sociologist Axel Honneth (2007) has developed a social theory in which he shows that accepting these needs on different levels in society (close relations, groups and by community) can be made into a driving force (practice) for creating successfully functioning societies. When appreciation is utilised in the work on change processes, it promotes inclusion and helps boost well-being for the people involved (Avital & Boland, 2008).

Culture is something that is performed, according to a social constructionist perspective (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Before starting the Train the Trainer education, we asked ourselves how we could involve the participants in performing a culture featuring appreciation from the very first day. As an explanation of the implications of "performing a culture", I previously referred to Goffman's (1959) argument that there are many similarities between how people perform their lives and what happens on a theatrical stage.

In the role we played as course leaders and facilitators of the training, we had more opportunities to perform our roles in new ways, change certain rituals. In other words: We wanted to

experiment with new ways of talking and acting that materially impacted the world in which these new modes of behaviour are integrated (Shotter, 2014).

Over the first two days we spent time together, we wanted to experiment with various methods by which we, together with our colleagues, could perform appreciation. In addition to the use of *portrait interviews*, we chose to apply various research methods based on Appreciative Inquiry (Reed, 2007). During the first day, all the participants used process methodology from AI, where the interviews held by the participants with each other were summarised by the person holding the interview recounting important experiences (stories) from the other person's practice.

At the end of the first day, the groups were asked to form small circles around a table to evaluate all their contributions throughout the day (photograph 6.6). This started by them individually explaining in brief what they felt had been valuable experiences and important "gains" from the day. The other participants then provided feedback on what their "colleague" had contributed to the group and the meeting, which they thought was of value.

Photograph 6.5 Construction of vital roles, relations and teams. My photograph from the Train the Trainer education meeting, November 2018

When appreciation is applied to work on social changes, the actual fact of being met by or meeting other persons with appreciation can have a transformative effect. However, appreciation can (also) be used as a convention (practice) in order to generate inclusion of all voices in a development process, and as a resource to create a cooperative environment in which those involved "celebrate their differences", according to Avital and Boland (2008, p. 13). I had discovered, while working with the internal research group, the importance of appreciation in empowering polyphonic investigative processes (Hauger, Bugge-Hansen, Paulsen & Thorkildsen, 2018). As described below, I chose to explore the performative effect of utilising appreciative communication in our group.

Text Box 6.3 Extract from a text in which a co-researcher (student) describes the impact of practising appreciation in our group.

> *"Us students spoke a lot about how welcome we felt, from the very early stages of the study. This made us curious about the concept of appreciation and the power it had in practice. It felt strange, when talking with the course leaders, that they gave us so much attention during the conversations. It was notable that they listened and had absolutely no form of preconceptions. The only type of behaviour I could identify was one of positive expectations. On my part, this made me more curious and more aware of my own self-development at a relatively early stage of the study.*
>
> *The fact that I was repeatedly attributed positive intentions resulted in a self-reinforcing positive construction of reality. This gave rise to an upward spiral effect in the group and in personal friendships. I make reference here to the concept of filling the bucket (Rath & Clifton 2004). I became a better listener and became aware of how easy it was to fill other people's buckets too.*
>
> *The side effect of this was motivation. Motivation for both Appreciative Inquiry as a method for my own practice, but also for an increased focus on self-development. Questions about what I most appreciated at work, at home, among friends and family became increasingly prevalent in my mindset. As I have mentioned, positive intentions were a fixed element/attitude during the course. One thing I would like to mention here is that I had the feeling that I was important to the group. This was despite the fact that there were participants in the group with much more expertise and more experience. I still felt that the others really listened to what I had to say in the group."*

Shotter (2014, p. 113) writes that it is only when a new practice is experienced "within the context of practice", that (new) knowledge can develop. The research should therefore take place via participation in performance (of "the art") as bodily, experience-based and performative knowledge (Jaakonaho & Junttila, 2019). We used circle maps to explore the new meanings of the concept of appreciation.

I asked my co-researchers to enter appreciation in the centre of the circle map. We then started a process whereby one colleague alone wrote what he or she understood about this concept. The concept was then explored by means of dialogue with other colleagues.

Once this process had been completed, we used the post-it note method to generate new ideas (based on exploring the concept) in order to gain a wider understanding of appreciation. This was carried out as follows: Each participant individually produced as many proposals as possible. One proposal was written down on a note. The colleagues then formed pairs to share ideas (presenting post-it notes to each other). This was carried out in a "mobile group". New ideas emerged from these conversations and were written down. All the notes were finally attached to a large poster on one wall of the room. This process produced just over 100 notes (proposals).

Photograph 6.6 A photograph I took of a poster with yellow post-it notes containing responses to the question of how we can reinforce the ability to behave appreciatively in our own practices. Taken during the Train the Trainer education meeting in November 2017.

With reference to Cross (2011), I would claim that the performance of the (visual) post-it method helped create an external bank of (also overlapping) ideas that could reinforce the ability to behave appreciatively in our daily work. During a subsequent reflection process, our colleagues were challenged to select one to two of these proposals that they would like to incorporate in their practices.

On the last day of the start-up meeting (two days), we held a short sequence to create "data" about the performative effect of the method applied involving appreciation in our research group[8]. Of the 29 statements I received, there was also one important critical voice. One co-researcher wrote:

> *"I have also reflected somewhat on the road ahead. It is possible, in such a safe setting, that you share more than you actually wanted to. You can feel vulnerable because others know something about you that, in principle, may be very personal. It is therefore important to have clear boundaries for the tasks. Not everyone is able to self-censor."*

FFR research is concerned with what the members of a community find useful when they work with social change (McNamee, 2020). Since many need to be involved, there will also be many opinions on how to bring about change, and what are valuable ways to be together. The practice of appreciation can also take place in ways that can be perceived as unpleasant.

All the statements that emerged say something important. I have also selected five statements from the participants (of 29 collected responses) that put into words slightly varying relational effects; what it means to be met with appreciation (as we practised) for the individual, for the group relations and for our groups as a whole. It is also interesting to note that one of the colleagues wrote that she

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[8] I asked the following question: Based on the experience you have gained from this meeting: What is the potential if we build new relations and new social fellowships via appreciation? All the participants wrote down their responses individually on a blank piece of paper (four to five minutes). The responses were then collected. I collected 29 responses. I (Bjørn) then summarised and categorised all the responses. I have provided a total overview of all the responses in appendix C.

now wants to develop such groups for the pupils in her own classes. I have not made any attempt to analyse these statements, but I am including them here to provide an insight into a future in which this value is utilised to construct local social fellowships.

The entire list of statements is included in appendix C. Below is a list of the statements I have selected.

- **I was recognised** for what I had done in/with my class. This has given me energy and happiness. The group saw me as the person I want to be, but don't always feel that I am.
- **I feel** that I am part of a group where I have the same values as the others.
- **The members of my group** quickly formed a different starting point. We rapidly started to see each other through a new lens. Positive meeting, relaxed, smiles, laughter, eye contact. Got to "know" each other quickly.
- **When everyone is met** with appreciation, this creates a very special atmosphere in the room. You feel safe and dare to relax and be yourself because you can see that the others want you to be happy.
- **In this room,** there is a whole group of people who want the best for each other. You can feel it physically. These are safe foundations and a starting point for enjoyment. It is the type of atmosphere you as a teacher want to create in the classroom. You can dare to be yourself and be happy.

Gergen and Gergen (2012, p. 54) writes that ordinary professional training makes us culturally mute. In contrast, research and knowledge dissemination based on a performative approach may allow the participants to reflect on the culture of which they are part, and the type of culture they want to help create.

Future Forming Research in New, Local Contexts

The work on the Train the Trainer education research project has two goals. Firstly, to ensure that the education helps develop the participants' skills in dialogical facilitation (Frimann, et al., 2020).

Secondly, to ensure that all participants start to work with future forming research into their own practice.

When *dialogical facilitation* is applied in research work, the starting point is an understanding that research is a lasting process, that knowledge is more "fluid" than "frozen", and that nobody has a monopoly over what applies as the truth (Frimann, Hersted & Søbye, 2020, p. 37). Learning this form of knowledge development is both different and more demanding than learning to utilise a specific method. In order to ensure a lasting process of knowledge development, it is also necessary to keep an eye on what obstructs or promotes the participants' willingness to engage in the knowledge development processes (McNamee, 2020).

In an attempt to learn to understand and develop expertise in how such dialogical processes could be facilitated, we had (already) developed a number of visual tools and designs for polyphonic research in groups. Circle maps, appreciative reflective team and the visual method of "Gjort-lært-lurt" (see below) are examples of such supports utilised to exercise our skills in dialogical facilitation. The tasks involved in leading the facilitation processes in groups were rotated among the participants. All the participants received a reflection log where they continuously were given the opportunity to write down their experiences of leading or taking part in the ongoing dialogical processes.

As we were responsible for the teaching, we wanted to provide guidelines for how the research from the participants' own practice could be performed. Most of the participants in the educational programme found it strange to consider themselves as researchers. Research is a "big word", to quote one of my colleagues, and is associated with a specific kind of practice performed by educated academic researchers, where the task of the researcher is to uncover what is true. *Future forming research* is a practice that shall help create social change (Hersted et al., 2020). This type of research prioritises the development of meanings rather than "data", as "domains of meaning are constitutive forms of life" and will therefore prioritise certain modes of behaviour over others (Hersted et al., 2020, p. 8).

Below, I provide a few examples to show how we practised (performed) the education in dialogical facilitation and research in order to create social changes during the Train the Trainer education. The first is an example showing how the participants in the groups learned to use the visual method, "Gjort (done), lært (learned), lurt" (ideas for future) as scaffolding to keep the dialogical processes open and lasting (Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2018). The second example shows how we, as leaders of the educational programme, facilitated a creative process to expand our repertoire of actions.

Mediating Lasting Polyphonic Dialogues via the Use of Tables

One of the visual methods we had developed to build skills in dialogical facilitation was inspired by Norwegian action researcher Tom Tiller's (1999) method, "Gjort-lært-lurt" (Done, learned and new ideas for the future). This method can be described as a three-step reflective process. "Done" refers to the actions to be reflected upon, "learned" refers to what has been learned based on what has been performed, and "new ideas" refers to what could be done later (in future situations).

Our constructed "Gjort-lært-lurt method" was developed to be used in a polyphonic and creative reflection process. The method we constructed was utilised to explore and create an interactive dynamic between a number of different change processes while under development (Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2017). Not only is "our" method used to reflect on experiences etc. gained by a colleague in his/her practice, it was also constructed to accumulate simultaneous experiences being developed by other colleagues and in other practices. This is in line with Bakhtin's (1984) ideals of polyphonic research. According to principles for polyphonic learning, the method will also have to facilitate processes that result in mutual respect for (and dialogue between) various experiences and a diversity of methods of understanding (Hersted et al., 2020). Table 6.2 provides a graphical presentation of the table.

Table 6.2 Graphic presentation of the "Gjort, lært, lurt" table.

Gjort (done): What new experiences	Lært (learned):	Lurt (new ideas for the future): What is required to sustain the new practice?

have been gained since last time?	How does what is "new" contribute towards the desired development?	What else can I/we do? What new ideas have emerged?
Co-researcher 1:	Co-researcher 1:	Co-researcher 1:
Co-researcher 2:	Co-researcher 2:	Co-researcher 2:
Co-researcher 3:	Co-researcher 3:	Co-researcher 3:
Co-researcher 4:	Co-researcher 4:	Co-researcher 4:
Co-researcher 5:	Co-researcher 5:	Co-researcher 5:
Co-researcher 6:	Co-researcher 6:	Co-researcher 6:

Before starting on the work on the "Gjort-lært-lurt" method, you draw a table on a sheet of paper. The name of all the participants in the team are then entered in the left-hand side of the table. The person elected in (or assigned) the role of facilitator leads the reflective dialogical processes in the group. Normally, there will be one person in the group tasked with summarising new insight that emerges, new ideas etc.

The process normally starts with a round where all the participants have the same amount of time to talk about their "new" (generative) experiences since the last time the group met ("gjort" or performed).

The participants decide what they want to talk about. Subsequently, the group explores what they find of value in what has been told ("lært" or learned). This can be seen as processes for creating meaning, in which the colleagues can express what they value about the implemented change work.

During the final part of the process, the participants jointly explore "what else" or anything "new" that could be performed. This can be seen as a process for aesthetic knowledge development; development of new ideas about what the participants hope might happen (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). With reference to Haseman (2019), the method can therefore be described as performative as it invites the participants to shift between different knowledge positions.

The work on knowledge development is assigned a form, for example, where the participants use storytelling (preferably in combination with showing photographs) to express their commitment (Gergen & Gergen, 2012), and a method of learning together where the participants can express support and care for each other.

In order to reinforce the aesthetic aspects of the use of this method for knowledge development, the research process was frequently concluded with an evaluation round, in which the participants provided feedback to each other about what they valued or felt was inspiring about the experience that had been shared or the new ideas that had emerged.

The "Gjort-lært-lurt" method was used at all (total 8) the Train the Trainer education meetings. This helped move the research focus towards lasting processes for "becoming" and "social change", rather than "findings" (Frimann, Hersted & Søbye, 2020).

Below is my account of how the method was performed in one of the groups on 15 January 2019 (the second meeting):

> "I (Bjørn) sat at a table with group no. 5. The group is made up of four teachers and one
> after-school care employee (children's supervisor, Kongsberg). Two of the teachers come
> from schools in Tønsberg, while one teacher is from a school in Re municipality.
>
> The group is tasked with sharing experiences about the SMART work conducted since the last
> meeting (November). Experiences are presented in 'rounds'. Hanna is the first to present
> what she has done since the start-up meeting in November. Hanna is a children's supervisor
> at an after-school care service. She tells us that she has started using meetings for the pupils

in second and third grades... 'Gratitude has also been a subject they have worked on with the children during after school care' Hanna says. 'It's so lovely to hear the children talking about what they are grateful for. This could, for example, be their mothers.' Hanna shows us photographs on her iPad of how she performed the gratefulness exercise.

The next person to speak is Linda. She is a teacher in a primary school in Tønsberg. She starts by telling us that they have included SMART in parent-teacher meetings. Before the meetings, the parents are asked to write a short story about their child, representing a situation where the children used 'their strengths'. The stories were to be written in a book that all the pupils used to explore situations where they felt happy at school. Linda told us that they had named the book Gliseboka (smile book)... 'One mother, for example, told a story about her child using humour to be funny.' A SMART card showing humour as a strength was glued into the child's book together with the story. The story and the strength chosen then provides the starting point for a conversation between the teacher and the parents about the child. Once the parent-teacher meeting was over, the child was able to read the story written by the parents.

The third person to speak is Henriette. She tells us how she uses SMART in her work as a special education teacher. She explains that the basic philosophy of SMART is particularly appropriate in her work. She talks about the importance of showing appreciation for pupils who are fed up with school. Henriette told a story about how she creates situations where pupils who are 'bored with school' can be provided with a feeling of achievement in situations outside the classroom. 'When we're on walks with the pupils, I may ask – who wants to light a fire? The pupil who learns how to do this becomes a fire lighting resource on subsequent walks.'

Anette, a teacher, tells us how she has been assigned responsibility for teaching the rest of the staff at her school about the SMART work. She has introduced this as a subject at three staff meetings already. The first time, she used portrait drawing as a method to describe the

strengths of each member of staff. 'They did it with no prior knowledge', she says. 'It was
amazing'. The second time, they tried out appreciative interviews. 'That didn't go so well,' we
are told.

Birgit, the final member of the group to present her experiences, starts off by saying: 'I work
at a school where nobody knows about the SMART work. I've had a difficult time this autumn
in my class. She tells us that she has started recognising the children's emotions. She
acknowledges that the children are angry. Birgit goes on to say that she has started working
together with another teacher in the same grade on a development project that they have
called the 'Dream grade'. The pupils in that grade were involved in a start-up process in
which they had to identify what they wanted. The answers were along the lines of; longer
breaks, sweets during class time etc. They discovered that the way they had asked the
questions prompted the pupils to respond with many 'I want' answers. Birgit explains that she
read the SMART blog and copied the questions from the Dream Class (how we want to be
*together).*" (Own notes, 25 January 2019)

After everyone had presented their experiences, the group reflected on what had been said.

"I'm so inspired. I just want to get home and start working" said one of the co-researchers in
the group. "But what if we used this method of sharing experiences among our staff? We
could have done this every second Tuesday. Normally, we are asked if any member of staff
has done anything exciting. Only a few, and often the same people, respond. In this situation,
everyone has something exciting to tell. We could use this method to learn in all subjects.
What about work on mathematics? The first thing I'm going to do when I get home is talk to
my principal."

Another group member added: "It's so exciting. New ideas. We are starting to think outside
the box. We are developing the positive aspects of SMART. We are documenting what we do.
The positive aspects that constantly underlie what we do together allows me to relax, dare to
be myself." (Own notes, 25 January 2019).

As shown by this example, the development of a new practice is neither problem-free nor pain-free. However, I did feel that my colleagues were part of a fellowship of learning, in which it was also allowed to say what had not gone so well. "There is no criticism," I wrote. (Own reflection notes, 25 January 2019). When the research is now heading more towards a performative direction, this allows us to more openly express "our passions" (Gergen & Gergen, 2012). In line with this performative orientation, we asked the groups to summarise their experiences of working in research groups for the educational programme, by means of a drawn symbol (art).

Photographs 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9. My photographs of the three drawings created by the research groups to describe important features of the learning fellowship of which they had been part. The drawings were created during the second last Train the Trainer meeting (3 September 2019).
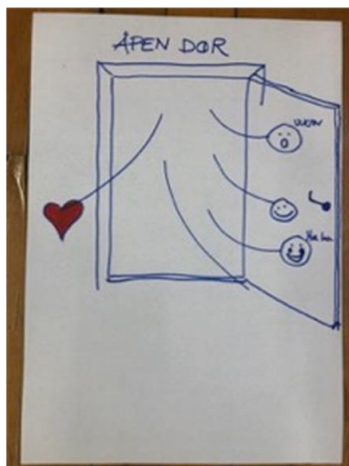
My photographs of three of these drawings, created by the groups, are presented above. One drawing (photograph 6.7) shows an open door (with the words open door above the drawing) through which (in my interpretation) the group members are entering. Hearts are included as a symbol on all the drawings. My interpretation of the heart symbol is that the teams feel a lot of empathy (care) for each other.

Frimann et al. (2020) write that knowledge development from a future forming perspective can be described as an upstream mindset. There is most probably no direct route from A to B. The research process rather involves a form of wayfinding, where the participants help each other find a way to adjust their course or start on a new route. The challenge is not to "freeze learning" but to focus on the opportunities that emerge in a lasting practice (Frimann et al., 2020, p. 37).

Text Box 6.4 Extract from a story told by a primary school teacher (co-researcher) about how the kindergarten introduced yoga in their work on upbringing – a surprising (for me) example of wayfinding.

"How can the use of yoga as a method help create good upbringing environments that trigger hope, involvement and joy in kindergartens?

At Brår kindergarten, we have used yoga as a method to teach the SMART qualities. This is a method used for all children aged 0 to 6. Everyday life in a kindergarten can be hectic for both adults and children. It is always positive to have a quiet moment, gather your thoughts and just exist in your own bubble. In modern-day society, children have to achieve so much, and this can increase their stress levels. Yoga can teach children to reduce the levels of stress they experience every day. Yoga as a method can help children develop strength, body control, flexibility and balance.

By using yoga as a method, the children gain skills about how the body, breathing, health, wellbeing and movement are all interrelated. Yoga also provides the mental tools to deal with challenges that occur both now and later in life. Yoga can also help them understand and be sensitive in relation to why and how other people react and act. In terms of body control and both fine and gross motor skills, the different yoga exercises can help improve the children's skills in these fields. This applies in particular to balance and stability, coordination and rhythm and, not least, concentration, discipline and focus. This, in turn, has several positive effects on the child in relation to both self-confidence and creativity."

Østern and Knudsen (2019) use the term "inter" to describe being in between something; between past and future, between old practice and new practice. Our objectives with the development and use of this and the other polyphonic methods were to help sustain these "between" processes.

6.4 Extension of the Interpretive Repertoire in the Research

Theories are one of the academic contributions potentially provided by research to an implemented change process (Alveeson & Deetz, 2009). For research based on social constructionism, theories may be understood as a way of thinking about and observing the world. Alvesson and Deetz (2009, p. 38) write that the problem with theories is not that they are wrong, but that they are not always relevant.

Theories may help extend the interpretive repertoire for a development project. In other words, different theories can be used to observe (for example) an implemented change process from different perspectives. By doing so, several new (generative) possible actions can be uncovered (McNamee, 2012).

During the winter and spring of 2017, I decided to introduce social innovation (SI) theories as a new theoretical perspective (lens) for my colleagues in the internal research group. As with many of the other theories upon which this research project has drawn, SI also represents an academic tradition that targets guiding transformative practice (Moulaert, MacCallum & Hillier, 2010). SI can be seen as a future-oriented change strategy. The academic field is interested in contributing to the creation of a better future by means of "lines of imagination" and "windows of opportunity for social creativity" (Moulaert et al., 2010, p. 15).

One particular concern with social innovation is the opportunities inherent in creating social inclusion by creating innovations in social relations and via processes of empowerment (Moulaert, et al. 2014). The authors indicate that SI strategies often emerge at the grassroot level in a society where people are faced with social problems to which satisfactory solutions cannot be found, based on prevailing conventions or familiar methods etc. "When I look back on the history of the SMART upbringing development through the lens of SI, it's easy to incorporate the SMART development work into such a narrative" (own reflection notes, 23 April 2017). SI theories may also help redirect the conversations about the SMART upbringing development work to a discourse of the development of the welfare services of the future. One key element in these conversations is the idea that the users must be involved as co-producer of their own welfare and welfare services (Cottam, 2011; Salloni, 2015).

The research field involving SI also contributed important experiences and perspectives about how transformative and innovative change processes can be made sustainable. According to Moulaert et al. (2010, p. 24), processes for social innovation can be described along two principal dimensions.

The first dimension relates to the (dialogical) processes that motivate people to work with social change. This is described as the value dimensions of such processes.

The second dimension relates to processes of institutionalisation. Moulaert et al. (2010, p. 24) write that social innovation processes that have emerged due to the initiative of individuals and smaller communities must create institutions to allow the use of socially creative strategies on a larger scale. Manzini (2015, p. 6.) claims that if innovations developed from the bottom up in organisations are to be allowed to grow and gain influence "at a greater scale", then lasting forms of organisation and organisations need to be established.

Both dimensions must therefore be achieved if social innovations are to be sustainable (Manzini, 2015; Moulaert et al., 2010). At this point in time (spring 2017), I felt that "this perspective could help us understand both the processes for mobilisation and creating meaning and the processes for institutionalisation in new ways" (own reflection notes, 23 April 2017).

In the first months of the spring of 2017, I therefore, decided to introduce social innovation theories as a new lens for the research work for my colleagues in the internal research group. This took place for the first time in February 2017. During the meeting, I found that the introduction of this new perspective not only opened the door to an extended understanding of the SMART work, but the theories were also met with enthusiasm. After the first research meeting in February, I summarised this as follows:

> *"When I introduced the new perspective, the research group responded with enthusiasm. I asked myself, why such an enthusiastic response? The only answer to this is that my colleagues felt that the focus has now been more clearly moved back to what SMART upbringing is all about: Helping create improvements for children and adolescents...*
>
> *My co-researcher Tina felt that these theories had helped her view the greater picture for the development work. 'It is all connected now. The theories provide us with a language we can use to talk about the whole picture,' she said. 'Our commitment is mainly mobilised by moving the focus to work with children and adolescents... and providing us with a language to*

put into words the processes and structures that we are helping to shape and are being

shaped by this development work...'. (Own reflection notes, 20 February 2017).

Based on these uplifting experiences from the meeting, we decided to implement SI as a perspective when moving on to explore our experiences and future opportunities. This took place as follows:

1. By carrying out dialogical exploration of our experiences of the SMART upbringing development work using social innovation theories as a lens. Circle maps used as a method for exploration. This was first carried out at a meeting of the internal research group in April 2017.

2. By involving a wider audience (colleagues, leaders, politicians etc.) in conversations about the SMART work from this perspective in the autumn of 2017 (Re municipality, 2018).

3. By implementing a process in the internal research group of co-authoring a leaflet describing experiences from the SMART upbringing development work using a social innovation perspective. The process of writing the leaflet took place in the spring of 2018. All the colleagues in the internal research group were involved in the process. The leaflet was entitled *SMART oppvekst som sosial innovasjon. Erfaringer fra et utviklingsarbeid i tjenester med ansvar for barn og unge. (SMART upbringing as social innovation. Experiences from a development project by services responsible for children and adolescents.)* (Hauger, Bugge-Hansen, Paulsen & Thorkildsen, 2018).

While the development work, up to the spring of 2017, had primarily been described as a transformative development process carried out within the services, we also started (based on SI theories) to describe SMART upbringing as a new concept for the co-production of enhanced welfare (Hauger et al. 2018).

The central concept behind co-production (based on SI theories) is that the people who make use of the services have "hidden resources that can be activated in delivery of the services, by using

their own knowledge and skills" (Selloni, 2017, p. 30). At that point in time, the process of exploring how SMART upbringing could provide the knowledge of development of more collective-based welfare models was only in its early stages. I will come back to the issue of whether and, possibly, how experiences from the development work could provide relevant experiences for such a discursive conversation about development of our welfare services in the final chapter of this thesis.

6.5 Establishment of the Smart Centre for Social Innovation

The most important (immediate) practical significance of our introduction of explorations into our practice and future opportunities for SMART upbringing, via an SI lens, was *"that we were more aware of the importance of developing infrastructures that could support the implemented innovation processes"*. (Own reflection notes, 2 September 2017).

The term *infrastructure* is from Selloni (2017). Infrastructure can be understood as mediating structures that recruit and interconnect new actors and resources in an ongoing innovation process (Selloni, 2017, p. 55). Examples of mediating structures are a digital network, a project or a service. Within a project, different human actors can come together in addition to resources such as time, meeting rooms, offices etc. to form a development process. With the project organisation for SMART upbringing, we had established a number of physical meeting places that allowed people to meet. We had, for example, various networks (for employees in kindergartens and after-school care employees) and a number of courses (in total eight different courses). The Train the Trainer education and digital learning platforms were examples of other infrastructure resources that recruited and involved participants in the ongoing development processes.

Many of these infrastructures recruited participants from outside their own municipality. Recruitment of external participants to the SMART work saw a significant increase in this period. In January 2018, for example, we registered 4,500 daily clicks on our website (smartoppvekst.no). By January 2019, this had increased to 10,000 clicks per day – a number that had increased yet again to 14,000 by the time the research project was over (June 2020).

Courses established showed the same development (see table 6.3). During the first years of the SMART upbringing development work (2013-2015), the courses were primarily reserved for employees in the services. In 2018, the courses held by SMART upbringing were primarily for colleagues outside Re municipality.

Table 6.3 Participants at courses held by SMART centre for social innovation, June 2019. Data gathered from the SMART centre for social innovation

Year:	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (to date)[9]
No. participants:	88	124	96	104	270	435	178

When reflecting on the implemented development work from an SI perspective, my main observation was that we "most probably had developed a comprehensive concept for how innovations could be augmented from within services responsible for children and adolescents" (Own reflection notes, 12 August 2017). I also wrote in the same note:

"Our idea for innovation is that the municipalities will be more successful in solving social problems among children and adolescents who experience exclusion, loneliness, bullying etc. by:

*1) Involving children and adolescents in **co-creating** their own upbringing environments.*

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[9] The SMART centre for social innovation now arranges fewer open courses but has more "internal" courses for employees in other municipalities and companies. In 2020, no external courses were held after the corona epidemic.

2) Basing cooperation with children, adolescents and their parents and the development of

*upbringing environments (the solutions) on the following **ethical principles and values**;*

Appreciation, focus on strengths, involvement, focus on relations and training.

*3) **Process orientation**. The innovative development work has to be sustained. This could, for*

example, take place by establishing infrastructures that allow different actors to innovate

together" (Own reflection note, 12 August 2017).

On the basis of these discoveries (etc.), we started conversations within the internal research group of 12 persons and with my colleagues from the daily project management group (4 persons) about the potential for SMART upbringing becoming a permanent organisation with responsibility for facilitation of continuous innovations, which also included other municipalities, external businesses and other actors than just the employees in the services.

The proposal we (SMART upbringing project management) developed in conversations that included our leaders in Re municipality, was for the establishment of a "SMART centre for social innovation". The centre would be assigned the task of developing and holding courses, carrying out research, developing and selling in-house produced material (books etc.) and facilitating various networks for social innovation (Re municipality, 2018). The "SMART centre for social innovation" was established via a unanimous municipal council resolution in December 2017. In 2018 there were eight employees at the centre divided into 4.7 FTEs.

6.6 The SMART Festival as a New Meeting Place

The newly established "SMART centre for social innovation" was assigned responsibility for the Train the Trainer education, which now (in 2020) also recruits participants from municipalities such as Oslo, Drammen, Lier, Kongsberg, and Vang. The SMART centre has also signed a sponsorship agreement with KLP, a national insurance company.

In the spring of 2018, the "SMART centre for social innovation" took the initiative to establish a new meeting place (infrastructure) in order to allow more new actors to participate in the ongoing development work. The meeting place was an annual event named the "SMART festival". We chose to use the term "festival" to describe the new innovation arena as we wanted to facilitate the use of the entire repertoire of knowledge; from lectures and storytelling, dialogues, art, music, dance, play and other performative activities (exhibitions, narration, demonstrations) as sources of inspiration for learning and work on innovation. 700 participants attended the first festival. These included children, parents, NGOs, politicians, business representatives and managers and professionals of a number of Norwegian municipalities.

Re municipality prepared a leaflet on the festival in the spring of 2018, including the following text:

"Our ambition (over time) is to develop the festival into a national arena for social innovation within the field of upbringing. We have chosen to use the word festival because our aim is to allow for a diversity of ways to share experiences, develop knowledge and participate. Possible examples of the above are:

- *Exhibitions*
- *Performances (dance, music, play)*
- *Workshops*
- *Lectures*

In order to develop and solve these challenges, we have to improve our skills in working together with children and adolescents. We need to mobilise the parents. NGOs, research, services working with children and adolescents and governmental authorities must join forces on an equal footing. We aim to develop a meeting place that:

- *Produces promising new practices and innovations in the field of upbringing.*
- *Allows active participation by children and adolescents.*

- *Seeks experience from development work in which children and adolescents are involved as equal participants or play a role as social entrepreneurs in public health work.*

- *Facilitates knowledge dissemination in a number of different ways: exhibitions, film, dialogue, lectures – at workshops, via song, music, drawings and images.*

- *Involves all participants in further development, distributing and co-creating new, good ideas, tools and practices.*

In addition to Re municipality, the organisations that helped organise the first public health festival in October 2018 were as follows; Tønsberg municipality; Vestfold county council, the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences at the University of South-Eastern Norway, Norwegian Red Cross; insurance company KLP, non-profit organisation Skeiv ungdom (for the LBGTQ community), local sports club Ivrig, and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) in Buskerud, Vestfold and Telemark (Re municipality, 2018).

Photograph 6.1 A photograph taken by my co-researcher, Belinda Orten, from a group session during the SMART festival (2018), where children got all the other participants to take part in a dance.

26 different interactive workshops were held during the festival, chaired by co-researchers from the Train the Trainer education programme.

The SMART festival has become a new arena for knowledge development related to the ongoing transformative change processes. Due to the hybrid nature of this new meeting place, it attracts participants who would not normally gather in one place. With reference to Manzini (2015), we have described the festival as a hybrid form of organisation: It is a meeting place for persons, groups of people and organisations across all sectors. The festival also has a form that allows new types of interactions to emerge between the participants (Jones, 2017). Play and various types of art can be utilised to create a fellowship where everyone has the opportunity to feel equal and enjoy their time together "here and now" (Bourriaud, 2002).

6.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented how this research project explored new practices under development in the child welfare service in Re, using narrative and performative inquiry (Gill, 2001). The chapter tells the story of how my co-researchers in the *SMART child welfare initiative* used dramaturgy to explore how future (desired) methods of cooperating with the parents and children could be performed, and future family lives could be experienced. The story about the new method for home visits also shows how the use of aesthetic methods such as playing can provide the family members with experiences of family life in a future forming perspective.

Further, this chapter has given insight into the formation of the new research groups: *The Train the Trainer education*. Because an important task for this research has been to contribute to creating lasting change, such initiatives have to be introduced to increase the capacity to create the desired results (Senge & Scharmer, 2006). There was also a need to allow more colleagues to learn how to apply the new methods and proposed solutions that had emerged via the research.

In the Train the Trainer education program, we experimented with the use of methods based on a performative research approach to create immediate effects in "the culture". This chapter gives an example of how playing has been used performed at The Train the Trainer education to mediate relations that feature equality, and to produce aesthetic qualities such as joy and commitment.

During this period, the research has been a co-actor in establishing *the SMART festival* and the *SMART center for social innovation infrastructures* to help support. In this chapter, these innovations are described as "infrastructure" which helps to facilitate contact between (new) parties, stakeholders, elements, and resources in the transformative change process, SMART upbringing.

Chapter 7: Summary and Illustration of the Practical Research Results

The purpose of this research project has been to create a movement towards more life-promoting ways of performing our work in the municipality. Instead of the research helping solve problems or creating ordinary progress (more of the same), the task for this research project has been to create work on upbringing in the municipality that is informed by our values and our hopes. The results of the research shall therefore be seen as a result of these efforts In this chapter I will describe the practical results created by the research collaboration. These are:

1. A discursive shift has been created when it comes to work on upbringing in our municipality
2. New local practices for work on upbringing have been developed
3. The research has contributed to the expansion of the cultural capital upon which the work on upbringing can draw.
4. The research has contributed to the development of new organisations and new forms of organizing in the work on upbringing.

In the presentation of the specific results, I will argue that the research has also had other forms of influence, both in Re municipality and outside the municipality. I describe this additional influence in the last part of the chapter.

7.1 Establishment of New Discourse Regarding Work on Upbringing

This research project has resulted in a discursive shift for work on upbringing. Discourse is, in this thesis, understood as a way of constructing and understanding the world through the use of a specific language (Alvesson & Deetz, 2009) or language-game (Wittgenstein, 1953).

In the exegesis (chapters 3 and 4), I have described this as a shift from pathology (problems) to potentials, and from problem-solving for individuals (individual orientation) to jointly triggering potential. In chapter 3, I show how the performance of an organisational development process based on AI at Kirkevoll school helped create such a discursive shift at the school.

Largely, this shift is based on the idea of the Dream Class originally practised by Vidar. In chapter 4, I show how this discursive shift is expressed in "before-now" narratives. More than 100 employees talked about the features of their own upbringing practices before the SMART umbrella term was introduced in the municipality and the important characteristics of the new practices. Having chosen to study the valuable aspects of the discursive shift under development, it is important to note that conceiving of the project as 'research' has helped reinforce all participants' transformative processes. I believe that I have fully documented such a communicative effect of the research in chapter 4.

In what I have called exegesis in this thesis, I show that this discursive shift is supported by a new verbal-visual language about strengths, which is to be used in the conversations about and with children and adolescents in work on upbringing ("the SMART language"). This SMART type of language was developed by this research to identify and put into words valued social behaviour (for example, respect and gratitude) and vital relations, for example, creativity and joy (Våge & Bugge-Hansen 2012; Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020). I have chosen to include a photograph of a poster showing one of these strength-based concepts. The poster (printed as an A3 card) presents the concept of caring. This is achieved both via a drawing (art) and a brief text below the drawing explaining how caring can be practiced. The text on the poster says: "Caring is when we show that we care about others by our actions and words". Whitney (2008) argues that the concept of caring resonates deeply within people and promotes the ability to cooperate.

Photograph 7.1 A verbal-visual poster presenting the concept of caring, one of the valued social SMART qualities (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2012).

The concept of caring is one of the 20 concepts utilised in internal discussions in the municipal services and in conversations with the children and their parents about the kind of behaviour, relationships and upbringing environments we want to have prioritized. Posters and cards showing the SMART language have been displayed in classrooms at all primary schools, in all kindergartens, health clinics and other organisations working with children and adolescents in the municipality over the past years I have been working on the research (2018-2019). I stress here how these 20 co-concepts were created by the process and not by the key researchers in advance.

Going Beyond the Status Quo

One important task with this research has been to challenge the work on upbringing beyond the status quo. To achieve this, knowledge resources based on art have been utilised and developed during the research. Metaphors from nature are used to visualise the new (local) innovative idea underlying the SMART work: That we can find new and uplifting opportunities for action in work on upbringing by focusing on the factors that trigger life in social communities rather than repairing problems.

233

Photographs 7.2 and 7.3 Two "strength trees". The photograph on the left is of a "strength tree", used as a mediating artefact at a meeting for parents (primary school) to develop knowledge about the type of class environment the parents would like to have. The photograph on the right shows how the strength tree has been utilised in the SMART child welfare initiative, where one of the family members (a child) has created an "image" of the life she would like to have. A yellow note has been attached outside the "tree". On it are the words: "Having a nice time with friends".

The "strength tree" has become both a symbol for the SMART work and a mediating artefact in involvement processes with children, adolescents, and their parents in a number of the services in the municipalities of Re (see photographs 7.1 and 7.2).

The research has also helped establish a new (ethical) standard for work on upbringing. This standard is expressed by means of five ethical principles: (1) Focus on strengths (2) appreciation, (3) collaboration (changing together), (4) relational responsibility and (5) training (in behaving consistently to values). These ethical principles have informed the work on upbringing in a number of services in the municipality (Feyling et al., 2018; Hauger, 2018; Re municipality, 2017).

I would suggest that the *ethical principles* that (also) have developed can be utilised as a general resource in the work on upbringing in other municipalities etc. (ref. 7.3 below). The principles have been made available to others in a number of books and courses.

In this thesis, I have also shown how circle maps have been used as a method for incorporating these principles into the daily work in the services (see chapters 5 and 6). Instead of attempting to incorporate the principles by telling why this is important (monologues), our colleagues are involved in creating meaning based on the principles.

Circle maps allow our colleagues (children and parents) the opportunity to put into words how it is to be met with appreciation or with a focus on own and children´s strengths. By exploring other persons' similar experiences, new ideas emerge about how these modes of behaviour in the world can be strengthened. In chapter 6, I show how circle maps are utilised so that an appreciative mode of behaviour spreads throughout the services of Re municipality.

The discursive shift in the municipality's work on upbringing does not imply that other methods of understanding have been suppressed. However, it does mean that there is now space for other approaches than those that have predominated before this research project was established.

7.2 New Local Methods for the Municipality's Work on Upbringing

The second result generated by the collaborative research is a new local practice in the work on upbringing. This new practice is referred to as SMART upbringing and can (in particular) be described by means of three concepts: *future forming, inquiry-driven* and moral (*praxis*). The description of this practice as future forming is with reference to Gergen's (2015) concept of *future forming research* and the action research tradition of Appreciative Inquiry, both of which have informed the development of this new practice (Hauger et al. 2018; Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020).

Another important characteristic of *SMART upbringing* is that this is an *inquiry-driven* practice. Children, adolescents and their parents are involved in studying (and thereby creating) the upbringing environments of which they are a part. In the Dream Class concept (see below), the pupils are involved in study-driven processes to create their own classroom environments. With the "Our small garden" concept, the children at a kindergarten were involved as co-creators of their upbringing

environment. Text Box 7.1 provides examples of how girls in the fifth grade were involved in an inquiry-driven process to transform the relationships the girls had with each other. Different variations of the main questions for this research, have been utilised as questions for the change processes based on SMART.

Text Box 7.1 SMART group of girls. An example of re-representation of children and adolescents as active participants in work on upbringing. The text was written by my co-researcher, Karina Heimestøl.

Over a period of three years, I worked with a group of girls in two different classes at Kirkevoll school. Both classes faced relatively similar challenges, with numerous conflicts, talking behind each other's backs and girls being excluded from play.

How can we together create an environment for the girls that results in more psychological safety and enjoyment for all?

When the process started, there was a clear divide between class A and class B. We, therefore, started by creating a joint strength tree, ensuring that all the participants felt a sense of ownership to the tree. On the basis of the focus question (the trunk), the girls interviewed each other to uncover success stories (the roots).

- *What does friendship with your classmates mean to you?*

- *Tell us about an incident when you experienced good friendship among your classmates. What did you do? What did the other(s) do?*

- *What qualities were used in this situation?*

The success stories of when they experienced a good environment among the girls were written on the tree roots. We then imagined the last day of school; A bird flies over Kirkevoll school and looks down on us on the last day of school before the summer holidays. What would the group of girls look like to the bird? How do you feel? How do the others feel about the group of girls? The girls interviewed each other in pairs, and we worked together to create the dream (crown) of the tree, about how we wanted the group of girls to be.

Once the strength tree had been created, we started the process of creating a roadmap. Using the dream as our basis, we chose our first sub-goal and the first step to take on the road to creating an environment in which all the girls could feel safe and happy. The roadmap was created for a specific period of time and contained the following: Sub-goals, Celebration, Obstacles, Measures. This allowed us to work systematically by taking the small steps towards the dream. The girls were

allowed to take part in deciding the sub-goals and specific measures to be performed. They were also involved in deciding different types of celebrations that were held at regular intervals.

When working on the specific sub-goals, we trained in having a focus on strengths for ourselves and each other. Each girl received a small book where they could make a note of their success stories related to the work to improve the environment among the girls. Together with these stories, they glued in the qualities they thought were predominant in the story. We then discussed the stories out loud with each other.

The girls were also assigned a secret friend according to a SMART method in which they had to look for any good things their secret friend did. When they returned to the group meetings for the girls, they received their secret friend's book and could correspondingly make a note of the success stories they had observed, and glue in qualities that were prominent. Once the stories had been noted and the qualities glued in, the name of the secret friend was revealed, and the girls read the stories out loud to each other. Sociograms were used to determine who would be a girl's secret friend. The goal was to strengthen relationships and build relationships across the two classes, A and B.

One to two cooperation games were played at each of the group meetings for the girls. These cooperation games provided positive feelings and also helped create relationships. During the process, the girls requested groups of friends to make it easier to take the games outdoors during the break. Groups of friends were established using the sociogram as a tool.

The girls were involved continuously throughout the process in evaluating their own work; What positive things have happened in the group of girls? What have you done? What have the others done? With this working method, we continuously focused on the desired behaviour, and the girls became aware of the positive changes taking place in their environment. With time, new and stronger relationships developed between the two classes, A and B, and the girls themselves described this as a hole opening in the wall – they were all now part of one class – C.

During the *SMART festival*, *Train the Trainer education* and all the courses arranged by SMART upbringing, the following question has formed the basis for the collaborative learning: How can we together create environments for an upbringing that include all children and that trigger hope, involvement and joy? For the SMART child welfare initiative, the question has been: How can we cooperate to create a family life where everyone is happy? For the *SMART groups of girls,* the question was: How can we together create an environment for the girls that results in safety and

enjoyment for all? (See Text Box 7.1) All these questions promote conversations about what we want *to happen.*

The third concept I have chosen to exploit when describing SMART upbringing is "praxis". This is a concept derived from Aristoteles. *Contrary to instrumental actions, praxis* is not assigned the task of producing any specific goals, but targets the creation of a certain moral order (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). With reference to SMART upbringing, the issue is ensuring that all children and adolescents have the opportunity to be happy, feel they are equals, are allowed to be themselves, experience joy etc. *Praxis* targets the life lived here and now, a form of "wisdom that unfolds in the interactive moment" (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 111).

Photograph 7.4 My photograph of pupils in a fifth-grade class practising the SMART language in relational conversations (in pairs) at Røråstoppen school, spring 2017. I was struck by the *relational beauty* expressed in this photograph.

When I argue that SMART upbringing can be described as a moral practise (praxis), this is on the grounds that the SMART workplaces's ethical principles and values (focus on strengths, collaboration, appreciation, relational responsibility) are at the forefront of the work. Moreover, there is a focus on training those who plan to use SMART upbringing in value-congruent behaviour on a

daily basis (Hauger et al., 2018). The Train the Trainer education is utilised as an arena in which to train in the performance of these skills (see chapter 6). Aesthetics, via use of playing, and use of different performative studies (performative conversations and interviews) to create relationships featuring equality and care *here and now*, are also included as key elements in a practice based on SMART upbringing (see photograph 7.3).

Knowledge About the New Practice

When choosing to describe SMART upbringing as a new practice by using the concept future forming, inquiry-driven and moral (praxis), I am aware that this can be performed in other ways and by drawing upon other concepts. The knowledge contributions from this (collaborative) research about the new SMART practice has taken place in particular via the development of knowledge about how such practice (can) be experienced (experimental knowledge) and performed (knowing how). The collaborative research has resulted in particular in the development of two concepts that can provide an audience with access to these forms of knowledge. These are the concepts of the Dream Class and the SMART language.

(1) The Dream Class

An article published about the Dream Class reads (Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020, p. 71):

> *"Briefly put, the model developed through the Dream Class can be described as follows:*
>
> 1. *The class identifies what they want to create, symbolized as a fruit, with an accompanying text such as: We want all students to be able to play during recess. They then vote on the desired social practice they wish to create (for example, types of play during recess that will enable everyone to participate).*
>
> 2. *Thereafter, the students brainstorm ideas about what it will require to achieve this.*

3. *The students then have the task of creating a roleplay or dramatizing different types of play activities in which they achieve this.*

4. *The social skills needed to achieve the desired interaction are trained.*

5. *Training, training…*

6. *Continued research to explore the situations once the new practice is established.*

An important aspect of using roleplay to try out new scripts for play, conflict resolution between the students (including within friendship groups etc.) includes students being given the opportunity for an experimental and sensory relationship with the new solution suggestions."

The article about the Dream Class contains a detailed description of how the pupils can be involved in this inquiry-driven change process. The proposed questions and methods for how ("knowing how") the class can make the move towards a desired future is also presented in a book made for teachers (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2015). A training course has also been developed (held for the first time in 2019) in which teachers are allowed to experience and train in the use of this concept.

The Dream Class has been applied (in many classes) at all primary schools in our (old) municipality (Re) and at a number of schools in other municipalities.

(2) The SMART language

The SMART language was the first new method on upbringing made accessible via a book, various other publications and courses (appendix D). In a description of this innovation, my colleagues in the internal research group and I summarise the main elements of the concept (Hauger, Bugge-Hansen, Paulsen & Thorkildsen, 2018, p. 64):

1) A book with an accompanying conceptual apparatus about strengths – printed on cards (see example in photograph 7.1).

2) An educational programme showing how the method can be introduced

to children (the first book was written for children in kindergartens). One key element of this educational programme is that the children shall play the role of researchers. Each book (four in total) comprises a number of narratives describing everyday situations that are familiar to the children. The stories are read and then, on the basis of the story read out loud, the children shall research "what is good" in the relations between the people, and the good ways of spending time together that help good things happen. The educational programme is based on a method from action research, where the pupils sit in a ring, listen to the story, make up their own minds about what happens by drawing upon a language about strengths. They then have appreciative dialogues with a fellow pupil. Finally, the pupils share their observations in a group session (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2012; Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2013).

3) The innovation shows how the pupils can take the step from being researchers in a "fictive world" (a narrated story) to start researching and reflecting on each other's practice. The development of a separate SMART conceptual apparatus can be understood as a process in which the original understanding of the words is deconstructed, and a new semiotic understanding is constructed, with new areas of application developed. The SMART terminology is assigned new meaning or an additional meaning beyond what is common in the ordinary contexts in kindergartens and schools.

The SMART language has now been developed into a concept customised for work with children in kindergartens and grades 1-4, grades 5-7 and grades 8-10 (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2012; 2014; 2015; Iversen & Bugge-Hansen, 2017; 2018). A course has also been developed to teach participants how the concept can be practised. This has been held for more than 1,000 participants (see table 6.3). I have chosen, below, to include a small extract from a blog I wrote in which I communicate my (first-hand) experience of using the method at a primary school.

Performance of the SMART Language

Below is a photograph of the class I visited in January 2017. The teacher, Iselin, is sitting in front of the pupils. The photograph also provides insight into how a SMART practice can be supported by some important set pieces (see the posters of the SMART language on the board). The pupils are seated in a specific pattern (semi-circle). This makes it easy to involve all the pupils in shifting dialogue (in pairs, in groups etc.) and to promote equality and relational closeness.

Photograph 7.5 A photograph I took in January 2017. The photograph is of a third-grade class at Kirkevoll school. Note how the teacher and pupils are seated and the posters on the board.

An extract from the blog I wrote in January 2017 reads:

> *"The teacher explains that they will be continuing to work with SMART upbringing. She briefly talks about the 'SMART concepts' they have worked with before, and explains that she will read a new story from one of the 'SMART upbringing books'. These books contain stories about the children's daily lives at school. By listening to the stories, the pupils learn about children who face a number of moral dilemmas and value-based choices in daily life. SMART*

upbringing has designed 20 concepts to put into words good actions performed (values) and good behaviour (moral conduct) in the social interaction between children and between children and adults.

Today, the class will continue working on the concept of integrity. When I heared this, I am a bit surprised. My immediate thought is that integrity is a difficult concept. 'Can pupils in the third grade learn this concept, not just understand what the word means lexically, but what it also means in practice? How can you learn to behave with integrity at the age of nine?'

I turn my attention to the teacher and the pupils. Iselin starts to read from the SMART book. I watch the pupils; one of the girls yawns, a boy moves around a little, some look over at me. Otherwise, the children are completely silent. All we can hear is the teacher's voice. All eyes are on the teacher.

The story she reads has a well-known dramaturgy (as in fairy tales), with narratives from daily life that are familiar for the children. This makes it easy for them to recognise the dilemmas in the story, and how the persons in the stories feel. This allows the children to get involved in the story. The stories are about how to behave and live together so that everyone can be happy. The pupils are involved in relational conversations (in pairs) where they investigate each other's thoughts and opinions on what happens. As the pupils investigate and learn together from the books, they are also practising 'the strengths' described on the SMART cards. The pupils learn to understand what 'caring' is by practising (for example) a caring way of talking together."

I have previously argued that the concept of the SMART *language* can be utilised to practice and train the pupils' aesthetic and ethical skills. I believe it may be relevant to make reference to Bourriaud's (2002) concept of *relational aesthetics* in the description of an important feature of this concept. Relational aesthetics target creating relations featuring equality and caring here and now. The SMART language provides knowledge on how to train the skills required to achieve this.

Both the SMART language and the Dream Class have been distributed to all primary schools, kindergartens and after school care services in Re municipality. Furthermore, the concepts have been made available and utilised at a number of municipal services working with children and adolescents nationwide.

7.3 Development of New Cultural Capital for the Work on Upbringing

A third result from this research is the development of new, and thereby an extension of, cultural capital upon which the municipality can draw when working on upbringing. In a discussion of what could be defined as results within performative research, Barrett (2009) points out that one possible contribution could be an increase in the cultural capital made available to a community. The term *cultural capital* in this context is used with reference to Louise Johnson's (2006) and Anne de Bruin's (1999) development of the term. In their interpolation of the term, they distinguish between two types of cultural capital: *Objectified cultural capital* and *embodied cultural capital*.

Objectified cultural capital could be artefacts such as books, films and other material artefacts, or local activities and events. *Embodied cultural capital* is described as talents, values, involvement, pride etc. that emerge via involvement in the research. Another terminology that may be used to put into words embodied capital are "agency"; the experience of having control and influence over the conditions that are of importance for living a good life and having passion. These are resources that may provide important driving forces for the work on creating social changes and desired transformations.

Embodied capital emerges by means of research processes that place values at the forefront and provide the participants with experiences that awaken emotions. Such an involvement occurs in particular when the participants are allowed to place their own values and deeply meaningful questions at the centre of the research. Moulaert et al. (2010) argues that it is the orientation towards values in a development process that motivates people to get involved in processes of social change.

Such an involvement may occur in that the participants are provided with first-hand (bodily) experiences of (new) ways of being together, solving tasks etc. that awaken positive feelings for an issue or change process (Sekerka & Fredrickson, 2010). My commitment to (and involvement in) this development process can be attributed such experiences (see chapter 3). Several of my colleagues have also stated that such "embodied" experiences have been absolutely decisive for their involvement. I believe that this thesis supports the claim that a comprehensive involvement in the development work has also been triggered among a number of persons outside of the municipal services; for example, among parents coaches in local sports clubs, politicians, local and national businesses etc[10].

I would therefore argue that there are many more persons who exercise some form of agency in the municipality's work on upbringing. Over the past years (2017-2018), a number of new actors also emerged in addition to the municipal services' employees, who took an active role in the work on upbringing in our municipality.

New Physical and Cultural Artefacts

Table 7.1 (below) provides an overview of new cultural and physical artefacts (objectified cultural capital) developed via the collaborative research. I have chosen to list six types of artefacts: These are the SMART principles (cultural artefact), printed cards and posters (physical artefacts); a number of books and folders (physical artefacts), films and other symbolic resources.

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[10] The local sports club "Ivrig" has chosen to rename its sports hall SMART arena. Large banners with the SMART language are on the walls in the hall, sponsored by the national insurance company, KLP.

Table 7.1 Cultural capital in the form of physical and symbolic artefacts developed by means of the collaborative research in the period from 2012 to 2019.

Physical and symbolic artefacts	How these are made available	Prevalence
The SMART principles	The principles are described in several "SMART books" and different articles.	Information on the SMART work in a number of municipalities (Re, Tønsberg, Vang municipalities), schools and kindergartens outside our own municipality.
Cards and posters: Printed cards and posters of different sizes with the "SMART language", "bunch of keys" and posters.	Physical cards of different sizes. Available as an enclosure with a number of the SMART books. The cards can be downloaded for free from the SMART upbringing website. The Gjort-lært-lurt poster is available via the online shop. http://smartoppvekst.no/nettbutikk/	Published in seven languages: Danish, French, English, Polish, Hungarian, Spanish, Swahili. Comprehensive distribution via courses etc. to a number of schools, kindergartens, after school care schemes in Norway.
Books and leaflets *Seven books* about how SMART can be utilised for work on upbringing in schools (5), kindergartens (1) and child welfare (1). Two working leaflets for pupils in primary school (1) and lower secondary school (1). Leaflet on the method for *Appreciative reflective team* and *SMART upbringing as social innovation*.	Available on the online shop. http://smartoppvekst.no/nettbutikk/	The number of books sold is more than 10,000.
Films *about the SMART work*	Can be downloaded/viewed on the following website: http://smartoppvekst.no/media/snurr-film/	The films are used to present the SMART work at conferences, courses etc. Shown to hundreds of persons.

Visual artefacts	The SMART compass (see figure 5.6). Presented in various books.	The SMART compass is used to present SMART upbringing
	Available as PowerPoint slides. Circle map	during courses, for educational purposes and at meetings.

These resources have been published for the municipal services via SMART upbringing's website, via the SMART centre's online shop and via distribution during courses, conferences and meetings in the municipality. Further, these new physical and cultural artefacts have also been made available to "all" Norwegian municipalities, kindergartens and schools. Sales of the six books written about SMART upbringing had, for example, reached more than 10,000 (spring 2019).

The production of new materials and cultural artefacts has been significant during this development process. This is a reflection of the new forms of (hybrid) organisations and cooperation methods that have emerged. Artists (graphic artists and illustrators) have been involved as new partners in the work on upbringing, and economic and material resources (rooms for courses etc.) have been obtained from the market (online shops) and sponsors.

7.4 Establishment of New Organisations and New Forms of Organizing

The research has contributed to the establishment of a number of new infrastructures and organisational forms that allow the involvement of new actors in the ongoing development work. Examples of such new infrastructures are the SMART festival, an annual event with 700-800 participants in 2018 and a corresponding figure in 2019; extensive training activities (see table 6.3), a specific educational programme (Train the Trainer) and the establishment of the *SMART centre for social innovation* (Hauger et al. 2018). I have chosen to use the term *collaborative organisation* to describe the new form of organisation that has emerged via the SMART upbringing grassroots initiative. Manzini (2015) writes that collaborative organisations achieve results that would not have been possible to achieve if one of the actors (for example, employees in one of the services) worked

alone. Manzini (2015) goes on to claim that such forms of organisation imply a rediscovery of the power of doing things together and a breach with the modern organisation's strong focus on task distribution (fragmentation) and individualisation. Such organisations emerge as a result of the (social) conversations people have to find solutions to the practical challenges they want to solve. With this development project, the task has been to find solutions to how all children and adolescents can be included in upbringing environments, and how to create environments featuring joy, hope and involvement. The new forms of organisation that have emerged via the SMART upbringing development process (and new forms of practice etc.) can be seen as different answers to the question of how we can *collaborate* to achieve this.

I have previously in this thesis pointed out that one important (new) feature of (for example) the new organisation, *SMART centre for social innovation,* is that it is a hybrid organisation. The centre works in ways that we can recognise from a market with (sales) and NGOs (mobilisation and network organisation). Inhabitants (children, adolescents and their parents), NGOs (for example, the sports club "Ivrig"), businesses (the insurance company KLP) are assigned (and take on) an active role as partners. The idea is that people (and various actors) shall help each other in creating valued social improvements for children and adolescents.

In efforts to keep the implemented development processes open and generative (ref. the second main question), it became important for us to create meeting places that also recruited participants from outside our own services, for example citizens, NGOs, businesses etc. The festival established in 2018 is an example of such a hybrid meeting place established with contributions from the research (Selloni, 2017).

Another form of organisation that has emerged as one of the answers to the main question is a comprehensive range of courses (see table 6.3). One of the contributions made by this research is that it has given birth to a new discourse in (the local) conversations about how to facilitate a good upbringing for children and adolescents (focus on potentials in social communities). The courses have been developed to build the capacity to lead change processes based on such a perspective.

In 2018, a specific Train the Trainer education programme was also established for the management of change processes based on SMART upbringing. Both the educational programme and courses have been established with some form of collaborative organisation. The main question for the SMART work forms the basis for all learning activities. The courses and educational programmes target solving *specific challenges* (ref. the main question, and are not tasked with providing training in general methods). Building relations with the participant who attends the courses and education have therefore been important (ref. chapter 6). Moreover, there is an emphasis on involving the participants (acting as learning colleagues, co-researchers etc.) in processes where the implemented change processes (SMART work) is made meaningful, and that courses and educational programmes are designed so that they make people want to get involved.

Based on this summary, and with reference to my exegesis, I would argue that the comprehensive courses, *Train the Trainer education*, *SMART festival* and *SMART centre for social innovation* can be defined as results of the collaborative research.

7.5 Extended Social Influence

When summarising the results of collaborative research, Banks, Herrington and Carter (2017, p. 542) argue that you shall not only identify the results that can be related to the purpose of the research, but should also identify the *more wide* social influence the research may have for society. It is the *collaborative way* in which the research is conducted that could, in particular, give rise to such an influence. Banks et al. (2017, p. 542) express this as follows:

> *"Participatory research, which entails people with a stake in the issue under study being involved in carrying out aspects of the research, adds an additional dimension. Here, change may occur in individuals and organisations as a result of doing the research, regardless of the findings."*

Further, Banks et al. (2017) writes that the experiences gained by different stakeholders from participating in the collaborative research can generate a generalised influence *outside the context* of the actual research. This influence is referred to as "participatory impact". There are several ways in which such participatory impact can be generated. In this summary, I point out two different ways this can be achieved. One is known as "*collective impact*". This implies that new forms of *strategic collaboration* are established between different organisations in order to achieve desired social changes and develop new policies in areas highlighted via the research. The collaboration established between our municipality, Vestfold county council, the Norwegian Directorate of Health and several other municipalities in the area of public health is one such example. These are actors that have both participated and co-organised (KLP and Vestfold county council) conferences held regarding SMART upbringing (2015, 2018 and 2019).

Another example of such strategic collaboration is between the project (subsequently the SMART centre), the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) (an interest group for all municipalities and county councils in Norway) and insurance company KLP. In both these examples, the collaboration related to a shared interest in doing something about (encouraging) experiences that have emerged from the research and SMART work. In both examples, there has been a desire to make these experiences available to all municipalities in Norway. The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) has, for example, supported the production and distribution of a number of films and educational programmes regarding the use of SMART in the work on upbringing in schools and kindergartens. Another example is the sponsorship agreement signed between insurance company KLP and the SMART centre. In addition to annual economic support, KLP provides rooms free of charge for courses held by SMART upbringing in the capital city (Oslo) and Bergen municipality (Vestland county).

Extended Influence From the Research in Re Municipality

The second form of extended social influence from the collaborative research is found in Re municipality. This has emerged via a form of influence known as "*collaborative impact*" (Banks,

Herrington & Carter, 2017). This implies that persons, groups etc., who have been involved in the research pick up ideas, concepts, methods etc. developed (or utilised) via the research and use these in other areas than those relating to the research. Two such examples are presented in brief below. The first is within management and management development, and the second within the work to develop a new vision for the new (merged) Tønsberg municipality.

1. *Leader training*: In 2017, the councilor in Re municipality took the initiative to carry out leadership training in the municipality, based on SMART upbringing (the principles, etc.). Together with two co-researchers from the SMART upbringing project, we were involved in the work to plan and carry out this training program. Approximately 80 managers, leaders of the largest unions in the municipality were involved in the training, comprising five meetings held over one year.

2. *The process to create the vision:* In the autumn of 2018, a project was initiated to create a new vision for Re and Tønsberg municipalities, which were to be merged. The SMART centre for social innovation was tasked with creating a design for the vision process, based on active involvement of the citizens, the municipal employees and politicians in the two municipal councils. We created a design for the development of the new vision, in which more than 400 persons took part via dialogues and creative processes at four conferences (using art etc.) to explore the kind of municipality they jointly wanted to create. Two of my co-researchers were assigned responsibility for facilitating the process together with some 20 (voluntary) participants from the Train the Trainer education programme.

By making use of the involvement processes based on Appreciative Inquiry, the new vision and core values for the new municipality of Tønsberg (merged with Re) were developed. The public values identified via this process were *collaboration*, *innovation*, *safety,* and *sustainability*. The new vision for the municipality was named: "Tønsberg municipality, where children laugh." The vision and new values were unanimously adopted on 22 June 2019.

7.6 Potential for Generalisation

The description of how I have conducted the research (chapters 3 to 6) and many of the knowledge contributions from the research have the form of emergent knowledge. The knowledge contributions mainly feature know-how and performative knowledge. According to Bolt (2007, p. 33), such type of knowledge has the potential for generalisation. This would take place by including performative knowledge from the research in dialogue with existing practical and theoretical paradigms (Bolt, 2007). I would argue, in this context, that this research has the potential to contribute new insights, more complex explanations or supplementary knowledge in relation to several theories and established practices. Below are three such (possible) contributions.

The first (possible) contribution may be in the form of illustrative knowledge to Gergen's (2014) research concept, *future forming research* (FFR). The narrative of how I have used this research approach (my exegesis) is a description of how FFR is utilised in my contextualised practice. This narrative itself is a result of the research. By publishing this thesis, I aim to include my experiences of using FFR in dialogue with others. Cajaiba-Santana (2014) writes that stories about how creative research has been conducted can in themselves be seen as a theoretical construction. The choices made in the research must be seen (and explained in the light of the relational processes of which the research is part). They have the potential to provide insight about (for example) how research processes based on *future forming research* can start, the possible benefits of such research and how the different forms of art in the research can be activated as a resource in (such) research.

The primary aim of my research project has not been to contribute to the development of Gergen's (2015) FFR theory. However, I do envision that my story about how I have conducted the research can contribute towards new ideas of how FFR can be conducted, and may inspire others to apply this research approach.

The second possible contribution to the development of generalised knowledge from this research involves the field of *Appreciative Inquiry*. To date, there has been little knowledge about how AI and how this process model can be utilised in work with children. My colleague Vidar Bugge-

Hansen and I wrote an article presenting our experiences of how this can be carried out. The article was published in the journal, *Appreciative Inquiry Practitioner* in February 2020 (Hauger & Bugge-Hansen).

The third possible contribution is in the field of public health. In 2017, I was asked by the Norwegian Directorate of Health (a part of our national health authorities) to write a report. In the report, issued in 2018, I show (e.g.) how different concepts based on SMART upbringing (the Dream Class, SMART language etc.) can be utilised for local public health work (Hauger, 2018). Once the report had been issued, I presented its contents at a number of regional (five) and national (one) conferences. This resulted in a dialogue with professionals who work in the field of public health.

7.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented a summary and illustration of the practical research results. An important goal of this research is to create work on upbringing in Re municipality that is informed by our values and our hopes. To achieve this, this research project has involved various relational processes to create direct cultural changes in Re municipality's upbringing work. Culture should, in this dissertation, be understood as a locally negotiated performance of the practice, a habit, or a ritual (McNamee, 2014). The chapter shows that the research has contributed to the development of a new way of talking and reflecting on the work of upbringing in Re municipality. This shift in discourse is described as a shift from pathology (problems) to potentials, and from problem-solving for individuals (individual orientation) to jointly triggering potential.

The second result generated by the collaborative research has been the construction of new local methods in the work on upbringing. These are the concepts of the Dream Class and the SMART language. The knowledge contributions from this (collaborative) research about these new methods has taken place via the development of knowledge about how such practices (can) be experienced (experimental knowledge) and performed (knowing how). This research has also contributed to an

extension of the cultural capital (de Bruin,1999; Johnson 2006) and upon which the municipality can draw when working on upbringing.

Further, this chapter discusses how this research can contribute to supplementary knowledge in relation to several established practices. One contribution identified in this chapter is illustrative knowledge to Gergen's (2014) research concept, *future forming research* (FFR). My exegesis has the potential to provide insight about (for example) how research processes based on *future forming research* can start, the possible benefits of such research and how the different forms of art in the research can be activated as a resource in (such) research.

Chapter 8: Theoretical Contributions, Discussion and Implications

In the first part of this chapter, I provide an account of the contribution this PhD research makes to knowledge advancement in the discipline. This contribution is related to theories of *Appreciative Inquiry* (Bushe, 2013; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Then I will discuss the issue of whether the processes that have contributed to the development of new practices for the upbringing of children and adolescents can be made transferable to other municipalities. During the final phase of the research, we started to provide training in how all employees in organisations assigned responsibility for children and adolescents can be involved in the work to realise the vision for the SMART work (see chapter 6). These change processes at the municipal and municipal service levels have been named *SMART Upbringing.* In this chapter, I open the door to discussions on the characteristics of such change processes, and whether such practices differ from other comparable concepts. I also present eight characteristics of change processes based on *SMART Upbringing.* The chapter concludes by claiming that SMART Upbringing can be seen as a new practice with several unique features. I also propose that the new concept is made available as a resource for other municipalities to be used for their work on upbringing.

I encourage discussions of the utility value of the research project and its possible implications for other municipalities, practitioners in the field of upbringing and for the academic field of future forming research. I conclude this chapter and this thesis by identifying possible limitations with the study and issues that warrant further research.

8.1 Expanding the Theoretical Foundations of Appreciative Inquiry

I have previously pointed out that Appreciative Inquiry ("AI") is a method for bringing about social changes with an exclusively positive focus (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider, 2017). Bushe (2012) queries whether AI can bring about transformative changes without the processes of change also addressing problems. Grant and Humphries (2006) point out that the use of a positive

discourse in an AI-based change process can lead to many of the participants' concerns and knowledge being automatically disqualified and not taken seriously. Bushe (2012) also points out that the transformative power of AI is gradually weakened as the strengths perspective is increasingly incorporated into daily conversations and tasks within the organisation. In order to retain the generative power of a change process based on AI, Johnson (2007) argues that development processes must be able to draw on areas of disagreement and differences of opinion. One way to do this is to adopt reflection and open up to criticism (Bushe, 2012; Clouder & King, 2015; Grant & Humphries, 2006).

Drawing on Wittgenstein's (1953) *language game* metaphor, change processes that open up to criticism may result in a "blame game" (Hersted, 2020). This means that conversations (a language game) become characterised by accusations and monological presentations of one's own position, sometimes culminating in a breakdown of relations (Whitney, 2008). The danger of this happening when an AI-based change process opens up to criticism may be a major reason why many practitioners (including myself) have been wary of encouraging conversations about negative aspects. In this PhD study, however, we have found that when these kinds of conversations are guided by relational ethics, they can actually have a revitalising effect on the people involved in the dialogue and on the ongoing development work. These kinds of ethically guided conversations can help foster greater trust between the participants and promote the discovery of new potentials for action (McNamee, 2020).

My interpretation or "exegesis" illustrates how theories of relational ethics (McNamee, 2020), and the use of reflexive methods (Marshall, 2017; Simon & Shard, 2014) have gradually been integrated into the work of AI-based development work in the municipality of Re. One of these methods was *Appreciative Reflective Teams* (Hauger et al., 2018; 2020). The use of this method paved the way for a greater diversity of ways in which my colleagues and I could engage in (and discuss) the AI-based change processes in our municipality.

This PhD study contributes increased knowledge about how change processes based on AI can retain their transformative power over time. Three contributions to the knowledge in the field that are useful in this regard will be presented:

1) Increased knowledge about how change processes based on AI can relate to "negative" elements and capitalise on disagreements and diversity of opinion.

2) Increased knowledge about how the participants' personal interests and processes of empowerment can help vitalise development work and contribute to long-term commitment from the people involved.

3) New knowledge about how methods of reflexivity can be incorporated into an AI process.

The Negative in an AI Process

Early AI theories argued that the use of a positive lens in change work, i.e. conversations about "the best of what is", was necessary in order to create an emotional climate that would enable the members of an organisation to talk about their dreams (Bushe, 1995). In a retrospective article, Bushe (2012) writes that this has been interpreted as implying that conversations about negative experiences ought to be avoided altogether. That is not the case. If the transformative power of AI is to be maintained, it is important to avoid dogmatism and the requirement that a specific model (for example, the 5-D model) or method must be adopted. Instead, a generative conversation between researchers and practitioners about the further development of AI should be encouraged. It is this kind of conversation that I hope to contribute to with this PhD project. One thing that strikes me in the literature about AI is how little has been written about how AI should deal with criticism and disagreements that can (and will) arise in processes of change. If an AI process is to not only enable conversations about negative aspects, but also to manage to capitalise on these experiences, the process must have helped develop a collective competence for how this can be done. The responsibility for ensuring that all opinions are listened to, and the responsibility for developing a community where everyone takes responsibility for ensuring that everyone is included and feels comfortable – no matter what is raised in the

conversations – cannot be an individual responsibility. It must be everyone's concern (Gergen, 2014). To achieve this, change processes based on AI ought to, over time, help expand the way people can talk about their experiences (the discourse). The participants must not become ensnared by one single discursive possibility (McNamee, 2020).

Appreciative Reflective Teams: Expansion of the Discursive Opportunities for Participation in an AI Process

One criticism that is commonly raised against AI is that this discursive approach to learning sets limits as to what kind of stories are regarded as relevant to investigate (selecting stories), how the stories should be presented, and what methods should be used when extracting knowledge from the stories (Grant & Humphries; 2006; Clouder & King, 2015). As a general rule, the core team will be given the authority to make these choices. In an Appreciative Reflective Team process, the responsibility for making these choices circulates among all the participants.

Our reflective teams method consists of three phases (1) a preparatory phase, (2) a reflective team process, and (3) a reflective retrospective phase. These processes can be understood as a practising of a new form of distribution of power, or what Marshall (2006) calls a political process within the research process, which we have summarised as follows (Hauger et al., 2002, p. 82):

- Everyone is given the opportunity to present their story, purely as narrator/presenter, without interruptions or having to answer/defend.
- Everyone enters the role as purely a listener of others' stories. This position shifts through different phases of a developing story. Sometimes you will be listening in relation to a story of practice being told for the first time. Other times, you will be in a listening position to others' reflections and a mirroring of your own story of practice.
- Everyone will participate in dialogues about his or her own or others' stories of practice.
- Everyone will take on the role of dialogue leaders, with the opportunity to ask appreciative, inquiring questions of the one who has presented a story of practice.

- Everyone will enter the role as process leaders. This entails leading and shaping the appreciative team process.

- Everyone will contribute to the development of common empirical material, taking pictures, writing notes, drawing etc.

- Everyone will be given the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making when it comes to what "data" will count from the reflective team processes. Thus, many different voices will be heard, and we will harvest a magnitude of possible answers to our research questions".

In this way, appreciative reflective teams help expand the way the participants (co-researchers) in a development project can be involved in the research process. Through a new distribution of roles and tasks in the action research process, the individual will be less trapped in researching or sharing their experiences in a (singular) discourse (McNamee, 2020). I would therefore argue that using an Appreciative Reflective Team process can serve to help expand the discursive potential of an AI-based change process.

Polyphonic Dialogues

Efforts to expand the discourse in an AI process from dialogues that have an exclusively positive focus to also including other discourses can be done through the use of polyphonic dialogues (McNamee, 2020). These kinds of dialogues are about focusing attention on what emerges (such as criticism) or is unexpected and meeting it with openness. Through these kinds of dialogues, the participants seek to set their own views aside and recognise that (for example) a development project can be understood and experienced in many ways. The purpose of these kinds of learning processes is to create a space for uncertainty and dissensus, rather than creating consensus. Further, it is important not to create antagonism, but to seek to co-create a better understanding between the different views that emerge (Hersted et al., 2020). It is also important that everyone who participates in these kinds of learning processes takes responsibility for making sure that everyone is included and feels comfortable.

Our work on developing *Appreciative Reflective Teams* shows how such polyphonic learning processes can be applied within an AI-based change process (Hauger et al., 2018a; Hauger et al., 2020). The method is a further development of the "reflective teams" method developed by the Norwegian psychologist and professor Tom Andersen (1987; 1994). In recent years, this method has also been adopted in action research inquiry. Hersted and Frimann (2020) argue that these kinds of team processes enable light to be shed on contrasts, dilemmas, doubts and opportunities in ongoing change work. Furthermore, Hersted and Frimann argue that training can help bring about changes in fixed patterns of thinking and action and can pave the way for new opportunities for action.

In our refined method, "appreciation [is] brought into the very heart of our ethical relational-responsive practice (Hauger et al., 2020 p. 71). Drawing on Whitney and Trosten-Bloom's (2003) understanding of the concept, that is, to see appreciation as 'an act of recognition' and 'an act of enhancement of value'." The emphasis of the fact that the work on learning processes should be appreciative is based on theories from AI that practising an appreciative way of behaving in conversations with others can help create a climate where people feel safe and incorporate ways of behaving towards one another that are characterised by caring and kindness (Whitney, 2008). Acting appreciatively is also about everyone assuming active responsibility for praising one another, praising all experiences, opinions, etc., that are shared in our learning community. However, this kind of fundamental attitude does not mean that we must avoid any form of criticism. On the contrary, it resulted in the voicing of criticism being seen as a vote of confidence and a manifestation of other (previously) suppressed opinions (Caza & Caroll, 2012). Another minor, positive side effect of doing this was that by listening to these views, a foundation was laid for more people in our group (of researchers) to feel seen and included. The bonds between us were strengthened, and the well-being of the group increased (Hauger et al. 2018).

New Types of Questions in an AI Process

The kind of questions asked in an AI-based change process will also affect how reality is described and understood. In our work on developing appreciative reflective teams, we (also) emphasised the use of more open (as opposed to positive) questions. An example of this kind of question is:

> *Tell a story that demonstrates what makes you particularly involved in this development work, what you hope to achieve, and what you are doing to achieve this.*

This question invites the individual to think through their intentions behind being part of the initiated development work. Facilitating conversations about this is an important element in self-reflexive practice (Marshall, 2006). When development work based on AI is started, the initial goal is to create a focus for the inquiries that is perceived as important to everyone in the community or group. Once this has been done, this (collective) intention may easily render a large diversity of personal intentions invisible. Pratt (2002) discovered that as an AI practitioner she often felt greater loyalty to the process than to the people. The question above invites us to explore what it is that interests and motivates the individual involved in the change work. This is a question that has helped me shift my attention to what it is that motivates my colleagues to engage in the change processes. In so doing, I found that the processes of change became both more vital and more autonomous or self-directed (see chapter 5). Marshall (2006) also points out that making adaptations to accommodate various individual and collective interests in a development project will lead to long-term commitment from the people involved.

Through this PhD research, we have also come up with another question that has paved the way for a greater diversity of experiences, interests, academic traditions and theoretical perspectives being actively included in initiated processes of change. The question starts: "How can we together create.....".

We began to adopt this type of question after this PhD project had helped develop a vision for the development project SMART Upbringing. The short version of this vision is that all children and young people in the municipality should feel included in their daily arenas: at school, in groups of

friends, at organised afterschool activities, at kindergarten, etc., and that everyone should experience joy, have hope for the future, and be involved. To work out what needs to be done to realise this vision, we developed the open, generative question:

> *How can we together create inclusive environments for children and young people that trigger joy, hope, and involvement?*

As we started using these questions, we noticed a greater diversity of interests, experiences and personal involvement being brought in, which we could then harness to create momentum towards our desired future. Some of the experiences that were shared in our learning community were about negative experiences of using AI, scepticism towards the use of a "purely positive approach" in the change work, and situations characterised by conflicts (Hauger et al., 2018a). Using the *Appreciative Reflective Team* method in the internal research group leads to a broadening of the methods used to explore each other's experiences. For example, as a result of these processes, mindfulness was adopted as a new method (Hauger et al., 2018a).

Practising Reflexivity in Team Processes

The concept of reflexivity focuses on the individual participants' (co-researchers) personal practices and the implications of this practice (Caza & Carroll, 2012). Earlier in this thesis, I pointed out that reflexivity can happen in a number of different ways. In the Appreciative Reflective Team method, the reflexive processes take place in two ways: (1) Through *self-reflection*, a form of awareness practice, where I reflect on my own behaviour in the world. This is a form of "self-guidance" based on the wish to coordinate with others in an ethical manner" (Simon, 2014). (2) Through relational reflection. This is a form of reflection that takes place through dialogue with others (Simon & Shard, 2014). The dialogues between two or more colleagues are facilitated in such a way that others'

perspectives on their own practices are incorporated into the reflection processes. These kinds of reflection processes can be described as polyphonic (Bakhtin, 1981; 1984; Shotter, 2010).

Self-reflection is introduced as a method in Appreciative Reflective Teams in a number of different ways. Firstly, all the participants (in turn) are given the opportunity to say why they have chosen to get involved in the initiated development work. The fact that the individual co-researcher is given the opportunity to express their interests (Marshall 2006, p. 338) is a key element in self-reflexive practice. It is not given that people know what motivates them (or others) to get involved. Challenging each other to put this into words, and how this manifests itself in one's own practice, can help direct the research processes towards what is of the greatest importance to the people involved, thereby helping increase the usefulness of the research. In the start-up phase of an Appreciative Reflective Team process, the individual co-researcher should present an element from their practice that we experienced as important and meaningful. I was tasked with picking out what I was particularly interested in, or what I thought was important, some three or four weeks before these practice experiences were to be presented at a reflective team meeting. Through the self-reflexive processes initiated in advance of the team meetings, we were challenged to think through the quality of our own practices, and the significance that our own way of presenting this practice had for others, and how this way of approaching a change project has affected my life and my well-being (Marshall, 2006).

After a colleague had presented a practice story that provided insight into what it was in the ongoing change processes that were of particular interest to them, and how this practice was performed, this person was given the opportunity to adopt an external perspective on their own practice and the story they had told. This is done by the person who had told their story having to sit outside of the circle of their co-researchers, who then had a learning dialogue based on the personal story that had been told. The process of self-reflexivity ends by writing a reflection memo, summarising what our co-researcher has learned from these reflection processes and how it will affect the future work.

The relational reflection processes take place in two sessions using the method we developed: First, via reflective team processes based on a colleague's practice story, and then through a reflection process based on a written reflection memo. I have described how these relational reflection processes are designed in chapter 5 of this thesis, which has been published in *The Appreciative Inquiry Practitioner* (Hauger et al., 2020).

Embedding the Appreciative Reflective Team Method in AI Processes

An action research process based on AI will normally take place through different cycles of inquiry processes. These processes are described as a 4D or 5D process (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Hauger et al., 2008). A positive focus should be used in the first phases of an AI process, which examines when the people and the organisation work at their best (the discovery phase) and in the work on creating a dream (the dream phase), (Bushe, 2012). This kind of focus in the inquiry processes helps develop a climate characterised by recognition, where the focus is on everything that works well and all the resources that can be activated in a process of change. According to the theories that underpin change processes based on AI, the strengths of the organisation and the people are the most overlooked resource that can be activated to create the organisation that everyone wants to be a part of. It will be relevant to bring in reflexive processes, more open questions and criticism in the work to keep the initiated change processes vital (the design phase and the destiny or delivery phase). At this point (often after having been part of the process for a year), the participants will have helped create a learning environment where together they take responsibility for ensuring that everyone is happy and feels appreciated. At this stage in the process, it may be appropriate to expand the discourse that the change processes draw on, and start introducing more open questions, and criticism.

Based on my findings in this PhD study, I would recommend that the training in adopting and integrating reflexive processes into AI-based development work ought to take place in the core group. The core group is a group made up of participants from different departments and levels in the organisation (Hauger et al., 2008). In a school, a core group will typically consist of participants from

the school's management, teachers from different years, and technical employees (maintenance and/or cleaning staff).

The need to make change processes based on AI more reflexive has been highlighted in the literature on AI (Bushe, 2012; Clouder & King, 2015; Grant & Humphries, 2006;

Clouder & King, 2015). AI is a change strategy that shows how theories based on a positive lens can be used to create desired transformative changes in an organisation (Avital & Boland, 2008). By integrating the *Appreciative Reflective Team* method into an AI-based change process, these kinds of change processes will rest on a broader theoretical foundation. Theories of reflexivity (Marshall, 2017) and relational reflexivity (Simon and Shard, 2014) will be integrated, along with theories about the positive.

My thesis is that these theories, and the *Appreciative Reflective Team* method, are best introduced after the organisation has adopted a positive lens to investigate all that is good, and what gives life to the organisation when it works at its best. Using appreciative dialogues involving all the employees and managers in discussions about "the best of what is", an atmosphere characterised by criticism and deficits can be transformed into a culture characterised by dialogue and caring for each other (Whitney, 2008). The reflexive processes and the *Appreciative Reflective Team* method ought to be integrated in the final stages of an AI process, i.e. the design phase and the destiny or delivery phase. Training in the use of reflexive methods ought initially to take place in the group responsible for leading the AI-based change work (the core group). The participants will then be tasked with integrating the different methods of reflection into their own practices. Integrating reflexivity into an AI process will create a dynamism that fosters a greater degree of vitality in the development work and long-term commitment from the parties involved.

8.2 New Ways to Increased Wellbeing

An important aim of this PhD research was to contribute to knowledge about what municipal authorities can do to prevent exclusion and contribute to increased well-being for children and adolescents (Heron & Reason, 2008). In the previous chapter, I provided an account of the practical knowledge that has been developed through this research project. In the following, I will give an account of the project's contribution to generalisable knowledge: How the future-forming change work processes that have been used through the project SMART Upbringing (2011–2017) can be transferred (but not copied) to other municipalities, schools and kindergartens. In order to be able to develop a theory about what characterises these processes of change (hereinafter called "SMART"), I have chosen to use the eight categories that Boyd and Bright (2007) used to describe change processes based on Appreciative Inquiry (AI).

Smart Change Processes Described Through Eight Categories

The categories developed by Boyd and Bright (2007, p. 1023) were originally used to compare a problem-centric tradition within action research with AI as an opportunity-centric action research process. The authors use the term "problem-centric methodology" to refer to change processes intended to guide a community from a negative situation to an ordinary situation. The purpose of these kinds of processes is to restore the status quo (Boyd & Bright, 2007). The metaphor that informs these kinds of change processes is that the local community is a problem that needs to be fixed.

The concept of "opportunity-centric" overlaps with the concept of "future forming" (Gergen, 2014) and focuses on what an organisation or community can do to resolve social problems in a way that moves beyond the status quo. To achieve this, a change must be made in the norms and conventions that underpin the actions and proposed solutions (Boyd & Bright, 2007). This includes a shift from examining how something is to how we want things to be (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). I have previously pointed out that, over time, the future-forming change processes that have been adopted in the SMART Upbringing project have evolved and become differentiated from change

processes based on AI. Using Boyd and Bright's categories (2007) as a starting point, it is possible to identify what this difference consists of. The eight categories are:

- Characteristics of the basic processes
- Possible areas of application
- Opportunities for change
- Underlying metaphor
- Dominant motivation for change
- Role of the facilitator
- Role of stakeholders
- Role of managers

Below, I will briefly explain what distinguishes change processes based on the SMART Upbringing project within each of these categories. This is summarised in table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Characteristics of future-forming change processes performed through the SMART Upbringing project.

(1) The basic processes	a) Individual and group reflections b) AI-based processes c) Aesthetic discussions and activities d) Processes for developing caring, ethical actions in the individual (the VIA interventions)
(2) Underlying metaphor	The local community and organisations as a focal point for relationships between people filled with potential and extraordinary resources.
(3) The role of the facilitator	The municipal authorities / organisation / local community is able to create change on its own.
(4) Role of stakeholders	Involve the entire system.
(5) Role of managers	Often bottom–up initiatives.

(6) Dominant motivation for change	Inspiration from the dream (the emerging idea) to create more equitable, lively environments for children and young people as formulated in the SMART Upbringing project
(7) Opportunities for change	Through new creative actions. Change the norms.
(8) Possible areas of application	Particularly relevant in change work in connection with children and young people – organisations that work with children and young people (schools, kindergartens, etc.).

Earlier in this thesis, I have shown that the underlying metaphor (2) for change processes based on the SMART methodology derives from AI: That social systems and relationships are seen as centres of life. In my exegesis, I show how the "tree of strengths" has been adopted to symbolise this metaphor. Like AI, change processes based on the SMART methodology involve the entire system. All the stakeholders are given a role as partners in the collaboration with the professionals in the change work, including children and young people. This PhD research has helped increase knowledge about how children and young people can be involved as partners in these kinds of change processes.

Like AI, moves (5) to initiate change processes in a school or municipality may start as a grassroots (bottom–up) initiative or be implemented by a formal leader (top–down). The development project SMART Upbringing started out as a bottom–up initiative; but in this thesis, I have provided examples of how these kinds of change processes have also been initiated by head teachers and other formal leaders in the municipality.

Building on my exegesis, it seems that change processes based on the SMART methodology stand out from future-forming change processes based on AI in three main areas or categories: *the*

basic processes (1), *opportunities for change* (7), and *possible areas of application* (8). I have therefore chosen to provide a more detailed presentation of what differentiates these two change processes in these areas.

Characteristics of the Basic Processes in SMART

According to Boyd and Bright (2007), the opportunity-centric change processes in AI consist of the following basic process: 1) Identify pockets of success. 2) Get the success factors to spread. 3) Create a shared, common dream. This basic process has also been adopted in the change processes in the SMART Upbringing project. In my exegesis, I show how these basic processes have been adapted and adopted in work with children and young people. Development of the *Dream Class* method and *Meetings with Children* are examples of this (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2015; Heimestøl, 2018).

By drawing on AI in the change processes based on the SMART methodology, a new strengths-based discourse has been introduced in work related to children and young people: Instead of regarding a school class and the children as a problem that needs fixing, the focus is on what will vitalise and energise the people. AI is also designed to develop a normative vision for the entire organisation. In *the Dream Class* method, AI-based processes are used to create a common vision for the class. AI can also be used to create good relationships between people and a common will to identify the assets (strengths) that already exist within the organisation and that can be activated in an initiated development process (McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

The adoption of the SMART methodology in kindergartens and schools in the municipality of Re builds on a vision that has already been developed for the work in this area in the municipality. AI is used to investigate pockets of success where the vision has been brought to life in small incidents, or pockets of practice in own service (Hauger et al., 2018).

My exegesis shows that the SMART Upbringing project has also drawn on three other basic processes, namely:

1) *Reflexive processes.* The task of the reflexive processes is to create openness towards new ways of being together, and help make the development processes (values, vision, etc.) meaningful and diverse, as well as promote the development of a collective responsibility where "everyone" assumes responsibility for ensuring everyone's well-being (Gergen, 2014; McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

2) *Change processes* in order to develop the competencies and habits of each child, teacher, leader, etc., to act morally, inspired from theories of VIA interventions (Lavy, 2019; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

3) *Aesthetic processes*. Facilitate conversations where all children and young people are given the opportunity to articulate what constitutes a good life for them (Biesta, 2018) and "here-and-now" activities where everyone is given the opportunity to be themselves and form supportive connections with others (Bourriaud, 2002; Jones, 2017).

In my exegesis, I have shown that change processes based on the SMART methodology began focusing on ethical aspects in transformative projects from 2017 (see chapter 5). I have adopted the concept of *relational ethics* to clarify what this entails. *Relational ethics* can be described *as a process to coordinate diversity* with a view to keeping dialogue open and a position to create soft, as opposed to hard, relationships between oneself and others (McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

The transition from using an exclusively "positive" focus to adopting an ethical focus in the change processes based on the SMART methodology is expressed in the new main question developed for SMART, namely:

How can we together create inclusive environments for children and young people that are dominated by a sense of joy, hope and involvement?

 Although the question dictates *per se* that the inquiry process must contribute to a positive outcome: environments for children and young people characterised by equality and vitality, the question itself is not a typical AI question. AI questions are unconditionally positive. The question

presented above allows all kinds of experiences, perspectives, methods, etc., to be used as resources to create a desired future. One criticism raised against change processes based on AI is that the loyalty of the people leading the process can easily become directed more towards the chosen methodology of change (AI) and less towards the people involved in the process (Pratt, 2002). In my exegesis, I reveal that this also happened in this PhD project (see chapter 5). I observed that I had greater loyalty to my preferred methods in the research process than to what had motivated my colleagues (co-researchers) to want to get involved. Similarly, there is a danger that the SMART methodology can be perceived as a method or process of change to which participants must be loyal.

To answer this main question, processes for reflection must be initiated, enabling essential experiences and views of the individual or various groups involved in the process (afterschool activities, parents' groups, etc.) to be brought to the fore. Using polyphonic methods, a multitude of responses can be teased out. The use of reflexive processes can also help overcome what Jaworski and Flowers (1998, p. 129) call the trap of over-activity. However, it must be pointed out that when an organisation deploys dream-based change processes, it is not given that everyone will identify with the dream when the work first starts up. This may lead to the change processes engendering conflicts and disagreements within the organisation. This can be overcome through the initiation of processes of individual and collective reflection. These kinds of reflexive processes will help anchor the development work. This means that reflexive processes are employed in the work to make the initiated development processes meaningful and polyphonic. *Appreciative Reflective Teams*, *the "Gjort-lært-lurt" [performed, learned, wondered] method* and *Circle Maps* are examples of relational reflection methods that can be incorporated into change processes. Keeping a log is another method that can be used by pupils and teachers alike. Through these reflexive processes, the participants learn to work with fluidity and uncertainty (Frimann, Hersted & Søbye, 2020). Through these processes of reflection, the participants support and encourage each other to continue translating the abstract values into action (praxis). The processes will also help develop new ideas that can be adopted to ensure the development work remains vital and is sustained.

This PhD project has taken inspiration from the fields of VIA interventions and character education in respect of how children and young people can develop skills and habits to act morally (Berkowitz, et al., 2017; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These are also skills that are compatible with 21st century knowledge and skills, where teamwork, creativity and innovation are at the forefront.

In the basic processes to build up these skills, the SMART methodology adopts the same main activities as VIA interventions in work with children and young people (Lavy, 2020). The language used to describe valued ways of thinking and acting (the strengths) represents the competencies and ways of being valued in our local communities, described as SMART strengths (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2012; Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020). The language borrows concepts (strengths) from both theories about the VIA character strengths and theories about character traits (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Salmon & Salte, 2008). I believe that the more strengths we can name and recognise, the more resources children and young people will have that they can (consciously) draw on.

Text Box 8.1 Processes of change in the research project inspired by VIA interventions (Lavy 2020).

Training in the strengths language and use of SMART strengths is carried out through four main activities taken from the field of VIA interventions in work with children and young people:

1) Introduction to theoretical knowledge and a conceptualised language about personal strengths. This includes an explanation of what character strengths are and what characterises the different strengths.
2) Various activities where the individual has to reflect on what happens when the strengths are deployed in new ways or in new situations. Various activities to discover one's own and other people's strengths.
3) Various activities where the individual experiments with how the strengths can be used to unleash their potential, create good relationships with others, and foster a community where everyone is included and feels comfortable.

Reflection on what happens when one and/or several strengths are used in different situations over a defined period (for example, a week).

While change processes based on AI are particularly concerned with creating results in the future, interventions based on a relational aesthetic focus more on what is happening *here and now* (Bourriaud, 2002). When this kind of approach is adopted, the task is to create a relational interaction

and social environments where everyone is allowed to be themselves and thrive *in the moment*. I have previously pointed out that play can be employed to achieve this. The performative interview (Denzin, 2001) is another method that does much of the same. However, aesthetic activities such as play and performative interviews can be used to create embodied memories of communities where it is good to be. These memories can then be retrieved in order to put into words what a desired future *might be like*. By drawing on aesthetics, the repertoire of strengths-based (vitalising) methods in development work can be expanded.

An aesthetic approach is also adopted to involve children, young people and their parents in conversations about *existential dimensions* (Biesta, 2018). In this context, existential dimensions refer to discussions about what is necessary to live well, individually and collectively. These kinds of conversations can be initiated to create stopping points where children are given the opportunity to reflect on what kind of life they want to create for themselves, to talk about their wishes and dreams, and to reflect on whether others also share the same aspirations. Both the verbal and the visual language about SMART strengths can be drawn on in this context.

When learning is framed in an aesthetic context, for example, by expressing that learning should also create *joy*, it provides teachers and school managers with alternative opportunities to create improvements for children and young people, as opposed to when we only use intellectual knowledge.

In adapting the strengths-based change processes to different local contexts that work with children and young people in a municipality, the SMART Upbringing project has also created a learning community to make this happen. This kind of group or community has three notable characteristics: (1) Participants with common areas of interest, (2) Developing knowledge and learning together, and (3) Sharing experiences, tools and materials while the participants learn from each other.

Another term that can be used to describe the learning community that needs to be established is *social laboratory*. This term is from Hassan (2014). A social laboratory is described as a platform

on which to find solutions to complex problems. Social laboratories attract people from different sectors. The concept directs attention to the experimental part of this kind of learning community.

Opportunities for Change in the Municipal Services' Practices

The next category I choose to present is "opportunities for change". The starting point for change work based on AI is not that there is a problem that needs to be fixed, but that there is a potential that is to be unleashed. Boyd and Bright (2007) point out that the opportunities to create change through AI lie in the fact that the conventions (or norms) that underlie how employees and managers understand their own work and the way change processes happen are changed. This is also in line with the concept of future-forming research (FFR) (Gergen, 2014), which argues that the work to create changes that go beyond the status quo can only be created through changes in the prevailing culture of the organisation.

Breaking with established patterns of thought and thinking in new ways is the greatest challenge of our time, the authors argue. What can be achieved and how quickly a process of change can occur is determined by the culture's powers of imagination (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). Change processes based on the SMART methodology also draw on processes based on AI to transform the culture. In my exegesis, I demonstrate how this happens by involving employees and managers in repetitive processes to explore everything that was good in their own work, at the school and in the pupils. A problem-centric discourse is thereby transformed to (also include) a discourse on potentials.

In my exegesis, I also show how improvements for children and young people could be achieved through a series of small experiments conducted by the individual employee and head of the services (see chapter 6). Culture is not just something that is maintained through norms and a culture that is "out there". Culture is also maintained and changed in all our daily actions. Previously in this thesis, I pointed out that culture can be understood as a dramaturgical performance of a practice. In this context, I have adopted Goffman (1959)'s theatre metaphor as a point of departure. The metaphor underlines how all the players on a stage (e.g. in a classroom), the script that says how

an activity is to be done, and all the scenery and costumes can be changed. Instead of simply repeating an activity in the classroom, it can be performed differently, or the roles can be redistributed, etc.

This form of "doing action", where the participants are able to draw on all the resources (experiences and materials) they have at their disposal from their own everyday lives, can be adopted to experiment with new ways of being in relationships with the children or their parents (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). In kindergartens, for example, soft toys are used as an actor to initiate conversations about the child's strengths in the family, and bring descriptions of the family's strengths back to kindergarten. A teddy bear is sent home with the child. The bear has a suitcase containing some simple tasks that the family are supposed to do to explore the child's strengths, a "reply form", and a printed copy of the SMART cards. The teddy bear is returned along with the suitcase and the completed reply form, describing the strengths of the family and the child. The use of the teddy bear can be seen as an experiment that enables the kindergarten to form new relationships with the family and the child. The concept of "social poetics" is about directing attention to accepted or privileged ways of understanding a situation (Larsen et al., 2020). It is about an "in the moment" ability to manage to resolve a concrete task. Poetics can be understood as "doing-actions" that unfold in small moments of interaction (Larsen et al., 2020). McNamee & Hosking (2012, p.111) use the concept "moral wisdom*"* to refer to a form of wisdom that manifests itself in interactive moments in practical situations.

In the change process based on the SMART methodology, participants are invited to experiment with making small changes to their practices, with a view to making incremental changes that can make an envisaged difference for children and young people. For example, a class can be started differently (with play), a meeting to get to know a family can be carried out as a "campfire chat" or by cooking together. By learning from these small experiments, whereby normal activities are performed with a slight difference, immediate changes can be created in the relationships with children and young people and their here-and-now well-being, as well as changes that can help transform the culture (Bolt, 2009). These kinds of experiments can be initiated by all the employees at a school or kindergarten. In change processes based on the SMART methodology, the participants are

encouraged to deploy all their resources and materials from their everyday lives in these kinds of experiments.

Possible Areas of Application for Change Processes Based on the Smart Methodology

AI is described as an approach to the development of organisations or communities that involves the entire system in the work to create the organisation that everyone wants to be a part of. Change processes based on the SMART methodology have been designed to find better ways for the municipality of Re to ensure the mental and social welfare of children and young people. Using future-forming research (FFR), a vision has been developed for how involved managers, employees, politicians and parents in the municipality want the environments for children and young people to be: Environments where all children and young people feel welcome and included and experience joy, hope, and involvement. Change processes based on the SMART methodology can be described using terms such as systemic change processes, multi-dimensional change processes, or whole-system-based (whole municipality / whole school / whole kindergarten) change processes (Seligman & Adler, 2019; Lavy, 2019).

This vision and the ethical principles that underlie the influence of the SMART methodology have already been adopted by a number of kindergartens, schools (for example, Fjell School in Drammen) and municipalities (Vang) elsewhere in Norway. The main question that informs the development work (and variations thereon) is also adapted to efforts to create improvements in the environments for children and young people: Variants of the question include: *How can we work together to create a family / group of friends where everyone feels included and experiences joy...* A number of methods have also been developed that are adapted to different local contexts that work with children and young people: Various adapted strengths-based methods have been developed for work with *young children (in kindergartens)*, *work in primary schools,* and *work with young people –* and in local contexts such as afterschool care schemes (SFO), municipal child health centres ("*helsestasjon*") and the child welfare services.

New Perspective in Municipal Work to Promote Increased Well-Being for Children

In order to describe (develop theory) what characterises the change processes that have been carried out under the auspices of the SMART Upbringing project, I have chosen to use eight categories as my point of departure to describe change processes based on AI (Boyd & Bright, 2007). Above, I have shown how the SMART Upbringing project has adopted a future-forming change strategy to prevent exclusion and promote increased well-being for children and young people.

In my analysis, I show that the future-forming change methodology based on SMART differs from AI in some significant areas. Three such areas have been identified, namely: *The kinds of change processes that are used, the possible areas of application,* and *the opportunities for change.* In change processes based on AI, the transformative power lies in choosing a "positive" focus. AI only uses "positive questions". All the questions have a formative role, i.e. they determine what we see and what is created (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Change processes based on the SMART methodology have a (particularly) moral and ethical focus. The goal for the change work is improvements in the everyday conditions for children and young people. Ethical principles are brought to the fore, and the process of change largely revolves around the reflexive processes undertaken to incorporate these principles in practical actions (Brydon-Miller, 2008).

The main question explores how the people involved can develop more equitable conditions for children and young people (the end result). Ethics is also made an important focus of all work processes involving the children and adults. Reflexivity processes are included as one of the four basic processes in the SMART methodology.

In order to be better able to develop a theory about this new perspective, and how it can be applied in municipal change processes (McNamee & Hosking, 2012) to improve the well-being of children and young people, I have chosen to call this perspective *Future-Forming Ethical Perspective in work with children and young people (FFEP).* Key characteristics of FFEP include:

1) Instead of investigating all the problems that children and young people are struggling with and all the deficient aspects of their circumstances, the focus is shifted towards

creating the environments for children and young people that the municipal authorities (and others) *would like to provide* (Gergen, 2014). The development work is informed by the municipality's vision for its work with children and young people, or by adopting or adapting the SMART vision.

2) The goal of the change processes is to work out how this envisioned reality could be realised. The change processes emphasise *pluralism* (McNamee, 2020). Instead of drawing on a single perspective and its associated methods in the work of bringing about social changes, it encourages using a combination of several different academic traditions, theories and methods. This kind of epistemic diversity paves the way for a greater diversity of opportunities for action that can be initiated at different levels of the organisation to create momentum towards a desired future.

3) The processes of change and work to create improvements in children's and young people's lives should be understood as ethical processes (McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Hersted et al., 2020). The change work builds on five main ethical principles: "Everyone" is responsible for ensuring everyone else's well-being (relational ethics). This can be promoted by adopting a strengths focus, acting appreciatively, facilitating participation, and by committing to working on practising relational ethics. These principles represent a *collective response* to what can be done to improve the environments for children and young people. Methods of self-reflection and relational reflection are adopted as key methods to make these ethical principles effective throughout the entire organisation.

4) Instead of trying to "change" children, young people, and their parents (exerting power *over*), they are involved as partners in the change work (power *together*) and in (aesthetic) conversations where they can articulate what constitutes a good life for them. In line with the thinking that dominates ethic-led action research (Brydon-Miller, 2008), it is emphasised that all individuals (including each individual child) have the capacity to contribute to the work on knowledge development and the right to influence the processes that affect their opportunities to thrive. In line with this ethical stance, the goal of the

change work is to promote the opportunities of all the parties involved to assume the role of an active agent of change.

In my exegesis, I explain how at the outset of this PhD project, I started using AI as a future-forming change strategy in my work on organisational development at the largest primary school in the municipality of Re. A key characteristic of AI is that change work is based on a positive (strengths-based) perspective. Through the research process, I became aware of the importance of the need for ethical reflection and the importance of expanding the democratic practice that has underpinned both the research and the performance of the change processes based on the SMART methodology. I have therefore chosen to link the work on the use of future-forming change processes to more ethically based traditions in action research (Brydon-Miller, 2006; Hersted et al., 2020). FFEP is my contribution to knowledge on how this can be done.

One important characteristic of future-forming ethical change processes is the importance they attach to pluralism. This also applies in respect of the theories that the change work draws on. Among the most important are: *Social constructionism* and the *future-forming research approach* (Gergen 1999; 2014; McNamee & Hosking, 2012), *theories of Appreciative Inquiry,* and (Boyd & Bright; Bushe, & Kassam, 2005; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, Hauger et al., 2008), *strengths-based approaches in work with children and young people* (Rawana & Brownlee, 2009; MacArthur, et al., 2011; Hauger & Mæland, 2015), *positive psychology* (Chodkiewicz, & Boyle, 2017; Ciarrochi et al., 2016; Lavy, 2018; Lomas, 2015; Park, & Peterson, 2009; Peterson & Seligman, 2004); *theories of character education and ART* (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Goldstein, & Glick, 1987), *theories of relational aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 2002); and *relational ethics and ethical action research* (Brydon-Miller, 2008; Hersted et al., 2020; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). The various theories have been described and/or referred to earlier in this thesis.

In change processes based on the *future-forming ethical perspective* in work with children and young people, the people who are going to facilitate the processes of change take on a *bricoleur* role, that is, a person who learns how to borrow theories and methods from many different disciplines

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). McNamee (2004) holds that practitioners who engage in transformative change processes ought not only to be able to draw on a wide range of different theories, but ought also to choose which elements from the various theories might be useful in their practice.

When FFEP is used in work with children and young people, the entire system is involved in the change work: all the employees, the pupils and their parents, as important partners in the development processes. These kinds of whole-school-based change processes build on a combination of ethical, aesthetic and strengths-based activities and change methodologies.

Through this PhD research, I have contributed generalisable knowledge about how a local authority can adopt a future-forming ethical perspective in change processes to prevent exclusion and promote increased well-being for children and young people. There is also much to suggest that this kind of change process can also be used to safeguard the social and mental well-being of other inhabitants in the municipality; for example, the elderly.

8.3 Utility of the Research

The question of what is valid "evidence" to show that research has been successful is viewed differently within science and research based on future forming research (FFR) relational research. With research based on science, statistical significance and testing of practices are valid evidence for whether the research has generated valuable results (McNamee, 2014).

With research based on a relational paradigm and with FFR, it is the assessment of whether the new practices have been *generative* and whether they have *local utility value* that applies as documentation for whether the research has been successful (McNamee, 2014). In the discussion above and in the previous chapter, I have shed light on the issue of whether the research has contributed to the development of new generative opportunities for work on upbringing. Below, I would like to open for a discussion about whether this research project can be viewed as having utility

value. I discuss the potential benefits of the findings from the study at various levels/in different contexts in our local municipality and other municipalities.

When questioning the local utility value of the research, it is also important to ask *who* the research may benefit. Who has benefited from the research? It is also important to ask who may be disadvantaged by the research. Assessments of the utility value of a practice cannot be carried out only by one of the parties involved in the new practice. <u>All</u> those involved must have the opportunity to assess what is of value (helpful) for themselves (McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

This research project has involved and impacted a large ecology of local stakeholders. These include my close partners in the research; in particular, the co-researchers in the internal research group, employees and managers in the municipal services who work with children and adolescents, local politicians, our managers, all the children and adolescents in the municipality and their parents. My exegesis can also be read as a narrative of how I have worked with this research project to ensure that it has local value. Below, I would like to open for further discussions of this.

Local Utility of the Study

One way of assessing whether the new practices developed to create improvement in the upbringing environments for children and adolescents are seen as having utility value is to assess whether the values on which these new proposed solutions are based are shared by society rather than several individual actors (Lawrence, Dover & Gallagher, 2014). When the research project started, I had the opportunity to place my values at the forefront of the research. The central values promoted via the new practices that have been developed are to contribute towards creating upbringing environments that feature joy, commitment and hope. These values have gained comprehensive support from "all" levels in the municipal services; from the chief municipal executive's management group, our politicians, organisation managers in the services and employees. This support has, for example, been expressed by means of unanimous municipal council resolutions regarding the establishment of the SMART centre for social innovation, in the invitation documents for the SMART festivals and via

continuous evaluations of the development work that have been performed at the annual meetings for the services.

In the previous chapter, I also demonstrated that managers and politicians in the municipality had benefited from the research project in their work on management training and in the process to create the vision for the new municipality.

The research project has been tasked with creating improvements for children and adolescents in the municipality by contributing to innovating those practices that shape the daily lives of children. One important feature of these practices is that they have become collaborative. How do the children, adolescents and their parents assess the question of whether these changes have been positive for them?

In chapter 3, I recounted the story of how the pupils were involved as active co-creators of their own classroom environment with the Dream Class project, and of the relationships among the pupils. New forms of conversations (featuring appreciation) were adopted between the pupils in the classroom. The way the pupils see each other, and their class changed. One mother described how the pupils in the class see her son in a new light. Once an outsider in the classroom environment and at "birthday parties", she explains that her son is now invited to take part in play and social events. In the pupils' narratives (drawings) about what it is like to spend time together in new ways in the SMART groups of girls, we find narratives of how being an outsider has been transformed into friendship.

In this thesis, the voices of some of the children and adolescents have been highlighted when they describe the utility value of the new practices developed. I could have included more of the children's voices in this thesis. The narratives about *Our Small Garden* and the presentations of the *Dream Class* and *SMART Language* provide this research with an insight into how we (my co-researchers and I) want things to develop for children and adolescents.   However, a different type of research is required (in addition to this project) to identify more about how children and adolescents experience the utility value of the new practices developed (emerged). Although the intentions behind

these innovations are good, it is not a foregone conclusion that the practices are performed in a way that ensures a benefit for all children. Research with the use of "positive change processes" shows that these can also be used for the purposes of discipline (Caza & Caroll, 2012). Later on in this chapter, I therefore, discuss the need for further research to study the utility value of these new practices also from a different research perspective (science).

Text Box 8.1 The poem, Footprints, written by a mother (co-researcher), SMART child welfare service initiative, 2018.

Footprints[11]

Two small footprints in the snow

A day in November

Two large footprints in the snow

A day in November

They walk together, their heads low

They walk together, to a destination

where they meet

warmth, care, safety and understanding

A mother

A son

A day in November

Three footprints in the snow

A day in December

"We will walk together, for as long as you need it"

Safety, trust, a hope

That life can be easy

A day in December when they are finally seen

Three footprints in the snow

A day in December

A mother

A son

And an angel who wants to help them

A light, a spark, a hope

A gift they have received

It feels good

A smile, a warm heart, an open book

A new chapter being written

Help is not close by

It is here

"The poem is vulnerable, sad and not sad," the mother explained. "It's about how it felt to be so alone out there. And then to be seen, listened to and taken seriously. It's about being met in your current situation in life, feeling important, feeling understood." (from my reflection note dated 17 April 2018)

The parents' assessments of the utility value of the new practices could also be more clearly included in this thesis. When discussing the utility value of the research, however, I prefer to include the voice of one mother who has experience from performing a new collaborative practice developed via the SMART child welfare service initiative. She described this voluntarily by writing a poem. The poem was written for a colleague who worked in the internal research group (Tina Feyling) to thank her for the way she welcomed the author.

Utility for my Co-researchers

It is also up to my co-researchers to deem whether I have conducted and collaborated on the research in a way which has been useful for my colleagues. Looking back on my exegesis, I find several

examples where I have not achieved this. At the start of the collaborative work for the internal research group, I behaved in a way that afforded me the position of knowledge expert. At periods of time, I used a language when discussing the research that seemed alienating (see chapter 5). One of my co-researchers found that being part of the research group was of no value to her. She also felt that she had no experiences to contribute that were of use for the "research". In my exegesis, I also refer to other periods where I performed the research in a monological manner.

I explain in my exegesis how my colleagues and I started to place ethics at the forefront of the research, and that we worked together to develop better solutions for how academic science could interact with practical knowledge in a non-hierarchical way. The result of this collaboration was a strengthened capacity to develop practical knowledge (knowing how) via the research. As a result, my colleagues and I found that the research is of utility value. During the final meeting of the internal research group in June 2019, we discussed in pairs our experiences of working together. I had a discussion with one of the colleagues who had joined the group at a slightly later date. My colleague reflected back to the day when he was asked to join the research group. In my reflection note dated 22 June 2019, I wrote the following:

> *"My first thought was: What kind of role do I have in such a group? I had no idea about what the research was. It was such a big word. I didn't get the concept. I joined the research group later than the others. But I found that there were several people who felt the same way..."*

> *When he says that there were several people who felt the same way, he is referring to the fact that several felt it was difficult to join the research group. My colleague then went on to reflect on how things had progressed. He continued: "We've built this group with generosity, safety and love ... before adding a fourth word: We meet each other with openness."*

I have highlighted this story because it illustrates an important lesson I have learned from this research: The importance of transferring the responsibility for moral conduct from one individual to a group (Gergen, 2014). This is what my colleague is saying: We've built this group with generosity, safety and love.

Political Distribution of Benefits

One of the most significant challenges when assessing the local utility value of the research is that the development of innovations (practices etc.) is always a political process that implies power redistribution (Lawrence, Dover & Gallagher, 2014). The process of incorporating a new practice can, therefore, never be neutral. All new practices can be seen as a redistribution of influence. With this research project, new practices were developed that afforded more influence for children when shaping their own upbringing environments. Practices based on power-together relations supplement practices based on power-over relations (McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

When summarising the issue of the utility value of the research, it is also important to ask the question of whether this research project and the implemented development work have excluded important voices, performed the development work in a dogmatic manner or given rise to the establishment of new power-over relations (McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

In the presentation above, I have indicated that there have been periods during which my performance of the research was at the expense of others. In chapter 5, I demonstrate how our performance of the development work for SMART upbringing has also helped create "we-they" relationships. The research and development work have also provided me with (and I have assumed) positions that imply that I have a greater potential to exercise power.

The discussions about how the research project has been performed also involve the issue of power. Boonstra (2004, p. 464) distinguishes between various perspectives on power. One form of power can be exercised by means of the roles held by an individual. In the role of researcher and the roles I have held as management of the SMART upbringing project, I have been provided with (and taken) more opportunities than others to set the agenda or define (for example) how a development process shall be conducted. These roles have also comprised a (latent) potential to utilise this definitive power to authorise others and promote the roles of others towards more agentic behaviour. My exegesis contains examples of how I (at certain periods) utilised the power I had obtained (and assumed) via my roles in both ways.

A different perspective on power is that described by Boonstra (2004) as *cultural power*. This relates to having influence over how the world shall be interpreted. This form of power was exercised, for example, when I was allowed the opportunity to define what was "correct" or "reasonable" ways of managing the development work / work on upbringing. Given that my views were enforced on others, this could have resulted in losses for others. Examples of such losses are the opportunity to exercise influence, or having what you personally feel is a valued practice discredited. There are also examples where such cultural power has been exercised. In chapter 5, I describe how a colleague felt that the development work was enforced. This dogmatic (monological) method of development work has been rectified. However, errors have been committed and unethical conduct may still occur. The question I have asked above is how such tendencies in my practice can be detected and rectified at an early stage. Marshall (2017) describes this task as the development of one's own practice in a sustainable manner.

The Question of the Local Utility of the Research – In Summary

When summarising the question of the utility value of the research, this involves (from my research perspective) the degree to which the research has allowed for an ecological versus egological way of being together (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). This applies both to the research, the SMART work and the new daily life created together with children and adolescents. I would like to open up a discussion on whether we have succeeded in this.

Looking back on the changes that have emerged in Re municipality via the collaboration between the research project and the ongoing SMART upbringing development work, what strikes me is how much support and commitment this process has triggered. The municipal council voted unanimously in favour of establishing the SMART upbringing project in 2011. A unanimous municipal council adopted the establishment of the SMART centre for social innovation. Parents associations, local sports clubs, non-profit organisations and thousands of people have participated in the development work. My colleagues at the centre have informed me that, on average, the SMART upbringing website had more than 10,000 clicks in the spring of 2019.

My point so far is not that this research, based on FFR, has been more valuable than if it had been conducted by drawing upon a different research approach – but given that the objective is to create direct social change, this may occur without the persons implementing the changes or living with the consequences actually noticing its value.

The Utility Value of the Research Outside Its Local Context

In the introductory chapter, I point out that the start-up of this research project and the SMART upbringing development work can be seen as a new response to how municipalities can better provide welfare for children and adolescents. It could be argued that the innovation generated by this collaborative research may provide insight into how the municipalities can provide welfare for children and adolescents in the future. Thanks to the development work, a two-sided paradigm in the work on upbringing has been supplemented by a relational paradigm (Selloni, 2017). As mentioned above, a two-sided paradigm is recognisable in that it is the municipal services that are the suppliers of welfare services, but the citizens are the users (Zamagni, 2014). "Top-heavy" organisations are required to standardise the welfare services. Any implemented reform is often driven by the need to make savings (Selloni, 2017). With the SMART upbringing development work, the change process is driven by a vision of a better society. Protecting citizens' welfare via a relational paradigm takes place by means of collaboration. With such a collective welfare model, the citizens are seen as resources working in a partnership with the professionals in the municipality in order to protect their own and each other's welfare (Cottam, 2011).

Contributions from this research project have helped supplement a hierarchical organisation of the services with methods of organisation that are relationally heavy: Employees across all the services with responsibility for children and adolescents were allowed to get involved in the work to create change related to upbringing in the municipal services. Hundreds of children, adolescents and citizens have been involved in conversations about how to realise the vision for the upbringing work. This has occurred, for example, at new hybrid meeting places established via the collaborative research (festival etc.). The SMART upbringing development work has already been highlighted as a

valuable example of a more collective model for the development of the welfare services. This has taken place, for example, at a number of conferences organised by (e.g.) the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS).

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that some of the new (local) practices developed by means of contributions from this research project have also been utilised in a number of other municipalities. More than 10,000 books describing the SMART upbringing language, Dream Class and other innovations have been sold. Previously in this chapter, I also pointed out that the SMART upbringing project involves participants from many parts of Norway.

It may also be argued in support of a large share of what Lawrence, Dover and Gallagher (2014, p. 319) refer to as new broad responses to important social challenges in upbringing work: The fundamental idea behind the SMART work, the principles already developed, have been shared and made available to others. When national health authorities ask us to share our experiences from the development work via publications, and at conferences, this is a sign that the research is seen as having utility value. Nonetheless, work still remains to incorporate the experience gained from the research into dialogue with other professional fields. Below, I describe how I hope that the experiences obtained from this research project can be exploited by other municipalities and (more) practitioners who work with children and adolescents in other parts of the country.

8.4 Implications

The possible *implications* of this research will be slightly different from the implications of conventional research (qualitative and quantitative). In general, a description of the implications of research entails possible consequences the completed research may have in society and for the research field on which the research is based. Implications of conventional research may be a proposal to add something to an existing theory, or a proposed new practice, procedure etc. ("x") to be introduced, based on evidence that this practice ("x") is more effective than another practice ("y").

With this research project, the implications have had a different function. The task of the research has not been to "illuminate, reflect or understand a given state of affairs" (Gergen, 2014, p. 293). It has had a generative task. The nature of the research has been to "search", rather than "re-search". The task has been to create new forms of (social) life based on the hopes of my co-researchers and myself. This research does not substantiate that the new concepts we have developed for use in work on upbringing or knowledge development are better or more effective than others. However, the use of these concepts opens the door to other ways teachers etc., can meet children, adolescents and their parents during work on upbringing, or how practitioners can learn from each other and develop knowledge from each other's practices. The research has also helped establish new forms of collaboration in the municipality (Re), where the citizens, voluntary organisations and businesses are involved in the work to protect the welfare of children and adolescents. Below, I provide a brief presentation of what I hope shall be an important implication of this research: That more municipalities make future efforts for the upbringing of children and adolescents. I would also like to display measures other municipalities can already take to exploit the knowledge developed from this research project. The final implication I would like to describe is how the knowledge contribution from this research project can be of value for the academic community of FFR researchers.

Future Efforts for the Upbringing of Children and Adolescents

One result I hope will emerge from this research project is that more municipalities make future efforts towards developing their upbringing environments for children and adolescents. Re municipality made such an effort by developing a vision for its work on upbringing. Their future vision is to develop upbringing environments in which all children and adolescents feel included, where they can all experience joy, have the opportunity to develop participation and which trigger hope. Moreover, five principles have been developed to contribute to the process involved in realising this vision. These principles are: *Focus on strengths, participation, appreciation, relational responsibility for each other* and *training* (in consistent behaviour).

Other municipalities in Norway have already adopted this vision, as have a number of schools, kindergartens and after-school care schemes (see chapter 7). It is my hope that this vision for social development spreads throughout Norwegian society.

The research project provides an insight into how the municipal services, citizens, partners etc., are mobilised towards a joint effort represented by a common vision, and that which Cottam (2011) refers to as a development perspective. Such change processes are not controlled and governed from the outside, but via dialogical processes from the "inside". I hope this research project provides a demonstration of the comprehensive commitment and creativity that can be triggered when development processes are managed in this way.

The research project has investigated and produced an innovative concept which other municipalities can utilise in order to develop their upbringing environments, based on the proposed vision and the principles laid down via the *SMART Upbringing* concept. The concept itself is described above in this chapter. *SMART Upbringing* has many similarities with Meroni's (2007, p. 30) concept of "creative communities" where people gather to develop innovative ways of living together. Below is a brief description of some of the measures the municipalities can take to carry out such a development process:

1. The municipality should recruit facilitators to lead such processes. The facilitators should have experience from the management of future forming change processes, such as Appreciative Inquiry or "SMART work". If such experience is not available in the individual municipality, it may be possible to develop internal competencies by sending employees to the Train the Trainer education programme.

2. Meeting arenas must be established, allowing employees from the different municipal services to meet so they can develop and innovate their own practices, which will endure over time. Whitney (2008) describes this task as a shift from utilising short-term projects to the initiation of lasting processes in order to create an ideal future.

3. A number of change processes implemented by the municipality normally have a short-time perspective. With development processes based on SMART Upbringing, the municipality should facilitate development processes that are lasting.

4. Moreover, the executive management in the municipality must allow for significant "self-governance" for the learning networks that are established (Senge & Scharmer, 2006). The participants must be able to implement solutions without having to wait for initiatives from above (Selloni, 2017).

Implications for Practitioners Who Work With Children and Adolescents

In the presentation above in this chapter, I have shown that the SMART upbringing project has expanded from a project involving practitioners in their own services discussing the type of upbringing environments that should be developed, to a dialogue involving participants from a number of organisations that work with children and adolescents from "all" of Norway. Thousands of people are involved in discussions via Facebook, courses and festivals. With reference to Latour (1996), I have described SMART upbringing as a new actor network under development. For practitioners who want to exploit experience from this development project to transform their own practice, it may be a good idea to join this network, thereby helping transform and innovate the practices and tools already developed and sharing important experiences and resources from their practices.

One important assumption in this research is that knowledge always evolves and is made meaningful in local discourses. It is only by taking part in such discourse that the experiences gained from the SMART work can be made meaningful. Discussions as to how experience from this development process can be made relevant for other discourses, for example relating to public health work, are already under way (Hauger, 2018).

One important discovery made during the development process by those involved in the research is that the opportunities for developing upbringing environments where more children can thrive are found in placing ethics at the forefront for how daily interaction is performed in the work

and daily interaction between the children. This collaborative research has given rise to the development of several concepts that allow teachers to test and gain experience from such an ethical practise (praxis). Four such new practices have been described in books or made available via courses and films. These are:

> **The Dream Class** (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2015). The concept shows how pupils ranging in age from the third and fourth grades to lower secondary school can be involved as co-creators of their own upbringing environments.

> **The SMART language** (Våge & Bugge-Hansen 2012; Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2013; Iversen & Bugge-Hansen 2017). The concept shows how a new verbal-visual language about ethical behaviour can be utilised to create caring relations and classroom environments. The concept is customised for work with children in kindergartens, primary schools and lower secondary schools.

> **Meetings with children** (Hauger, 2015c; Heimestøl, 2018). This concept shows how children at after-school care can be involved in creating their upbringing environments.

> **SMART child welfare initiative** (Feyling et al. 2018). The concept shows how parents can be involved as partners in the development of their family lives from a future forming perspective.

This "new" way of working (the practices) in Re municipality can be described in different ways. My colleagues in the SMART child welfare initiative, for example, describe their new practice as a collaborative practice. Another term used is *affirmative practice* (Barge, Hornstrup & Gill, 2014). An affirmative practice draws attention to factors that bring life to human systems. This term is from AI. Such a practice can help transform strongly negative feelings, division and vulnerability. It can be applied to establish partnerships with children and to promote a positive emotional climate (Whitney, 2008).

During the research project and the SMART upbringing development work, a number of concepts and materials have been developed and are now available for use when exploring the potential to promote life in a school classroom, during after-school care etc. The material is mainly self-instructive (Hauger et al., 2018).

Implications for Future Forming Research

This research project has drawn upon future forming research (FFR). I also hope that this thesis may be of use for other researchers who want to apply such a research approach. I would like to highlight in particular four contributions from this research to FFR as a research concept.

1. Firstly, this research project may be used as an example of how FFR can be applied to create social change by means of studies that result in development of practices or *practice producing inquiries*. In Gergen's article (2014, p. 393.) about how FFR can help create lasting social change, practice producing inquiries are mentioned as one of three promising "registers of inquiry". The two others are liberatory and action-centred inquiries.

2. This thesis demonstrates how I have proceeded when studying a new promising practice within the work on upbringing in Re municipality. In this context, innovation has taken place via an equal merger of two practices that are not normally related; Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and Aggression Replacement Training. Without the researcher's (my) ability to ignore own prejudices and explore the innovation with an open mind, it would not have been possible to help give birth to this innovation. The exegesis about how the researcher (I) worked together with the practitioners (co-researchers) who have been at the forefront of the innovation is a contribution to the cultural capital about how such studies can be performed (Bolt 2009).

3. The third contribution involves how studies can be performed in a way that goes beyond the reflexive paradigm's concept of knowledge. Metaphorically speaking, the research process takes place in such a paradigm of "watching, looking and seeing" (Gergen, 2015, p. 290). The result of such studies is knowledge developed via words. This study shows how inquiries and reports from the research can take place via performative methods (Gergen & Gergen,

294

2012). The use of aesthetic methods (play etc.), art (drawings, graphic illustrations etc.) and photographs has played a central role in the study. It has also generated new forms of life.

4. The fourth contribution relates to the development of polyphonic research methods. Polyphonic studies and polyphonic methods of learning are important ideals in FFR and research based on social constructionism (Gergen, 2020; McNamee, 2020). In this study, I have further developed the reflective team as a polyphonic research method (Hauger et al 2018). With the concept we have applied, participants can draw upon art forms when presenting their experiences. We have used meditation, images and drawings as part of the reflective processes (see chapter 5). The processes are also extended in time and with new activities. A reflective team process can take more than two to three months. The participants write reflection notes after a team process, and these are also subject to reflection.

With this research project, we have also constructed polyphonic multi-methods such as *The Circle Map* and the *Gjort, lært lurt* method. These combine dialogic processes with the use of visual artifacts. When the words expressed are written down on a drawn poster, they have a reinforcing, mediating function in the processes.

8.5 Possible Limitations of the Research Project

One important purpose of this research project has been to help create more life-promoting environments for upbringing for children and adolescents in Re municipality. I have worked towards this goal by studying (shaping) the emergence of new generative practices that have been under development in the municipality's work on upbringing. The development of new forms of practice, which can be beneficial for the work on upbringing in the municipalities, has been more important than the development of the correct (a singular) response to the challenges involved in the work on upbringing (McNamee, 2020). The development of new practices requires collaboration between the researcher (my practice) and various professionals who work together with children and adolescents in the municipality on a daily basis. The type of new practices that are developed and the extent to

which they are incorporated in and disseminated among the municipality will rely, in particular, on which persons I collaborate with and how this collaboration takes place. The processes involved in identifying how new practices shall be "labelled, categorized, discussed and deployed into everyday life" require discussion and negotiations between those included in the research (McNamee 2020, p. 17).

During the research, I have studied the emergence of new practices in the work on upbringing in Re municipality during the period from 2006 to 2015. As I continued to study the extent (and reshaping) of these innovations, I decided to establish an internal research group.

One limitation with this study is *the selection of participants in the internal research group* and those who have been my closest partners in the research. This group could have been composed slightly differently. Most of the members had been very involved in (and positive to) the work required to disseminate the innovations for the work on upbringing. Several colleagues who were "critical" to the new practices being developed could have been invited to join the internal research group. I could also have invited participants from those municipal services that up to that point (2015) had not been involved to any extent in the SMART upbringing development work. This may have given rise to the development of other practices, and to a slightly different direction for the development work, or that the results from the research could be incorporated in more municipal services.

The second limitation to be mentioned is a *monological performance of the research* in the period from 2015 to 2016. During this period, I had chosen to carry out studies of new (promising) practices among the municipal services based on a positive lens perspective (Golden-Biddle & Dutton, 2012). One advantage of such a perspective is that it can reinforce the commitment to and support for an implemented development process (Reed, 2007). I also experienced that the way I performed the studies in the municipal services in 2015 (see chapter 4) produced the result above. This was intentional on my part. The limitation of such a positive lens perspective is that the research only produces a limited image of the factors being studied (Reed, 2007). My choice of such a

monological perspective during this stage of the research implied that I was late in discovering the kind of doubts and objections against the implemented development work and the way it was performed. If I had chosen to supplement the research by using different perspectives (critical, for example), and had been open to information from other voices than those that were positive, I would have chosen to study other experiences and allowed other voices to be heard.

My use of the term *monological performance of the research* is also in reference to how I conducted the research in the internal research group during the initial stage (2015-2016). I assumed the role of knowledge expert – the person who shall explain and "teach" my colleagues how to conduct the research.- As a result, the research was dominated by my intellectual interests and not by the practical interests and the emotional commitment of my co-researchers. My colleague, Vidar Bugge-Hansen, repeatedly said that "we mustn't forget who this research is for. We are carrying out this research to create improvements for children and adolescents," (my reflection note dated 17 October 2016). By listening to him and the other colleagues in the internal research group and allowing their commitment and interests to have more influence on the research (polyphonic turnaround), we achieved a greater diversity of new practices that developed and were incorporated via the research (see chapter 6).

The third limitation to be mentioned here is that I **wanted to achieve a lot**.

The research has followed a transformative development process upwards from status as a nameless initiative in a "classroom" to a development process comprising a number of (17) municipal services in Re municipality and a number of organisations outside the municipality. I have studied the implemented development processes in different ways; via field visits, exploration of new practices in the daily management of the research group and via collaborative research in the internal research group and the Train the Trainer education programme. The knowledge we have developed has been continuously directed back to colleagues. We (my co-researchers and I) have developed courses, made films, written folders and organised conferences and festivals. At certain periods of time, the work has involved more "change work" and practical task solving (rigging rooms, developing courses

and training). It has been difficult to find a correct balance between the factors that require attention in my role as a researcher and the other roles I have assumed. This has made it difficult for me to decide what to include and what to exclude when writing my exegesis. As a result of these dilemmas, my description of the research process may be less transparent.

8.6 Possible Further Research Questions

The research has contributed to the development of a number of new practices in the work on upbringing. Some of these have been implemented in many places. This applies to the Dream Class and SMART upbringing. The potential for further dissemination of these practices will probably depend on the measurement of their efficiency compared with other (comparable) practices. In the previous chapter, I pointed out that this research has the potential to develop generalisable knowledge in the field of local public health work (Hauger, 2018).

Based on experience gained from the study, I am curious to see whether two of the new practices this research has helped develop – The Dream Class and SMART upbringing – may have a positive impact on the quality of life for children and adolescents. This requires studies of these concepts, based on science (quantitative methods).

Another issue that may require further study is whether and how different interventions based on SMART upbringing can help create a richer life (larger life) for children and adolescents. SMART upbringing has developed a number of aesthetic methods; for example, the SMART language, where children are invited to take part in discussing the characteristics of a good life and where they are involved in discussions to create good relations and good social groups. What are the children's experiences of this? What new opportunities for creating a larger life are provided by such a practice?

The third issue I believe requires further research is how the SMART Upbringing Project can be executed in other municipalities (upscaling). How can we measure the effects of such a

programme? Such a research programme should be organised as multidisciplinary research, including researchers with knowledge of future forming research and science.

8.7 Closing Reflections

The assignment for this research project has been to help create improvements in the upbringing environments in Re municipality. Based on FFR, the values of my co-researchers and myself have been placed at the forefront of the research (Cooperrider & Srivastva 1987, Gergen 2014). Various creative studies have been performed to explore how upbringing environments featuring joy, commitment and hope can be created. Art and performative methods have been utilised as key elements in these studies (Gergen & Gergen, 2012; Jones, 2017).

The collaborative research has helped create a discursive shift in the municipality's work on upbringing via the research work performed in the municipality. This change can be described as a shift from pathology (problems) to potentials, and from problem-solving for individuals (individual orientation) to jointly triggering potential. In the exegesis, I show that this discursive shift is supported by a new verbal-visual language about strengths, which is used in the conversations about and with children and adolescents in work on upbringing ("the SMART language").

This research project has also contributed to the establishment of new practices, new forms of organisation and organisations in Re municipality's work on upbringing. Several of these practices have already been implemented by a number of other organisations working with children and adolescents in other municipalities. Examples of these are the *SMART language* and *The Dream Class* (Våge & Bugge-Hansen, 2011; 2013; 2015; Hauger & Bugge-Hansen, 2020). The practices are processes that show how children and adolescents can be involved as active co-creators of their own upbringing environments in classrooms at school, kindergartens and during after-school care (Hauger, 2018).

This research project has also helped extend the *cultural capital* about how FFR can be used as an approach to the work on creating lasting social change (de Bruin,1999; Johnsen, 2006; Barrett & Bolt, 2007). Two such knowledge contributions have been highlighted. These are: (1) The PhD

research as an example of how *practice producing inquiries* can be conducted in a municipality, and (2) how inquiries based on FFR can be conducted in a way that goes beyond *the reflective paradigm* (Gergen, 2014).

I hope this research project provides an insight into how future welfare services for children and adolescents *may evolve* in a municipality. In my thesis, I argue that the SMART upbringing concept developed by means of this research project has a major potential to create desired social change in the upbringing environments for children and adolescents in other municipalities. The concept shows how different professionals responsible for upbringing of children and adolescents can be involved in processes of practical experimentation and knowledge development, in an effort to innovate their own practices in line with the vision of this research project.

During this research project, I have also shown how social researchers can collaborate with professionals in a municipality in order to co-create (co-construct) new practices, knowledge and change together, via FFR. Although the experiences gained from this method of collaboration for performing research are not generalisable for other researchers in other contexts, I hope that I have shared some of the insights and knowledge gained from our learning process that can inspire and benefit others.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: SMART-cards

TEAMWORK

Is when we are able to cooperate with others to achieve a goal

ENDURANCE

Is when we push ourselves to continue, even though we want to give up

RESPECT
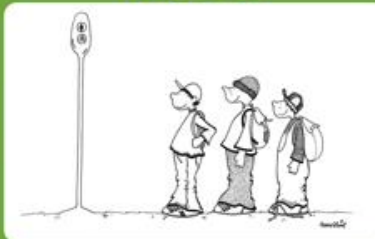
Is when we treat with consideration others, those in charge, things around us and ourselves

THANKFULNESS

Is when we are pleased about things that happen and express it

CONFIDENCE

Is when we believe in ourselves and believe that we have the knowledge to achieve our goals

PURPOSEFULNESS

Is the ability to find out what you want to do and plan how to achieve your goal

HUMANISM
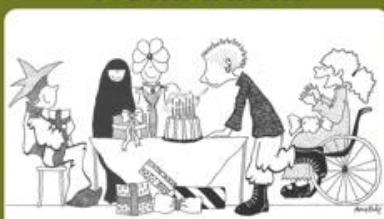
Is when we belive that all people are equally important, even if they look different and have other opinions than us

HONESTY

Willingness to say what is true

INTEGRITY

Is the ability to do what you are convinced is right

HUMOUR

Is the ability to make yourself and the people around you smile, laugh and be happy

LOVE OF LEARNING

Is when we enjoy learning new things and know how to work to get new knowledge

CURIOSITY

Is when we are interested in things which happen around us. We can see things from different angles, experiment and find out how things work

CREATIVITY

Is the ability to find new and good solutions to problems

LEADERSHIP

Is the ability to make others able to work well, achieve goals and work with each other without conflict

Appendix B: Appreciative Interview in the Train the Trainer Education

1. What do you appreciate most?

What do you appreciate most about the company you work for?

About your work?

About yourself?

2. What inspires you?

What motivated you to participate in this Train the Trainer education?

3. Best experiences of your own work

a) A crucial aim of the SMART upbringing development work is to develop and incorporate new ways in which to collaborate with children, young people, their parents and society to contribute to more (all) children and young people feeling included, experiencing enjoyment and achievement in everyday life.

If you were to tell us about an example of your experience of achieving some of this in everyday life – What would you highlight?

What would you tell us about?

What was it that made it so successful?

What can others learn from this experience?

_____

_____

_____

b) If you were to tell us about other inspiring examples from your own work – or that are being developed in your place of work – what would you tell us about?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C: The Performative Effect of Appreciation

- It is heartwarming. I open up both to myself and to others.
- When I am met with appreciation, I feel seen, heard and accepted. This is important for me to feel safe and to be able to be myself.
- The knot in my stomach vanished. I felt that I was seen and heard in a good way.
- I felt that it was easier to open up to the group. I shared more, and sooner, than I thought I would. This has given me energy and happiness. By the evening, my muscles ached from laughing and I was also completely drained
- I feel happy. I relax. I want to share. I want to listen. Trust is built.
- I become more creative, involved and happy.
- I feel safe and have a sense of inner peace. Creates transparency in thoughts and reflections.
- Safe, recognised, happy, positively charged. Like a better version of myself. Relaxed. Valued.
- I feel seen. Gain energy. Become more relaxed. Become more involved and interested. I want to get to know people better. I feel part of the community
- I felt safe.
- I open up more quickly than I otherwise would have.
- I feel safe and want to contribute to the community. I become motivated. I feel seen.
- I make eye contact with the people I meet. I act more calmly. I think more about what I am doing and saying. I look for strengths. I feel that I belong at an early stage. I can be who I am without worrying about anything.
- I feel valued. Experience a good feeling. You relax and the weight comes off your shoulders. I feel positively inclined towards people that I meet. I want to get to know others and meet them in the same way. You meet other people with an open mind. You get to know each other in a deeper way. Good relationships are formed.
- I feel safe more quickly and it becomes easier to focus on others. I get very focused on being the best me I can when I meet other people that I do not know. When the group becomes safe, you become better at seeing others and I feel positive, curious and want to create change."
- Become happy. Enjoy it. Dare to show who I am. Both strong and weak sides.
- I feel safe to open up and be myself. I feel seen and affirmed.

- I became more confident in myself and felt that my voice mattered. I felt seen and it made me feel calm and happy and, not least, comfortable and moved by what was said yesterday."
- It did something good for me. When meeting new people, it was good to know that other people had (would have) a positive impression of me. I felt safe, seen and looked after.
- Easier to give of myself when I feel seen and I feel like it creates ripple effects.
- Positively curious. Wanted to get to know others. Wanted to share. Transparency. It was really nice to feel welcome in a group of unfamiliar people. Being met by appreciation creates community. It was not scary to open up and talk about work and other things. I felt that I could be myself.
- Being met by appreciation creates safety and transparency. It brings joy and laughter and a relaxed atmosphere. It creates the confidence and courage to be yourself. The room to act and the level of tolerance becomes greater. It creates involvement
- The confidence I felt allowed me to feel that I performed better and I think this is something I can bring back to the children's group.
- I feel important. I felt seen. It was interesting that others noticed my qualities without me feeling that I had to highlight them.
- It feels good to be appreciated. You are seen through new eyes and you get confirmation of who you are and who you want to be when you meet others. This could mean a new start for children, from primary through secondary school
- When you meet others with appreciation in the way that happened yesterday, I feel it becomes easier to open up. It is easier to tell the others in the group about your reservations and fears. You get to know one another more quickly. You know one another better. It becomes easier to go up to someone you have not met before and have a little chat.

Appendix D: List of Publications Presenting New Methods and Concepts Based

on Smart Upbringing

Concepts/ method	Presented in:
"SMART language" – used in kindergarden	Våge, G. A. & Bugge-Hansen, V. (2012). *Smart oppvekst 1. Identifiser barns styrker* *gjennom sosiale historier og moralske dilemmaer.* Tønsberg: Sareptas as. Hauger, B. (2018). *Styrkebasert tilnærming i lokalt folkehelsearbeid.* Rapport IS2721. Oslo: Helsedirektoratet.
"SMART language" – used in primary schools	Våge, G. A. & Bugge-Hansen, V. (2013). *Smart oppvekst 2. Identifiser barns styrker* *gjennom sosiale historier og moralske dilemmaer.* Tønsberg: Sareptas as Iversen, E. S. & Bugge-Hansen, V. (2018). SMART oppvekst 4. *Hvordan kan et felles fokus* *på styrker skape læringsglede, mestring og trivel for ALLE*? Tønsberg: Re kommune & Sareptas.
"SMART language" – used in secondary schools	Iversen, E. S. & Bugge-Hansen, V. (2017). *SMART ungdom. Hvordan skape felleskap som* *forsker på styrker og verdsetter forskjeller?* Tønsberg: Re kommune & Sareptas.
"Dreamclass"	Våge, G. A. & Bugge-Hansen, V. (2015). *Smart oppvekst 3. Hva vil skje om alle barn lærer* *seg ferdigheten i å se alt som er bra hos seg selv og andre?* Tønsberg: Sareptas as.

	Iversen, E. S. & Bugge-Hansen, V. (2018). SMART oppvekst 4. *Hvordan kan et felles fokus* *på styrker skape læringsglede, mestring og trivel for ALLE*? Tønsberg: Re kommune & Sareptas. Hauger, B. & Bugge-Hansen, V. (2020). SMART Upbringing: Creating environments so that all children and youth can realize their potentials. *AI practitioner, 22*, 67-78.
SMART child welfare initiative	Feyling, T., Engstrøm, A.K. & Holte, M. (2018). *Samarbeid i praksis – erfaringer fra* *familiearbeid i SMART barnevernstiltak*. Revetal: Re kommune.

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